

ISSUE 06 | SEPTEMBER 2015

# THE MEMON



WORLD MEMON ORGANISATION NEWSLETTER  
AGM EDITION

Evolution of WMO

Incorporated

Great Expectations

Resurrection of Youth

The MILLION dollar

Moment

*The Legend Of*  
**MR. M.H OMAR**

# THE MEMON



## INTRODUCTION

### I CAME, I SAW, I CONQUERED!

"Veni, vidi, vici" is a Latin phrase popularly attributed to Julius Caesar for his swift, conclusive victories.

It is also very apt for Mohamed Haji Omar. The incredible saga of MH Omar dawned on the checkered battlefield of business too. Having lost a few initial battles but never lost heart.

Stood undaunted and marched forward. Showed unmatched resilience, perseverance and endurance. Took the risks, jumped off a few cliffs, grew wings as he plunged towards the ground and soared like the phoenix to win the war.



Serving Mankind

MH Omar is Chairman of a multi billion dollar business conglomerate employing a workforce of around 50,000, largest garment exporters of Sri Lanka, manufacturing units scattered across the Subcontinent, offices in New York, London and Hong Kong, tie ups with international apparel brands and fashion houses, partnerships with Global fortune 500 Companies. Add to it extensive Property Development, Trading and Manufacturing Industries with the distinction of being the largest and most successful producers of moulded plastic in Sri Lanka accounting for more than 50 percent of the domestic market share.

It all started with - a dream, steely resolve to accomplish, bold acquisitions, remarkably successful turnarounds, conquering the hearts of his workers, building trust with governments around the world, contributing to each nation's economy and giving back to the community.

This is the legend of Mohamed Haji Omar. Sweat, determination, guts and glory.

### ALL HAIL CAESAR!

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# Evolution of WMO

## World Memon Organisation. Incorporated.

"The best teamwork comes from men who are working independently toward one goal in unison."--J.C. Penney

Mr Yunus Suleman, proficient Chartered Accountant and Former Chairman of KPMG Africa, one of the finest audit and financial firms in the world as the Treasurer. Mr. Nowsad Gani, a well respected lawyer based in UK and businessman extraordinaire, heading the Legal department. Mr. Gulaam Abdoola, managing director of one of the largest property development firms of Africa as the Chair of Finance. Mr. Ashraf Sattar, a Harvard Business School Alumni and Sri Lankan apparel giant promoting membership. Mr Suliman Noor Mahomed, inspirational leader, doyen of African industry with unmatched business acumen taking care of Investments. Mr. Satar Dada, the national icon of Botswana and a magnanimous Philanthropist and Humanitarian. Accomplished gentlemen and business magnates, Mr. Haroon Karim, Mr. Bashir Sattar, Mr. Shoaib Ismail Mangrora, Mr. Mahmood Shaikhani and Mr Ismail Gadit from UK, Pakistan and the Middle East, each armed with their own area of expertise. Add them all up and you have a distinguished board of directors of a highly successful, global business conglomerate.

But that is just the executive committee of the World Memon Organisation working towards the noble cause of Serving Mankind. Each member, absolutely perfect for the job. Providing voluntary, selfless service towards their beloved organisation with dedicated passion and determination to achieve their common objective of transforming WMO into a world class organisation.

The executive marks the Evolution of WMO into a corporate structure where each penny is accounted for, all transactions are transparent and every action is guaranteed in compliance with the highest international standards.

## Welcome to the World Memon Organisation, Incorporated.

To obtain the full report on AGM please click on the link below:

<http://wmoworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/AGM-Report-2015.pdf>

### 13th AGAM of WMO - COLOMBO



# The MILLION Dollar moment

It was a watershed moment in the history of WMO. The President, Mr. Suliman Noor Mahomed had just rendered another one of his trademark motivational speeches to the august gathering of distinguished guests at the WMO Gala Dinner. A bespectacled, tall figure emerged from the crowd, seated in the well manicured South Lawns of the pristine Taj Samudra. He slowly sauntered onto the stage and whispered something into the ears of the Deputy Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr Ashraf Sattar.

The entire gathering was up on their feet, a standing ovation was delivered, the President rushed onto the stage to shake the gentleman's hand, Mr. Ashraf Sattar was fighting back his tears. The atmosphere was electric.



