

connexion

Conflict and Peace Journalism

Sakuntala Gupta

Disputes, wars, terror attacks, natural disasters, dissent, arrests, detentions. What do these words have in common? Well, they all represent the negative and unhappy side of life. We often hear complaints that journalists revel in conflict situations and like to play up the darker side of human nature. Why do bomb blasts, tsunamis and death sentences make headline news?

The answer is obvious. These out-of-the-ordinary events often result in the loss of lives and homes. Audiences want to know about them and the media has a duty to inform. In addition, themes with elements of conflict lend themselves to contrasting viewpoints resulting in debates that make good listening or reading.

But is it really true that the media favours reporting on conflicts at the expense of the positive things in life? Not really. Tune into the broadcast media or read the printed pages and you'll find numerous stories which are inspiring, heart-warming and make you feel good. The perfect stuff for peace journalism.

In recent months, we've analyzed tsunamis, pirate attacks, bomb blasts and Sino-Japan tension on RSI. In the process, we've discovered not only the bad side of the human race, but the good qualities of the human spirit. For example, the untiring

efforts of medical aid workers in Aceh following the tsunamis and the spirit of cooperation amongst Thai fishermen to rebuild their lives after tidal waves destroyed what was dear to them. Not forgetting the successful separation of Indonesian twins Anggi and Angeli by Singapore doctors and the conquest of Mount Everest by students from the National University of Singapore.

Life is about the ugly and the beautiful, sadness and happiness, aspirations, motivation, and funny happenings. Our energetic crew will bring you generous doses of all these elements in the months ahead!

New programmes on RSI(English) from July 2005 include:

- **Eye on East Asia, and South Asian Spotlight**, colour pieces from our stringers in Asia's dynamic hotspots, China, India and their neighbours.

- **25 Minutes**, a live weekly forum on issues concerning Singapore and the region.
- **The Interview**, focussing on people with interesting stories to tell.
- **Check Out**, a programme centred on educating listeners on an array of topics.
- **Mind Your Business**, strategies on succeeding in the business world.
- **Rara Avis**, strange and quirky happenings in the region and beyond.
- **Music Across Borders**, an ethnic music kaleidoscope.

Stay tuned!

Check out our new programmes on www.rsi.sg/english

25 Minutes

Belinda Sunshine



Belinda with Dr Ivor Lim, Dr Peter Lim and Dr Marco Faria Correa (extreme right)

... with three plastic surgeons, Dr Ivor Lim, Dr Peter Lim and Dr Marco Faria Correa ... how lucky can one get!!

This happened on a radio show on RSI in April this year.

As we found out from the good doctors, the word "plastic" in plastic surgery was derived from the ancient Greek word "plastikos" which means to mould.

Plastic surgery includes a lot of different procedures, from cosmetically enhancing a person's features to reconstructive surgery.

The desire to look young and good in today's society is resulting in a growing number of men and women turning to plastic surgeons for help.

According to my guests, common "quick fix" treatments are Botox injections, face-lifts and IPL or Intense Pulsed Light.

Men tend to go for Botox and IPL.

Women are more concerned about their eyes. They want their eye-bags removed or eyelid folds created.

As for surgery procedures, many go for liposuction, breast enlargement and augmentation.

Dr. Marco who practices both in Singapore and Brazil told me that in Brazil alone, there are more 25,000 plastic surgeons. Why? Because all women and men want to look beautiful.

He does "extreme-makeovers" as well. That means plastic surgery from head to toe. You can be sure it's not cheap!

A lot of people think that plastic surgeons can perform miracles. One day you'd look like Quasimodo, the next day you'd look like Brad Pitt.

Yes, the plastic surgeon can make you look better. But whatever your reasons for choosing aesthetic surgery, it's important to have realistic expectations. Also it's never without risks!

Improving a feature of the face or body may give you greater self esteem, confidence and add to your sense of well-being, but it does not guarantee happiness. Feeling good about yourself both physically and emotionally is really up to you.

Written by "an ugly duckling".

"25 Minutes is a "live" weekly forum on RSI. A panel of studio guests discuss topical issues with a host from RSI. It is broadcast on Wednesday at 1235 hrs UTC and repeated on Saturday at 1135 hrs UTC. Besides Singapore's strides in the realm of plastic surgery, we've done series on the economics of pop art, music and literature in Singapore, as well as the main languages in our island republic. Stay tuned for engaging discussions on a range of issues relevant to Singapore and the region... In 25 Minutes on RSI.

