



# HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 55/ August 2006

## **IN MEMORIAM: REV. LEE SOO MIN**

**Returned to the Lord on 21 July 2006**

Rev. Lee Soo Min served the then Asia Alliance of YMCAs for 12 years, from 1973 to 1985, and the World Alliance of YMCAs as its Secretary General from 1985 to 1991 with great honour and distinction. We have lost a dedicated leader of outstanding qualities.

Rev. Lee Soo Min had made a great difference to the YMCA not only in Asia and Pacific, but also at the World level. We owe much to him for his vision and foresight. He led the struggle in shaping the identity and mission thrust of the YMCAs in the Asia and Pacific and the world. He defined with urgency the need for leadership development for building a strong and viable YMCA in the region. During his tenure of service in the Area Alliance, he furthered the *“cause of Asian Solidarity and emphasizing development as the mission of the YMCAs in Asia.”* Leadership for renewal, and, justice and peace issues were cornerstones of the work plan. Dr. M.D. David pays tribute to him in the history of the Asia Alliance of YMCAs *“A Symbol of Asian Solidarity”*: *His most significant efforts were in enabling YMCAs in Asia towards finding an identity and self-hood in the particular context of Asia.*

He gave outstanding leadership to the World Alliance from 1985 until his retirement in 2001. As Secretary General, he had built his vision and mission for the World YMCA around issues of development, peace and justice. Leadership development, youth development and gender equity were promoted.

We pray that God may grant for Mi-hwa and members of the family, strength, courage and comfort at this time. We pray for eternal rest in the Lord Jesus Christ for Soo Min as he rests from his labour, from the good race that he had run steadfastly throughout his life. We give thanks to God for his life of service to the community and the YMCA.

As we remember him and celebrate his life and work, we pray that we be encouraged to commit ourselves to the vision and the Mission of the YMCA in Asia and Pacific.

## **Remembering the Victims**

### **11 July Mumbai Train Bombings, Conflicts in Sri Lanka & Lebanon-Israel**

Let us continue to pray for those killed and the families of the victims; for the YMCAs as they serve and provide humanitarian support and aid to the affected in such challenging times; and for a world where peace reigns and human dignity is upheld regardless of race, religion, social status and gender.

### **1. Mr. Martin Meissner and Rev. Samuel D. Stephens to Lead World Alliance of YMCAs**

*Our congratulations* to Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, our President who was elected Deputy President of the World Alliance of YMCAs, 2006-2010 at the recently concluded YMCA World Council in Durban, South Africa. The World Council elected Mr. Martin Meissner (Germany) as President and Mr. Fernando Ondarza (Mexico) as Treasurer; and confirmed Dr. Bart Shaha's tenure as Secretary General till 2010.

*Our congratulations* to the following members from the region elected as members of the Executive Committee: Ms. Maria Cristina Miranda (Philippines - Youth), Ms. Helen McEwan (New Zealand), Ms. Hiromi Nagao (Japan) and Dr. Park Jai Chang (Korea - 2<sup>nd</sup> Term). It is significant that the new Executive Committee of 23 has 9 youth, and 13 women leaders (7 of whom are youth).

**We pray for God's continued leading and wisdom for our World Alliance Officers and members of the Executive Committee as they serve and carry out the YMCA Mission through the particular roles entrusted to them.**

*(See World Alliance Website, [www.ymca.int](http://www.ymca.int) for details of World Council and World Youth Council)*

### **2. Community-based Approach to Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development**

This Regional Training Workshop focussing on a Community-based Approach to Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development is organised to strengthen capacity of YMCA volunteer and staff leaders in poverty alleviation and sustainable development. It will be facilitated in the spirit of building a learning community that will draw from the spirituality, cultures, traditions and wisdom of the community and the participants. The theme will be "*Alleviating Poverty, Building and Creating Sustainability for Life*".

