



Alumni profile >

# A twist of fate

Six years ago, Lakshan Madurasinghe had his bags packed and was set to leave Sri Lanka for a new academic challenge at the University of Nottingham. Changes in family circumstances meant that three days before his departure for the UK, all this changed. **Lisa Pierre** talks to Lakshan about this fortunate twist of fate.

**S**till determined to achieve his aim of furthering his education, Lakshan enrolled on a Diploma in Economics course one month after it had started at the Royal Institute of Colombo (RIC) in Sri Lanka. This was to be the beginning of a change of luck for him as he went on to achieve the only distinction that year in the island. This subsequently led to him being awarded a scholarship in his final year and in 2003 he graduated with honours in BSc Management.

Recalling how he felt about it all after his initial setback, he tells us: "It was truly a life changing and fulfilling experience to say the least. I learnt many lessons along the way. Most have moulded me into the person I am today." Did he have any regrets about how a twist of fate led him on a different academic path? Has his University of London degree helped him in terms of employment opportunities? "Yes, very helpful! Although it was done by staying in Sri Lanka, a University of London degree carries much repute and is highly regarded in Sri Lanka. It's a real winner at interviews."

With his degree opening many doors for him, at 23 Lakshan was offered the position of Human Resource Development Manager for Coke SL. After six months he was promoted to Head of PR & Communications, a job in which he learnt many life lessons; a gratifying challenge as he refers to it. "I learnt to work and live by values – honesty, integrity, teamwork, to take individual initiative, develop mutual trust and respect, and be committed." During his years with Coke SL he learnt to be disciplined, to truly multitask and to manage his time effectively. Such a working environment also meant networking opportunities were with the best in the business and the worldwide travel opened doors to meeting new people and embracing new cultures.

Truly believing that one must capitalise on moments and opportunities when

they come your way, after five years with Coke SL Lakshan was given the chance to start up his own business. He grabbed it with both hands and heart, feeling it was time to be independent and assume greater responsibility in his career and make his mark in society.

Lakshan started out by setting up a company that recycles PET plastic bottles. It had also been one of his key areas while at Coke and his contacts played a huge part when he got Coke and other key industry players involved. At this time he also set up his events company after a contact from his Coke days asked him to go into partnership. As if two companies were not enough work, he has recently set up a consultancy company, ARAM Consultancy (Pvt) Ltd (named after his son's initials – Athan Romaan Alexander Madurasinghe) after

Having worked in the private sector for many years, there were obvious differences in being one's own boss. Lakshan stresses that he now has the advantages of making his own decisions and that by working hard he can make a name for himself and thus reap the benefits of success over time. What of the disadvantages? The risks are higher, he explains, saying that as he is totally responsible for those who work for him his name and professional reputation is on the line, he is never guaranteed a fixed salary every month and that external factors – political, social or economic – can also govern how things work out.

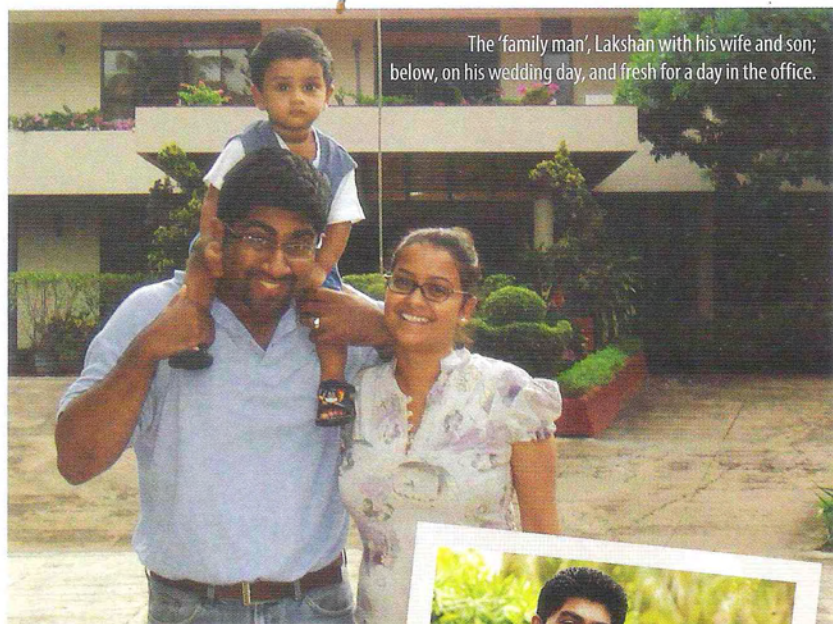
With this in mind he turns to how Sri Lanka is now facing a period of positive change. When University of London staff visited in February earlier this year it was just days after a terrorist

