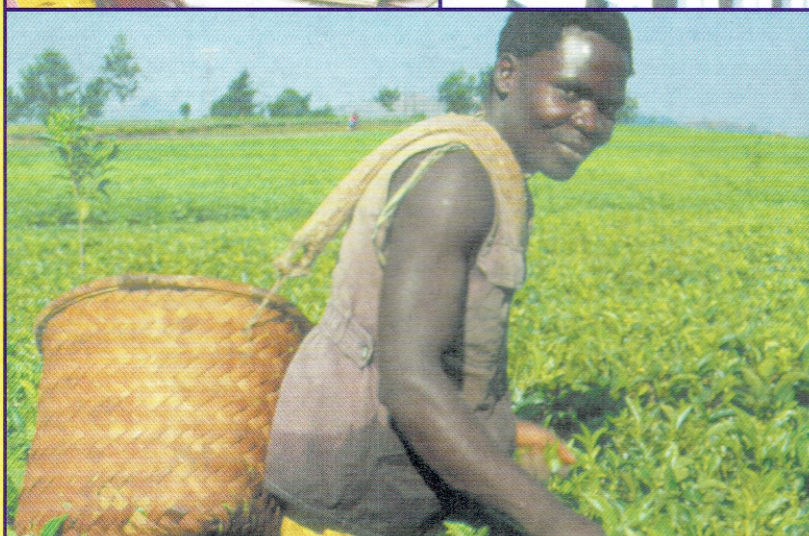
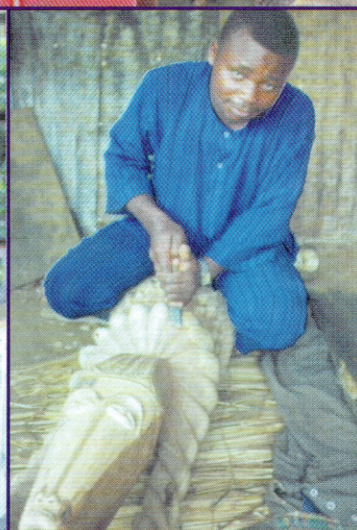
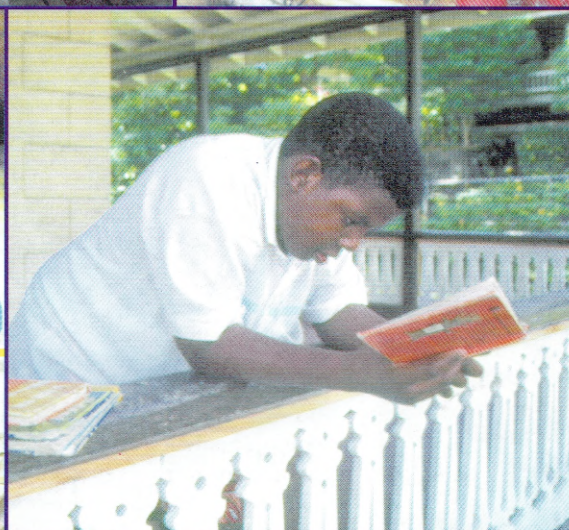
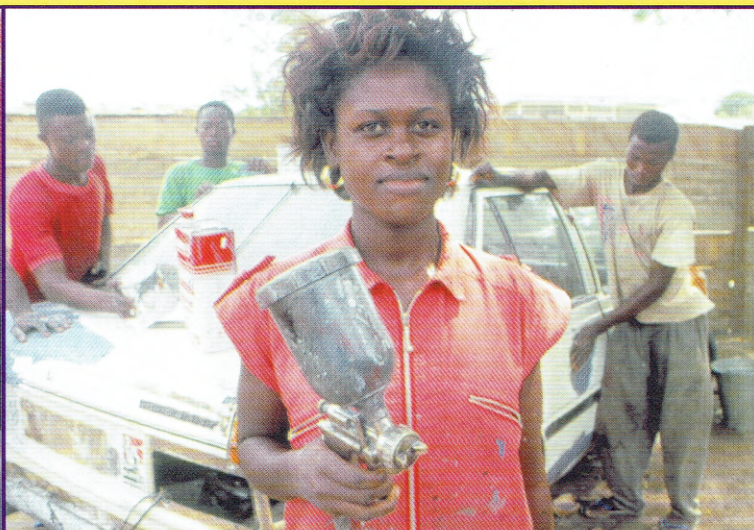




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CURRENTS

COMMONWEALTH



Giving youth a say

Tackling 'the apartheid of gender'

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The Commonwealth in bloom

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Lightening the debt burden

When leaders of the major industrialised nations held their annual economic summit in Birmingham, Britain, from 15-17 May, they had a special appeal from the Commonwealth to consider.

In a letter to British Prime Minister Tony Blair as Chairman, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku, appealed to the Group of Eight, or G-8, to, among other things, accelerate and expand the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The G-8 is the renamed G-7 plus Russia which joined for the first time this year as a full-fledged member. The rest are: Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

The HIPC Initiative is a facility which is designed to reduce the debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries to sustainable levels while at the same time encouraging sound economic policies. At present, six countries qualify for relief under the Initiative, including three from the Commonwealth – Uganda, Guyana and Mozambique.

At their September 1997 meeting in Mauritius, Commonwealth Finance Ministers supported new proposals to strengthen the HIPC Initiative by Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer. Dubbed the 'Mauritius Mandate', the mandate recommended that all eligible HIPCs should have embarked upon the process of securing a sustainable exit from their debt problems by the year 2000.

The Commonwealth has for many years put debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries high on its agenda. A number of low-income member states are heavily indebted to creditor governments which form the 'Paris Club' and multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the regional development banks. The share of low-income country debt owed to commercial banks – which constitute the 'London Club' – is relatively small, and has more or less been adequately dealt with.



Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku

The challenge has been to ease the bilateral and multilateral debt burden in order to improve the development process of the countries concerned. At present, much-needed resources are being diverted for debt servicing for sums which in some instances exceed the entire health and education budgets of the countries concerned.

Concern has been expressed that the implementation of the HIPC Initiative has been slow, and that its conditions have been too stringent. It has also been stressed that countries that are emerging from very destructive civil wars, such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zaire, should be given accelerated debt relief.

In the event, there was disappointment that the G-8 did not agree on specific ways of accelerating and expanding the HIPC Initiative, as spelt out in the Mauritius Mandate. However, on 18 May, Chancellor Brown highlighted two positive developments. At a meeting with non-governmental organisations and business enterprises in London, he said that the G-8 leaders had shown commitment to making progress on debt relief for HIPCs by the year 2000.

In addition, Mr Brown pointed out that the leaders had also committed themselves to accelerating the HIPC Initiative, where necessary, for post-conflict countries.

A review of the follow-up on the Mauritius Mandate and further progress made on the implementation of the HIPC Initiative will be taken up as a special agenda item by Commonwealth Finance Ministers at their 1998 meeting in Ottawa, Canada.

'Zero tolerance' for corruption

A NEWLY FORMED EXPERT GROUP ON GOOD governance and elimination of corruption has started work, and its interim report is expected to be presented to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in September. The final report will be prepared for the 1999 Heads of Government Meeting.

The group is chaired by Dr Mahbub ul Haq, Head of the Human Resource

Development Centre of Pakistan, and former Finance Minister and Adviser to the World Bank and UNDP.

At the end of their first meeting in London on 5-7 May, they agreed, among other things, that there should be 'zero tolerance' for corruption and that national commitment to anti-corruption programmes is essential for their successful implementation.

Other members of the group include: Dr K Botchwey (Ghana), former Finance Minister; Mr Bertrand de Speville (Britain), consultant on anti-corruption, and former Commissioner

of the Hong Kong Independent Commission on Corruption; Ms Ruth Hubbard (Canada), President of the Canadian Public Service Commission; Dr Lal Jayawardena (Sri Lanka), adviser to the President on economic issues; Mr Lim Siong Guan (Singapore), Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office; the Hon Barry O'Keefe (Australia), Judge and Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption; and Dr K Rattray (Jamaica), Solicitor-General and former Attorney-General.

Commonwealth ministerial mission asks for help for Sierra Leone



ComSec/S Papera

A COMMONWEALTH MINISTERIAL MISSION to Sierra Leone has urged member governments of the 54-country association and the rest of the international community to support Sierra Leone in its reconstruction efforts, and to contribute to a newly established UN Trust Fund for the country. The five representatives of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG) visited Freetown on 31 March to express the

The CMAG representatives inspecting the grounds of Fourah Bay College, in Freetown, which had been a rebel stronghold

Commonwealth's support for Sierra Leone's newly restored democratic government led by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, and to discuss its reconstruction needs.

In a statement issued at the end of the visit, the Group's leader, Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister Dr Stan Mudenge, said its discussions with President

Kabbah and his government centred on urgently needed bilateral and multi-lateral assistance. Among the proposals to be implemented immediately by the Commonwealth is assistance with the establishment of a sound policy framework for the mining sector of the diamond-rich country.

President Kabbah returned to Freetown on 10 March after the illegal military junta there had been ousted by military action taken under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States.

Apart from Dr Mudenge, the Commonwealth ministerial team included the Foreign Minister of Ghana, Mr Victor Gbeho; the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Dato' Musa bin Hitam; Minister of State at Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Tony Lloyd; and Canada's Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa, Mr David Kilgour.

The decision to send a mission to Freetown was taken by CMAG when it last met in London on 2-3 March. Its current members are: Barbados, Botswana, Britain, Canada, Ghana, Malaysia, New Zealand and Zimbabwe.

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Where credit is due

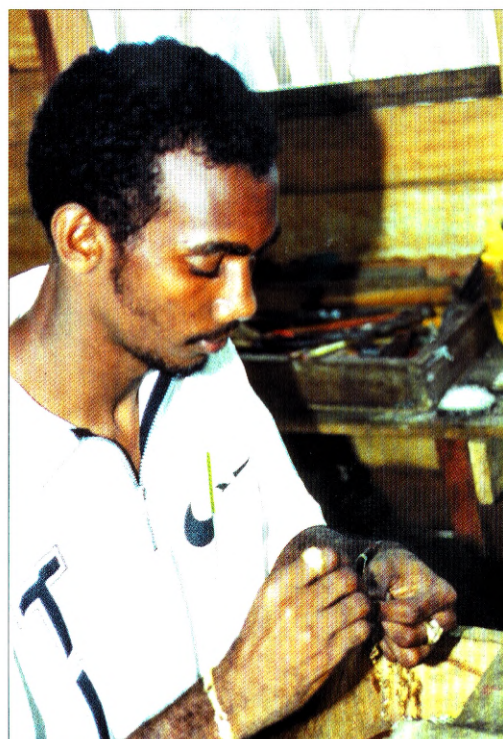
When Commonwealth Youth Ministers met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 25-30 May to discuss 'A Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth', a central focus was a novel initiative to empower youth by giving them the modest but vital credit to start or expand their small businesses. The scheme started as a pilot programme in 1996 and one of its beneficiaries lives in the Indian state of Gujarat.

Sunitaben Gordonbhai measured up the cement, mixed it with sand, straightened up and wiped the sweat off her brow with a smile, happy that she would be able to meet her clients orders – and happy about the money she would be making.

In the heat of the morning sun she was busy making cement pilasters that she would sell to nearby builders. Using a spatula she shovelled the mortar into a steel mould and drew it along the top of the mould before sprinkling a coating of fine sand on the now-level top. She lifted up the mould and tipped out the pilaster onto the cemented floor where it joined the three dozen she had already laid out neatly. Pointing to them, she said: "The loan has changed my life. I earn enough from sales to make my monthly repayments and support my family."

At 20, despite her modest education, Sunitaben has become an entrepreneur thanks to the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI), an innovative micro-credit scheme established in four countries: Guyana, India, Solomon Islands and Zambia. Since the pilot scheme started in 1996, 420 people in Gujarat have borrowed money under it. Sunitaben borrowed 5,000 rupees (US\$145) and now has a monthly turnover of almost US\$600. Sales from her limited product range, which also includes 40-litre hexagonal water urns, have enabled her to meet the monthly loan repayments of 480 rupees. Within a year she will have repaid her loan and can think of expansion.

Another beneficiary is Harshabbhai Bachubhai who lives in Bavala Dhehal village. Harshabbhai spotted an opportunity to become self-employed when he realised that the mill in his village could not meet the needs of the 3,500 people who lived there. When he heard about the CYCI scheme he decided to apply. After three weeks of training under the programme he borrowed



Jeweller Adrian Thomas, a CYCI beneficiary in Guyana, making a gold bracelet for a customer

money from it to set up a flour milling business. His business, too, is prospering and the local community in turn is benefiting.

