

Harinder Veriah Trust Award



Harinder Veriah Trust

Harinder Veriah was a young Malaysian lawyer who died in Hong Kong on January 2nd, 2000, in tragic circumstances, at the age of 33, leaving a young son, Ravi, just sixteen months, and her English husband.

Harinder was born and brought up in Petaling Jaya. She took an external London University law degree, studying part-time while working to support herself. She practised as a lawyer in Malaysia for three years before moving to England to live with her husband. There she took an LLM at King's College, London and then worked as a solicitor for Lovells, the distinguished international law firm, at their London office. In November 1998 she was seconded to work in their Hong Kong office for three years. During her time with the firm, Harinder made a huge impression and a very successful future beckoned until her untimely death.

Despite her extraordinary success, Harinder was no stranger to adversity. She lost her mother when she was six and she had a very difficult and tough childhood. Money was always extremely scarce. Far from being diminished by her experience of adversity, Harinder was ennobled by it, never forgetting or rejecting her own background of hardship, always empathising with those less fortunate than herself. She was vivacious, wise, witty, clever, adaptable, loving, compassionate, bubbling with life and energy, life-giving and life-enhancing. The trust has been created in her memory: to honour an extraordinary person and to embrace and disseminate the values that she held so dear.

More details about Harinder can be found on her website: www.harinderveriah.com.

THE AWARD

In memory of Harinder, Lovells, the international law firm for whom she worked, kindly agreed to employ a young Malaysian lawyer at their London office for a

period of up to two years. The successful candidate will be employed as a normal fee-earner and paid in sterling by reference to the market rate in London for the level of experience. The first selection process for the award took place in 2003 and the recipient of that award, Murali Ramakrishnan, commenced his two-year spell at Lovells in January 2004.

ELIGIBILITY

Candidates must be Malaysian citizens who have spent most of their life in Malaysia. They must have been admitted to the Malaysian Bar and have not less than two and not more than six years' experience. Candidates who meet these criteria but who are not presently practising lawyers will also be considered. Candidates may practice in any branch of commercial law (contentious and/or non-contentious). Candidates should have an excellent command of English, spoken and written. In the spirit of Harinder, the successful candidate will be a highly exceptional person, self-made, who has shown an ability to overcome adversity. The trustees are particularly keen to receive applications from candidates from non-privileged backgrounds. A key aim of the trust is to help such people.

SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE

The successful candidate will be required to sit and pass the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test [QLTT] (professional conduct and accounts exam only) in order to practice as a solicitor in England and Wales. S/he will probably need to move to London in early 2006, depending on when the selection committee reaches its decision. The appropriate tuition in London for the QLTT will be arranged. S/he will commence employment at Lovells shortly afterwards. Financial assistance may be provided with the airfare to London, depending on the successful candidate's circumstances, and help may also be given in finding accommodation,

LOVELLS

Lovells is the fifth largest international law firm in Europe and the sixth largest in the world. It has nearly 350 partners worldwide and over 1600 lawyers. The firm's headquarters are in London and it has 27 offices around the world, including New York, Washington, Paris, Brussels, Dusseldorf, and Frankfurt. It has six offices in Asia: Beijing, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo. More details about the firm can be found on its website: www.lovells.com.

CLOSING DATE

The closing date for the receipt of applications will be May 24th, 2005. No applications received after this date will be considered. Completed application forms should be sent to: Harinder Veriah Trust, c/o Putri Noor Shariza Noordin, Shearn Delamore & Co, 7th Floor, Wisma Hamzah-Kwong Hing, No 1, Leboh Ampang, 50100 Kuala Lumpur.

SELECTION PROCESS

The committee of management consists of Hendon Mohamed, Shariza Noordin, Dhiren Norendra and Martin Jacques. The committee, with the assistance of

Justice Dato' James Foong, will be responsible for drawing up a final shortlist of candidates based on interviews. The successful candidate will then be chosen after discussion with Lovells. A further interview may be necessary. No financial assistance will be given for travel to the interviews. The Trust reserves the right not to make a selection if it deems there to be no suitable candidate.

FURTHER DETAILS

Details of the award, together with an application form that can be downloaded, can also be found on www.harinderveriah.com.

If you have any queries, or need further copies of the application form, please write: Harinder Veriah Trust, c/o Putri Noor Shariza Noordin, Shearn Delamore & Co, 7th Floor, Wisma Hamzah-Kwong Hing, No 1, Leboh Ampang, 50100 Kuala Lumpur, or alternatively: shariza@shearndelamore.com.

Copies of the application form can also be obtained from: Catherine Eu, Bar Council Malaysia, No 13, 15 & 17, Leboh Pasar Besar, 50050 Kuala Lumpur. Tel 03-2031 3003

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Harinder Veriah Trust Award

Report on the Harinder Veriah Trust since its launching

Hendon Mohamed

It has been slightly over five years since Harinder Veriah (Hari) died in Hong Kong (in January 2000), under very tragic circumstances. Her passing left a void that is irreplaceable. She left Martin, her husband, and Ravi, her son, and a whole number of people on whom she, in her lifetime, left an indelible impact. One such group of people was Lovells, the distinguished international firm of Solicitors in London, with whom Hari worked after she left her law practice in Malaysia. She was based in their Hong Kong office when she died.

That Lovells had chosen to create this Trust in Hari's memory is a reflection of the impression and impact she left behind. In her memory, Lovells agreed to engage a young Malaysian lawyer to work at their London office for up to two years.

