

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Of rains, drains & Metrowater
- A telecom revolution
- A look at Tranquebar
- Help from UK prisoners
- The divine doctor

Vol. XI No. 07

FREE ISSUE

July 16-31, 2001

Marine park still a dream

It was 21 years ago that the Tamil Nadu Government issued a G.O. to establish in the Gulf of Mannar India's first Marine National Park. Ever since, development of this biosphere reserve has been progressing at snail's pace.

The Gulf of Mannar is rich with unique coral formations, marine life, molluscs and tropical fish. Sea cucumbers, dolphins and the endangered

in Ramanathapuram and nine in Tuticorin Districts, bordering the proposed park.

There are altogether about 60,000 fisherfolk living in these villages of whom more than 14,000 are active fishermen. A Trust has been formed by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation to promote sustainable alternative livelihood options (as part of a management strategy) for the poor when con-

Meanwhile, *Fishing Chimes* adds, over-exploitation of the marine fishery resources has started giving warning signals of the impending dangers that will affect marine life in the Gulf of Mannar and the Tuticorin seas. The disappearance of some species and the dwindling numbers of fish, like shark, have been reported. Landings of seer, tuna and other popular fish have alarmingly declined. The reason for the dismal landings is that even the young fish have been caught indiscriminately during the past 15 years.

The pearl fisheries have become history. Mindless mining of coral continues. The spurt in exports has led to over-fishing of sea cucumber, and the sacred chanks are exploited indiscriminately. Sea turtles and dugongs have been reduced to a residual population.

(Continued on page 6)

• by A Special Correspondent

dugong (the 'mermaid') all find a home in the waters around the 21 islands covered by the Park.

About 3,600 species of fauna and flora have been identified in the area by various marine fisheries research organisations. The fauna is said to be one of the richest in the whole of the Indo-West Pacific region and in dire need of protection. But little has been done by successive State Governments over the last two decades.

Mangroves still thrive in Shingle, Kurusadai, Pullivasal, Poomarichan, Manoli and Manoliputti Islands. The coastline from Mandapam camp to Kanniyakumari has about 17,125 productive hectares of algae, with a crop estimated at about 22,500 tonnes. The Gulf of Mannar area is also rich in sea grasses.

There are about 120 species of coral in this region. In spite of a State Government ban, large scale quarrying of coral has been going on in the coastal areas of Tuticorin District and the coral is utilised as the raw material in cement factories and brick kilns.

Exploitation of marine resources in the in-shore waters had been the sole occupation of several thousand fishing families living along the coast in the Gulf. There are 47 fishing villages along the coast - 38 are

servation and management of the park and biosphere reserve get underway.

Rs. 35 crore has been given as a grant by the Global Environment Facility to implement the Gulf of Mannar biosphere reserve preservation project. But no one is quite sure how it has been spent.

In spite of our country possessing a cultural heritage unsurpassed in the world, only a fraction of it is protected by the Centre and States. The government undertakes the responsibility of just about 10,000 buildings - a figure that pales in comparison to, for example, the over 600,000 buildings that enjoy protection in one form or another in Great Britain - a country approximately the size of Uttar Pradesh!

To embark upon the process of identifying buildings for protection, listing of monuments becomes a primary and urgent task. Preparing a documentation of heritage buildings worthy of preservation is a useful exercise, of value to historians, architects, planners, sociologists and the interested layperson. Such exercises have been carried out in most countries where there is any perceived threat to

heritage. Since a large part of India's cultural heritage has so far remained undocumented, listing of the built heritage has been recognised as a principal task by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

recognition of heritage, identification of potential projects by national and international aid organisations and cultural foundations.

In spite of the obvious benefits of such a list, several people still question the necessity of

• by Ratish Nanda
Consultant for Delhi's heritage
buildings' listing project

Such inventories are a primary tool for the conservation and protection of the built heritage. Strategies are meaningless without knowledge and understanding of what exists. Inventories are useful for prioritisation of conservation, identification of the potential and routes for tourism, planning development projects such as infrastructure and education, improving public awareness and

preparing 'lists' like this. 'Why list a few buildings?', it is often asked. While every answer raises further questions and a list such as this invariably leads to some buildings being left out, it is important to note that the world over, effective protection of historic buildings has invariably depended on the creation of an inventory.