Thousands of kilometres away, the bustling streets of the Zambian capital, Lusaka, have little in common with Gujarat, except the CYCI. For, here too, the credit initiative is operating. The youth of the densely populated areas of Matero, Chilenje and Chawama have also been targeted by the loan programme. "Before the loan I was struggling to run my carpentry business," Josa Mukoto said, looking proudly at the workers busy around him. "My customers had to give me cash deposits before I could buy the material to make their orders."

In the background, four young men were working on new furniture orders.

"My friend Evans Zulu told me about the Commonwealth Youth Programme credit scheme and I went there and borrowed money." Josa was the first beneficiary in Zambia. He borrowed one million kwacha (about US\$522). "Most of it was in the form of materials and I got some money to fund my operations. I managed to pay back the loan within the six-month deadline and I have bought a plot of land for a

house, tools and some machinery. I also hired a showroom for my furniture." Josa's no longer eking out a living in a country where 85 per cent of the population lives on less than US\$1 a day. His business is prospering and he has hired some young men to work for him.

The credit programme was approved by Commonwealth Youth Ministers in 1995 and the four pilot countries are where the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) has regional offices. Most established financial institutions and banks would not lend money to youth who have few tangible assets. However, under the credit initiative, more than US\$73,000 has been loaned to young people aged between 19 and 29.

There are slight differences in how the scheme works in different countries, but the basic principle was successful-

ly pioneered in Bangladesh by the Grameen Bank. The young people form a group and are trained together by staff from the CYP and its partner organisations. Although each person is liable for their own loan they exert peer pressure on each other to keep up to date with repayments. Among other skills the training teaches them how to think and plan as entrepreneurs. The youths learn how to forecast cash flows, select viable businesses and manage them. Although the programme is still in its pilot phase, its success speaks for itself. Almost three years after its launch more than 500 loans have been granted.

The importance of the CYCI is reflected in the fact that the economic empowerment of young people is at the top of the list of action points for

Commonwealth and global mandates and covenants relating to young people

- Harare Commonwealth Declaration (1991)
- UN World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (1995)
- Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development (1995)
- Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration (1995)
- Edinburgh Economic Declaration and Communiqué (1997)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by all 54 Commonwealth countries)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (ratified by 44 Commonwealth countries as at September 1997)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified by 29 Commonwealth countries as at September 1997)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified by 28 countries as at September 1997)

governments set out in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment which was the centre-piece of the Kuala Lumpur meeting. The replication of the scheme in other countries is certain to bring the Commonwealth closer to achieving its goal not only of involving young people in the economy but, above all, reducing youth unemployment and poverty.

Giving youth a say

AT THEIR MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR, Commonwealth Youth Ministers gave their approval to a Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (POA) which is designed to help countries harness better the potential of their youth for development by the turn of the century.

The 'Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment to the Year 2005' is in response to the evident challenges of the new millennium as they will affect the youth. It goes without saying that as youth are their country's future, the ability of countries to achieve their aspirations in the new century depends on how well prepared their young people are. The POA provides countries with a structured and comprehensive Commonwealth plan as the foundation for their individual youth development programmes.

Having been adopted it will now be presented to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1999 for endorsement. The time-frame of the POA is from 1998 to 2005 in the first instance, with a review and update in 2005.

For the Commonwealth which long ago recognised the imperative of focusing on the youth, the POA is only the natural result of planning that began as early as 1973 with the establishment of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP).

Since 1973, when Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed the implementation of the CYP, the programme has evolved from a training and information programme for youth workers into one of the world's leading

youth and development agencies. Indeed, the Commonwealth is the only major intergovernmental organisation with a fund and programme dedicated to youth.

The early recognition of the importance of youth to the aspirations of the Commonwealth was based on the youth statistics: one-third of the world's youth – defined as those in the 15-29 age groups – live in Commonwealth countries, and almost all of them live in developing countries.

In 1995, Commonwealth Youth Ministers, who meet every three years, recommended three strategies that the CYP should adopt as its central pillars towards the year 2000: national youth policy development, human resource development for women and men, and youth empowerment. Thirty-three member countries today either have or are in the process of implementing national youth policies, and many more have expressed interest in the idea.

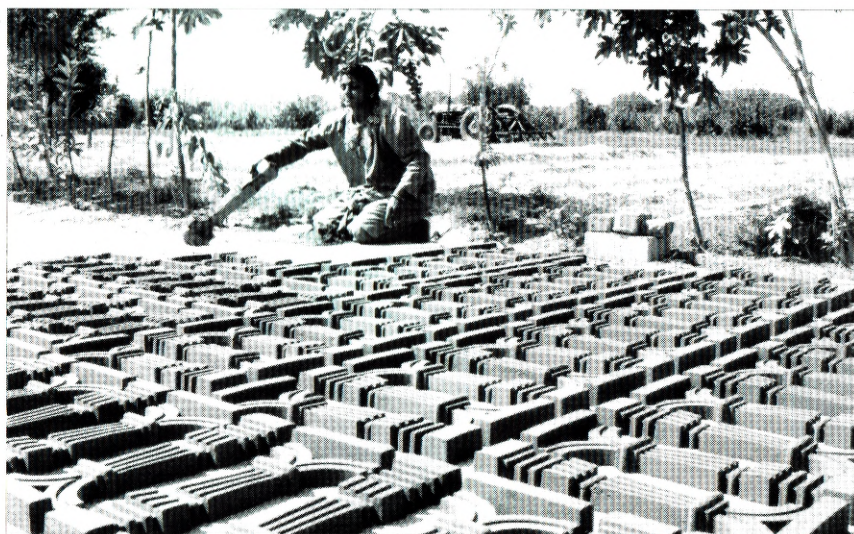
Based on that groundswell, last year the CYP launched 'National Youth Policy 2000' (or NYP 2000), a major programme of technical assistance to help governments which as yet have no youth policy to formulate one, and to review and update those already in existence.

At the Kuala Lumpur meeting, ministers also welcomed a novel scheme to establish sport scholarships to enable sportspersons to gain training in other Commonwealth countries. Sport is seen as a vital way to help realise young people's full potential.

'Youth empowerment' is defined as giving young people the opportunity to have a say in decisions which affect them. The empowerment of young people involves the concerted efforts of young people themselves as well as a number of key stakeholders. These include governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, the media, educational institutions, the private sector, family and community networks.

This is a very different approach from previous practice. Youth development work has in the past been – and in many cases still is – centred on a 'social welfare approach'. This approach perceives young people as passive objects upon whom interventions must act, rather than as active subjects participating in the shaping of their lives and

ComSec/M. Wamandeyya



Sunitaben Gordonbhai working hard to meet clients' orders



communities. This view tends to perpetuate the very problems it seeks to solve.

The NYP 2000 initiative set the goal of having a national youth policy in place in every Commonwealth country by the turn of the century.

Implementing the Plan of Action

On the implementation of the POA, 10 strategic objectives have been set out for governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Under each of the 10 are a number of action points which governments may adapt to their specific national needs and requirements.

Action points for governments include:

- developing and implementing measures to promote the participation of young people in the economy;
- strengthening social support systems and collaboration between key stakeholders in youth empowerment;
- developing and strengthening youth ministries, national youth policies, and legislative and/or administrative frameworks impacting on youth affairs;
- promoting positive role models and self-images to foster a sense of responsibility and self-esteem in young people;
- promoting the participation of young people, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, in decision-making at appropriate levels, including communities and local, provincial and national governments;
- taking affirmative and direct action to ensure gender equity and equality of treatment and outcomes for young people in special circumstances.

Action points for the Commonwealth Secretariat, to support and complement the efforts of member governments, particularly through the CYP, include:

- providing advice and technical assistance to governments on the implementation of the POA and assisting to mainstream youth policies;
- involving young people in programmes to promote such fundamental Commonwealth values as democracy, human rights, peace and gender equality;
- developing and implementing programmes to support young women and young people in special circumstances, including refugees, street children, and young women and men living with HIV/AIDS;

- promoting the participation of young people in economic activity through the implementation of such programmes as the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative, micro-credit management systems, and entrepreneurship training.

To ensure the monitoring of the Plan of Action, the Secretariat proposes to develop a Youth Development Index in collaboration with other relevant partners. The Index will be based on a set of demographic, socio-economic, political and other indicators that address the status of youth in Commonwealth countries. It would be regularly updated through a database developed by the Secretariat, with information provided by member governments.

When implemented by Commonwealth governments, the POA will lead to an enhanced contribution on the part of young people to national prosperity, economic competitiveness and reduced unemployment. Other benefits include the growth of an educated, skilled workforce, the building of a just and equitable society based on good governance and democracy, and the consolidation of peace and positive values in society.

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Appeal for clemency

Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku has joined other leaders in the international community in appealing to the Nigerian government to show restraint in its treatment of six men sentenced to death on 28 April for allegedly plotting to overthrow the Nigerian military regime. They include Lt-Gen Oladipo Diya.

Chief Anyaoku's plea for a show of "utmost restraint and humanitarianism" was later echoed by the South African Government which warned of an "adverse reaction" should the six be executed.

The water agenda

A Commonwealth-wide information network is to be created to link water experts and institutions in all member countries. This decision is part of an agenda for action on the sustainable management and use of freshwater agreed by Commonwealth Environment Ministers in April.

The agenda also proposes to encourage public and private partnerships to increase investment in water infrastructure and services. The agenda for action was agreed at the ministers meeting in New York on 28 April, during this year's session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The ministers meeting was chaired by Mr Molwyn Joseph of Antigua and Barbuda.

The agenda, which was presented to the CSD, also seeks for member countries to adopt integrated water management policies, and develop legislation and mechanisms to improve regulation and enforcement. Countries are to mobilise resources and adapt water pricing policies to their national circumstances. They are also encouraged to put more emphasis on market-based approaches based on the 'polluter-pays, user-pays' principles.

Another element of the agenda is that action will be taken to mobilise greater support for the efforts of Commonwealth small states, who have serious freshwater problems, to develop long-term water management strategies, as recommended by the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action.

Landmines ban register

As at May, four Commonwealth countries had ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and on their Destruction, out of a global total of 11.



Business brains boost trade

Twelve prominent business leaders across the Commonwealth have joined the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) whose aim is to boost and encourage private sector involvement in trade and investment in the 54 Commonwealth countries. Among them is its Chairman, Lord Cairns (*top right*), who is also Head of Britain's Commonwealth Development Corporation and BAT Industries. The Vice-Chairman is Cyril Ramaphosa (*inset*), Executive Deputy Director of New Africa Investments Limited, South Africa.

The other members include: Hugh Morgan, Executive Director, Western Mining Corporation Ltd, Australia; Jacques Lamare, President and Chief Executive Officer, SNC-Lavalin Group Inc, Canada; Ishmael Yamson, Chairman, Unilever, Ghana; Rahul Bajaj, Chairman and Managing Director, Bajaj Auto Ltd, India; John Simba, Chairman, Kenya National Bank; Tunku Tan Sri Dato' Sri Ahmad Yahaya, Executive Deputy Chairman, Sime Darby Berhad, Malaysia; Shaikat R Mirza, Chairman, Engro Chemical Pakistan Ltd; and Kerstin M Coombs, Managing Director, CLICO Energy Company Ltd, Trinidad and Tobago.

The CBC held its inaugural meeting on 20-21 April in London.

The four are: Belize, Canada, Mauritius, and Trinidad and Tobago. At present, there are 126 signatories to the convention which opened for signature on 3 December 1997, 42 of them Commonwealth countries.

The global landmines ban treaty is scheduled to come into force on 1 July – provided 40 countries ratify it by then. The slow ratification by governments is ascribed to the technical, financial and economic implications.

The convention was concluded in Oslo, Norway, in September 1997. Its preamble states that the main objective of the ban on anti-personnel landmines is to put an end 'to the suffering and casualties', the killing or maiming of 'hundreds of people every week, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians, especially children.'

At their summit in Edinburgh last October, Commonwealth Heads of Government called for countries in a position to do so to sign the convention. As a follow-up to this, in February Chief Anyaoku sent a circular to governments requesting speedy signature or ratification of the convention.

Nauru

Nauru, one of the Commonwealth's two Special Members, has applied for full

membership of the 54-member organisation. The Pacific island is one of the 32 Commonwealth members classified as small states, and had a population of 10,500 in 1997.