On 28 August 2003, the Trustees of the Trust, assisted greatly by the firm of Messrs Shearn Delamore & Co, announced the appointment of Murali Ramakrishnan as the first recipient of the Trust Award. In the opinion of the Trustees, Murali was a most deserving candidate: "excellent lawyer-material, independent of mind but alert, concerned and caring for those around him, and possessing of talent and interest beyond the law he was practising. But more than that, Murali had known what it was like to have to go against the odds and to face adversity. He impressed the Panel who interviewed him and Lovells. Though different from Hari in background and life's experiences, there was no doubt that Murali had been a survivor, and in that sense he related to Hari and something of what Hari had been through.

Murali has now been with Lovells a year. In April 2004, Cherie Booth Q.C. (wife of the British Prime Minister) hosted a reception at No 10 Downing Street in honour of the Trust. Many Malaysians who have made a life (and a name) in London were present to share the event.

It was a proud moment for all who had been involved in the Trust – even Ravi (all 7 years of him!) was privileged in giving his speech in the name of the mother he dearly loves.

I was also fortunate to have had an opportunity to visit Lovells, one of the largest international firms of Solicitors. I was both proud and delighted to be informed that Murali was doing very well in the firm and that they were extremely happy with him. For Murali, the experience itself had and will obviously been an experience to long cherish (if not to die for!).

The Trustees would wish to keep the Malaysian flag flying, not only for what it reflects on the quality of the Malaysian lawyer and the legal profession generally, but for what this would have meant to Hari. Her death will long remain a heart-tugging tragedy, but Hari did not die in vain. The rare and singular opportunity to work as a Solicitor in London, and in one of the largest international firms anywhere, is something the average young Malaysian lawyer can now dream of and hope for. In the Harinder Veriah International Trust, Hari has left a legacy we all cherish.



Harinder with her son, Ravi.

From Penang to London - A Dream Come True

Murali Ramakrishnan

Murali Ramakrishnan was the first recipient of the Harinder Veriah Trust International Award. He is now 31 years old, married with a one year old son. He practised as an Advocate in Penang from 1998 to 2003, and here he describes his first year working for Lovells in London.

My father was a postman. And so was his father. And his father. Sad but true. When I gained admission into University Malaya, my family was extremely proud. However, I had to take a loan to pay the paltry annual fee and living expenses of RM5,000. Five years in practice and having just repaid all my student debts, I was not seeing any light at the end of the tunnel.

I was rushing to meet a client on a hot evening when I received a call from London - it was Martin Jacques with news that I had been selected as the first recipient of the Harinder Veriah Trust Award. I was to sit for the Qualified Lawyers Transfer Test in London in October 2003 and start work with Lovells in January 2004. What followed this conversation was an amalgamation of happiness, anxiety and fear, which produced an unmistakable state of confusion.

The test was easy. And confidence was high. Having said our goodbyes, my wife Asha and I landed in Heathrow airport just after Christmas. Lovells was kind enough to put us up for eight weeks in a flat off Baker Street, the setting for Sherlock Holmes' investigations.

My first day at work was a daunting experience, arriving at a mammoth establishment like Lovells, spread over three buildings in Holborn Viaduct. I put on my best clothes and was extremely careful not to let a 'lah' slip out. The day however went by smoothly thanks to the friendly people in the D4, the Fraud and Insolvency Litigation group. My first month at work was spent mainly on training and acclimatising to the work environment. Lovells is an international law firm and its office in London alone comprises 900 lawyers. It is, to put it crudely, a legal factory with layers of management levels and countless corporate clients to cater to.

I imagined, before I arrived, that the single most difficult task would be familiarising myself with English law - I have a vague recollection of peering at the All England Reports when I was lost in the library. The law was surprisingly similar but the procedures were different due to the recent Woolf reforms.

The most difficult task, I found, was the simple act of integrating with the big city lawyers, i.e. my peers. English was spoken in a variety of accents, unfortunately none sounded familiar to me. London is the world in one city, so cosmopolitan it is unbelievable. However, despite its giant population, London is a lonely city, lacking the warmth of Malaysia. And part of the challenge was to blend with the city's culture and peoples. I was indeed lucky to have with me Asha and our baby, Keevan. Otherwise, I might have had to replace my suit jacket with a straight one. Martin Jacques and Ravi were however always there to help us settle in, and Asha and I owe them a great deal.

Now, I have so many friends, it is not true (an Irish expression I just learnt) but at first, breaking the ice was very difficult. Quite a number of English lawyers in Lovells today quite frequently use the words 'makan' and 'lah', sometimes together. In the past year, I assisted in several massive matters - US tobacco litigation, BAA v Ryanair and the BCCI liquidation, and the exposure has been immeasurable.

The Harinder Veriah Trust Award has been, seriously, a dream come true for me - an opportunity to work abroad in a vibrant city like London, with an international law firm like Lovells. Quite simply, the breadth and depth of work in this establishment is unparalleled with any legal practise in South East Asia.

While legal work is broadly the same as in Malaysia, though on a much bigger scale involving several jurisdictions, the legal industry, I feel, is more professional, better regulated, and possesses a larger degree of self-respect. Did I mention that the Judges in England appear impartial and intelligent? And they understand English too.

If you are a young lawyer having come from an underprivileged background, the best thing you can do for yourself is apply for the Harinder Veriah Trust Award. It is a once-in-a-lifetime, life changing experience. It changed my life and I am thankful for it.