The Workshop from **3-8 October 2006** will be held in Manila and the Pangasinan Province, Luzon, Philippines. It will seek new insights into poverty and alternative development in the Asian and Pacific contexts, both rural and urban. The participants will engage in community-based approaches, appreciative inquiry, adaptive learning, enabling partnerships and other approaches, learning to become more mindful of the community and effective in working with the community towards poverty alleviation and sustainability. *Details have already circulated to national Movements; also see Website.*

### 3. Roundtable on Building Membership for Mission

The Roundtable on Building Membership for Mission will be held in Singapore from **15-19 October 2006**. This roundtable of YMCA volunteer and professional leaders of movements in the region will focus on strengthening YMCA membership at all levels. It will explore strategies and best practices for building a membership that is sustainable and participative in the YMCA Mission. The aim is to strengthen a mission-driven YMCA, the membership responsive to the contextual realities of the region and respective countries. *Details will be circulated soon.*

### 4. Over 140 Young Leaders for 1<sup>st</sup> APAY Youth Assembly 2006 in Malaysia



#### **Youth Assembly Participants are invited to interpret the Logo!**

*During the Community Building session (26 August, evening) participants will be invited to share their interpretation of the Logo for the Youth Assembly. Gifts will be presented to five interpretations adjudged to be most meaningful and expressive of the participant's expectations of their experiences at the Assembly.*

On 26 August we will welcome almost 150 participants from 19 countries in the region and beyond, at the 1<sup>st</sup> APAY Youth Assembly in Kuala Lumpur (KL), Malaysia. The youth participants as resources and key partners in the Assembly will be fully involved in the running of the Assembly. The Steering Committee, composed of participants including members of the APAY Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee, will oversee the programme and the fulfilment of its objectives. Besides learning together about the key concepts and relevant issues for young people in the YMCA and the society, participants will plan together for increased and wider youth participation and leadership in the YMCA's transformational agenda. Participants will engage in workshops, e.g. on ecumenism, interfaith cooperation, peace-building, solidarity with disadvantaged, students working for change, youth networking, sustainable development and environment, gender and culture, HIV and AIDS, in celebrating and sharing youth involvement and responses related to the theme through audio-visuals, different components of the programme, and worship.

We thank the Movements that have given support to youth to be part of this historic 1<sup>st</sup> APAY Youth Assembly: *Australia (1), Bangladesh (7), Cambodia (4), East Timor (5), Hong Kong (15), Korea (14), India (17), Indonesia (2), Japan (12), Malaysia (4), Myanmar (3), Philippines (4), Singapore (7), Sri Lanka (2), Taiwan (24), Thailand (2) and Vietnam (2). From our partners and from outside the region: Canada (15), Interfaith Cooperation Forum (1), Y-CARE, UK (3) and WA (1).*

**National Movements are requested send the participants' sign-up sheets and flight information to the APAY Secretariat IMMEDIATELY to facilitate meet/greet arrangements and preparations.**

## 5. General Assembly Planning Committee to Meet in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Planning for the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly scheduled for **5-9 September 2007**, will take place at the YMCA in Kuala Lumpur from **1-4 September 2006**. Rev. Ng Ee Lin, Chairperson of the APAY Committee on Contemporary Mission and Social Relevance will chair the Planning Committee. The Committee will work on the programme design and contents, recommend resource persons, etc. for the Assembly.

The Assembly venue will be the Pegasus Reef Hotel and Palm Village Resort located 24 km south of the International Airport (about halfway between the airport and the city).

## 6. Love and Affection Youth Camp, Nias Island, Indonesia

The YMCA Love and Affection Youth Camp ~ 20-27 August 2006, Sirombu, Nias Island, Indonesia is an APAY-Japan YMCA Tsunami Response Programme financially supported by the YMCA of Japan. Twenty-five youth leaders from the Medan YMCA and the YMCA of Japan are participating.

## 7. YMCA Lebanon Actively Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis, Needs Our Support

Hundreds of lives of innocent civilians, especially children and women, lost in Lebanon and Israel. Hundreds of thousands more displaced. Buildings and houses brought to ruins in the on-going conflict and violence as the armed conflict between Israel and the Hezbollah in Lebanon continued. In solidarity with the YMCA of Lebanon and those affected, we pray with peace-loving people for a just and enduring peace and security for all people in the Middle East. With them we urge the rejection of all forms of violence and to work towards a ceasefire and mechanisms for justpeace and security in the region.