As special members, Nauru and Tuvalu take part in all Commonwealth activities except Heads of Government and other decision-making meetings. Unlike full members, they are not assessed but make a voluntary contribution towards the running of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and they are eligible for all forms of technical assistance.

Joint UN office moves

The new premises of the Joint Office for Commonwealth Permanent Representatives to the United Nations were officially opened on 30 April by Chief Anyaoku. The new office (at 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017) provides expanded facilities for nine small states: Belize, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Maldives, St Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles and Solomon Islands.

The joint office is a facility provided under the Commonwealth umbrella to assist its small member states to be represented in New York and to participate in the activities of the UN.

Papua New Guinea improves its palm oil

A Commonwealth expert in Papua New Guinea has helped the Government to draw up innovative guidelines for boosting palm oil production without causing damaging environmental side-effects.

Palm oil is one of the world's most versatile products, used in the manufacture of soaps, margarines, cooking oils, even coffee whitener.

But extracting the much-prized liquid from the spiny palm bunches can also pose serious environmental risks. Oil mill effluent is the biggest hazard. In the past, pollution has caused considerable damage to water sources, putting villagers' health at risk. Pesticides and herbicides also pose health hazards.

That is why Stephen Nicholls, a New Zealand expert in environment and resource management, was brought in.

Financed by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), Mr Nicholls was part of a five-member committee appointed by the Papua New Guinea Government and charged with preparing a set of guidelines to tackle environmental problems associated with the industry. The other members of the committee

abundant food source for aquatic bacteria and other micro-organisms.

The organisms proliferate, "often dramatically, consuming much of the oxygen in the water." As a result, fish are asphyxiated. In addition, weeds clog the water and harmful organic sludges form on the streambeds.

At one site visited by the committee, the smell and appearance of the discharge made it unpleasantly obvious that the treatment system was not operating properly. At another site, the effects of long-term organic pollution was evident: "There was less than adequate dilution of the mill discharge and the waters for some distance downstream showed the effects of pollution." The waterway was clogged and the water unfit for many human uses.

The committee's recommendations emphasise the importance of regular inspections of mill effluent. It says controls are needed to protect the soil and water resources on which rural people's livelihood depends.

Processing mills can also generate dense clouds of smoke if the boilers are incorrectly adjusted. The key recommendation in this area is the acquisition of modern boilers, which almost eliminate smoke emissions.

The committee even grappled with

Papua New Guinea has an Environmental Code of Practice for the industry. But the mere existence of a code is not enough.

"The problem is that there are not enough public servants to police the practices," he points out. "There are very strict controls on water pollution and soil conservation, but I suspect they are not really enforced."

That is why securing industry co-operation with the proposed guidelines – which are being considered by the Government – is vital. "We are dependent on the industry's honesty and integrity," he says.

South Africa tackles 'apartheid of gender'

South Africa is now often praised as one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of policies fostering gender awareness and women's rights. But try telling that to the one in three women who are illiterate or who will be raped during their lifetime.

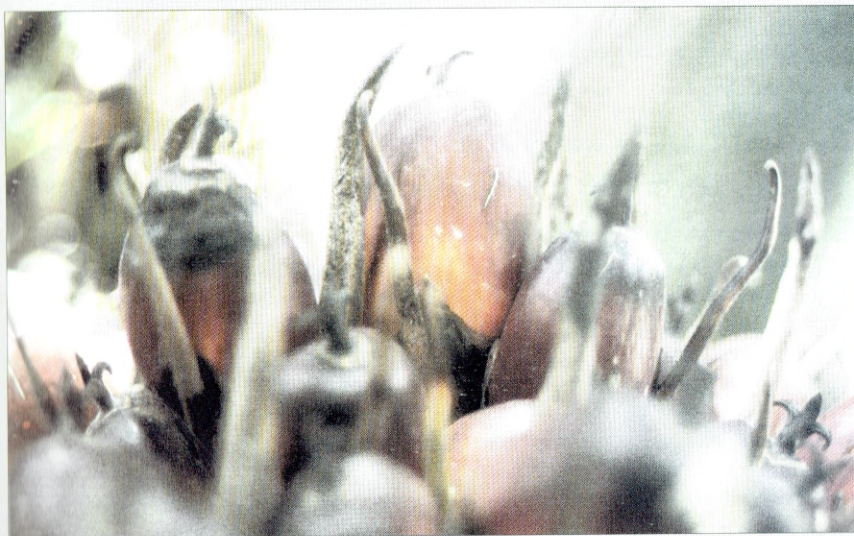
Or try telling it to Martha as she sits on a milk crate on a Johannesburg pavement, roasting cobs of corn on a barrel fire.

Workers hastily purchase the corn and rush back to their offices, while she slips the money under the folds of the brightly-coloured cloths knotted across her shoulders. When the day is done, she balances the large barrel on her head and walks home, a visible anachronism in the hustle and bustle of metropolitan Johannesburg. For her, and the millions of women like her, she is trapped in a worldwide phenomenon of discrimination which the late executive director of Unicef, James Grant, described as "the apartheid of gender".

Martha has never heard about the Government's ratification of the international Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or the establishment of a Commission for Gender Equality.

Kathy Albertyn of the Commission admits that "we're really at step one. I can't say we've made much impact at the grassroots level." And yet, the groundwork is being laid for the creation of a better life for women.

The Commission is an independent, constitutionally enshrined body which reports to parliament. It monitors government policy and has the right to investigate cases of gender discrimination. In establishing the Commission



From little palm oil kernels much goodness flows

comprised officials of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Overall, the industry's environmental record has been good, he says, but there is room for improvement.

"The most widespread environmental effect is the impact of discharges," says Mr Nicholls.

The effects can be severe. Discharges from mills contain heavy concentrations of organic matter which get into streams and rivers and provide an

the controversial issue of proposals for large-scale projects on forested land.

"We now require the developer to submit detailed forestry, agricultural development and environmental reports on site conditions throughout the area, and the ways in which the development will accommodate these conditions," says Mr Nicholls.

Like other countries in the region,



A lot more to do as South Africans celebrate Women's Day, 1997

and other machinery to advance gender equality, South Africa drew substantially on the comparative experience of other Commonwealth countries, and on technical support offered by the CFTC.

The 40 cases currently on the Commission's books range from workplace discrimination to the refusal of Radio Islam, a community station in Johannesburg, to broadcast women's voices "for religious reasons".

Colleen Lowe-Morna, a former consultant on gender issues for the Commonwealth in South Africa and now the Commission's chief executive, explains that the approach has been to create gender desks in every government department rather than to form a single "gender ministry".

"We want every government department to make a contribution," she says. "Everyone is answerable to gender equality."

Twelve desks have been established so far.

An Office on the Status of Women has been established in the Deputy President's office, to co-ordinate gender training in government and encourage the initiation of gender-sensitive policies.

The aim is to ensure, for example, that new legislation is 'gender neutral'. When the Housing Bill was drawn up, it was found that it failed to take into account the particular problems experienced by women in getting access to housing, including their lack of local government representation and the discriminatory attitude of housing boards.

Similarly, the Women's Budget Initiative shows that government is doing more than simply paying lip service to gender equality.

"If you want to see which way a country is headed, look at the country's budget and how it allocates resources for women and children," Pregs Govender, an MP on the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Finance, which set up the Initiative, told a Commonwealth conference on gender policies.

The Initiative looks at the way women are affected by the expenditure plans of each government department. A close look at macroeconomic policy from a gender perspective is necessary "because every area, not just health, education and welfare, affects women and men differently," explains Debbie Budlender, a principal researcher with the Community Agency for Social Enquiry, a non-governmental organisation which works on the project.

These programmes were developed with the support of the CFTC and are now feeding back into projects and policies elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Commonwealth experts provided an important stimulus to the discussions and also brought "international muscle and clout to South Africa," says Ms Lowe-Morna.

Thenjiwe Mtintso, outgoing chairperson of the Gender Commission, says that Commonwealth assistance has been timely, relevant and absolutely key to the Commission in its formative stages.

"As one of the few independent bodies in the Commonwealth charged with advancing gender equality, we look forward to sharing our experiences with sister Commonwealth countries," she says.

Despite the progress, warns Ms Mtintso, there is a long way to go.

"When we consider how far South Africans, particularly women, have

come since that historic march on Union Buildings in 1956 [to protest against extension of apartheid pass laws to women] we have much to be proud of. Yet so much remains to be done."

Malaysia's cocoa doctor smells something good

Dr Sebastian Alex Lopez has a 'nose' for chocolate – and his nose knows that chocolate is not what it used to be. "Good flavour is a sensation. You must experience it to know it. And flavour has declined the world over," says the Tanzania-born cocoa expert.

Good processing is the key to good flavour, but raw material plays a crucial role, maintains Dr Lopez: "You can ruin good quality cocoa by poor processing, but you cannot improve genetically poor quality by superior handling."

Dr Lopez says he got hooked on chocolate while on holiday in Trinidad and Tobago 30 years ago, and his work has since taken him to Brazil, Belize, Grenada, the United States and, currently, to Malaysia.

He has now just completed a three-year stint at the Malaysian Cocoa Board in Sabah. His placement was arranged and funded by the CFTC.

Malaysian cocoa faces a problem. Though still a major foreign exchange earner – behind only palm oil and rubber in terms of agricultural exports – acreage is down to about 235,000 hectares from 419,793 hectares in 1990.

Many farmers switched to palm oil because prices were better. Others cut back on maintenance, which has enabled black pod, a fungal disease, and the highly destructive cocoa pod borer pest to gain footholds.

With world demand expected to outpace production, the price outlook is reasonably good. But there is another problem: the quality of the cocoa beans for chocolate making is not as good as it could be. Poor quality can cut 20 per cent off the price, and Malaysian cocoa has a reputation for acidity, a weaker flavour than its West African counterpart, and smoke contamination.

Dr Lopez has therefore been experimenting with different equipment and techniques. The aim, he explains, is to gain more control over the process of fermentation, which precedes the drying of the beans, and then the cleaning, roasting, shelling and grinding into a paste.

The only way to tell whether or not a particular variety will produce a good flavour is to ferment and make chocolate from it. However, proper fermentation requires a sizeable output from at least 50 trees.

"It means that if you come across an interesting tree, you have to first replicate it," he explains, which would take about 18 months.

"Our process can handle a single tree, and so cuts research time and the need to plant large areas just for evaluation," says Dr Lopez.

Before he leaves Malaysia, Dr Lopez would like to see a proposed experimental processing project come to fruition. To be owned and run by farmers on an island off Semporna, in Sabah, it would act as a model for cocoa farmers in other areas.

Farmers have offered about 3,000 square metres of land for the project, which will use solar energy for drying, with a wood furnace back-up.

"I would like to see this one fly," says Dr Lopez. "Only a practical demonstration of worth is acceptable to villagers. This calls for all your academic and work experiences, and every bit of wit and psychology you possess. Exciting!"

See cocoa story on page 12

Prison officials shine a light into a dark corner

There is little problem winning public support for fair elections, an uncensored media or freedom from arbitrary arrest. But prisoners' rights are rarely a matter of popular concern particularly when meagre resources have to match priorities.

"Lock them up and throw away the key" is a common attitude. And many governments and politicians think: why spend time or money on a group of people who have committed crimes and have no public support?

Prisoners, however, are people, whatever wrongs they may have done, and people have rights, even if some of those rights are curtailed as a punishment.

So in March, the Commonwealth Secretariat organised a workshop entitled 'Prison Officials and Human Rights' in response to a request for assistance from the Government of Cameroon. Funded by the CFTC, the workshop helped to shine some light into this dark corner of society.

"Cameroon has ratified international human rights conventions," explains one of the visiting experts, Claudia Sturt, Head of Prison Programmes at Bristol Prison in Britain, "but there was need for comprehensive knowledge and application at all levels of the criminal justice system."

"This training gives us an opportunity to look at ourselves hard and see what needs correcting and how to do so," says Tsala Amougou, a prison administrator with Cameroon's National School of Penitentiary Administration (NSPA).

Mr Amougou's primary job is to inculcate respect for human rights among prison officials. The task is made difficult by overcrowding and poor sanitation in the prison system.

More than 16,000 prisoners are accommodated in the country's 67 prisons, and overcrowding is chronic.

The penitentiary in Bertoua, in south Cameroon, was built during the colonial period for 50 prisoners, says Eone Keket, another NSPA teacher; today, it houses 750. Mantoum Prison, in the west, has 800 prisoners, but was designed for 80.

