



SEMINAR

INDIANS IN MALAYSIA: FROM BRITISH COLONIALISM TO HINDRAF

Date: Wednesday, 15 February 2012
Time: 10.00 am – 11.30 am
Venue: Seminar Room II, ISEAS

About the Speaker

Dr Carl Vadivella Belle
Independent Scholar



Carl Vadivella Belle received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Australian National University in Canberra. He served in the Australian High Commission, Kuala Lumpur between 1976 and 1979, a posting which generated a deep interest in Malaysia. His doctoral dissertation, "Thaipusam in Malaysia: A Hindu Festival Misunderstood?" was accepted by Deakin University in 2004. His professional life included work in foreign affairs and educational research and methodology. Dr Belle was the Inaugural Hindu Chaplain at the Flinders University of South Australia, but he now works as an independent scholar. He has lectured widely on religion and history, and has written extensively on religion, history, and on international affairs. He is currently completing a book on the history of Indians in Malaysia.

About the Seminar

This presentation will provide an overview of the modern history of Indians in Malaya/Malaysia from the time of British colonialism to the recent rise (and fall) of Hindraf. It will examine the arrival of Indian labour throughout the colonial period, and the formation of Indian political social and religious structures. It will show how wartime involvement in the politics of Indian nationalism provided Indians in Malaya and Singapore with an evanescent sense of identity. It will argue that the post-war Indian minority in Malaya/Malaysia has been systemically marginalized, initially by a continued Sino-Malay rivalry, and more latterly by a foundational ideology which emphasises conceptions of "race" and in particular an enduring dichotomy of "indigene"/"immigrant", a dichotomy now deepened by a widening religious divide. In closing the presentation will touch upon the rise of Hindraf, the seismic election of 8 March 2008, and the potential implications for Malaysian politics and society.

ISEAS is pleased to invite you to the Seminar.