In choosing buildings to be listed, attention has to be paid

to any special value within certain types for architectural, planning or historical reasons. Structures which are important for technological innovation also need to be listed. In most cases a building is listed as a whole unless otherwise mentioned, which includes its setting as well as a description of façade, interiors, any fixtures, layout, gardens, courtyard and building elements.

In Delhi where a listing exercise has been completed, over 1200 buildings of archaeological, architectural and historical significance have been documented and plotted on zonal maps. In the absence of effective legislation, the attempt primarily has been to document the fast disappearing built heritage of the city in a simple, readable format. Once a building is

(Continued on page 7)



• Three streets in one of the best residential areas in town demonstrate how the best of planning can go awry. One street is encroached on with construction - some of it quite pukka - on both sides. The next street has encroachments of a different sort as well as considerable construction 'protecting' terraces. And the third street has been made into a dead end with a permanent structure in place. Yet the three parallel roads, leading off a main thoroughfare, were undoubtedly meant to connect with the road parallel to the main road. A bit difficult given all this construction, wouldn't you say? (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

The importance of being listed

Leading a telecom revolution

For Ashok Jhunjhunwala*, Head of the Electrical Engineering Department, IIT Chennai, life has always been fired with a vision, a vision of a revolution in the telecom networking in India, particularly rural India. His goal: 100 million telecom and Net connections to wire up Indian villages. It at last looks like his dogged persistence and commitment will win, in spite of the tremendous odds.

To this end he has put together a team of faculty members at IIT-M to form the Telecommunications and Computer Networking (TeNet) group (from 3 or 4 initially it is now a 10-12-strong group). The group has developed various technologies, including the corDECT wireless in local loop (WLL). Their efforts aim at

R&D focus in developed countries shifts from cost reduction to enhancing the accessory services and features because the price is affordable to over 90% of households in the West. But in our country the focus of R&D must be to bring down the per line cost to be able to provide more lines to as wide a section of the population as possible. The corDECT Wireless Local Loop developed by our team at IIT will make this possible."

"This", he goes on, "is actually the product of a thought process that began more than a decade ago, two of my colleagues Bhaskar Ramamurthi and Timothy Gonsalves, contributing to it. It has been a tremendous learning experience - about India, its rural areas, about people and about tech-