"When prisons are overcrowded, it leads to abuse and is difficult to avoid practices such as homosexuality," points out Moffat Karambanachero, regional director of Prison Fellowship International, a non-governmental organisation promoting prison reform in Africa, and one of three outside experts brought in for the workshop. Such conditions can lead to the spread of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and other diseases. When prisoners have served their sentence and are released, the diseases accompany them into the community – an illustration of why the issue of prisoners' rights cannot be isolated from the rights of society as a whole.

Mr Karambanachero, a Zimbabwean, emphasises that building more prisons is not necessarily the answer. "The Commonwealth does not encourage the building of new prisons," he says, and instead advocates alternatives to custody such as community service for non-violent and minor offenders.

He says that prisoners in Zimbabwe are encouraged to learn skills or take up farming, which could help prisons pay for themselves. He estimates that 80-90 per cent of food eaten in

Commonwealth Secretariat volunteers required for assignments in Commonwealth countries

The Commonwealth Secretariat has launched the Commonwealth Service Abroad Programme to enhance the Secretariat's capacity to meet short-term technical assistance needs of member governments through the deployment of highly qualified volunteers, supplementing the Secretariat's existing technical assistance programmes. The programme offers the possibility of rewarding developmental work in over 50 Commonwealth countries.

In anticipation of future needs we wish to expand our database of highly qualified Commonwealth nationals with professional qualifications and at least ten years' experience in senior positions within their relevant fields, particularly in the areas listed below:

Computing (including Systems Analysis and Networks), Economics (including Finance and Taxation Policy), Environment, Gender Planning, Human Resource Development, Industry Development (especially small and medium scale), Natural Resources Management (including Mining, Energy, Marine and Fisheries), State Enterprise Restructuring and Privatisation, Public Service Reform and Good Governance, Stock Market/Securities Trading Regulations, Technology (e.g., geodetics, hydrographics, GIS), Trade Policy Promotion and Tourism.

Volunteers are contracted on a no-fee basis, but receive a daily living allowance at UN rates and return economy class air fares (and air fares for the volunteer's spouse, where assignments are for more than six weeks).

Applicants who wish to be considered for volunteer assignments should contact:
Chief Personnel Officer

Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House,
Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, Britain

Tel: +44 (0)171-747 6185 Fax: +44 (0)171-747 6520

In the field

The Commonwealth Secretariat, through the CFTC, places experts in the field to assist in the sustainable development of member countries. Between 1 December 1997 and 29 April 1998, the following short- and long-term experts began assignments in the following countries (appointment dates in parenthesis):

Botswana *Mrs H Sawkill* of Britain has joined the Central Resource Centre in the Ministry of Education as a speech therapist (2.1.98 to 1.1.00). *Dr C Rajana* of Guyana has joined the Ministry of Finance and Planning as a consultant on the Central Tender Board (28.1.98 to 27.1.00)

The Gambia *Mr K Damoah-Agyemang* of Ghana, an expert in electoral management, has joined the Independent Electoral Commission (7.3.98 to 6.9.99)

Ghana *Dr J R Slack* of Britain has joined the University of Ghana Medical School as a professor and senior lecturer in physiology (7.3.98 to 6.3.99)

Kiribati *Mr A M Wilson* of Britain has joined the Tarawa Technical Institute within the Ministry of Education as a lecturer in engineering (24.2.98 to 23.2.00)

Mauritius *Dr A P Rhodes* of New Zealand, a veterinary expert in artificial insemination, has joined the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (12.1.98 to 11.1.00)

Papua New Guinea *Mr K D Gupta* of India has joined the Internal Revenue Commission where he will serve as Director in charge of policy and legal matters (15.2.98 to 14.2.00)

Samoa *Mr S C Raaymakers* of Australia has joined the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme as a marine pollution officer (26.1.98 to 25.1.00)

Seychelles *Mr D H Barker* of Britain, a geotechnical civil engineer, has joined the Land Transport Division of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport (8.2.98 to 7.2.99). In the same Division is *Mr P Abbey* of Australia, a civil engineer in hydrology (10.2.98 to 9.2.99)

Solomon Islands *Mr R D Chetwynd* of Britain has been appointed the Registrar of the High Court in the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs (5.2.98 to 4.2.00)

Sri Lanka *Mr D V Crow* of Britain has joined the Industrial Development Board as a consultant in business development planning (28.2.98 to 27.2.99)

Zimbabwe *Dr K S Sastry* of India has been appointed the short-course programme co-ordinator at the Southern African Regional Institute for Policy Studies (27.1.98 to 16.1.00). Also at the same Institute is *Dr F G W Msiska* of Malawi who has been appointed Academic Registrar of the Master's Degree Programme (18.2.98 to 17.2.99)

Small states are in a particularly difficult situation. Not only are they short of the skilled resources to conduct proper assessments, but their fragile ecosystems make them arguably the most vulnerable to environmental disasters when things go wrong.

To assist the governments of small states in the Indian Ocean, the CFTC recently helped train 26 officials in conducting proper EIAs and how to incorporate them as part of their overall planning processes. The workshop, from 11 to 15 May, was a joint initiative between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Institut de l'Energie et de l'Environnement de la Francophonie, and brought together both English- and French-speaking participants from Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles.

The workshop demonstrates the growing co-operation between the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, and was hosted by the Government of Mauritius, itself a member of both associations.

"We want to train participants in a general way in the techniques and methods of EIA preparation, but more particularly in the role of the EIA in environmental management, the processes of identifying the criteria for undertaking EIAs, and in preparing appropriate terms of reference," says a Commonwealth official. In addition to these aspects of EIAs, the workshop also looked at the commissioning, manage-

Zimbabwean prisons is produced by prisoners. This approach is being adopted in several other African countries, including Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

The 'Recommendations for Action' produced at the end of the four-day workshop pinpointed key areas where participants considered the Ministry of Territorial Administration needed to take urgent steps to fine-tune the prison management system in line with the principles of natural justice.

"We will continue to harmonise the living conditions of detainees," pledged Jean Marie Pongmoni, director of the Yaoundé central prison, "and the workshop is a testimony that we are moving in the right direction."

Joining forces in the Indian Ocean

Whether bilateral or multilateral, almost every donor agency wants to ensure that



Indian Ocean officials visit a model environment site

its development projects harm the environment as little as possible. So they often require Environmental Impact Assessments, or EIAs, before giving the go-ahead to take any industrial project from the drawing board to the local construction site.

But demanding EIAs can often put an unfair burden on the host governments of developing countries who seldom have the skills to effectively protect their own environmental interests.

ment and evaluation of such assessments.

But donor agencies are not the only ones who require EIAs.

Development projects carried out by private industry or governments themselves usually require, as government policy, an analysis of how different projects will affect the surrounding environment. As a result, proper project planning and evaluation are important responsibilities for government planning departments – whether financing for a project comes from their pockets or someone else's.

The journey of cocoa through continents and time

Cocoa is considered a 'golden' commodity in many Commonwealth countries, accounting for a high percentage of their foreign exchange earnings, and some 30 per cent of the world's cocoa production comes from the Commonwealth. This year the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) is celebrating its 25th anniversary and has marked the event in a special way, tracing the rise of cocoa through continents and time.

Both cultures put great emphasis on the sanctity of cocoa and viewed the cocoa bean as a symbol of prosperity. Indeed, as an illustration of how important cocoa was in Aztec society, Montezuma, the Aztec emperor, decreed that as punishment those who did not go to war should not wear cotton or feathers, or drink cocoa!

Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortés were among the first Europeans to taste cocoa during their triumphant voyages of discovery to the New World. Cortés in particular was impressed with the cocoa drink, *xocoatl*, which he drank with the Aztecs in Mexico and the recipe for which he brought back with him to Spain in 1528.

With the addition of sugar, chocolate became a favourite drink of the Spanish court, and attempts to satisfy domestic demand included the planting of cocoa trees in Spanish territories such as the Dominican

in 1834 and then again in 1880. From there it was introduced in Singapore, Fiji, Samoa, Tanzania and Madagascar during the next decade.

Commonwealth countries have always been prominent on both sides of the cocoa market. On the consumption side, Britain has traditionally been one of the world's largest users of cocoa and companies such as Cadbury and Rowntree (now a division of Nestlé) have, over long periods of time, promoted cocoa-growing in a number of Commonwealth countries.

At the turn of the century, Trinidad and Tobago was one of the largest cocoa-growing areas in the world. This preceded the emergence of Ghana as the world's largest producer, and this dominance prevailed over many decades until the late 1970s.

Since then, Côte d'Ivoire has assumed the position of the world's largest producer, accounting for over 40 per cent of world production, but Commonwealth countries are still very prominent on the cocoa-production scene. Total production of cocoa in the Commonwealth accounts for nearly

30 per cent of world production. However, Africa is the largest cocoa-producing area.

Production of cocoa in Commonwealth countries is significant not only in terms of its volume, but also in terms of its characteristics. Ghana's cocoa beans are highly regarded for their quality and commonly command a price premium over other high volume producers.

Also, a number of Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, for example Grenada, Jamaica, and Trinidad and

Tobago, and Papua New Guinea in the Pacific, although relatively small producers, specialise in growing 'fine' or 'flavour' cocoa beans. These have particular aroma, taste and/or colour properties which are sought-after by producers of fine chocolate.

The future prospects are for continuing growth in both production and consumption of cocoa. Prices have been improving in recent years compared to low levels which prevailed in the early 1990s, and are expected to continue to rise over the years ahead.

(A nose for chocolate – see page 9.)

Feature courtesy of the ICCO, London.



(above) Cocoa pods
(left) Cocoa beans being packed into sacks ready for transportation

As part of the silver jubilee celebrations, the ICCO organised 'The Journey of Cocoa through time and continents', a re-enactment of the first shipments of cocoa from its native South America to Europe from where it was introduced to the rest of the world. In April symbolic sacks of cocoa beans were sent from the main cocoa-producing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to the port of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic.

Today cocoa is a global commodity – a far cry from its origins deep in the rainforests of South America, where its value as a currency, food and religious token was known only to the ancient Aztec and Mayan civilisations.

Republic, Trinidad, Haiti and Fernando Po. The rush by European trading nations to claim land to cultivate cocoa began in earnest in the late 17th century.

As chocolate manufacturing methods developed and consumption rose, the explosion in demand required yet more cocoa to be grown. *Amelonado* cocoa from Brazil was planted in Príncipe in 1822, São Tomé in 1830 and Fernando Po in 1854, then on to Nigeria in 1874 and Ghana in 1879. In Cameroon, cocoa was planted during the German colonial period of 1925 to 1939.

Elsewhere, *Tritatario* cocoa out of Trinidad was first planted in Sri Lanka

Education

TEH MING LI

IN VIETNAM THEY CALL US *BUI-DOI*. Life's Dirt. We are the beaten generation of a past, long dead, living in the present that will not forget. My brother and I are Amerasians – a wonderful concoction of East and West, conceived in a not-so-wonderful environment. My mother was a Vietnamese village girl and my father, an American GI. You've most probably heard of this one before. The so-called 'star-crossed' lovers caught in a war neither wanted a part of. We were that result.

Growing up in Vietnam was every bit as tough as you can imagine, more so because we are *bui-doi*. In the post-Vietnam War era, nobody wants a living reminder. The children in our village used to pick fights with us. They said my father was evil, he dropped the bombs on Hanoi. They called my mother a white man's whore.

We were always overlooked. My mother had a hard time asking help from her relatives. We had no friends. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with green almond-shaped eyes. Mothers would sweeten their tongues in front of you and sharpen them when you weren't looking. I became a recluse and learnt with my eyes and ears.

School in Vietnam was nothing more than an event to while the time away. I learnt much more outside school than in. How to shun the jeers and accept some hard facts. How to stifle my cries and my tears at night. How not to hate my mother. Or the father I never knew. These were my lessons and I learnt them very well, thank you.

I'm now in the Philippines waiting for a new life in the United States. My mother managed to cajole and fight her way through millions of documents and queues at the American Embassy. We learnt that they did not really want us over there either – just fulfilling an old obligation. We were tested through and through. Do you know English? A relative in the United States? Have you had your inoculations? We learnt how to fake our smiles and not to build castles in the air.

At the Philippines Refugees Process Centre, we learn how to play baseball,



Karl Foster

how to sing American songs and tell American jokes. I have one:

What do you get when you have an elephant paddling in a pool?