Mr M.H Omar, a stalwart of the Sri Lankan Memon community had just announced an unprecedented **MILLION DOLLARS** contribution towards the World Memon Organisation.

The magnanimous gesture was his endorsement of the extensive humanitarian work done by the WMO towards their common objective of Serving Mankind.



Serving Mankind

WORLD MEMON ORGANIZATION

September 9, 2015

Mr. M H Omar  
116 Barnes Place,  
Colombo 07.

Dear Omar Bha,  
  
Assalamu Allaikum,

On behalf of the World Memon Organization, I wish to personally thank you for your generosity. We highly appreciate your kind donation and are grateful for your continued, steadfast support towards our Organization.

Your sizeable contribution will make an immediate difference in the lives of hundreds of less fortunate brothers and sisters. It will serve as an inspiration to others towards making their own commitments for the upliftment of Humanity.

I treasure our invaluable friendship and look forward to many more years of Serving Mankind, together under the umbrella of our beloved WMO.

I promise you, my dear, old friend. At our age, there is no better exercise for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.

Yours sincerely,

Suliman Noor Mahomed (Solly Noor)  
President - World Memon Organization

Cc: Mr. Ashroff Sattar –Trustee  
Mr. A C Saleem –VP Far East Chapter

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# THE LEGEND OF M.H OMAR

If one were to recall the point of time when M.H. Omar struck gold was when he bought over a beat up plastic company called Nayagams from the state in 1976. It was a big risk and those close to him wondered what would happen if he couldn't come with the one hundred thousand smackers installments. He would tell them, in his nonchalant way, the state wouldn't 'kill' him if he didn't come up with the money. All what they would do is take back the factory and that would be the end of the matter.



## Legend of our times

M. H. Omar started his life in humble settings. He worked as a textile broker and then as an announcer at Radio Ceylon, a station very popular in the 60s for Hindi songs.

He established his first textile shop, Firoz Ltd in the main trading hub of Colombo, (where he still works from). Well known in the community for his appetite for Risk and Long term Vision. From textiles, he expanded to plastics and then Apparels Manufacturing. Today, he along with his 3 sons, have built a vast business empire. His strategic vision to allow his sons to independently handle operations has grown the company into one of the largest private conglomerates in Sri Lanka and the Largest Apparel Exporter of the island.

Lovingly known as Major to his friends, M.H. Omar to most others, he is MH Uncle to the Far East Chapter. We've always admired him as our Trustee and looked up to him for Leadership and Guidance. But now he has elevated our pride to next level with his unprecedented contribution to the WMO.

For memons of Sri Lanka, he is a monument of a man and a legend of our times.

- Mr Ashraf Sattar  
Deputy Chairman of Board of Trustees (WMO)

M.H. Omar is one of those rare entrepreneurs who do exceptionally well when operating out of their comfort zone. The derring-do in him saw to it that Nayagams, now renamed Phoenix Industries, rose literally from the ashes, after the bird it was named after. The plastic products the company produced soon became a household name and before long the company's income rose exponentially enabling M.H. Omar to invest in other ventures which were way beyond the imagination of your average 'Pettah Merchant'.

In 1976 M.H. Omar bought over a failing garment factory in Hulftsdorp in Colombo and within a short period of time turned it around into an export orientated factory. This was no mean task since the machinery available at both Lux Shirts and M.K.C. Industries, a hosiery plant which he had taken over previously, was old and decrepit. But it was his philosophy to make good use of the resources at hand and then go in for new machinery. It was with this 'resource' that Lux Shirts first exported garments to the U.S. This was not a successful or profitable project but it paved the way for new ideas. This was the stepping stone to M.H. Omar's signature project – Brandix Lanka Limited. Today 'Brandix' is the leading exporter of garments in Sri Lanka and has occupied the number one slot for many years now.



The company employs over 45,000 persons and is one of the largest, if not the largest, employee based company.