The Interview

Bharati Jagdish

If there's one thing I've learnt from being a producer-presenter, it's that everybody has a story.

The high-flying business guru with coiffed hair, power suit and designer shoes may have had a miserable childhood or a life-changing experience that drove him on to eventually acquire the trappings of success as we see it. I've even met some who truly resent the symbols of success they have to exhibit in order to appear successful. People are contradictions.



I've met taxi-drivers and hawkers who never expected to be doing what they're doing now, who spent their whole lives chasing material success, but had life-changing experiences that caused them to change their focus. Now, they say they don't crave coiffed hair, power suits and designer shoes. Not because they really don't want them, but because it's easier to live life if you have no expectations of it. But there is bliss in that too. Because all paths carry their own highs.

I've met young people who seem so sure of themselves and what they want, what they believe life should be, but who are, deep down inside just as lost as any of us.

I've met artists and writers who don't sleep for days in the pursuit of their muse. Why? Sometimes they don't know either.

I've met business consultants who woke up one day with a realization that businesses are about people and not the bottom line. A cliché perhaps, but an important revelation nevertheless.

"The Interview" seeks to convey the essence of our interviewee's expertise and find out what they're passionate about. It will tackle tough issues too. But while we seek to do all this, it is also important to get to the heart of the interviewee's motivations.

They all have a story and it is these stories that we seek to unfurl in "The Interview".

"The Interview" was launched on RSI in July. Join Bharati Jagdish as she attempts to unfurl the personalities behind people in our community.

The Celebrity Factor in Thai Politics

Melanie Yip

2005 was a momentous year for Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. Barely three months after the devastating tsunami struck parts of Asia on 26 December 2004 and almost crippled the Phuket tourism industry, the country found itself in the midst of a general election.

Mr Thaksin's swift decision making following the tsunami was played up on television. That was good PR for the Prime Minister.

In February 2005, Thaksin made political history when he became the first Prime Minister of Thailand to serve a full first term, and win his second with a landslide victory.

On my assignment to cover the Thai election in Bangkok, I could not help but notice the number of good looking people who stood for elections. TV personalities, young elites with blue-blooded political backgrounds and even impressive overseas educational resumes were the toast of the town in the polls.

But how did the Thai voters react to the glamour factor in the elections? Professor Surat Horachaikul from Chulalongkorn University felt that the reactions were mixed.

“Some of them think that these actors and actresses cannot run the country. They are just there because they want to achieve something, and this is a stop where they want to end their career. Some of them say why not? This is a democratic country. Actors and actresses should be allowed to run the country.”

Well, the celebrity factor certainly gave an advantage to some political parties. Voters may not have known how the beautiful people would fare as politicians, but the fact that they were well known faces could have attracted some of the voters.



Celebrity posters

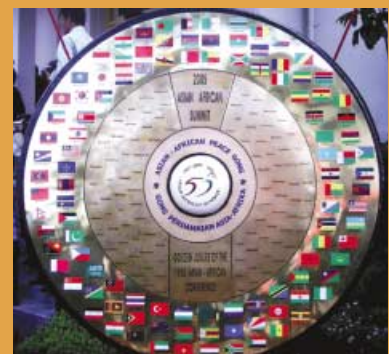
ASIA-AFRICA SUMMIT 2005

Melanie Yip

Indonesia's Aceh province was one of the areas hardest hit by the December 2004 tsunami. But that did little to dampen the spirits of Indonesians, as the country geared up to host the 50th anniversary of the Asia-Africa Summit in April 2005.

Leaders from more than 100 nations, many of them first time participants, attended this event amid tight security in Jakarta and Bandung.

The Asia-Africa Summit was a memorable assignment for me. It was my first trip to Jakarta I got to shake hands with Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and met Mr Lee Khoo Choy, a man who had witnessed both the first Bandung Summit in 1955, and the second Summit in 2005.

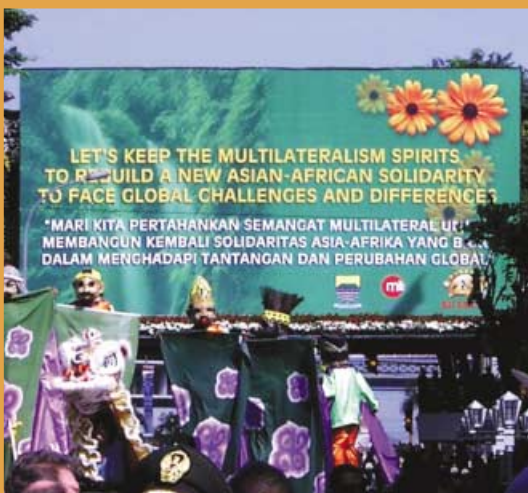


Mr Lee Khoo Choy attended the first Bandung Summit in 1955 as a journalist, and he recalled fondly the first meeting between leaders of Asia and Africa in Gedung Merdeka in Bandung.

