WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MUSINGS TO THE RESERVE TO THE RESERV

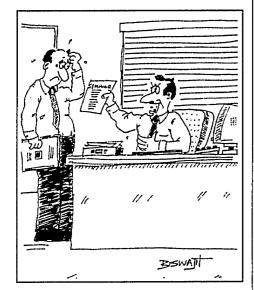
INSIDE

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September 16-30, 2002

Vol. XII No.11

a-MUSING



You know why no one came to the seminar on "Parking Space in Chennai"?... Because you didn't say it in big, bold letters, "Car Parking Available"!

Watch that space!

In Chennai today, the fate of any proposed outing is decided by One Single Factor.

The answer to the question: "Is it easy to find parking?"

If it's a "Yes", go ahead, get dressed, and take the city by storm.

If the answer is "No", you are probably going to stay home, gazing glumly at the TV, or pretending to read a good book.

People who are willing to brave chaotic traffic and nightmarish roads blench at the thought of finding parking for their vehicles.

Even the importance of one's presence at social occasions pales besides the worry over parking.

"Getting married ... and at that particular chatram?" you tell your friend, "Well, I'm happy for you, but I cannot grace the occasion. Where would I leave my car?"

Families with wailing hungry kids raising hell in the back seat drive briskly by certain hotels. They'd rather bear with the noise than face the hazards of trying to find a space to park. And have you seen people trying to quickly slip their vehicles into a parking space even as the earlier arrival is slowly trying to reverse into the spot?

Talking about being viciously competitive!

Every day, new vehicles hit the road, but nobody knows where to park them.

Sorry, Chennai ... you have no choice.

You'd better learn to walk again.

Ranjitha Ashok

Eco-sensitive areas in

FREE ISSUE

need of protection

(By A Special Correspondent)

With Government planning to set up a committee to monitor the environment, *Madras Musings* recently asked Prof. P.J. Sanjeeva Raj which he would consider the most environmentally sensitive spots in and around Chennai and which needed urgent conservation and protection. His list is as follows:

I. Beaches, like the Marina, San Thomé and Besant Nagar Beaches.

(Save them for fisherfolk, the public and turtles).

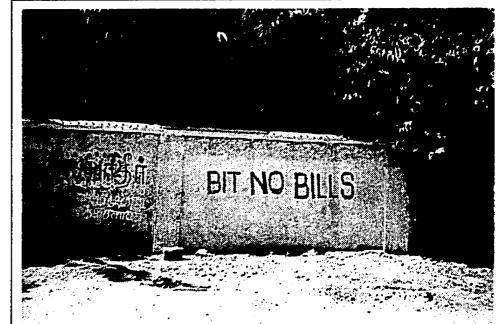
II. Beach-Erosion, as at Tiruvotriyur, Koraikuppam and Kovalam.(Save the beach and the fisherfolk).

II. Creeks, like the Ennore, Kovalam and Pulicat Creeks. (Save from sand-bar formation, pollution and fish-kills).

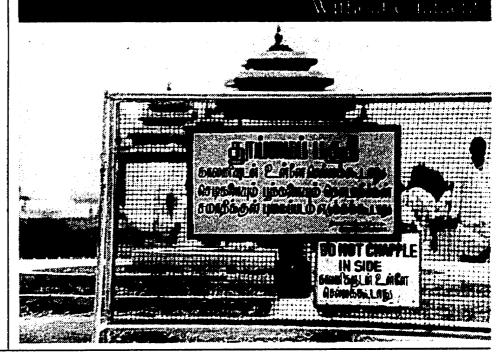
IV. River-Mouths, like those of the Adyar, Cooum and Kortailiyar.

(Save from siltation and from being cess-pools).

(Continued on page 8)



SINES OF THE TYMES



Heritage lessons from Mumbai

(By A Special Correspondent)

Mumbai set the lead for the country with its Heritage Regulations five years ago and with its subsequent awareness campaign spearheaded by conservationists like Shyam Chainani, Rahul Mehrotra and Sharada Dwivedi. But in recent months there have appeared some blips that should send a warning to conservationists in other cities planning Heritage Regulations and States intending to introduce Heritage Acts.

One issue is the composition of the Heritage Commitee. The most recent committee appointed in Mumbai has NO conservation architects or those with a proven record of heritage conservation on it.

The Committee comprises the former chief secretary and

municipal commissioner as its chairman, an environmentalist, a structural engineer, a city historian, the director of the Prince of Wales Museum, two architects, the chief architect to the state government and a BMC officer not below the rank of chief engineer, who will be the member-secretary.

