



# In Touch South India

## Headlines from the U.S. Consulate General Chennai



October – November, 2006

Volume: III, Issue: 6

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

### Get in Touch

#### Main Web link:

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

#### Other links:

<http://americanlibrary.in.library.net>

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>

<http://www.usaep.org>

<http://buyusa.gov/india>

#### Consulate Phone Number:

044-2857-4000

#### Consulate Fax Number:

044-2811-2020

### Upcoming Films:

#### Tribute to the great Actors (Bi-weekly Friday Films)

October 6

*A Streetcar Named Desire*

October 27

*Twelve Angry Men*

Co-sponsored by  
Madras Film Society and  
Indo-Cine Appreciation Foundation

#### Thrillers and Chillers (Film Festival)

October 30:

*Fearless Vampire Killers*

October 31:

*Arachnophobia*

November 1:

*Forbidden Planet*

November 2:

*Poltergeist*

November 3:

*Twilight Zone—The Movie*

November 4:

*Phenomenon*

Co-sponsored by  
Madras Film Society

All films at 6:30 p.m.  
at Film Chamber Theater  
Gemini Circle Chennai - 6

Seats on a first come first  
served basis

# September 11: Make the Day Count

September 11 is a date forever etched in our memory. It is a date one cannot let pass unnoticed or unremarked. The U.S. Consulate General in Chennai held a solemn ceremony and observed a moment of silence at precisely five years to the minute after the first attack in New York.

Consul General David T. Hopper said on the occasion: "Words fail us which can express our sadness for the lives lost, our admiration for the rescuers and responders, our resolve to resist the perpetrators of terrorism, and our commitment to make the world a better place. Yet, we are obliged to

try to find those words. Through words and deeds it is important that we remember, that we resist when and where necessary, that we undertake renewal, and that we seek reconciliation among individuals and communities."

Mr. Hopper also noted that September 11, 2006, was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mass meeting in South Africa at which Mohandas Gandhi introduced his ideas of non-violent resistance to injustice. So the day was one not only of sorrow for the victims of terrorists, but of commitment to answer the terrorists in a concrete manner and to defeat them.



Ms. Suriya Ahmed, consular employee, holding the hands of a child at Community Health Education Society (CHES), Chennai. Also seen are Mr. K.R. Mahesh and Ms. Nafisa Ali of consular section.

In an initiative called "Make the Day Count," Consulate employees – Indian and American – marked September 11 and the days leading up to it with a blood drive on the Consulate's premises, a visit to a home for children with HIV/AIDS, a tree-planting and computer donation at a madrassa for disadvantaged boys, and outreach to fishing villages hit by the tsunami and to which the U.S. Agency for International Development recently provided new sanitation facilities.

(Continued on page 2)



This edition of *In Touch South India* highlights how the Consulate General commemorated the recent fifth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. At a simple commemorative event, representatives of a wide variety of faiths and local institutions and the Chennai consular corps joined Consulate staff in a moment of silence in memory of all victims of terrorism, including those of the July 11 Mumbai bombings. Earlier in the day, many members of the Consulate staff took part in "Make the Day Count" charitable outreach efforts to also mark the day through acts of rebuilding and renewal.

With this addition of *In Touch* we also welcome the Consulate's new Public Affairs Officer, Fred Kaplan. We simultaneously thank the members of our excellent locally-engaged staff and the team of four entry-level officers, Mahvash Siddiqui, Saad Bokhari, Brooke Spelman and Anne Seshadri, who worked hard to keep our public affairs programming going at a fast pace while we awaited Fred's arrival.

**-David T. Hopper, Consul General**

These acts of human solidarity, though small and localized, constituted a powerful response to those who kill others because of their nationality or creed. It was a response that said: “We stand together in defense of life and liberty no matter where we come from or how we worship.”



American Children folding the flag at September 11 ceremony.

For the some 73 Consulate employees who participated in “Make the Day Count,” after giving their blood and toil and knowing the satisfaction and joy of helping their fellow human beings, September 11 takes on a new meaning. On future anniversaries, they will continue to remember and honor the innocent people murdered on that date, but they also will remember and assist the living irrespective of religious or national differences, and in this way deal a blow against terrorism.

## Changing of the Guard

With the departure in June of both Public Affairs Officer Ravi Candadai and Deputy Public Affairs Officer Christopher Wurst, several entry-level officers from the Consular Section, all public diplomacy specialists, were called to action to serve successively as Acting Public Affairs Officer. Each brought unique talents to bear and helped ensure a seamless transition.