**We urge member movements to respond to the appeal made by the YMCA of Lebanon for medical aid, supplies and funds to address the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon. Please send your support to the World Alliance of YMCAs, with a copy to the Lebanon YMCA and APAY for information.**

## 8. EASY Net APSYW Resource Book Out Now

The EASY Net Resource Book for the Asia and Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW) providing reflections and analysis on the theme, through poetry, prayers and liturgy, stories and experiences, essays and bible study, is now ready for distribution. We acknowledge the young leaders who collectively produced the materials. The **On-line Edition** is available at the APAY website. Print copies and Posters will be provided to National Movements.

We urge movements to join our ecumenical partners in celebrating and reflecting on the theme “Youth Protecting the *Oikoumene*” during the APSYW from 15-21 October 2006.

## 9. IMPORTANT REMINDERS!!

**Mission in Action Programmes (MAPs)** focussing on Community Building: Ten short-listed proposals have been circulated to National Movements for their consideration and support. We encourage National Movements to support these socially relevant action programmes of YMCAs that need the multi-lateral support of partners in the region.

**Position of Executive Secretary, Vacancy 2007:** Applications are invited for the position of Executive Secretary that will become vacant in 2007. The incumbent will be part of a staff team engaged in the major focus areas of the Quadrennial Plan, but will have **specific functions in the areas of Youth Participation and Leadership Development, and Gender Equity**. Suitably qualified persons, with proven experience in the specific focus areas, and interest/experience in other focus areas of the APAY, should submit their application in writing to the General Secretary, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs by **30 August 2006**.

*Any enquiry about this invitation for applications may be directed to the General Secretary, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in confidence.*

## 10. Upcoming Events ~ August to December

20 – 27 Aug	Youth Love & Affection Work Camp	Nias Island, Indonesia
23 – 26 Aug	ICF Coordinating Meeting*	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
26 Aug – 1 Sept	1 <sup>st</sup> APAY Youth Assembly	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1 – 4 Sept	17 <sup>th</sup> General Assembly Planning	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
12 – 16 Sept	ICF Peace-building in Indigenous Communities*	Jorhat, India
03 – 08 Oct	Workshop on Poverty Alleviation and Sustainability	Manila/Pangasinan, Philippines
15 – 19 Oct	Roundtable on Membership and Mission	Singapore
15 – 21 Oct	Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week	Movements/EASY Net
30 Oct – 4 Dec	24 <sup>th</sup> Advanced Studies Programme	Hong Kong
5 – 10 Nov	Workshop on Leadership Capacity Building for Women	Chiangmai, Thailand
6 – 10 Dec	Participatory Worship and Liturgy /Assembly Worship Workshop	Colombo, Sri Lanka

\* ICF ~ Interfaith Cooperation Programme, joint programme of APAY, CCA and EED

## 11. Concluding Remarks ~ Acting for Life and Peace

The past month has been a busy and eventful month. We had the Indonesian Tsunami Partners' Coordinating Meeting, the World Youth Council and World Council. During the same month, we had the 11 July train bombings in Mumbai, India; increased violence in Sri Lanka and the continuing conflict involving Israel and the Hezbollah in Lebanon. The good news was that the violence in Dili, East Timor had been contained by the time the World Council started.

But, even as we were deliberating on the theme of the YMCA World Council in Durban, South Africa, "*Ubuntu: Striving Together for Life and Peace*", we were "bombed" into reality by the violence in Mumbai and Lebanon. How do we respond as a single unit in the vast humankind? We do really have to ponder and reflect on this as an individual and as a community, more so now than ever, with the foiling of planned attacks on 10 trans-Atlantic flights, just days ago, on 10 August by London.

It is significant that the International Youth Convocation of the Y's Men International that met from 31 July to 6 August in Busan, Korea had the theme "*Action! Make Peace a Reality*" amidst growing violence and conflicts. Their Workbook wrote, "*the word 'Action' implies the direct implementation of all the past discussions and choices already taken by the youth in past Youth Convocations ... discussions on 'What to do' are over, and now the discussions are about 'How to do it'. ... Through 'Action', make Peace something real, ...tangible.*"

I was privileged to make a special presentation on the theme. In the discussion with the over 150 youth following the presentation, I could sense their urgency, especially those who have had direct or indirect experiences of violence of sorts or who have been engaged in actions towards peace. They shared their action ideas – improve communications with people and build awareness, avoid discrimination, work towards situations where there is security, engage in "peace actions" when conflict erupts in the community, etc.

