

### A MORNING WITH DATO KANDAN

An invitation was extended by the Executive Committee of the Kirkby Alumni association Malaysia, to Dato V . L. Kandan, a Kirkbyite from the 1955 – 57 batch, to attend its Executive Committee on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>. June, 2014. The meeting was held at the Kolej Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya at 10.00 a.m.

The President of the Kirkby Alumni, Tan Sri Dato Sri Yahaya Ibrahim, who chaired the meeting, extended a very warm welcome to Dato Kandan and all those present. He was happy to note that, judging from the attendance at the latest Kirkby Reunion held in Penang from 6<sup>th</sup>. to 8<sup>th</sup>. June 2014, the spirit of goodwill and fellowship was still evident and flourishing in the hearts and minds of all Kirkbyites. He said that he and the other members of the Kirkby Alumni Association would be happy to hear what the Kirkbyites thought of the Alumni.

Dato Kandan had expressed the desire to meet up with Tan Sri and a few other members of the Kirkby Alumni Association to share with them some views, concerns and aspirations for the future of the Kirkby Alumni, expressed by those attending the Kirkby Reunion. Dato Kandan, at the invitation of Mr. P. Ramakrishnan, the organizing chairman of the Kirkby Reunion 2014, had moderated an informal meeting held with them and had assured them that he would bring their views, concerns and aspirations for the future of the Kirkby Alumni, to the attention of the Kirkby Alumni Association. As a motivator Dato Kandan had focused on the two groups – those in the Alumni and the groups running the reunions.

Dato Kandan said that he himself was interested in the Kirkby Alumni and its future and realized that it has an important part to play in upholding and strengthening the spirit of goodwill and fellowship amongst the ranks of Kirkbyites and their dwindling numbers. He remembered becoming a member of the Kirkby Alumni at the invitation of Tan Sri Vadivello during a get-together at Intan several years ago.

Dato Kandan wished to bring to the attention of the Kirkby Alumni Association the following major points which were raised at the Kirkby Reunion 2014:

a) Kirkby Alumni Association Malaysia:

Like Dato Kandan himself, most of those present wanted to know whether it still existed, and if so, was it active? They were surprised that they had not heard anything from the Alumni or about any activities organised by the Alumni. Many of those present felt that it only catered to the needs of the ‘titled’ few and was not interested in the welfare of the ordinary Kirkbyites. Shockingly, many of those present did not want to have anything to do with the Alumni. There was a suggestion that the Alumni be requested to organize the next Kirkby Reunion. There were a number of objections to this suggestion.

They felt that they enjoyed the atmosphere and feeling of informality and comradeship that existed amongst participants at all the reunions that have been organized so far by groups that were not aligned to the Alumni. There were fears that the presence of the 'titled' few and other dignitaries invited by the Alumni, if it organized a reunion, would turn such a reunion into a very formal affair.

b) The construction of a "Kirkby College" in Malaysia:

There was a suggestion that a college, named Kirkby College, be set up in or around Kuala Lumpur, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education which could help with the allocation of a piece of land.

When told that such a college, called Kirkby International College, already existed in Kuala Lumpur, most of those present were surprised. They wanted to know what role or form of control, if any, the Kirkby Alumni Association had in its administration or existence.

c) The setting up of a Kirkby Library:

Those present felt that there should be such a set-up of such a facility so that items, articles, magazines, books, and anything else to do with Kirkby, could be stored for the information of future generations. It would form some sort of 'archives' for us.

d) Disappointment with the Kirkby Alumni Association Executive Committee:

There was a feeling amongst those present that the above committee, comprising the 'titled' few is aloof who considered themselves to be 'superior' and were not prepared to 'mix with' interact with the ordinary Kirkbyites. They have not taken the trouble to participate in any of the Kirkby reunions held so far.

A case in particular was the Kirkby Reunion held at Port Dickson in 2012. The organizing committee had gone out of its way to accommodate their request for the Kirkby Alumni Association to have its AGM at the venue of the reunion.

The Executive Committee arrived, held its AGM, and then left unannounced, much to the disappointment of the organising committee. They felt that the least that the Executive Committee could have done was to thank the organisers for accommodation their request, had lunch or tea with them and taken some time to meet those present at the reunion.

