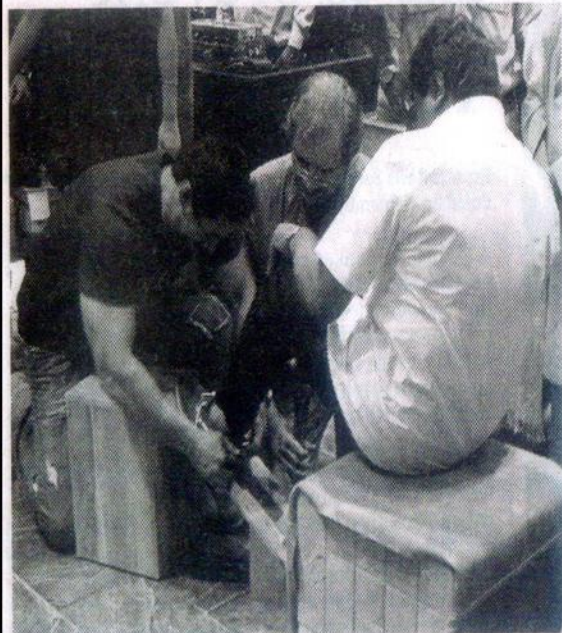


● GREEN ACTIVIST

Kovai bus conductor gets US eco award



Actor and nature-lover John Abraham (left) ties the laces of a pair of shoes that was awarded to TNSTC bus conductor and eco-activist M Yoganathan (right) during the *Unsung Hero* award ceremony in New Delhi on Sunday | **Express**

M Rafi Ahmed | ENS
Coimbatore, September 27

IT is yet another feather in the cap of Marimuthu Yoganathan, Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) bus conductor and an eco-activist, who returned from Delhi on Monday after receiving the 'Unsung Hero' award from actor John Abraham and filmmaker Mike Pandey.

The recognition from US-based footwear major Timberland was bestowed on Yoganathan for his outstanding work in planting 50,000 saplings across the city, besides creating awareness of protecting the environment among the students.

"I was shocked and surprised when Bollywood actor John Abraham laced new pair of shoes during the opening of Timberland's outlet," he said, adding that it was an unforgettable moment in his life as the

FRANKLY SPEAKING

"It's an unforgettable moment in my life to be amidst a host of dignitaries. However, I felt nervous to converse with them with my broken English," said Yoganathan. Natesan, general secretary of New Delhi Tamil Elaignar Panpattu Kazhagam, came to his rescue, as he donned the role of an interpreter

company chose to honour him at a time when he is busy with his pet project 'Uyir Vazha Oru Maram' wherein students would plant a sapling on their birthday.

Yoganathan has so far received 14 awards, including the Eco Warrior award given away by Vice-President of India Mohammed Hamid Ansari in 2008 and the Earth Matters Foundation award from Mike Pandey in

the same year. Recently, the Tamil Nadu government conferred on him the title 'Suttru Suzhal Seyal Veerar' (Eco Warrior).

"I was only too pleased to accept their recognition since I came to know that the company is strictly adhering to eco-friendly initiative on reducing carbon footprint," Yoganathan said, adding that Timberland had formed 'Earthkeepers', a group of volunteers engaged in preserving and protecting the environment across countries.

Yoganathan said he has been invited by the general manager of Aravankadu Cordite factory to educate students drawn from four schools on afforestation. And the programme is scheduled to be held on October 9.

Before signing off, the eco warrior said, "It needs two hands to make a sound. I need some sponsors for my eco project."