• by
Shobha Menon

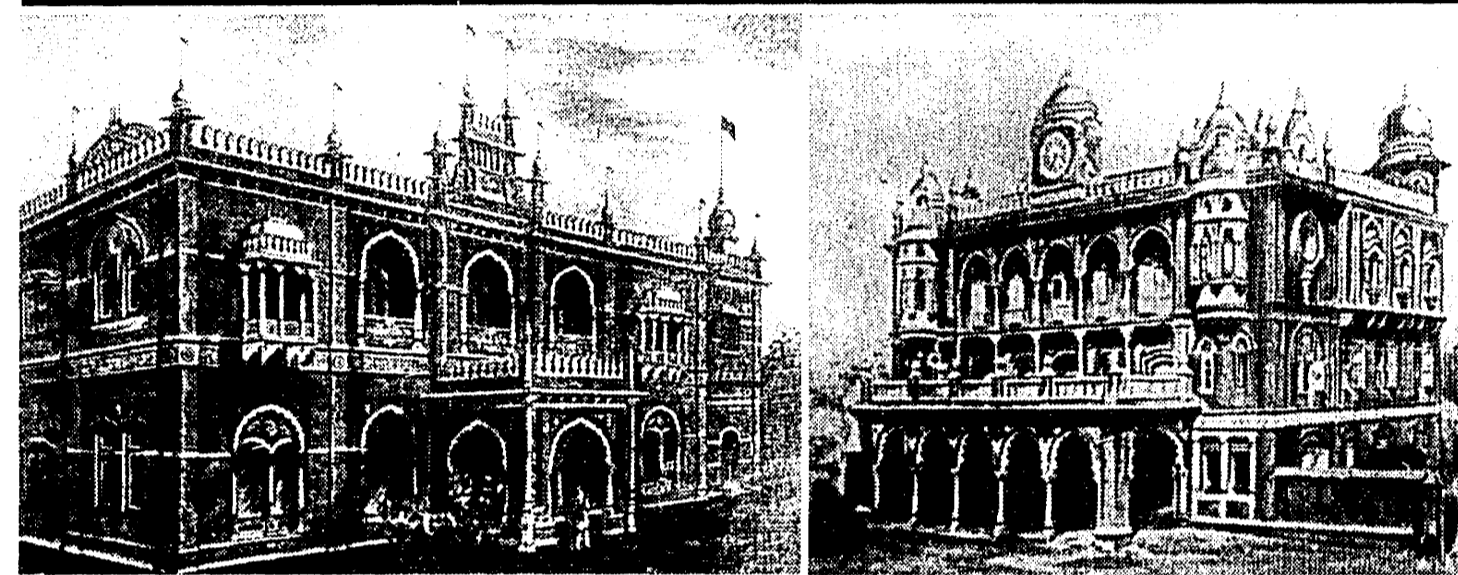
bringing down the cost of telecom and Internet connection from the current Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 10,000 per line!

Says Jhunjhunwala, "Statistics show that in 1991, both India and China had about 5.5 million telephone connections. Today, China has about 200 million telephones (an addition of about 30 million lines each year), while India has only about 30 million telephones in all. A telephone line in India that costs about Rs. 30,000 to install, will need at least a Rs. 1000 per month billing to break even. Which means that it is out of reach for about 97% of the Indian population. The

nology. How to fit all these various factors together has been the question!" It was this conundrum that led to a major breakthrough. "Initially we would discuss various ideas and strategies as a team, which has slowly and steadily grown in size. Our views have become much sharper and clearer over the years. And in the last two years we have formulated a way of wiring through a business model, which I'm positive can make a difference in rural India."

And here is how. TeNet, along with firms it has incubated - Midas Communications, Banyan Networks are two of them - has formed a Trust and floated a company, n-Logue, to push this technology. n-Logue has been set up to provide voice and Internet services in every under-served village and small town in India, in a way that is both self-sustaining and profitable, by providing the technology and business model that support such a mission. The critical success factors for this to happen are appropriate and enabling technologies, dense network penetration and a local franchisee who will run the enterprise as a business.

It is a decentralised model of operation (inspired by the cable TV operations in India), whereby it will identify and partner with a local entrepreneur (called a Local Service Partner or LSP), in every place that it wishes to operate. Along



Our NEW (top) is of an OLD landmark building on Mount Road that was transformed in recent years and of a comparatively new highrise that arose on the debris of another OLD landmark that adjoined the former.

Our OLD views of these two buildings near what was Round Tanu are from A Guide to Madras, 1903, when they were Whiteaway, Laidlaw's (left, above) and T.R. Tawker & Sons (right, above) respectively.

Whiteaway, Laidlaw's, a renowned British commercial name in India from the late 19th Century, opened its Madras branch in 1901 in the new building it built on Mount Road. This building was ranked alongside with other fine Whiteaway, Laidlaw buildings that existed in Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon and Colombo. The firm's business expanded to 20 establishments in the East, extending from Murrree to Karachi, Calcutta to Bombay and from Moulmein to Singapore.