Seated in his office at Firoze Limited in Second Cross Street, in Pettah M.H. Omar, the octogenarian is still a busy man. Blessed with both wealth and splendid health he keeps himself occupied with one trade or another. More recently he went into the gem trade and perhaps the first thing you'll see when you enter his plush office is a copy of the license issued by the Gem Corporation permitting him to indulge in the gem trade of which he knew hardly anything. But by catching the tiger by the tail he says he has got the hang of the finer points of the trade.

M.H. Omar is a multi faceted man. You might call him a man for all seasons if you are a movie buff like him. He is a voracious reader and even today he cannot go to bed without reading some book or the other. He is an avid cricket fan and if you were to walk into his office when an international match is on he would be watching it on the huge TV fixed to the wall opposite his desk all the while listening to classical Indian/Pakistani music on his lap top. Not many of his genres in the Memon community in Colombo know how to operate a computer. The very fact that he does goes to show his insatiable thirst to learn new things and keep abreast of what's going on around in the world.



A foreword by WMO Trustee, Mr Farook Kassim about his maternal uncle and father in law, Mr. MH Omar.

The year was 1966 and I had just celebrated my 8th birthday. Uncle Major, as he was popularly known, was our neighbor. A distinct memory I have of that time is our family returning home after performing Haj. We brought back with us, the latest electronic gadgets, unheard of in our city but the irony was we did not know how to operate most of them. Uncle Omar was the one who patiently taught us how they all worked.

Sometimes on the weekends, he used take his children and my siblings fishing, either to the Beira Lake or the Breakwaters at Colombo Port.

I always remember him as a kind, loving, very confident and entrepreneurial man. He did not hesitate to try out any new business venture. He lived by the belief - that any failure is only a stepping stone to success.

He has been my role model in business and an inspirational figure in my life. I always aspire to be like him. A great mind, a mighty heart and a generous soul...my Uncle Major, the legendary MH Omar.



If that was all to say about M.H. Omar then the story would end here. But then that's not all. Not many have seen the 'socialist' in him. Generous to a fault, he has helped many individuals and many causes. His pet project is to supply drinking water to villages in Sri Lanka under his banner 'Water is Life'. Over the years he has provided many villages with wells but not that many outside the project know the charitable deeds he has done and continues to do. Modesty prevents him from speaking of the virtuous deeds he has carried out to alleviate the sufferings of the underprivileged.



An incurable optimist, M.H. Omar encourages youth to be smart. He runs an education fund which has helped many students complete their studies. Some of them, today, occupy top posts in the commercial and academic fields. One thing is sure. He would never tell you their names.



M.H. Omar is fond of encouraging youth of all hues to prepare themselves – indeed 'arm' themselves - for the future with a sound education. 'Things' he says, 'are going to change and the youth must be ready, able and willing to pick up the gauntlet'. He often quotes the South African freedom fighter Steve Biko who said 'Change the way you think and things will not be the same'.



Mrs. Seema Omar, daughter in law of Mr. M H Omar gives us an insight on her visionary father in law.

My husband had gone to Germany on an extended business trip, being away from home for a whole month. This was in the first year of my marriage, in 1986, much before idd calls and cell phones became the norm. My father-in-law came home for lunch one day soon after my husband had left, and said he had spoken to Ashroff and how Ashroff had said to please send Seema on the next plane to Germany. I knew he was joking and I said - Pe, if he was to say that, I would not want for anything else in this world and in response to that my father-in-law said to me - he will never say it, but you will have to understand it. In all these years of my marriage, that is one piece of wisdom that I have never forgotten and which has stood me in very good stead!

I have always known my father-in-law to be a fearless, outspoken man who never felt any need to adjust his opinions for the sake of anyone else. This is truly reflected in the way he does charity. Having studied how many memon foundations started successfully but collapsed along with their founders, he modeled the M.H. Omar foundation on the foundations in the west which continued to grow long after their founders were long dead and gone. In order to do this, he has ensured that the M.H.O. foundation generates an income, from which a part is used in service to the community, and the rest is used to help the foundation grow so its income can be augmented, and the scope of its service widened with the passage of time.

When I asked him what was his favorite way of doing charity, his reply was, education, education and more education.

He has little patience for religious doctrines unless they make sense to his very practical mind. His philosophy around charity is that if we dole out funds indiscriminately, we rob people of their dignity and stunt their potential. Instead he advocates that we invest money in teaching skills and developing people to become employable, and then build businesses that create employment for them.



# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."



Those immortal Charles Dickens lines effectively capture the gamut of emotions and fluctuating fortunes of the WMO international youth wing since its inception in the city of Colombo in the month of February, 2013. Whilst the youth wings put up stellar performances on the individual chapter levels, the collaborative International projects were conspicuously absent.



The ever dependable, Mr. Yunus Suleman has stepped up to the plate, taken charge of the international youth wing and the results were instantaneous. The third IYC (International Youth Conference) held on the 31st of August, 2015 at the Taj Samudra, Colombo was abuzz with excitement and energy. The atmosphere was vibrant and 5 international projects encompassing education, women empowerment, Memoni language and culture, sports and business were enthusiastically presented by the Youth. The entire executive committee of the WMO sat patiently through the presentations, giving each project their diligent attention, feedback and guidance.



The honourable WMO President, Mr. Solly Noor and the executive committee emphasised that the youngsters of our community are the rightful heirs of the worthy WMO legacy. The endeavours to Unite, Uphold, Uplift and Serve Mankind will be their cross to bear in the years to come. WMO has always spent considerable funds to bring together Memon youngsters from around the globe on a common, united platform. Whether it was the spectacular MPL (Memon Premier League), an international, world class cricket tournament or the IYC. The organisation has unflinchingly backed their belief to give centre stage to the youth and groom them into future leaders.



John F Kennedy, one of the youngest US Presidents, in his famous inaugural address quoted, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

It's about time the youth ask themselves the same question in regards to the Memon Community, reciprocate to WMO, stand up and be counted for.

**To obtain the full report please click on the link below:**

<http://wmoworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/AGM-Report-2015.pdf>



# Ladies Wing Coming of Age

The WMO International Ladies Wing meeting took place on the 31st August 2015 was a huge success with an attendance of 96 ladies in total with global representation from the Africa, India, Pakistan, UK, Middle East and Far East. The meeting commenced with a dua and a very warm welcome from Mrs Shazia Sangani of the host country and it further continued with Mrs Fazila AK Ismail of the International Ladies Wing elaborating on how women have played a vital role in the success of WMO and today through tireless efforts and determination are recognized as a driving force behind many successful projects under the banner of WMO. Mr Sulaiman Noor Mohamed (President WMO) addressed the ladies with a motivational talk as to how it is imperative for our Memon women to at all times set higher goals as we are fortunate to be in a era where society allows women such great opportunities.

All the chapter representatives gave a strong presentation of the work done by each chapter and how the women of the memon community are actively involved and making us all very proud of them.

Women Empowerment Project was proposed in the meeting with the prime purpose of educating and empowering women with the skills and confidence necessary to secure their future and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This project received an overwhelming response and an immediate fundraising effort was held spontaneously at the meeting which resulted in successful collection of funds for the primary stage of project execution.

A step by Step guide on how to use the Memon Connections website was shown to the ladies at the meeting and the improvements that are underway. Mrs Fazila Ismail announced the Memon connections Leads of different chapters which are as follows.

India Chapter  
Razia Chasmawala

Pakistan Chapter  
Aisha Anwar/Shamim Bawany/Bilqis Tabani

Africa Chapter  
Jameela Joosab/Feroza Mohammed

Europe Chapter  
Shamim Osman

Middle East  
Rashida Vahedna

Far East Chapter  
Shazia Sangani



Mrs Fazila AK Ismail (Chair International Ladies wing) in her closing remarks appreciated excellent hospitality of Far East Chapter mainly the efforts of Shazia Sanghani, Gulshan Sattar and Ageela and applauded FC management committee for arranging not just Ladies wing meetings but also arranging leisure activities for ladies such as picnic at exuberant resort locations, dinners with best cuisines and other activities such as Memoni comical plays which was thoroughly enjoyed by females from all chapters. She thanked all the Chapter Representatives for their presentations and for their untiring efforts throughout the year and also thanked heads of special projects namely Shabana Darvesh of India Sanam Fayaz of Middle East and Fareeda Azeez of Bangalore. Sadaf Vahedna was thanked for her role as Admin in Memon Connections. She thanked Sulaiman Noor Mohamed (President WMO) for always encouraging ladies and appreciating all projects undertaken by them, it is his faith which invigorates the strength and courage in ladies to work passionately for community services as hes often seen saying "Women are not equal to men, they are and always have been far superior than men"



# MEMON PREMIER LEAGUE 2015

"There wasn't a doubt that Pakistan's raucous fans would ensure their chants were heard"

A Pakistan with momentum is a beast that cannot be contained. Every team in the first MPL discovered that fact to their cost in 2013 when Pakistan cruised to the title.