Swimming trunks!

My brother and I do not find it very funny and neither do the other kids in the camp.

During lessons, we learn about Albert Einstein and John F Kennedy, as well as write essays like the one I'm doing now. We learn about the fifty states in our new home. We even learn a bit of slang – how to tell someone to 'stuff it' and how something is 'cool'. Two days ago, we learnt about the Civil War in America. They did not have to explain why it happened – we already understood.

Tomorrow, we're having a day off. Mr Jonathan Wells, our counsellor, is going to take us on a picnic and tell us

more about American people. He's going to tell us about certain prejudices that some Americans possess – that sometimes people of a different race get different treatment. He does not have to teach me that. I am thirteen. I do not need educating twice-over.

This story was the Asia Regional Winner in the 1997 Commonwealth Short Story Competition, sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation and administered by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association. The author of Education, Teh Ming Li was born in Kuala Lumpur in 1973. She studied Writing and Publishing at Middlesex University in London, Britain, and now works as a copywriter in Malaysia.

She has always been interested in fiction, and her favourite writers include Ernest Hemingway, Truman Capote and Alice Walker. This is her first writing prize.

Lessons for Samoa

IN MARCH, CHIEF ELECTION OFFICERS and other senior officials from the electoral management bodies of 41 Commonwealth countries met in Britain to consider ways of improving the conduct of elections in their countries. The 'Voting for Democracy' conference took place at Queens' College, Cambridge and Samoa was one of the participating countries. In an interview at Cambridge, its Chief Electoral Officer, **Sooialo David Fong** (right), a lawyer who was appointed to the position in August 1996, spoke to *Commonwealth Currents* about his impressions of the meeting, and explained the electoral system in his country. Excerpts from the interview:

Q What percentage of Samoans are registered voters?

A Prior to our elections in 1996 we had about 78,000 out of a population of 163,000; so you can say that roughly about 50 per cent of the total population is on the roll.

Q What voting method does your country use?

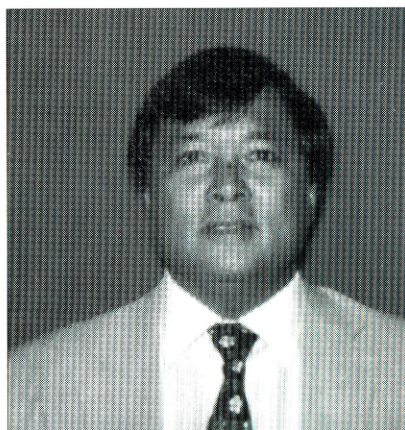
A We use the first-past-the-post system.

Q How useful was the 'Voting for Democracy' conference to you?

A Absolutely useful. For someone like myself who is new to electoral administration, the conference was an ideal opportunity to learn from my colleagues in other Commonwealth countries.

Samoa being a very small country, many of the points that were made here by my colleagues may not be relevant to us. But at the same time I feel that this has widened my understanding of electoral work in the Commonwealth. I believe that the informal discussions we had – of course in addition to the formal meetings – were very important because we discussed issues that are personal to our countries. I found it extremely useful to talk about the situation in our own countries.

Also, having met these colleagues, I feel that from now on I can easily make contact with them and maybe even request their assistance, or their advice. Before this meeting I don't think that I would ever have contemplated writing to any one of these people. To me this was one of the most important features of the Cambridge meeting ... It has set the climate for the sharing of information common to us in the area of elections.



Q Were there any specific ideas that you found relevant to the Samoan situation?

A Well, we don't have an electoral commission as some countries do, so I found discussions on that quite interesting. However, I found the area of voter registration very relevant and useful to me because this is a problem we have been wrestling with in Samoa.

Our electoral roll which was used for our general election in 1996 requires tidying up. The problem is that the very minimal equipment that we have is already out of date. We began to use computers for the preparation of the voters' roll in 1990 when our country was preparing for a national referendum on universal adult suffrage. It was very encouraging that our people voted significantly in favour of universal suffrage and in our national elections in 1991, for the first time people 21 years and over were given the right to vote. Prior to that, in our 41 territorial constituencies only title-holders were eligible to register and to vote or become candidates.

Q Who are title-holders?

A Title-holders refer to leaders (or heads) of families. They're elected by their families.

Before 1991 if you did not have a title, you were not eligible to vote.

Q Considering the size of Samoa surely you don't have difficulties with your elections?

A Not really. This is something we're very thankful for. However, one feature that I really would like to see introduced into our system is that of voter education.

Q You have never had a voter education programme?

A No. We're hoping to get funding to start one soon ... We're very fortunate in

one aspect in that we have a high literacy rate (98 per cent); people can read and write – in Samoan, not necessarily English – and that's probably why there was not that need for it before. But I feel that our people need to be able to appreciate this right which in other countries many people have died for in their struggle to get the right to vote.

And there are other areas where I feel voter education could play a fundamental role ... In the villages, for example, we still have a very strong, communal sense of living, so people there are very much guided by decisions made by the village council of chiefs and orators ... It's not unusual for a council to put up a certain candidate for election and insist that everyone in that village should vote for that particular person. Worse, they'll also threaten that those who do not vote for that candidate will be penalised by the council and even banished from the village ...

I think that if the opportunity is given for us to establish such a programme we will make full use of it to clear up misconceptions, and create public awareness of the provisions of our Electoral Act.

Q Do you think the Commonwealth is working towards a common electoral system since there have been a number of these meetings?

A It is interesting to find that currently even Britain has set up an Independent Commission on the Voting System, chaired by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, to look into the question of a possible alternative to the present 'first-past-the-post' system.

At present, I cannot see any common ground for adopting one particular system because I think the different countries adopt a system that is more relevant to their situation.

This kind of gathering is very important because it really widens one's perspective ... and should there be the need for a change, one would have alternatives to consider.

Corporate practice

A Commonwealth Association for Corporate Governance is to be established to promote exemplary standards of behaviour by board directors and companies in the public and private sectors. This was the recommendation of a three-day conference on corporate governance which took place at Sundridge Park, Kent, in Britain, from 26 to 28 April.

Ombudsmen team up

IN RECENT YEARS, MORE AND MORE developing countries have established the office of 'Ombudsman' to promote democracy. The widespread adaptation of the institution, and the importance of such bodies networking, were highlighted at a recent human rights forum in the Caribbean.

A Caribbean Ombudsman Association is to be formed following the recommendations of a human rights workshop held in Antigua and Barbuda in March. The workshop participants recommended the formation of the association to ensure good governance and democracy as well as encourage collaboration among human rights institutions in the region.

In a resolution, the participants also asked Heads of Government to recognise that the Ombudsman, an office that investigates citizens' complaints against the government or other authorities, and human rights institutions have an important role to play in good governance. They suggested that more of them should be established in the Caribbean.

Currently, Caribbean countries that have Ombudsmen include Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The workshop, themed 'Strengthening National Ombudsman and Human Rights Institutions in the Caribbean', and held from 9-12 March, was jointly organised by the Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Office of the Ombudsman of Antigua and Barbuda, and the International Ombudsman Institute based in Canada. Participants comprised representatives of Caribbean and international ombudsman and human rights institutions, as well as other non-governmental organisations.



Senator Samuel Aymer, Antigua and Barbuda's Minister of Health and Civil Service Affairs, giving the keynote speech at the workshop

 **YOU**

Yvette Landry Poaka Djommou only recently became acquainted with *Commonwealth Currents* in her college library in Yaoundé, Cameroon. However, she is already finding the magazine useful in her efforts to improve her English, and she also likes to read about developments in the other Commonwealth countries.

Ms Djommou, 20, is studying Business Administration at the Catholic Institute of Yaoundé and as she will soon complete her studies, she is busy thinking about her future and choice of career.



Do you want to be featured in this column? If so, please write to us and tell us about yourself and your views about Commonwealth Currents. Tell us also, how you got your first copy of this magazine. Write to: The Editor, Commonwealth Currents, Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, Britain.

This column has previously featured readers from Sri Lanka, Ghana, India and Zimbabwe.

Advancing the Human Rights of Women: Using International Human Rights Standards in Domestic Litigation

Edited by Andrew Byrnes, Jane Connors and Lum Bik

*Commonwealth Secretariat 192 + xii pages
ISBN 0 85092 515 0 Price: £14.99*

This publication contains the revised version of papers presented at the Asia/South Pacific Regional Judicial Colloquium for Senior Judges on the Domestic Application of International Human Rights Norms Relevant to the Human Rights of Women. It took place at the University of Hong Kong from 20-22 May 1996.

Among other things the contributors

examine the challenges involved in promoting the human rights of women and the girl child in domestic litigation, and explore the ways in which human rights norms can achieve this goal.

Examination Systems in Small States: Comparative Perspectives on Policies, Models and Operations

*Edited by Mark Bray and Lucy Steward
Commonwealth Secretariat 292 + xi pages
ISBN 0 85092 529 0 Price: £12.99*

This publication deals with the provision of examinations in small states and is intended for use by ministries of education, examining bodies, researchers and international organisations.

It includes case studies of examination systems in particular countries, and the role of metropolitan examination bodies in small states.

Promoting Private Capital Flows and Handling Volatility: The Role of National and International Policies

*Commonwealth Secretariat 80 pages
(Economic Paper 34)*

ISBN 0 85092 536 3 Price: £6.00

The findings of a Commonwealth Working Group are presented in this report. Following a request from Commonwealth Finance Ministers at their meeting in Bermuda in September 1996, the Group met in London earlier this year to consider the role of national and international policies in encouraging capital flows for investment.

The Working Group's views reflect a wide variety of experience, from some of the world's most dynamic and competitive economies, to poorer countries that have yet to benefit from developments in the global economy.

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Schools 'Net' makes CENSE

Schools in Australia, Britain, Canada, India, New Zealand and Singapore use them. South Africans will one day soon. Internet-based computer networks are taking off and, thanks to a new Commonwealth initiative, more countries in the association may follow suit.

For educationalists, the Internet represents a powerful new tool to promote international co-operation and understanding in schools, not to mention its potential to share knowledge between leaders in education. Through the Internet, a student or teacher can 'log on' with his or her computer and access institutions such as the British Library, download files or send a message to another student thousands of kilometres away. The technology exists, all that was missing was the overall link.

That new link is CENSE, the Commonwealth Electronic Network for

Schools and Education. Run by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), CENSE will connect the national learning networks in Commonwealth countries and, where no such national networks exist, help mobilise the resources to enable schools to benefit from an Internet connection. It was the outcome of a meeting held at COL's Vancouver headquarters in March and attended by representatives from several Commonwealth organisations including the Commonwealth Secretariat and COMNET-IT.

Through CENSE, young people may soon be able to log on to interactive sites and learn about Commonwealth initiatives such as the Iwokrama rainforest. It will also help to share learning and teaching materials between Commonwealth educators.

The web site entry point for CENSE is <http://www.col.org/cense>

NGOs, don't forget your kit

With all the work being done to promote public and private sector good practice these days, it was only a matter of time before non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the Commonwealth came under scrutiny as well.

The Commonwealth Foundation, working directly with NGOs, has blazed this trail with a new, comprehensive training kit entitled *NGO Good Policy and Practice*, complementing its successful 1997 booklet, *Guidelines for Good Practice*.

Both the training kit and the guidelines are the Foundation's response to the rapidly changing relationship between government and NGOs.

"In many countries, governments have redefined their roles, becoming the providers of an economic and policy framework," says Don Clarke, the Deputy Director of the Foundation. Policy itself is being implemented, increasingly, by civil society organisations such as the private sector and NGOs.

"We believe the training kit is an essential tool for NGOs seeking to strengthen their impact, professional credibility and sustainability in this new environment," he says.

The kit includes handouts and slides for overhead projection and is available from the Foundation for £25. For more information contact: Commonwealth Foundation, Marlborough House, London SW1Y 5HY, Britain. Tel: +44 (0)171-930 3783; Fax: +44 (0)171-839 8157.

Puppets ready for television debut



Noreen Young

The trainees show off the next stars of Jamaica TV

Noreen Young is a professional puppet-maker. She is also a puppeteer and a producer of children's television which allows her to bring her colourful craft to thousands of children in living rooms across her native Canada.

Jamaican children, however, aren't so lucky. With little or no local children's television, they have to rely on US imports. So when the country's Super Supreme TV told the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association it was interested in producing its own children's programmes, Ms Young was the perfect choice to train some professional puppet-makers. The CBA organised a two-week training workshop in January with funding from the Commonwealth Media Development Fund.