The spacious new building had 15,000 sq. ft. on the ground floor besides 1,500 sq. ft. of gallery space. There was a large suite of rooms on the second floor for living quarters. The firm was a department store of sorts, but was best known for its drapery and outfitting business. ...& THE NEW

The company employed about 60 to 100 shirtmakers at a time. The property was bought by the Swadesamitran, the pioneering Tamil daily, and C.R. Srinivasan, the proprietor, named it Victory House, when the war in Europe came to an end in 1945 (see the OLD below, copied from the photo albums of the Tamil Nadu Archives & Historical Research. When the Swadesamitran began to struggle, Victory House was sold to the VGP Group in 1975. The building was renovated and its facade was changed, but the new owners continue to keep the name.

To the east of Whiteaway, Laidlaw's was an even older building, the home of the renowned Gujarati jewellers and diamond merchants, T.R. Tawker & Sons, who held for three generations the honour of special appointments to the Maharajas of Mysore, Travancore and Vizianagaram and to the Gaekwad of Baroda. The firm was also patronised by the monarchs of neighbouring countries and the British nobility.

With an exterior of red brick with stone dressing crowned with a turret sporting a 4-feet dial wallclock and Pallavaram granite columns, the building was designed by Henry Irwin and built by T. Manavala Chetty in the 1890s. The interior was 45 feet by 30 and 30 feet in height and had a teakwood frieze running around the room above the showcases. There were also rooms adjoining the building providing accommodation for the local craftsmen employed by the firm.

From the Tawkers, the building passed into the hands of Kasturi Estates in 1931. The South Indian Cooperative Insurance bought the building in 1948 and on the nationalisation of insurance in 1956, it became the property of the Life Insurance Corporation. Its ground floor was once occupied by Indian Airlines before it moved to its new premises in 1979. The SICI Building was pulled down the next year and a new and tasteless building was built by LIC, which occupies a part of it and rents the rest out as textile showroom. (Photographs and text by RAJIND N. CHRISTY.)

with the LSPs, n-Logue will set up an Access Centre to provide the last mile access and assist them in obtaining the connectivity to the Internet and telecom backbones. Each Access Centre will cater to 500 to 1000 customers in a radius of 25 km (about 2000 sq. km). The LSP would provide a connection in every small town or vil-

lage in that area. n-Logue will set up about 2500 Access Centres across India in the next three years. This translates into a total of one million voice and Internet subscribers.

In this way, n-Logue hopes to encourage a number of small entrepreneurs in all the small towns and villages where it has its operations and makes the

business of spreading Internet awareness a much faster, more fleet-footed operation.

In villages, there would be an additional business opportunity in setting up village kiosks that offer both telephone and Internet services to the local community. Through its LSP,

(Continued on page 8)

A Danish look at Tranquebar

• This article on Tranquebar is mainly based on the author's studies in the town in 1982 and on the work of a survey team of young Danish architects and historians who spent three months in Tranquebar in 1985. The author was a member of the Danish steering committee for the work.

The same committee is continuing its efforts for the preservation of Tranquebar and had hoped to participate in the restoration of important monuments in the town in cooperation with Indian colleagues in 1994 and the years following. Unfortunately, little progress was made on this, but there's now hope of greater progress with the Danish government indicating to the Government of Tamil Nadu its willingness to participate in any plan to restore the town in a classical manner (Madras Musings, June 16th).

Both from an Indian and a Danish point of view, Tranquebar is of great cultural and architectural importance. This warrants a wholehearted effort for the preservation of the remaining buildings and planned care of the urban unit that gives Tranquebar its unique character.

An important criterion for the success of such preservation work is, however, reasonable development of the town, which at present suffers from stagnation and, in some respects, even from decline. It is of little use to restore houses when they cannot be filled with vital activities afterwards. It is, therefore, necessary that this somewhat remote region is developed in a planned manner by the authorities. The buildings worthy of preservation could then be used for many different purposes, making respectful renovation and modernisation a reasonable proposition.

General plan for the restoration

A good basis for the preservation work would be to draw up a general plan for Tranquebar's urban architectural relationships and valuable individual buildings. But in surveying the town as a first step to make a quality evaluation of all buildings, it would not be necessary to start from scratch, because existing documentation (Ib Andersen, Sten Nilsson, H. H. Engqvist, DAL-Gruppen et al) provides a wealth of information about the old Danish buildings. To understand the town as a whole, however, it would be necessary to carry out a general examination of the quarters with traditional Indian houses. The interplay between buildings from two different cultures within the same town is one of the most interesting aspects of Tranquebar.