“To me, it was like a fashion show because you find different costumes like the African costumes, the Burmese costumes, Filipino costumes. It was really very impressive, the march past”

The 1955 meeting was held at a time of ideological struggle for many nations which had just broken off from their colonial masters. How much of that scenario has changed at the time of the 2005 Golden Jubilee? Well, Asia has seen bigger changes than Africa and today boasts of economic powerhouses like Japan and emerging economic powers like China and India.

The Golden Jubilee provided a good opportunity for many countries to look ahead to the challenges facing us today. As Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said ***“I think the need for us to cooperate as one increasingly inter-related and inter-dependent world is more than ever before. So I think the desire to cooperate, and to develop for mutual interests are there, to find specific, tangible projects and focuses, that's something the countries have to work on.”***



Riding the Magic Carpet

Yvonne Gomez

"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." - St. Augustine

There are so many reasons why people travel. Some do it just to get away from their stressful everyday lives. Others go overseas on vacations to satisfy their curiosity about something that they've heard or read about but never seen up close and personal. Some people also fly across continents simply to fulfill a desire to discover the unknown.

For me, I like to travel for every one of the reasons given above. Sometimes you just have to physically remove yourself from your comfort zone to allow the cramped or unused parts of your body and mind to unwind, and give your senses a chance to absorb the unfamiliar. Chilling out with a cool drink on your balcony overlooking the same scene you see every day is unlikely to calm or revive your senses as much as if you sip a limoncello while gazing out at the glittering Mediterranean sea from the terrace of a villa in Ravello, perched high above the Amalfi coast in Italy.

As a voracious reader of myriad literary genres, I often come across photographs of historical architectural masterpieces, or learn about cultures that have survived centuries of modernization. I am often engulfed with a sense of wonder when I make that leap from page to reality, to actually come face to face with an enduring symbol of history, like Botticelli's painting of the Birth of Venus at the Uffizi gallery in Florence, the Colosseum in Rome, or Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

Travellers I've spoken to have also told me about indescribable spiritual reactions to mystical natural wonders like Uluru in Australia. But people don't only travel to see famous physical constructions. Gourmands and shopaholics in Thailand often can't resist the temptation to savour a fiery bowl of tom yum soup or head to Bangkok's world-famous shopper's haven, Chatuchak Weekend Market for a few bargains.

Although the well-trodden path is unlikely to ever lose its appeal or popularity with ordinary tourists, the egoist in some of us sometimes desires to go where few have gone, to take the road less traveled and delight in the thrill of discovery and knowledge of a corner of the earth unsullied by mass tourism. Travellers in this category seek the unknown and under-explored nooks in Indo-China, Nepal, Eastern Europe, South America and elsewhere.

Rapid advances in aerospace technology and greater connectivity between global cities have made travel easier and possible for those for whom it was a rare luxury. Still, there are some among us who, for whatever reason, are unable to travel as widely as we had liked to, or not at all. But far from being alienated from the tourist class, these armchair vacationers can embark on their own magic carpet ride with "Traveller's Tales", which not only gives RSI's listeners a glimpse of far-flung places, it's also given me the opportunity to share stories of my own adventures with listeners.

The world is brimming with the promise of adventure. Former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "There is no end to the adventures we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open." But if you can't open your eyes to see the world's charms, don't despair. You can certainly hear about them in my programme, Traveller's Tales.

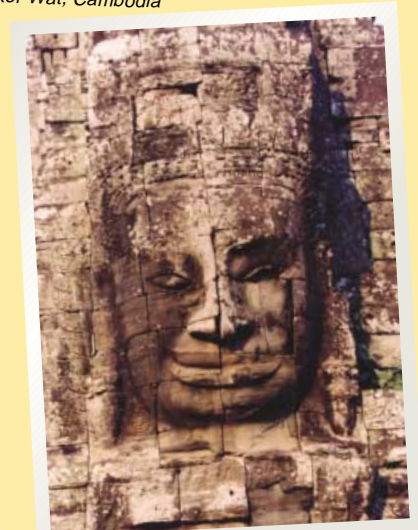
Catch the trade winds on your sails by tuning into Traveller's Tales on Radio Singapore International every Monday, Wednesday and Sunday.