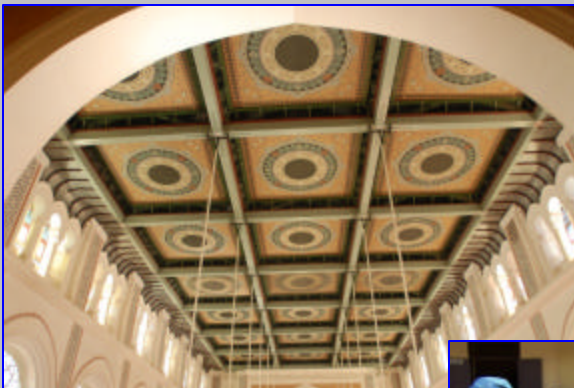
In addition, Robin Diallo, Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer in New Delhi, spent nineteen days at the helm of the Public Affairs Section in Chennai, offering her much-valued expertise.

Finally, on August 22, Frederick J. Kaplan arrived at post and assumed the position of Public Affairs Officer for Chennai. Mr. Kaplan last served as Counselor for Political and Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica. He served previously in South Africa, Venezuela, Ivory Coast, Brazil and Portugal. Before that, Mr. Kaplan was a lawyer in Seattle, U.S.A., and a Peace Corp volunteer in Togo, West Africa. He is excited by his new duties and looks forward to getting to know South Indians in all their diversity.

## AIRC REACHES OUT

In September, American Information Resource Center (AIRC) at the consulate continues to be actively involved in interacting with students and other communities. Over the

## Positive Images :



▲ Close view of ceiling panels of the University of Madras Senate House which were restored with a contribution from USG funding.



▲ Vice Consul Jason Rebholz donating blood as part of September 11: Make the Day Count program.



▲ Vice Consul John Kastning at work during tree planting program at a tsunami affected village - September 9.

last two weeks AIRC staff transformed the library to a training center to train more than 30 students of library and information science from Stella Maris College, Chennai. Students learned the techniques of library operations and the art of providing effective service.

Responding to requests from various colleges and other institutions, the staff organized two orientation programs for literature



PAO Fred Kaplan interacting with students of St. Joseph Women's college, Visakhapatnam during the inauguration of the AIRC traveling exhibition on September 19, 2006

students from Ethraj College for Women, Chennai. Students completed their assignments staying in the library for almost the whole day. A group of 11 international students from the National Institute of Small Industry Extension Training, Hyderabad, visited the AIRC to observe the techniques of information storage and retrieval.

During August and September, AIRC staff traveled to various cities in south India on outreach visits and also organized traveling exhibitions in Calicut and Visakhapatnam.

The American Corner in Bangalore organized Free Magazine Day and distributed scholastic magazines to children and also organized an Art Workshop for students in co-sponsorship with Crayola, Bangalore. The AIRC coordinator recently interacted with a group of advocates at the Corner.

## Consular Corner:

### Business Travel Made Easier, Says AmCham

Recent changes made to accommodate more U.S. business travel are paying off, according to members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Chennai. At a Sept. 6 AmCham human resources workshop, Consul General David Hopper heard widespread support and encouragement for the Consulate's efforts in this area.

As the number of student applicants has decreased with the opening of the school year, the Consulate has shifted its resources to business travel, particularly for members of its Business Executive Program (BEP). AmCham noted that visa appointment availability has improved significantly and is meeting the needs of its members.

AmCham members thanked the Consulate for BEP workshops and other outreach activities designed to spread information and make applicants more aware of visa application procedures. As a result, business travelers are more prepared for their interviews.

Finally, AmCham noted that the routine issuance of 10-year validity B1/B2 visas was very much appreciated by the business community.

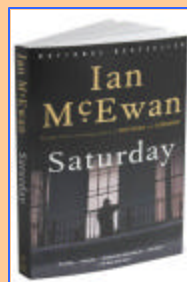
Consul General Hopper thanked AmCham for their comments, and said that with business travel availability improving, the next area for improvement would be in tourist travel.

There are currently 183 companies in Chennai's Business Executive Program. Twenty-five new companies have been added to date in 2006, compared to eight new companies in 2005.