The next step should be to identify the sections worthy of preservation within fixed boundaries of the town and rules laid down for their care.

The plan should prevent any future building development obliterating the contours of the historic town. As far as is possible, a broad buffer zone should be maintained in front of the gate and the line of the town wall.

• by **HANS MUNK HANSEN**
in *Aspects of Conservation in Urban India*,
edited by Sten Nilsson, University Press, Sweden, 1995.

Within the town it is quite obvious that the important east-west axis, comprising the major buildings of the Danish period, constitutes a unique feature worthy of preservation. Starting on the land side, these are the Landporten, Kongensgade

To assist future builders of new houses in this section of the town, a number of type proposals could be prepared for facades, which combine consideration for their historic neighbours with reasonable requirements for any modern



The Great Entrance to Tranquebar - and to King's Street. (Photographs by RAJIND N. CHRISTY.)

(King's Street) with a number of still existing 18th Century houses with colonnades or columned porticos, and the two churches. Next comes the big Parade Ground, with Dansborg (the Fort) the town's dominant building and, lastly, the dramatic intersection of the axis and the sea.

There is no doubt that the highest priority must be given to the preservation of this part of Tranquebar. It is vitally impor-

tant to ensure that the general character of the street and the Parade Ground and their mutual relationship do not suffer damage. Therefore, new buildings and major alterations to existing houses should be subject to regulations concerning the height of buildings, the adaptation of facades to the existing architecture, including the choice of materials, colours, etc.

Nor should there be any weakening of the powerful effect of the building mass of the citadel, experienced in relation to the considerably smaller buildings on the other sides of the Parade Ground.

Besides the part of the town



Dansborg, the fort of Tranquebar (Tarangambadi).

described here, there are other small areas in Tranquebar that also deserve protection - for example the big school complex on Admiralgade (Admiral Street). For the town in general and the areas worthy of preservation in particular, it is important that future development is not allowed to result in a confusion of new street furniture, ugly surfacing and a glut of signboards. With planned control of these renewals and certain restrictions, the worst excesses can be held in check.

The preservation planning outlined here can only be implemented through the Indian authorities, and the proposed regulations must be compatible with the framework of Indian legislation.

* * *

Dansborg and Landporten are already listed as protected monuments under Indian legislation. But continued and unified efforts on behalf of historical Tranquebar will require a register of all houses worthy of preservation. Such a register would include all relevant data and photographs of the various objects of interest. Experience from other countries shows that the very fact that a building appears in a publication of this nature sharpens the owner's interest in caring for his property.

In the case of Tranquebar, a large part of the work of such

registration has already been done. The material only needs some supplementation and translation into Tamil and English. The next step should be to provide proposals for individual care of the buildings worthy of preservation. This could include an analysis of the original appearance and might result in a sketch proposal for a careful restoration.

In addition, a simply worded publication should be prepared for the ordinary owners of historic houses and local tradesmen which, mainly pictorially, draws attention to the buildings' architectural qualities and gives guidance on the best way of maintaining them.

All the recommendations given here are aimed at a professionally competent and targeted planning of a rescue action for Tranquebar. However, the vital question of the financing of the actual restoration works has not yet been resolved.

Meanwhile, the time it takes for all the pieces to fall into place should be used to preserve the status quo, and especially to prevent thoughtless demolition of important buildings.

A vital aspect of this as well as to ensure a successful result of the efforts for preservation is to get Tranquebar's population to retain their interest in the cause and to participate actively in the care of their historical heritage.

Want to muse with MUSINGS?

If you would like to be put on Madras Musings' mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, CHENNAI-600 006.