"On my first morning at Super Supreme TV, I met the trainees who had enrolled

in the course: 10 women who worked professionally with young children," says Ms Young. "Except for two, none had ever made a puppet before."

Ms Young took the group through the various steps of constructing hand-and-rod puppets sculpted from foam rubber and covered with colourful fleece fabric. Out of a total of 17 imaginative characters created, at least 10 were camera worthy.

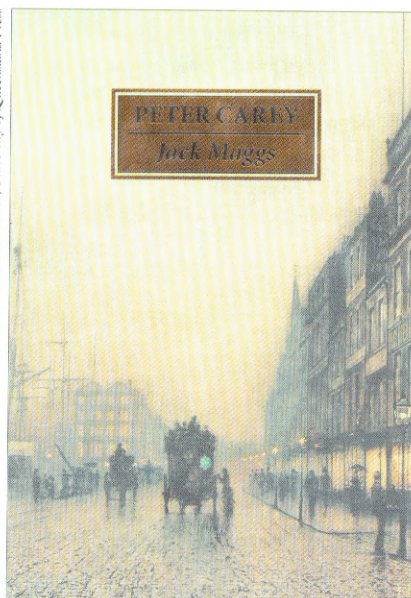
"It seemed to me that everyone in Jamaica is a natural-born story-teller," says Ms Young. "This quality will prove most useful when the trainees start performing with the colourful and lively characters they created during the workshop." Clearly, there is more stimulating viewing ahead for Jamaican children.

Jack Maggs bags 1998 Writers Prize

Australia's Peter Carey was awarded the 1998 Commonwealth Writers Prize for his novel *Jack Maggs* which looks at the relationship between his homeland and Britain.

As part of his prize the author was presented with a cheque for £10,000 by the Jamaican Prime Minister, P J Patterson, at an awards dinner in Kingston on 28 April. At the same ceremony Canadian writer Tim Wynveen, author of *Angel Falls*, took the best-first-book award worth £3,000.

In his acceptance speech, Mr Carey, whose previous books include *Oscar and Lucinda* (now a major motion picture), said: "It is a very moving experience to feel that I will be read and understood in other countries."



The writer, who now lives in New York, said the inspiration to write *Jack Maggs* came to him while he was reading Edward Said's book *Culture and Imperialism* while on a previous holiday trip to Jamaica.

Other writers competing for the 1998 prizes were Australia's Emma Tom, Canada's Mordecai Richler, India's Vikram Chandra, South Africa's Pamela Jooste, Sri Lanka's A Sivanandan and Zimbabwe's Charles Mungoshi.

The prize ceremony was also accompanied by a festival of Caribbean writing. Previous Caribbean winners such as Earl Lovelace, Olive Senior, Vanessa Spence and Robert Antoni participated in the well-attended readings held at the University of the West Indies' Mona Campus.

The prize is sponsored annually by the Commonwealth Foundation.

Distance scholarships announced

Students from three Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean will be the first to benefit from new distance learning scholarships offered by the Government of Canada through the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in Vancouver.

Lloyd Axworthy, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, presented COL recently with a cheque for C\$1.75 million to fund a pilot programme for five years offering Caribbean students the opportunity to study by distance learning at post-secondary institutions in Canada.

The Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme will

Craft awards open for nominations



Exodus II by 1996 winner Smitha Cariappa of India

Commonwealth artists and crafts people, especially those working in the fields of printmaking, textile design and jewellery, are being encouraged to apply

for 1998 Commonwealth Arts and Crafts Awards.

The awards, valued at £6,000 each, go towards the living expenses and air fare of those wishing to explore their art or craft in another Commonwealth country, perhaps with other artists or with an arts institution. The scheme is for a period of between six and nine months and is sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation.

When last offered in 1996, the awards helped, among others, painter and sculptor Patrick Mazola of Kenya who explored his own childhood roots in Jamaica and Masooma Syed of Pakistan who took her art and jewellery to Australia to learn new techniques.

For further information about the awards, contact the Project Manager, Commonwealth Arts and Crafts Awards, Commonwealth Foundation, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HY, Britain. The closing date for applications is 1 September 1998.

be administered by COL as part of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

Think local in the Third Millennium

A gentle yet strong force for decency, peace and good governance in a world fraught with conflict and division. That was the description of the Commonwealth agreed at the end of a high-powered meeting of 150 delegates in Ottawa, Canada, in March sponsored by the local chapter of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Leading representatives of non-governmental organisations, officials, academics and diplomats took a long, hard look at prospects for the organisation in the Third Millennium. In doing so, they came up with some innovative ideas on refugees, peacekeeping and local government.

Professor Ali Mazrui, director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies in the United States, a Kenyan and one of Africa's most respected academics, pointed out that the Commonwealth had quietly served as a guiding force through many of the upheavals of the century. But he suggested the problem of increasing numbers of children being

born as refugees might argue for the Commonwealth to have its own High Commissioner for Refugees. And he mooted the idea of a Commonwealth Commissioner for Children and Orphans.

Bernard Membe, Minister Counsellor at the Tanzania High Commission in Ottawa, called for the establishment of a Commonwealth Peacekeeping Force, and for the Commonwealth to give top priority to peace and security and to the solution of the debt crisis.

Zimbabwe's Charles Katiza, Secretary-General of the International Union of Local Authorities Africa Section, argued that if the Commonwealth is to further good governance and democracy it needs to concentrate more on the needs of local government.

"Nowhere has democracy worked well without a great measure of local self-government," he commented. Only at the local level could individuals really participate in their government.

Noting that the Ugandan Government helped local authorities visit progressive local government systems in Africa and elsewhere in the world in order to learn from them, he added, "Central government officials have often labelled local governments as corrupt. In fact, the reverse is true, for corruption at the local level is only symptomatic of the corruption at the centre."



Promoting women's political participation in Commonwealth Asia

The following is an abridged version of a paper on 'Gender and Politics: A Commonwealth Asian Overview' by **Dr Yasmin Tambiah** (right). She presented it at a Commonwealth Asian-European symposium on 'Gender, Politics, Peace, Conflict Prevention and Resolution', which took place in Brighton, Britain, from 2-6 March. At the symposium, parliamentarians and senior officials from 11 Commonwealth countries examined the issues of women's participation in processes of democratisation and conflict resolution.

Participating countries were: Bangladesh, Britain, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Commonwealth Asia (especially South Asia) has had, and still has, the privilege of electing women as heads of state or government, including the first elected woman Head of Government in the modern world. (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have all either had, or currently have, women as the President or Prime Minister.) It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that there would be substantial numbers of women Members of Parliament to parallel this. Unfortunately, the statistical record of women as MPs and other national and local-level legislators reflects the contrary. For example:



Lower House	Seats	Women	% Women
Bangladesh	330	37	11.2
India	543	39	7.2
Malaysia	192	15	7.8
Pakistan	217	6	2.8
Singapore	87	3	3.4
Sri Lanka	225	11	4.8

In comparison, according to a recent assessment by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), statistics for Asia in general are as follows:

Percentage of women in the Lower House (or Single House) of Parliament	9.7%
Percentage of women in the Upper House (or Senate) of Parliament	9.9%
Both Houses combined	9.7%

The IPU notes that Asia ranks lower than all other regions excepting the Arab states in its percentage of women in the Lower House of Parliament. For comparison, worldwide the average percentage of parliamentary seats held by women is 11.4 per cent, with the highest percentage being 36 per cent in the Nordic countries. Referring to the above statistical tables, it is evident that in the majority of Commonwealth Asian countries the percentage of women in Parliament is less than both the regional as well as the international average and, with few exceptions, less than the Commonwealth average of 7.2 per cent in 1995.

In the cases of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, while major national decision-making positions are held by women (President, Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition), there are only one or two other women members of Cabinet. The problematic reality that women Ministers are more likely than their male counterparts to be assigned 'soft' portfolios (such as Social Welfare, Health or Culture) compared with portfolios such as Financial Planning, Defence or Foreign Affairs is also borne out.

Given that when a woman is Head of State or Government she is likely to be handling 'hard' portfolios such as Defence and Financial Planning, to be acting as supreme authority on a range of key national matters, and representing national interests in international fora, it may be argued that being 'female' in that particular post is not a disqualification! Clearly then, there is a complicated matrix of forces at play that results in a very low percentage of women accessing positions that enable and empower them to be active in political decision-making.

Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka are all signatories to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

While some of these states have signed the convention with reservations regarding certain Articles, in none of them are there internal constitutional barriers to women either voting or running for political office. There is general agreement at state level, and consequently at inter-state level, that women's political empowerment is an essential prerequisite for advancing women's status overall and to promote gender equality in power-sharing and decision-making at all societal levels.

Nor is there disagreement between state-level perspectives and those of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the region concerned with women's rights and civil rights regarding these issues. Why then are there so few women in politics in Asia?

Some of the reasons are:

- Limited and conservative interpretations of otherwise dynamic social and cultural value systems often confine women (and girls) to the private sphere of the household and family, forbidding them to be active in the public, mixed-gender arena which necessarily characterises political activity.
- High levels of female illiteracy, particularly in South Asia, prevent women and girls from having access to basic information in a number of areas



Women voters at a polling station in Calcutta, India ... stronger commitment by governments would ensure more women voters and more women politicians

affecting their lives, including awareness of fundamental rights and political processes. Consequently, there is a forced dependency on male kin and male-centred institutions for key decisions.

- Violence against women in both private and public spheres has been compounded by situations of increasing violence in political culture ... (which) discourages them from participating in political activity that necessitates working late into the night on political campaigns, travelling alone, etc.
- Sexual harassment ... Women in politics (as in other professions) are often compelled to keep silent about this lest they be regarded as 'loose' women ... Female politicians are also much more likely than men to risk character assassination through allegations of sexual impropriety ...
- (The increasingly high expenditure in politics) discourages women's participation, given that women in general command a far lower proportion of financial and material resources than their male counterparts ...
- Few women candidates are nominated by political parties to contest elections in any case. However, this is clearly not testimony to women's lack of interest in entering the formal political arena given that an increasing number of women are contesting as independents (even when they risk losing their deposit) ...

There are also the questions of whether women's wings of political parties may actually result in marginalising women and women's issues further,

rather than integrating women into the political mainstream, and whether the centring of women's concerns by a woman candidate in her expressed political commitments is likely to count against her successful election.

Despite the limiting factors to women's political participation, initiatives have been taken among the states of Commonwealth Asia to enable more women to enter politics.

There is little question that, over the past five years, increasing attention has been paid to the need to rectify the serious imbalance of women's participation in politics and public decision-making. Bodies ranging from the IPU to national governments and NGO networks have openly articulated strategies whose implementation is crucial if women are to enter and act authoritatively in political fora at all levels. Below are select examples of actions and strategies being developed in the region to further these goals:

A. NGOs' actions

The build-up to the Beijing World Conference on Women (in 1995) witnessed several initiatives among NGOs to increase women's access to and involvement in the political arena. Two noteworthy examples at the regional level are the South Asian Co-ordination Committee on Political Empowerment of Women (SACPEW) and the activities of the Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics. SACPEW, with its secretariat currently in New Delhi, began with the aim of establishing a support group for Indian women in politics, and subsequently expanded to cover South Asia.

SACPEW's proposed strategies include creating a South Asia network of women's organisations to address the alternative 'clean and green' politics, lobbying for equal participation of women in all decision-making institutions within the South Asian region and in member countries, as well as lobbying political parties, trade unions and other groups to give equal representation to women.

B. National-level initiatives

In connection with the February 1998 elections India's National Commission for Women launched a campaign to ensure that MPs elected were women and/or women-friendly, and were committed to ending corruption and political thuggery as well as concerned about the environment.

In Malaysia, the 'National Policy on Women Action Plan', drawn up by the Women's Affairs Division of the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, has as a key component plans to deal with politics and leadership, and proposes a number of strategies targeting women and men, women leaders, political party leaders and government ministries.

The new Draft Constitution of Sri Lanka has allotted a 25 per cent quota to women at provincial and local government levels. Given that an amendment which requires 40 per cent of candidates nominated by parties to contest an election to be youths (between 18-35 years) is already in place, theoretically this makes it possible for 35-45 per cent of political representatives at provincial and local government levels to be women.

There is ... an increasing awareness of provisions already in place that can be better utilised, or imaginatively re-worked, to promote women's political participation. What is still inadequate, or still needs to be pursued with commitment and tenacity, is the actual implementation of the many recommendations that have been made – whether such implementation is to be carried out by NGOs, political parties, village, district and provincial councils, national parliaments, or intergovernmental bodies.