**'Away from his professional obligations, Lakshan is also the youngest board member of Habitat for Humanity SL, a global project in which volunteers from all backgrounds come together to build homes for families in need. He has so far been involved in the construction of two villages – consisting of 25 homes and a community centre – in the South of Sri Lanka.'**

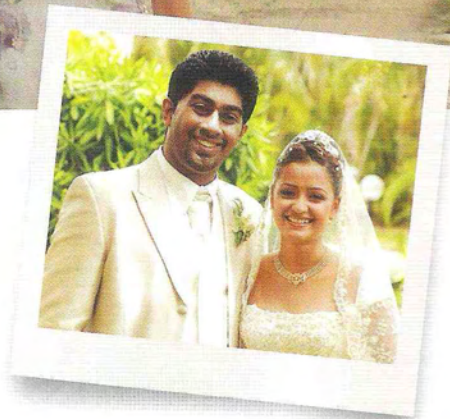
realising many agencies set high retainers for their work. Setting up his own virtual consultancy means he can now forgo the high overheads and fixed costs that PR and advertising agencies set and can select the best professionals in PR, events, marketing, carbon commerce, waste management, research, and tourism. ARAM's services are the same as these larger companies, only cheaper as their running costs are lower – a model he feels is what current markets need.

attack in Colombo. Many young Sri Lankans have grown up surrounded by the tension and political unrest of civil war. Lakshan thinks the future now looks great especially in regard to their export and tourism markets. After three decades of unrest, he hopes the world will now be able to know of the beauty of his country and its people and happily emphasises that this is the first time in his lifetime that they are living in peace.

With the new opportunities available in



The 'family man', Lakshan with his wife and son; below, on his wedding day, and fresh for a day in the office.



**'I got to stay at home with friends and family and also earn a world-recognised degree.'**

a time of peace, there are issues that may still affect young Sri Lankans today. He feels that although the standard of English and IT are high, it needs to be improved to reach a world standard. There is a lack of confidence to take risks and step away from the norm, or what is expected by society or family expectations.

Away from his professional obligations, Lakshan is also the youngest board member of Habitat for Humanity SL, a global project in which volunteers from all backgrounds come together to build homes for families in need. He has so far been involved in the construction of two villages – consisting of 25 homes and a community centre – in the South of Sri Lanka. This volunteering aspect is something Lakshan expressed an interest in expanding when he became the External System International Chapter Leader this year.

Is there time to relax and step away from his many obligations? When he can he enjoys spending time with his wife and son, travelling around Sri Lanka and shopping. In the future he hopes to do an MBA and develop his company to be one of the most respected in Sri Lanka.

After many changes, professionally and personally, since he enrolled on his

diploma course are there any regrets about not going to the university he intended to? None at all he stresses, he got the best of both worlds: "I got to stay at home with friends and family and also earn a world-recognised degree."

**Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka**

Habitat for Humanity Sri Lanka is a registered non-governmental organization whose mission is to provide simple, decent, affordable housing for people in need. To receive assistance from a local affiliate project, a family must live in unfit or inadequate housing and must not be able to afford or obtain better housing through conventional means. Partner families are selected based on their ability to contribute labour and repay the cost of the house. Religion, Ethnicity, Political Status, Kinship and Friendship do not determine a family's eligibility. [www.hfhsl.org](http://www.hfhsl.org)



**A helping hand**

On Sunday 28 February 2010, University of London staff will be helping Habitat for Humanity ([www.hfhsl.org](http://www.hfhsl.org)) on a one-day build in Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, and we would like to invite alumni to come and take part! If you are unable to help, but would like to contribute, donations to this project are also welcome.

For further details on the Alumni Event on 27 February 2010 at the Galle Face hotel, or on the Habitat for Humanity day, please contact: [lisa.pierre@london.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.pierre@london.ac.uk)

To join the local chapter in Sri Lanka please contact: [lakshan.madurasinghe@gmail.com](mailto:lakshan.madurasinghe@gmail.com)