Name

Address

Note: Overseas postage extra. Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Gulf: Rs. 375/year. US & Europe: Rs 425/year. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

Leading a telecom revolution

(Continued from Page 4)

n-Logue offers low-priced village kiosks as a commercially viable package, run like the ubiquitous urban Internet cafes but with the ease and simplicity of a PCO booth.

These kiosks would be equipped with a PC, a power supply and an Internet/voice connection and office application software in the local language. They will provide telephone service at the standard DOT rates (with appropriate discount when a kiosk is operated as a PCO) and the Internet charges will not be more than Rs. 15-25 per hour (as against typical charges of Rs.30-40 per hour in urban areas). n-Logue will provide training, support and assistance in all technical issues and will handle issues around connectivity to the backbone.

Since the technology is easy to deploy and support, the LSP can concentrate on selling the service, creating awareness about the Internet, etc. They could make additional revenues through value-added services like hosting web pages and providing local content. They would need an operating knowledge of the technology, enough to maintain a satisfactory quality of service. The kiosk operator can augment the income he gets from selling Internet services by using the PC to do job typing, give computer classes, etc.

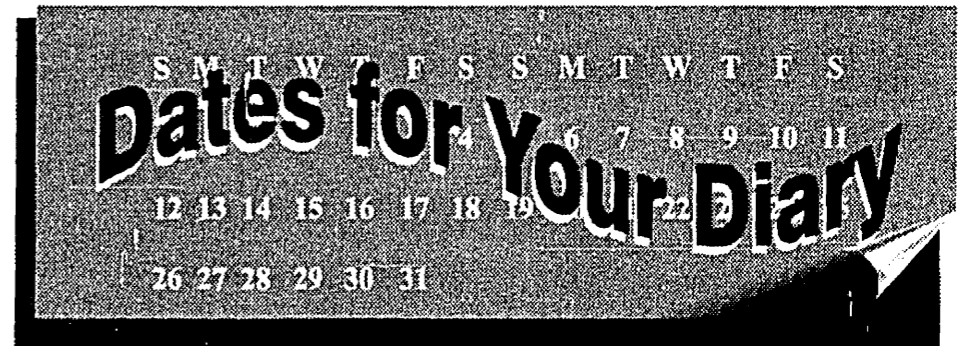
Critical to the success of n-Logue's business model is the ability to roll out these Access Centres in a very short time. Facilitating this is the adoption

of flexible partnerships with various organisations having similar interests. To this end, n-Logue has partnered with large corporates with rural interests (such as EID Parry), with District and State Governments, and with Foundations and Trusts. Some of the ongoing projects are in Nellikuppam, Cuddalore District (with EID Parry), Melur, Madurai District (with MIT, Harvard and the I-Gyan Foundation), Dhar District (with the State Government), Durg District (with the State Government), Sikar District (with the State Government) etc. n-Logue has also signed an MOU with Satyam Infoway to provide bandwidth for these projects.

As Jhunjhunwala says, "The scientist who has innovative ideas might not have the skill to market his invention or product. From innovative ideas to R&D to marketing and selling the products developed, each aspect requires careful handling. Obviously we at IIT cannot do everything. Therefore came the idea of asking other interested ex-alumni to pitch in. In fact, each of the compa-

nies we've incubated was actually born in these very IIT laboratories. For two years these companies operated from our Electrical Engineering Department, to move out only when they had enough confidence and expertise to be on their own. But ultimately it is the 500 and odd people who are behind this whole project who matter. It is the ability to inspire people and get them going that counts!

"As for the question of Government support, there is no one answer. There have been periods when things have been made very difficult. Which is rather ironic, considering the national support that you see for any new technology abroad. Did you know that the US banned entry of the GSM mobile for eight years to nurture their own IS-95 (CDMA) technology? Or that South Korea banned the use of GSM in their own country so that LG and Hyundai could become leaders in the IS-95 terminal market? If the Government cannot provide support within India to indigenous Indian technology, we will never be leaders, at best we can be foot soldiers!