And now, 2 years later but in a campaign of distinct and glorious parallels, Sri Lanka have also sampled the unstoppable alchemy that occurs when cricket's most emotional and temperamental participants find a way to meld their ambitions to their deeds.

Blessed with immense all round talent, the memons from across the globe got together to put together a showcase event. Having cruised to the title in 2013, the same was expected from a star studded Pakistan team featuring some of the prominent domestic names from the country's cricketing circle, and they did not disappoint.

For many Srilankan fans present at the ground to support their home team it was a disappointing end to what looked like a fairy tale. But let's not take anything away from the winners. What we must not forget, despite the colors or the nations, it was a victory for the MEMONS, and a victory for The World Memon Organisation.





## MPL HEROES

### A 16 year old Srilankan Comrade



Shehzad Ameen, alongside Sheriyar Ghani and Danish Aziz reminded us all of the legendary Saeed Anwar with his strokes presented with a timeline that would confuse even the best of the best. Awarded the Man of the Series for his contributions with the bat meant that despite a predicted India Pakistan final yet again, the Lankan army marched ahead to the local fan's delight by reaching their first final

### The Spin Wizards from the Deserts of Middle East



Going into a must win match for both Middle East & Europe, The Middle East team fielded 3 spinners in Farooq, Abid & Asif. With a strong start by Europe and a middle order power hitter in Yaqoob roaring for Europe, the Middle East team turned to their wizards. A total of 6 out of 10 wickets were picked by the spinners but sadly the Middle East team batted without any purpose and collapsed for less than 100 runs for the 4th time in a row in the MPL history.

### Europe, The Surprise Package!



Cricket is a beautiful game and it comes with a magical spell for emotions, a spell that would make Harry Potter proud too. Europe's team filled with talent and passion pulled up which can be considered as the most testing time for Pakistan team which has won 8 out of 8 matches thus far in the MPL history.

### Dilscoop? Or was it A Mars coop?

Facing a quickie, a little known Marwan playing his first game for Europe. What we saw next highlighted the increase in MPL standards. A premier fast bowler from Pakistan scooped over the keeper's head for a boundary with such ease. If Dilshan was around in Colombo those days, he would have reconsidered his technique seeing the Marscoop.

### BOOM BOOM Memon!



Through out the MPL 2015, Fahad Jabbar was either out early or batted alongside Sheriyar Ghani who scored at a blistering speed against a depleted Middle East team. But the big opener kept his best for the time it mattered most. Smashing a thunderous 66 of just 23 balls and practically ended Far East's hopes during the powerplay itself. The quick fire scoring by the openers meant that Pakistan would score in excess of 190 which meant that Far East would need to score the tournament's highest total to win the MPL.

Article by:  
Salmaan Hussain

## The WMO Fairytale

Once upon a time, there lived a magnanimous King, Abdul Razzak Yaqoub. Everything he touched turned to gold. His subjects were happy, the hopefuls always returned with their hands full and no seeker was turned away. The kingdom of WMO was blessed. The next liege, Abdul Satar Dada was again a kind hearted and gentle ruler. The kingdom grew prosperous and people from far and wide became citizens of this famous land. But dark clouds began to gather in the skies..

Enter His Royal Highness, Suliman Noor Mahomed.

The new General appointed knights of the round table. Each brave knight was armed with a secret weapon and possessed a special set of skills. The threats soon vanished, the children were saved, the women were given their rightful place next to the men and they all lived happily ever after.

Although we may have taken many creative liberties in this fairytale version of the 13 year journey of the World Memon Organisation. In the end there is MH Omar, fairy god father of WMO who gave away a million wishes.