It is only such commitment and follow-through that will realise the intention to have the aspirations of an entire polity clearly articulated by vibrant, democratic political structures which reflect the presence and active participation equally of women and men.

Dr Tambiah is a consultant with the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Change of baton in Botswana

Following the retirement of President Sir Ketumile Masire on 31 March, after 18 years in office, his vice-president, Festus G Mogae, has become the new President of Botswana. President Mogae, 58, (right) assumed the office on 1 April.

Mr Mogae was appointed Vice-President in 1992 after a distinguished career in the civil service. Born in Serowe, Botswana, in 1939, he graduated from Oxford University in 1968 with a BA (Hons) in Economics. He also obtained an MA in Development Economics at the University of Sussex in 1970.



Mr Mogae has been a Member of Parliament for the ruling Botswana Democratic Party since 1994, leader of the National Assembly, and a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. He has served in Botswana's financial administration since 1968, as well as with regional and international financial organisations including the Southern African Development Community and the International Monetary Fund.

Married and a father of three daughters, President Mogae's interests include conservation, tourism and scientific research; he is also the president of the Botswana Society for the Deaf.

Nigerian leader dies

General Sani Abacha (right), Nigeria's Head of State, died suddenly on 8 June in the presidential villa in Abuja. He was 54. The provisional ruling council named as his successor the Chief of Defence Staff, General Abdulsalam Abubakar.

General Abacha seized power in 1993 after a presidential election, widely believed to have been won by Chief Moshood Abiola, was cancelled in mid-count. Chief Abiola was charged with treason and jailed for claiming to have won the election. In 1995, following the execution of the writer and political activist, Ken Saro Wiwa, and eight others, despite Commonwealth and other international pleas for clemency, Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth.

In a statement, Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku first conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family and then added: "I have no doubt that all Nigerians would wish to ensure that peace prevails and that the succession arrangements are based on genuine national consensus."

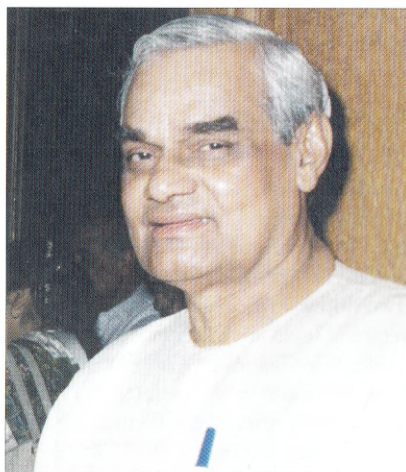
Subsequently, Chief Anyaoku urged the new administration to maintain the transition process; to initiate a genuine national debate on the constitution and interim arrangements; and to release all political prisoners and detainees, including Chief Abiola who, the Secretary-General added, should be associated with the interim arrangements.

General Abacha is survived by his wife, Maryam, six sons and three daughters.



Popperfoto/Reuters

Vajpayee returns



Journalist and poet Atal Behari Vajpayee (above), leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was sworn in as India's 14th

Prime Minister on 19 March, heading another coalition government. It was the second time in less than two years that Mr Vajpayee, 72, was assuming the office. On 14 May 1996 he was sworn in as Prime Minister but resigned 13 days later because his party was unable to secure a parliamentary majority.

Mr Vajpayee, who was a founder member of Jan Sangh – the BJP's predecessor – in 1951, served as External Affairs Minister from 1977 to 1979 when the Janata Party was in government. He is one of India's longest-serving parliamentarians and is known for his oratorical skills.

Better known to his friends as 'Atalji', Mr Vajpayee's interest in politics began when he was a student. He holds a postgraduate degree in Political Science from Kanpur University, and started his working life as a journalist. A bachelor, he is not only a respected politician, but also a well known Hindi poet.

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT WEB SITES

The Secretariat's world wide web site:
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org>

A Bulletin Page providing short news items on Commonwealth activities:
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/latest/bulletin/index.html>

A site for young people, which also focuses on the member countries:
<http://www.youngcommonwealth.org>

Back in the saddle

Seven years after a brief spell as Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Donald Kalpokas (*right*), leader of the Vanua'aku Pati, is back in the saddle heading a coalition government. He first became Prime Minister in September 1991, but subsequently lost that position when his party was defeated in the December 1991 elections.

Mr Kalpokas, 55, was again elected Prime Minister on 30 March following elections on 6 March.

A teacher by profession, Mr Kalpokas trained at the Ardmore Teachers' College in New Zealand from 1966-67, and then went to the University of the South Pacific, in Suva, Fiji, for further studies. He spent a number of years in the teaching field, during which he founded the Teachers Association, of which he became the first president. In 1975 he became an executive member of the National



Party and was elected to the first New Hebrides Representative Assembly.

In 1978, Mr Kalpokas joined the Government of National Unity as Minister for Education and was elected to parliament the following year. From 1987 to September 1991, he served in a number of ministerial positions, including Minister of Lands, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was Leader of the Opposition from May 1997 until the elections in March.

British Council Chair

A prominent champion of women's rights and justice, Helena Kennedy, QC, 47, has been elected as the new Chair of the British Council. She is the first woman to head the organisation which promotes Britain's cultural interests abroad. On 1 August she will take over from the incumbent, Sir Martin Jacomb, who retires after six years' service.



Honoured with a life peerage last year, Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws, as she is now known, is Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University in Britain. She practises predominantly in criminal law and is also a broadcaster and journalist.

A historic first in Seychelles

The elderly and infirm, some in wheelchairs, some being literally carried on chairs, came out with thousands of others to cast their votes in the Seychelles Presidential and National Assembly elections in March.

For Seychelles, it was the second such visit to the polls since the Indian Ocean country of more than 100 small islands returned to multi-party democracy in 1993. For the Commonwealth, it was the first time it had joined forces with the French-speaking group of nations, La Francophonie, in a joint mission to observe the elections.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku and the Secretary-General of La Francophonie, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, had agreed to the historic joint mission following requests from the Seychelles Government to both associations to observe the elections. Seychelles is a member of both associations.

Sir John Compton, former Prime Minister of St Lucia, which is itself a member of both the Commonwealth and La Francophonie, led the joint mission which also consisted of five observers from the Commonwealth and three from La Francophonie.

The Group examined carefully the campaign as well as the actual polling process, familiarising itself with the unique political character of this small island state which has about 56,000 voters and which was under one-party rule by

the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) from 1977 to 1993.

While it found that the preparations for the elections were thorough and professional and polling days peaceful and orderly, the Group expressed some concern in a number of areas.

The Observers stressed the continued importance of strengthening democratic institutions and said they believed that the time had come for all sides to consider how to further improve the effective separation of state and political party functions.

Because the Group had received a number of complaints of attempts to influence the vote through payments, it also drew attention to the payment of social security benefits through accelerated means-testing immediately prior to the polls.

The Group also felt that the Electoral Commissioner could examine ways of speeding up the electoral process, especially in larger electoral areas, the possibility of introducing postal balloting for citizens not in the country at the time, and the possibility of ensuring that electoral districts have roughly equal proportions.

Mr Albert René was returned as President and his party, the SPPF, won 24 of 25 elected seats. Under the Constitution, up to a further 10 seats are divided among the various parties in proportion to the votes they received.

Vanuatu elections

Following elections in Vanuatu on 6 March, a new coalition government with Mr Donald Kalpokas of the Vanua'aku Pati (VP) as leader, has replaced the multi-party government led by Mr Serge Vohor of the Union of Moderate Parties which had been in power since 1991. The VP won the highest number of seats, 18, in the 52-seat parliament. Its coalition partner, the National United Party, won 12.

Last November, rising political tension in the country led to the dissolution of its parliament and a challenge to that move in the Supreme Court. Subsequent developments, including rioting in the capital, Port Vila, led to the declaration of a state of emergency by the President. It was against this background that in January the Commonwealth Secretary-General issued a statement appealing for order and due process. At that time he also wrote to the President and Prime Minister offering his good offices to facilitate a resolution of the political crisis.

The Secretary-General subsequently sent two Secretariat officials to Vanuatu to be present at the elections.

JUNE

1-5 GUERNSEY, CHANNEL ISLANDS: Twenty-ninth British Island and Mediterranean Regional Conference, organised by the CPA

1-10 VALLETTA, MALTA: ComSec workshop on 'Information Technology and Diplomacy'

2-3 PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA: Conference on 'The Commonwealth and South Africa', organised by ComSec

8-10 LONDON, BRITAIN: Conference on 'The Role of the Opposition', jointly organised by ComSec and the CPA, at Marlborough House

8-12 SUVA, FIJI: Pacific regional workshop on 'Cultural Aspects of Human Rights', organised by ComSec at the University of the South Pacific

8-12 SUVA, FIJI: ComSec regional workshop on 'The Use of Criminal Law in International Environmental Conventions'

9 LONDON, BRITAIN: AGM of the Commonwealth Press Union, at the RCS

14-July 3 HALIFAX, CANADA: International Environmental Management Programme, organised by ComSec

15-16 LONDON, BRITAIN: CLGF Board Meeting

15-19 LONDON, BRITAIN: Colloquium on 'Parliamentary Sovereignty and Judicial Activism', organised by the CPA

15-19 COLOMBO, SRI LANKA: ComSec Asia regional workshop on 'Legal Implementation of the WTO Agreement'

15-July 31 VALLETTA, MALTA: ComSec distance learning course on 'Information Technology and Diplomacy'

17-19 LONDON, BRITAIN: Thirty-sixth Meeting of the CSC Executive Committee

22 LONDON, BRITAIN: AGM of the Commonwealth Countries' League

22-24 LONDON, BRITAIN: Meeting of the Committee of Management and Board of Representatives of the CFTC

22-26 SOUTH AFRICA: CYP Africa Centre workshop on 'Conflict Resolution'

24 LONDON, BRITAIN: Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Foundation

27-Nov 1 LONDON, BRITAIN: Exhibition on the history, culture and arts of the Maori people, at the British Museum

29-Sep 25 BIRMINGHAM AND LINCOLN, BRITAIN: Commonwealth Tax Inspectors Course, organised by Cata

30 GENEVA, SWITZERLAND: Technical seminar on 'Pre-Shipment Inspection', organised by ComSec

30-July 4 CASTRIES, ST LUCIA: Nineteenth Meeting of Caricom Heads of Government

JULY

5-25 COVENTRY AND OXFORD, BRITAIN: Training and Development Programme on 'Higher Education Management' for higher education administrators and managers from outside Britain, at the Universities of Warwick and Oxford. Further information from: Assistant Registrar, University of Warwick. Tel: +44 (0) 1203 528103. Fax: +44 (0) 1203 524170

6-13 SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Twenty-ninth Conference for Presiding Officers and Clerks from Australia and the Pacific

6-31 OXFORD, BRITAIN: Refugee Studies Programme International Summer School to provide those working with refugees and other forced migrants with a wider understanding of the interlocking institutional framework that dominates their world and the world of those who have been uprooted. Further information from: Tel: +44 (0) 1865 270722. Fax: +44 (0) 1865 270721

10-12 WINDSOR, BRITAIN: Conference on 'Values in Commonwealth Education', organised by the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catharine's, at Cumberland Lodge. Further information from: Tel: +44 (0) 1784 432316. Fax: +44 (0) 1784 438507

11-17 ONTARIO, CANADA: CPA Canadian Regional Conference

13-15 SUVA, FIJI: COMBINET Pacific Regional Workshop, organised by ComSec

16-18 BRIGHTON, BRITAIN: Castle Technical Seminar for Built Environment Professions on 'The Role of The Surveyor in Sustainable Development', at the University of Brighton. Further information from: Tel: +44 (0) 117 976 2190. Fax: +44 (0) 117 976 3895

18 BRIGHTON, BRITAIN: Castle General Assembly, at the University of Brighton

20-24 ARUSHA, TANZANIA: ComSec Africa regional workshop for legal draftspersons on 'Legal Implementation of the WTO Agreement'

20-25 JAMAICA: Twenty-eighth Conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic Region, organised by the CPA

AUGUST

3-5 NAIROBI, KENYA: CPA Post-Election Seminar

3-7 COVENTRY, BRITAIN: CIO Conference on 'Fraud Management in Telecommunications'

3-8 HARARE, ZIMBABWE: Zimbabwe International Book Fair

3-Sep 25 LINCOLN AND LONDON, BRITAIN: Advanced Management Programme for tax officials, organised by Cata