The meeting was happy to note that at least three members of the present Executive Committee and an auditor were participating in the Penang Reunion 2014.

e) Annual General Meetings of the Kirkby Alumni association:

Those present were disillusioned to learn that the last AGM of the Alumni was held more than two years ago during the Kirkby Reunion in 2012 in Port Dickson when an AGM, as its name suggests, should be held once a year. How could the Alumni claim to be active when it cannot even hold its AGM as required.

Some participants who claimed to be members of the Alumni, complained that they had not been invited to any AGM so far.

f) The need for a regular newsletter:

Those present felt that there was a need for some form of a newsletter that could keep members of the Alumni informed about the activities of the Alumni.

They were informed that there was such a newsletter in the form of the *PANDUAN* which was printed at regular intervals and sent to members of the Alumni.

Those present felt that the newsletter should be sent to every Kirkbyite, whether or not he is a member of the Alumni.

Surprisingly even some members of the Alumni claimed that they had not received copies of the *PANDUAN*.

g) The Kirkby Co-operative Society:

A participant felt that the Alumni should set up a "Kirkby Co-operative Society". Proceeds/profits from this co-operative could be used to sponsor two students from a "Masters in Education" course. Upon graduation they would be tasked with looking into the education system, the past and the present and with a view to the future. They would focus more on the teaching and learning of the English Language.

h) The book " *KIRKBY – A HERITAGE* "

Most of those present were not aware of the existence of this book relating the experiences of Kirkbyites and their time spent at Kirkby.

They were informed that the book was being re-edited and will soon be reproduced so that everyone will be able to own a copy.

**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE ?**

- 1) Dato Kandan said that he was pleased to learn that many of the ideas and suggestions made at the Penang Reunion had already been implemented. He would get in touch with all those who were present at the Penang Reunion to inform them of the latest developments in the Kirkby Alumni association.

- 2) Dato Kandan informed the Alumni Executive Committee that he had, at the insistence of some members present at the dinner on Saturday night, that the next reunion would be held in the Klang Valley. Dato Kandan said that was the reason for his presence this morning, to see and find ways to work together and have the next reunion in the Klang Valley in 2016. It would be a two and a half day affair at which the future direction of the Alumni can be discussed.
- 3) Dato Kandan requested that he be given a complete list of all Alumni members. He was prepared to write personally, to all non-members, inform them of the activities and accomplishments of the Alumni, and invite them to become members of the Alumni.
- 4) Tan Sri Yahaya Ibrahim thanked Dato Kandan for enlightening the Executive Committee on the way Kirkbyites feel about the Alumni and for the interesting and thought-provoking discussion. He denied that those with titles consider themselves to be above or superior to other Kirkbyites. In agreeing with Tan Sri Yahya Ibrahim, Tan Sri Vadiveloo said that there were only 2 Tan Sri's and 1 Dato in the Executive Committee. Moreover Tan Sri Yahaya Ibrahim had requested that he be allowed to step down as President of the Alumni. But he had been requested by the Executive to continue for at least another term. There is a need for the younger group to join the Alumni and help it to become more active.
- 5) Tan Sri Yahaya Ibrahim has worked very hard and has always publicised Kirkby. Articles written by him about Kirkby have been published in all major newspapers. A lot of what was planned and envisaged for Kirkby Alumni has been achieved. The success we have achieved as a small group is beyond what we had expected. The greatest achievement is the establishment of the Kirkby International College, a living testimony to the memory of the Kirkby College in Liverpool, England.
- 6) Tan Sri Yahaya Ibrahim went on to say that non-participation in the Alumni is the individual's attitude. An effort has always been made to enroll new members at every gathering of Kirkbyites. Unfortunately publications of any kind can only be sent to Alumni members.

We have to accept the fact that Kirkbyites have varying views. We cannot expect everyone to think as we do and to have similar political leanings as we have.

- 7) Dato Kandan said that, having heard the views of all those present, there is no doubt that there is a political divide amongst Kirkbyites. But he assured the meeting that though some may not have similar political views, their interest, faith and commitment, loyalty and love for Kirkby and all that Kirkby stands for, cannot be doubted.

***T. Balwant Singh***