The Colosseum in Rome



Angkor Wat, Cambodia



Chatuchak Weekend Market, Bangkok

Greetings earthlings,

We come in peace (so far)...

We are Comrade Jack Yong and Comrade Justin Teo.

We've been sent by our Grand Master, General Nukas, to the RSI office on Mother Earth, with the valiant mission of sky-rocketing the testosterone levels in the English Department in double quick time.



One of our first tasks on this planet was to fill this page of the Connexion newsletter with a bit of background data on ourselves. Here is a recording which we made on our arduous interplanetary journey to the office.

Jack: So Justin, what were you doing before RSI?

Justin: Working in the wild and wacky world of procurement. OK, maybe not so wild and wacky. I was involved in marketing products for mainland Chinese manufacturers to buyers around the world. What brings you to RSI anyway?

Jack: I don't know. Perhaps I was just at the right place at the right time. When a friend suggested to me, more than a year ago, to join the radio, I laughed at the mere suggestion! I've always been interested in journalism but never really gave much serious thought to joining the profession. As a fresh business graduate, I guess I was conditioned to aspire towards a more management-executive role. Who knew! What about you? Why journalism?

Justin: I'm morning-challenged? Nah. I previously had attachments with The Straits Times and MediaCorp which were eye-opening, fun and stimulating, work-wise. I prefer the independence in this line of work and I wake up for possibilities, not probabilities.

Jack: And the stories you are looking to pursue?

Justin: All types of news, in particular, affairs of the Lion City, neighborly concerns in ASEAN, the American grapevine and happenings in world of film, technology and media. What is your take on current affairs?

Jack: "Current affairs" is all around us. Everyone has access to it and the freedom to explore and think about it.

Justin: What are your ambitions? Save the world, rid the evil?

Jack: I AM "the evil"!!! Well... other than to become a global citizen, I want to get my masters degree before I turn 30. Anyway, what do you think of the work environment at RSI? How does it differ from that of other organizations you've worked at?

Justin: It's not as formal; people are friendlier. What do you think?

Jack: The environment here is dynamic and I think that complements the creative profession.

Justin: If you could describe yourself with two adjectives, what would they be?

Jack: Selfish and kind. Yourself?

Justin: Serene (most of the time)

Jack: In this job, we interview people from all walks of life. If you could interview anyone in the world, who would it be and why?

Justin: Arsene Wenger, for transforming the beautiful game, or Michael Mann, for his celluloid craft. By the way, what's up with your neat desk? Are you a neat freak?

Jack: I've seen worse. C'mon... have you checked out Melanie's desk?

MAILbox

I listen to your English broadcast in my home town in Bali, Indonesia. Its very interesting to listen to your broadcast. As a neighbouring country, Singapore is always interesting for me. There are many things I want to know from Singapore. It's the reason why I listen to your broadcast.

Alex Torbeni, Denpasar, Indonesia

I am your loyal listener from Ciamis, Indonesia. I would like to request for your latest bulletins. As an English teacher I need it as a supplement in my teaching.

Yusuf Hidayat, Ciamis, West Java, Indonesia

I am an American cultural anthropologist working in the Social Sciences Division of the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines. In my work it is important to keep abreast of the latest news events in South East Asia. I am pleased to report that I find Radio Singapore International to be the most complete and authoritative voice of news and events in the region. That is why I continually tune into your programming.

Dr Stephen Zolvinski, Laguna, The Philippines

I feel your programmes are very polished when compared with the international broadcasting of neighbouring countries.

Shinji Yamaguchi, Shizuoka, Japan

By the age of 11, RSI has got its maturity on the microphone. Many radio stations broadcast for more than 50 years, but they cannot satisfy their listeners... Your programmes do not bore anyone because they are short, but accurate and enjoyable... The voices and pronunciation of all your staff members... Yvonne, Bharati, Melanie and others are very nice... Belinda's Rhythm in the Sun is a very popular and enjoyable programme.

Swapan Kumar Ghosh, Santineketan, India

I have a Listeners' Club, the Sadat Listeners' Club. It has 195 members. A large number of members of this club are students. They listen to your service regularly. They like all your programmes.

Syed Khizar Hayat Shah, Muzaffar Ghar, Pakistan

Hello from Hollywood! Its my pleasure to report reception of your English Service... I enjoyed the quick lively pace of your programmes and the fluency of your English broadcasters.

James Peltz, Arcadia, California, USA