Members co-opted by the last committee, a researcher-writer, an architect-academician, a conservation architect and a retired urban planner have not been reinducted.

Much to the ire of heritage lovers, conservation architects are again conspicuous by their absence from the committee.

By excluding conservation architects from the committee, the government has contra-

vened its own gazette notification, stipulating that of the two architects on the core committee, one must be a heritage conservation architect and the other an urban design specialist or having experience in conservation architecture. It also says that all co-opted members "must have special knowledge of the subject matter".

The other matter of concern in Mumbai conservation circles is the insurance of heritage buildings. Only a few privately owned heritage structures — notably the Deutsche Bank building (former Tata Palace), Standard Chartered Bank building, ANZ Grindlays building, Bombay House, Hong Kong Bank building and American Express — are well-insured

and well-equipped to deal with fire and other accidents.

However, neither the BMC building nor the GPO, both public institutions and Grade I heritage structures, is insured. Nor is their grand Gothic neighbour, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, nor for that matter the Mumbai University's Rajabai Tower and the Western Railway headquarters. "The country's insurance policy being what it is, it does not allow the insurance of its own buildings, not even those on the heritage lists. It will take another 20 years for government-owned properties to be insured, as in advanced countries," says a Central Railway official.

(Continued on page 8)

A CLEAN Marina is a Singaara Marina

to clean the Marina, on provid-Tnder the last Government — and its Corporation — a Singaara Chennai was the focus. That it did not materialise is another matter. This Government now appears to want to ensure that there'll be a Singaara Marina. And The Man From Madras Musings truly hopes that the Government will make it happen; certainly, taking on a much smaller project gives it every opportunity of succeeding, if only all concerned put their hearts into it. MMM understands that the embellishments; what it requires

Chennai Metropolitan Developis protection by man of Nature's ment Authority has been entrusted with the project to beautify the Marina and that it plans to constitute a Beach Management Committee to undertake the multicrore task. With the parks and waterways of the city also being looked at for improvement. MMM feels committees will not do. What is needy is a virtually autonomous Open Spaces Authority to function independently of the regular government set-up. It would need to be an Authority with representatives from Government, the private sector, NGOs and independent experts to get the most out of it. If the Open Spaces Author-

ity remains a distant dream, MMM hopes that the Beach Management Committee at least adopts a broader outlook and does not adopt a top-down approach that the State's Tourism Policy seems intent on doing. Under the State Tourism Policy, three committees are being planned, an Investment Guidance Cell, a High Power Tourism Committee and a State Tourism Promotion Board. All the private sector, NGOs or individual experts. All of them, except for the political leadership, are loaded with bureaucrats with no tourism experience at all and, worse, always liable to transfer, usually no sooner they acquire some expertise. MMM hopes that if a Beach Management Committee is formed that it will have at least several Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and Vendors' Associations, representatives of NGOs

The priority

Whether, in the final analysis, we get a Beach Management Committee or an Open Spaces Authority, there is much that can be done within the present framework if only the CMDA gets all those concerned together, provides them funding and monitors their implementing what is essential.

that have shown interest in

beaches and the environment,

and any individual with experi-

ence in tourism and leisure

As far as The Man From Madras Musings is concerned, the Marina as it is needs little improvement to beautify it. If we just ensure that it is a CLEAN Marina, it will immediately become a beautiful Marina. Every bit of money spent on manpower

ing adequate eco-friendly toilets and getting people to use them. and finding alternatives to the present bathing-and-'dhobi' ghat on the beach would be well worth it, for these alone will ensure a

clean and, automatically, more beautiful Marina. All this, it must also be emphasised, needs to be done without changing the character of the beach, certainly by not building on it such 'beautifying' embellishments as fountains etc. Beautification of a natural space does not require man-made

At the same time, it must be remembered a major 'lung' of the city is also a place of rest and recreation for the people and that, among the amenities needed to be provided them, are eating facilities and recreational facilities for children. Food courts and space for food and knickknack vendors are certainly essential for public spaces like the Marina. But how these should be developed without affecting the ambience of the area is the most difficult task and needs to be examined not by official engineers but designers with greater sensitivity to the environment. And this is where many a design institute could help - even without fee, as part of its social

It should also be remembered that apart from food sold in food courts and at vendors' kiosks where some degree of control could be maintained on keeping the beach clean – public spaces like this will inevitably have people bringing their own food involved with international and drink and there will also be tourism, at least in neighbouring ment. But what is necessary is a hawkers. The Marina will not be countries like Sri Lanka, The wider discussion of the policy the Marina without this continuing lifestyle. Thus, cleaning operations will have to be on a round-the-clock basis to all

intents and purposes. It is no use saying the Marina will be clean by 10 a.m. every day and be left to its devices till the next day. Much use of the Marina is made from around 6 a.m. - and that's by when it should be clean. Similarly, it begins to draw bigger crowds by 5 p.m. and then again by 8 p.m., by each of which times it should be clean. Thus, cleaning - even under the lights - would need to start around 4 a.m. and go on through the day and evening. And that is the area where MMM feels the maximum expenditure needs to be spent.