16-21 CANADA: Commonwealth Universities General Conference, organised by the ACU

23-25 TORONTO, CANADA: Commonwealth Universities Post-Conference Symposia on 'Technological Change: Impacts on Distance Learning and Off Campus Education' for Vice-Chancellors and Presidents, jointly organised by COL, York University and the ACU

24-28 OXFORD, BRITAIN: Conference on 'International Co-operation to Combat Crime' with special focus on fundamental rights and the criminal justice system, organised by ComSec

SEPTEMBER

1-25 ACCRA, GHANA: Workshop on 'Management of Economic Reform for National Competitiveness', organised by ComSec

6-9 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA: CAPAM General Meeting and Biennial Conference on 'The New Public Administration: Moving into the 21st Century'

11-21 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA: XVI COMMONWEALTH GAMES

26-27 OXFORD, BRITAIN: Workshop on 'Asylum in a Frontier-Free Europe', organised by the Refugee Studies Programme, at Queen Elizabeth House. Further information from: Tel: +44 (0) 1865 270722. Fax: +44 (0) 1865 270721

28-Oct 1 PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: Meeting of the Council of the CTO

28-Oct 2 KAMPALA, UGANDA: Nineteenth Cata Annual Technical Workshop

29-Oct 1 OTTAWA, CANADA: Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, organised by ComSec

OCTOBER

12-Nov 20 NAGPUR, INDIA: Commonwealth Management Training Programme, organised by Cata

13-24 WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND: Forty-fourth Conference of the CPA

26-29 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA: Conference of the Commonwealth Press Union

* **THE BAHAMAS:** Commonwealth 'Global Tourism 2000 Conference', organised by ComSec

NOVEMBER

7 LONDON, BRITAIN: Thirty-second Commonwealth Countries' League Fair, at Kensington Town Hall

9-11 BELIZE CITY, BELIZE: Meeting of Commonwealth Senior Officials

9-27 KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA: Training programme on 'Taxation of International Transactions', organised by Cata

15-20 LONDON, BRITAIN: British Council International Seminar on 'Standards, NVQs and Competency-Based Approaches to Training'. Further details from: Tel: +44 (0) 1865 316636. Fax: +44 (0) 1865 557368 or 516590. E-mail: international.seminars@britcoun.org

15-21 EDINBURGH, BRITAIN: British Council International Seminar on 'Assuring Quality and Bringing about Improvements in Schools'

*Precise dates not available

NATIONAL DAYS

June - August

June 1	Samoa
June 4	Tonga
June 13*	Britain
June 18	Seychelles
June 25	Mozambique
July 1	Canada
July 6	Malawi
July 7	Solomon Islands
July 10	The Bahamas
July 12	Kiribati
July 26	Maldives
July 30	Vanuatu
August 3	Jamaica
August 9	Singapore
August 31	Malaysia
August 31	Trinidad and Tobago

* The second Saturday in June
** The first Monday in August

ABBREVIATIONS

ACU: Association of Commonwealth Universities; **AGM:** Annual General Meeting; **CAPAM:** Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management; **Caricom:** Caribbean Community; **Castle:** Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy; **Cata:** Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators; **CFTC:** Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation; **CLGF:** Commonwealth Local Government Forum; **COL:** Commonwealth of Learning; **COMBINET:** Commonwealth Business Network; **ComSec:** Commonwealth Secretariat; **CPA:** Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; **CSC:** Commonwealth Science Council; **CTO:** Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation; **CYP:** Commonwealth Youth Programme; **RCS:** Royal Commonwealth Society; **WTO:** World Trade Organisation



It's the people who count

DEVELOPMENT MEANS MANY THINGS to many people ... accountants read figures off the bottom line, economists grapple with graphs, politicians proudly point to spanking new and towering buildings. But trust an artist to see things at their most relevant level.

For Zimbabwean sculptor Adam Madebe, development means people themselves, and from this view he has created a quartet of bronze figures to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC).

The Bulawayo-born Mr Madebe's four figures entitled 'Development'

(right) Adam Madebe at work in his studio
(below) Development and the nuclear family ... the bronze creation was unveiled by British Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short



depict the nuclear family, with the worker-husband and father, gazing at his wife, who strips corn for food while nursing an infant, and a child who is intently reading a book. The message of love, of hope for the future, intertwined as it is with the sub-themes of the work ethic, education and even of nutrition, is unmistakable. This powerful exhibit will be on permanent display outside the CDC's office in London and was commissioned to reflect the organisation's contribution to economic development.

Mr Madebe, 44, used a unique technique to produce his figures. First, he created a clay sculpture. Then, he clad it in bronze sheets and welded them together. Finally, he

removed the clay, leaving a hollow metal form. It is a technique which he has refined over the years and apart from making the whole less heavy (and heavy-looking), imparts a certain fragility along the various lines of welding.

Mr Madebe's work is a stunning reaffirmation of belief in what really matters in development.

Snapshot returns next issue.



Would you like to receive **COMMONWEALTH CURRENTS** regularly?

It's absolutely free! Just complete this questionnaire and send to: **Commonwealth Currents, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, Britain.** You should receive your first issue within four months. Thank you.

PLEASE WRITE IN CAPITAL LETTERS AND INSERT TICK ☒ WHERE APPLICABLE

- Are you: ☐ male ☐ female? 2. What year were you born? 19 __ __ 3. What is your job title? _____
- Which best describes you? (please disregard numbers)

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<input type="checkbox"/> Non-governmental Personnel (53-00-00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Personnel (54-00-00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Media Personnel (55-00-00)
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Personnel (56-00-00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Personnel (57-00-00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed (58-06-00)
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<input type="checkbox"/> Military Personnel (58-15-00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Cw Foundation Fellow (58-19-00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Student (58-20-00)
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- What is your main interest in *Commonwealth Currents*?

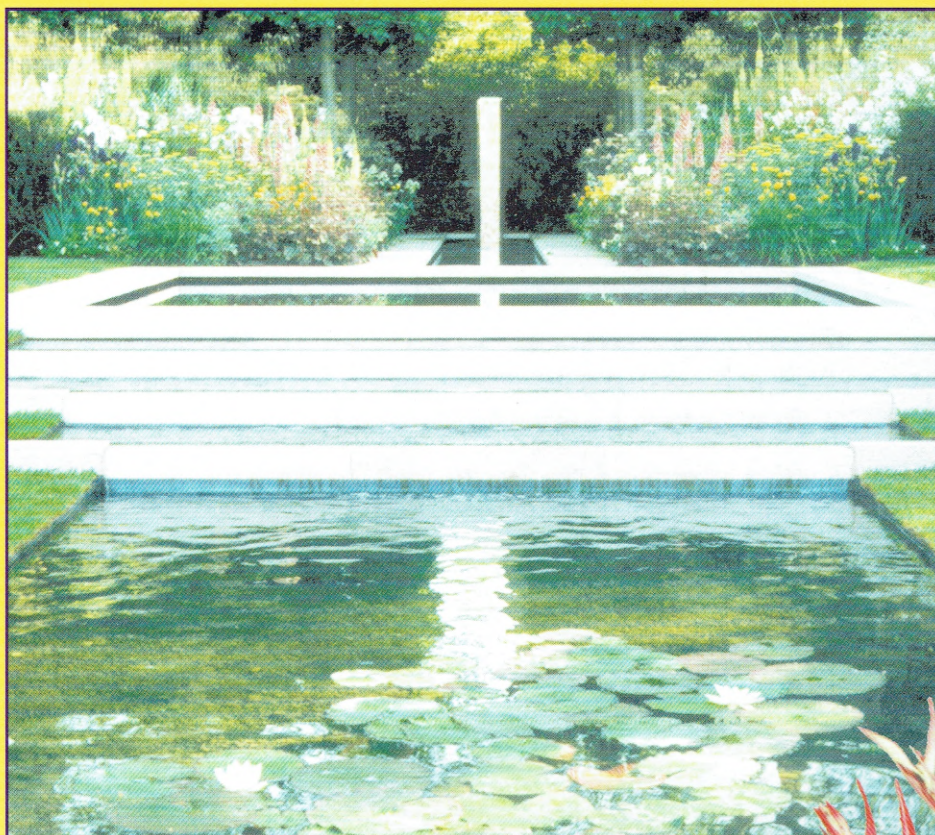
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THE COMMONWEALTH BLOSSOMS AT CHELSEA



RHS/Dominic Turner



ComSci/Kneba

Commonwealth countries were in full blossom at this year's Chelsea Flower Show in London, where countries from all over the world exhibit their native flora annually.

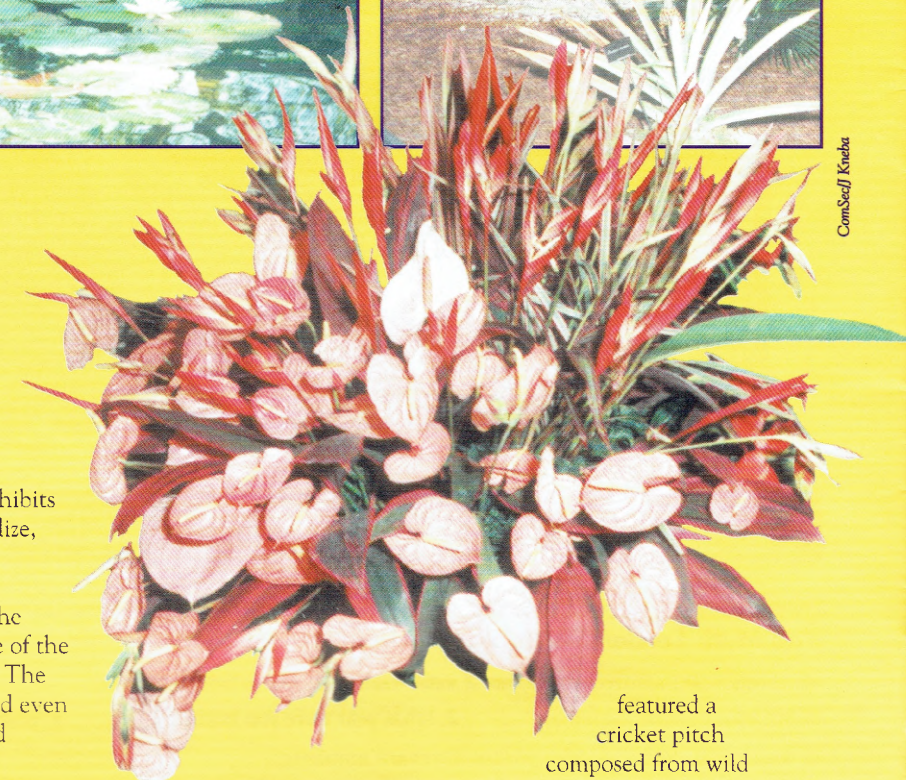
Participating Commonwealth countries with exotic exhibits and imaginative floral creations included Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe.

Organised by Britain's Royal Horticultural Society, the flower show, this year from 19-22 May, has become one of the city's biggest spring attractions since it started in 1913. The competition is keen, with individuals, organisations and even media companies demonstrating their green fingers and competing for the much-coveted prizes.

The show is held in the extensive grounds of the Royal Hospital, in the suburb of Chelsea, and its centrepiece is the grand marquee, described as 'the world's largest', where many of this year's 700 exhibits from all over the world were on show.

The highlight of the show is the award of prizes in numerous categories. This year the Best Garden award went to the *Evening Standard* newspaper of Britain. Other gold-award winners included exhibitors from Barbados, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

One of the crowd-pullers was the Barbados stand in the grand marquee which saluted the country's much-loved sport, cricket, in flowers and plants with fascinating ingenuity. The stand



(top left) The *Evening Standard* Best Garden

(top right) The centrepiece of the Jamaican display

(above right) A bouquet from the Barbados Stand

featured a cricket pitch composed from wild

weed, with tuberoses and ginger flowers as spectators on terraces. The showpiece consisted of flower buds arranged to form a cricket ball and a coconut branch as the bat.

Maria Craig of the Barbados Horticultural Society said that their choice of 'Cricket, lovely cricket' as the theme for their stand was inspired by the Test match in Barbados between West Indies and England earlier this year. It had taken a dozen people to wrap and pack

the flowers, and about 40 boxes and crates to transport their fragile cargo from Barbados. Their hard work was rewarded when, on the morning of 20 May, the judges placed on their stand a card with the all-important words: Gold Award.