It is important for us today to not only define Peace in negative terms, *focusing on what to eliminate such as physical or structural violence*, but also increasingly to do so in holistic, positive terms *focusing on what a peaceful world would look like*. More holistic peace paradigms, with an increasing emphasis on positive conceptions of peace have emerged. Both however are essential, if effective change is to occur. We need to realise that, whatever our nationality, culture or religious tradition, we are all interconnected and interdependent. Peace-building is a pathway to social change whether in the family, in our organizational life or in community relations. As individuals and communities, we can work to build or create new sets of behaviours, norms and structures where peace, justice and non-violence are principles of a peace culture.

The Lord bless us and keep us all ..... as we journey together in our *Mission of Peace*.

**Yip Kok Choong**  
General Secretary

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*With Executive Secretaries Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dias*

## UNITED NATIONS DESIGNATED DAYS AND EVENTS TO REMEMBER

*This section of brief notes on United Nations Designated Days and Events September-October 2006 (adapted: UN Website sources) is an awareness-building feature.*

**International Literacy Day, 8 September:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) inaugurated its official observance of International Literacy Day on 8 September 1967. This followed a recommendation of the September 1966 World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy held in Tehran, Iran. The date for International Literacy Day is the opening day of the 1966 UNESCO World Conference on the Eradication of Illiteracy. The International Literacy Day focuses attention on worldwide literacy issues and needs. It is estimated that 860 million of the world's adults (nearly two-thirds of whom are women) do not know how to read or write and that more than 100 million children lack access to education. The theme of the 2006 celebration is *Literacy, the Path Out of Poverty*.

**International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, 16 September:** This Day has been celebrated since 1994 on September 16th, the date on which the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was signed in 1987. The theme for 2006: *Protect the Ozone Layer: Save Life on Earth*. This commemoration offers an opportunity to focus attention and action on the protection of the ozone layer that absorbs most of the harmful radiation from the sun. The problem is that the ozone layer has been depleted as a result of human activity. Where the layer is depleted the incidence of skin cancers rises, there are more eye cataracts, immune systems are weakened, animals are adversely effected, ocean eco-systems are damaged, fishing yields are reduced, plant yields are reduced, and plastics are damaged. The problem is worst over the Antarctic where there is an ozone hole.

**International Day of Peace, 21 September:** This Day provides an opportunity for individuals, organisations and nations to create practical acts of Peace on a shared date. It can be used to highlight the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 or promote this day as one for non-violence and global ceasefire.

*Possible activities:* Join the countdown to peace, plan a local event, ask your government officials to issue a proclamation, use universal invocations/prayers, ring a bell, light a candle for peace, ask your place of worship to ring its bells at 12 noon, participate in a peace-building project that is intergenerational and intercultural, join alliance of youth uniting for a culture of peace, plant a tree, fast for peace, have a peace day party or whatever inspires you as a peace-builder. More suggestions at <http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org>.

**World Maritime Day (During the Week), 22-30 September:** This Day is celebrated every year to focus attention on the importance of shipping safety and the marine environment, and to draw attention to an aspect of the work of the United Nations International Maritime Organisation. While the Day is usually observed in the last week of September, the exact date is left to individual governments.

**International Day of Older Persons, 1 October:** The International Day of Older Persons has been observed by the United Nations on October 1st since 1990. The idea of a society for all ages takes its roots from the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. 'A society for all' was interpreted as a society in which "every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play". In our fast ageing world, older people will increasingly play a critical role - through volunteer work, transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labor force.

**World Habitat Day, 2 October:** The first Monday in October every year has been designated as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of human settlements and the basic right to adequate shelter for all. It is also intended to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat. The theme for this year is *Cities, Magnets of Hope*. This theme reminds all of us that the world is witnessing the greatest migration in its history of people into towns and cities.

**World Space Week, 4 - 10 October:** The World Space Week is an international celebration of science and technology, and their contribution to the betterment of the human condition. These dates commemorate two events: 4 October 1957, the launch of the first human-made Earth satellite, Sputnik 1, thus opening the way for space exploration; and 10 October 1967, the Signing of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. This year's theme is *Space for Saving Lives*. It encourages participants to focus World Space Week programmes on the many ways that space helps to save lives on Earth. This includes disaster management, such as after the major tsunami in Asia, telemedicine, and environmental protection.