July 18 and 19: Two-day festival marking the 15th anniversary of the Madras Council's International Dance Alliance featuring many talented young dance groups (6 on each day) from India and Europe (6.15 p.m. at Music Academy).

Till July 20: Artistic depiction in line of the various aspects of Marundeeswarar Temple, Tiruvanniyur by J. Prabhakar. (At Manasthala, 10 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.)

July 20-22: Concerts featuring Sowmiya and Sudha Ragu-nathan. (6.30 p.m. Narada Gana Sabha.)

From July 21: Exhibition of sculpture and painting by French artist C.A.B. (At Alliance Francaise.)

"But I realise there is no point complaining, so I don't give up very easily. If you strongly believe that the truth is with you, you just carry on. Obstacles will be there, and even if scores of people are waiting to see you fail, you've got to go on and not give up. Show them it is possible, and then you win!"

After all, Jhunjhunwala should know, he's seen almost everything that can happen to a new idea this past decade.

July 22: Kite flying competition for everyone. (At DakshinaChitra.)

From July 24: The Forum Art Gallery presents an exhibition of paintings and illustrations by A.V. Illango based on *Ponniyin Selvan* (from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Russian Cultural Centre).

July 28: About dance... Lecture by Patrick Gleyse and Nirmala, choreographers and dancers. (At Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m.)

Patrick Gleyse, choreographer and dancer, former member of the famous Maurice Bejart's "Ballet of the XXth Century" and Opera de Marseilles, state-qualified teacher of dance, and Nirmala, choreographer and danseuse of South Indian tradition, disciple of guru Muthuswamy Pillai, propose a discussion on the universality of dance. Illustrated by a film of Erich Hortnagl.

July 28-August 4: An exhibition of paintings by Kavita Deuskar of Hyderabad. (At Artworld, 6.30 p.m.)

August 1-8: Exhibition-cum-sale of terracotta by K.B. Jinan of Kumbham Murals, Nilambur. (At Manasthala, 10 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.)

August 4: Clay Play — to let loose the creativity of children of all ages. (At Manasthala, 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.)

August 5: Terracotta workshop for children and adults conducted by K.B. Jinan. (At Manasthala, 10 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.)

August 18-October 6: Workshop on puppet-making for children. Registration forms are available at Manasthala.

The last Saturday of every month, Chitra and Vasudevan are at Manasthala to facilitate any number of beautiful creations with paper at the Origami Club. Registration forms are available at Manasthala.

Answers to Quiz

1. Manipur; 2. Kadalundi; 3. Salem stainless steel roofing; 4. Slobodan Milosevic; 5. He became the first to win a crore on KBC Junior show; 6. Jack Lemmon; 7. Muhammad Rafiq Tarar; 8. Batata (Birla-Tata-AT&T); 9. It would be the world's first privately piloted spaceship. It has been built by

aspiring spaceman Steve Bennett of United Kingdom.

* * *

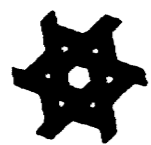
10. The Statue of King George V; 11. C.R.Pattabhi Raman; 12. Madras Medical College.

* * *

13. Nilgiris (Rufus-breasted)

Laughing Thrush; 14. Maruthanayagam Pillai; 15. She is the first student of the State's transit school camp, run as part of the Child Labour Elimination Project, to clear the exam; 16. Operation Veerappan; 17. K.V. Mahadevan; 18. A. Ravindranath; 19. Raj Bhavan; 20. Madurai and Vellore prisons.

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations:



Amalgamations Group

APCOM

Apcom Computers Ltd.



Ashok Leyland



Bank of Madura Ltd.



India Cements Ltd.

KASTURI &
SONS
LTD.

LOKAVANI
HALLMARK PRESS
PVT. LTD.

Rane

Rane Group



MURUGAPPA
GROUP

The
SANMAR
Group



Sundaram Finance
Limited



Sundram Fasteners
Limited



TATA
Consultancy
Services



Thiru Arooran
Sugars Ltd

TVS-SUZUKI

TVS Suzuki
Ltd.