

Search on for seaman missing on eve of coming home

By Leon Berenger

A hunt is on for a Sri Lankan sailor missing since late September 2009 from a sea port in the United Arab Emirates, (UAE) his family and maritime officials said yesterday.

Ranjan Perera with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) said that Second Engineer Pradeep Anthony Kumar Manoharan, a father of one had made contact with his family in Colombo in September 2009 and thereafter gone missing. Despite a search by his employer, FAL Shipping Company based in the UAE together with the Sri Lankan Mission in Dubai his whereabouts still remains a mystery.

The man was also in possession of his passport and Seaman's Discharge Certificate, which goes to indicate that he was preparing to leave for Colombo, Mr. Perera said.

He had signed on the vessel in August 2008 and his home leave was due since the work period of one year had already been completed, he added.

A list of personal belongings later sent to the family in Colombo included an assortment of toys confirming the thinking that the man was preparing to head home at the shortest possible notice, he said.

Investigations have also revealed that his employer was prompt in the payment of wages and other dues totaling some Rs. 800,000 per month and therefore there was no necessity



K.R. Swarnalatha with her son

for him to abandon his employment, Mr. Perera pointed out.

He said ITF agents overseas had been contacted and their assistance sought to help trace the missing seafarer.

"I have been every where - the External Affairs Ministry, the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau ((SLFEB) - but without any success, lamented his wife, K. R. Swarnalatha, a resident of Hunupitiya Wattala.

"The last time he spoke to me was in September 2009 and he was preparing to come home on leave. He had done a lot of purchasing for our toddler and the home. That is the last time I heard from him. Since then there has been total 'radio silence,'" she added.