**World Teachers Day, 5 October:** On 5 October, teachers' organisations worldwide mobilise to ensure that the needs of future generations are taken into consideration in this increasingly complex, multicultural and technological world. UNESCO inaugurated 5 October as World Teachers' Day in 1994 to commemorate the joint signing of the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers on 5 October 1966. World Teachers' Day also highlights the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel adopted in 1997. It represents a significant token of the awareness, understanding and appreciation displayed for the vital contribution that teachers make to education and development.

**World Post Day, 9 October:** World Post Day is observed on 9 October every year to mark the anniversary of the founding of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) on 9 October 1874. Today the UPU, with 189 member countries, oversees the co-ordination of the global postal service, the world's largest physical distribution network. Postal services in all countries provide the primary means of communication for people, organisations and business. The goal is to ensure a universal postal service that is easily accessible, efficient and affordable.

**World Mental Health Day, 10 October:** World Mental Health Day is co-organized by the World Federation of Mental Health (WFMH) and the World Health Organisation. The WFMH is a global network of people involved in mental health issues. This year's campaign theme, *Building Awareness - Reducing Risk: Mental Illness and Suicide*, calls attention to one of the world's greatest public health epidemics. The World Health Organization estimates that there are one million suicide deaths each year, representing 1.4% percent of the total global burden of disease. It is also estimated that half of all people who die by suicide have at least one (often undiagnosed) mental illness or abuse of alcohol or other drugs.

**International Day For Natural Disaster Reduction, 12 October:** Natural, environmental and technological disasters regularly occur throughout the world. One of the primary roles of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) is to educate populations and communities most at risk from natural disasters on the means available to prevent hazards from turning into disasters. A World Disaster Reduction Campaign is promoted in an effort to mobilise youth through appropriate education towards a global culture of preventing natural disasters. The Day is observed on the second Wednesday of October.

**World Food Day, 16 October:** World Food Day commemorates the anniversary of the founding of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on 16 October 1945. This year's theme is *Investing in Agriculture for Food Security*. Approximately 1.2 billion people struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. An estimated 840 million suffer the gnawing pain of hunger, and as many as 24,000 people, many of them children, die every day as a result. People who are hungry are more susceptible to disease, and find their capacity to work diminished as well. Hunger also impairs children's ability to learn, with consequences that are felt long after childhood is over. World Food Day activities aim to heighten public understanding of hunger and strengthen solidarity in the struggle to make sure that everyone has enough to eat every day.

**International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October:** The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty has been observed every year since 1993, when the UN General Assembly designated this day to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries - a need that has become a development priority. At the [Millennium Summit](#), world leaders committed themselves to cutting by half by the year 2015 the number of people living in extreme poverty - people whose income is less than one dollar a day. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan says: "*We must see poverty eradication ... as a sacred duty.*"

**United Nations Day, 24 October:** The anniversary of the coming into force of the United Nations Charter on 24 October 1945 has been observed as United Nations Day since 1948. The UN Preamble says: " We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold misery to (hu)mankind, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.." These commitments have been constantly

challenged, put to the test and always reaffirmed by the global community despite difficulties and barriers.

**World Development Information Day, 24 October:** The United Nations General Assembly instituted World Development Information Day at its 27<sup>th</sup> Session in December 1972 with the object of drawing the attention of world public opinion each year to development problems and the necessity of strengthening international co-operation to solve them. The General Assembly also decided that World Development Information Day should coincide, in principle, with United Nations Day to stress the central role of development in the work of the United Nations.

**Disarmament Week, 24-30 October:** Disarmament Week has been observed by the United Nations since 1978 when Member States were invited to highlight the dangers of the arms race, promote recognition of the need to stop the arms race, and increase public understanding of the urgent tasks of disarmament. The United Nations has always taken a keen interest in arms control and disarmament issues. The Secretariat, sometimes without much support from member states, has striven to make the world safer for all.

**Visit our Website: [www.asiapacificymca.org](http://www.asiapacificymca.org)**

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