**“Outside of a dog, a man's best friend is a book. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.” (Groucho Marx)**

**Jane K. Gamble**  
Vice Consul

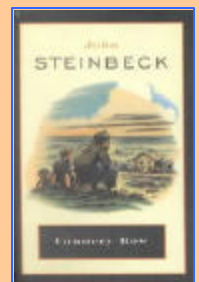
**Saturday**  
by Ian McEwan



As McEwan writes, “When anything can happen, everything matters.” *Saturday* magnifies an incidental moment that has the effect of changing a man's perception of the world, while bringing into focus the importance of those everyday blessings that are easily taken for granted. *Saturday* explores ideas of fate and purpose, life's fragility and social anxiety as it is manifest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I greatly enjoyed the quiet pace of the novel and the building tension that brings the story to its unexpected resolution. McEwan's writing style is delicious and precise – he is a master of the English language.

**John C. Kastning**  
Vice Consul

**Cannery Row**  
by John Steinbeck



*Cannery Row* is a humorous novel about everyday lives in the seaside city of Monterey, California. Steinbeck weaves the characters of Cannery Row together smoothly, focusing on the friendships and adventures of the acquaintances surrounding Doc Ricketts, a marine biologist. I especially like how Steinbeck blends the stories of the different immigrant communities--Chinese, Spanish, Mexican, Anglo-American--set among the natural beauty of the Pacific coast. He captures the essence of a community affected by a booming fishing industry, but still clinging to its roots as a sleepy harbor town.

## Educator Draws lessons from U.S. Trip



Mr. S.S. Nathan, Principal, Bala Vidya Mandir Senior Secondary School (Adayar), Chennai, was nominated by the Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Consulate General Chennai to participate in a 6-week program titled, "The Study of the United States Institute for Foreign Secondary School Educators," which was held at the Institute for Training and Development in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA. Funded by the U.S. government, the program is intended to provide international teachers and curriculum developers with opportunities to broaden the cultural and historical base of the courses they design and teach by enriching their knowledge of U.S. society, culture, values and institutions, past and present.

Mr. Nathan, who is only the second person from South India to participate in this program has been a teacher for more than two decades. Mr. Nathan is the recipient of several "Best Teacher" awards. Here are excerpts of his feedback about his recently concluded visit to the United States:

Q: Please provide a brief overview of your participation in the program.

A: The program aimed at giving the global secondary educators the experience of American life and society. It provided the best of every aspect of American life right from history through civil rights, American democracy, religious pluralism, gun culture, literature, art, education, immigration and jazz. This was achieved through actual experience, lectures, debates, readings, presentations, museum visits, films and individual research projects.

Q: How is participation in the Institute going to benefit you professionally?

A: All the topics were dealt with utmost care and preparations, but individual interests of participants made one evince interest in certain topics. As such, the topics on literature, art and culture, history, movements and human rights interested me both professionally and personally. As a facilitator in the department of humanities these topics are of prime importance in the study of American life and society since these topics impact the society. Personally, I understand the influence of these resulting in individual freedom.

Q: What are the immediate and expected long-term impact of your visit on your work?

A: Immediate impact would be to find out how the experience could be synthesized to fit into the Indian context. The long-term plan is to bring about the highly professional approach of the American society in all the activities of my institution.

## Preserving the Past for the Future

The 2006 Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in India was granted to the United Theological College (UTC), Bangalore, for \$35,000. The project being funded is the preservation of ancient palm-leaf manuscripts and rare books in the archives of the UTC and conversion of the information into microfiche. The main aim of the project is to preserve and make available the invaluable information in the palm leaf manuscripts and rare books to researchers.

Through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, the U.S. Department of State helps eligible countries around the



Ambassador Mulford examining palm-leaf manuscripts from the United Theological College

globe preserve historic sites and manuscripts, museum collections, and traditional forms of expression such as music, dance, and language.

UTC has a collection of 2,000 palm leaf manuscripts that are over 200 years old in several Indian languages, which are in urgent need of preservation. The manuscripts bear testimony to the rich cultural heritage of India in the 18th and 19th centuries, and

include folk literature, native medicinal formulae, religious writings, astrological texts, astronomical facts, records of cultural practices, traditional systems of medicine, veterinary, agricultural sciences and crafts and skills. These manuscripts are important material for historical research and a treasure trove of ethnographic and historical information.

Besides these palm leaves, UTC has some rare and historic written material such as Mahatma Gandhi's letters to a few Christian leaders, the First Tamil Bible printed in India and the writings of the famous 18th century Tamil Christian poet-singer, Vedanayagam Sastriar of Tanjore, apart from innumerable historical documents relating to the history of Christianity in South India.

Established in 1910, the United Theological College in Bangalore is one of the leading institutions in the country that imparts theological education to students from all over the world. In addition, the college also has strong departments in communications, religion and culture and women's studies.