Another aspect that needs looking into is the need for lifeguards from dawn to dusk along the waterline and a couple of buoy-enclosed areas of sea where safe bathing could be permitted.

Constant cleaning of the beach, providing eco-friendly infrastructure for the people (such as toilets, vendors' kiosks, food courts and wastebins) and eco-friendly recreational equipment, and safe bathing facilities are the priorities. Embellishments are not necessary at all. The present garden space and promenades are more than adequate and need only to be maintained constantly

Traffic question

There is however, one other question that needs to be paid attention to. And that is the burgeoning vehicular traffic. If the Marina becomes a better place, more would want to use it. And even if it does not become a better place, it will every year attract increasing vehicular traffic. Where is the parking for all these vehicles?

There is already talk of widening Kamaraj Salai for traffic and that could well be at the expense of the promenade, but must NEVER be. Suggestions like two and three-tiered highways, marring the skyline – and going against Coast Zone Regulations – are meant only for the silly season. But whatever the season, parking will remain a problem that will have its affect on the Marina - and this certainly needs study right from the beginning as plans are drawn up to make the Marina a better place.

Whose policy!

glimpse The Man From Madras Musings has had of the Government's Tourism Policy, a consequence of its

SHORT **SNAPPY**

stated commitment to Tourism, has MMM wondering who evolved this policy. Was it the bureaucrats of the Tourism Department and Corporation or did they have inputs from people Maldives, Thailand and Malav-

Certainly, there are some welcome features about the policy, particularly the reduced focus on pilgrim or temple towns and traditional cultural heritage and an increased focus on leisure and 'adventure' tourism. But there is still not enough of a focus on beach and backwaters tourism, given the long coastline we have, or heritage tourism that will attract an international audience. It is nice to see some attention paid to Tranquebar - that would appeal to the Scandinavians, particularly if attention was paid to the beach too - but Pulicat, Nagapattinam and Covelong could have had as much attention

paid to them. Another aspect of the policy is that it constantly talks of development, particularly suggesting building new 'attractions'. Most international tourists are more interested in what you have by way of heritage, particularly if it is well maintained, and not additions to it. What is needed, for instance, is the complete emptying of the core area of Mahabalipuram, leaving the tourist with none of the 'new' structures or 'encroachments' to contend with, no harassment by guides, hawkers, beggars etc., no vehicular traffic and no gates to

the monuments. All these have SEA

made Mahabalipuram an eco-disaster and reduced the pleasure of the foreign visitors seeing it for the first time. 'Development' similar to this in other heritage sites, like Tranquebar, could easily lead to a similar unpleasant situation.

The saddest thing about the policy is, as MMM has mentioned above, the approach appears to be a top-down one with Government, if we go by the committees it is planning to run tourism with, taking the view that it knows best how to make a success of tourism and that no one outside the circle of bureaucrats and politicians knows what is good for Tamil Nadu Tourism. The attitude is one of, "We'll give you concessions to invest in what we think is best" instead of one of "We'll give you concessions to invest in what we BOTH think is best".

Finally, as MMM has said before, tourism has to be thought of in different segments – foreign tourists who bring in money, domestic tourists prepared to spend money on holidays, and tourists on pilgrimage who spend little. Different destinations with different facilities for each have to be kept in mind. Particularly, the thought that 4- and 5-star facilities, not necessarily of marbled luxury, might be necessary even in small destinations whereas in many destinations even a onestar facility needs to have the basic standards of five-star facilities if you are looking for any tourist spending money.

That the latest Tourism Policy is a signal improvement on past policies, MMM would be the first person to agree. And so MMM congratulates the Governwith those who have long experience in tourism - particularly international tourism - and a considerable fine tuning of what has been laid down.

Using sea-water

↑ n intriguing proposal The Man From Madras Musings read the other day was one that suggested cooling Tokyo with seawater. With the city getting hotter and hotter, it has been suggested that refrigerator-like tubing be laid beneath Tokyo and used with seawater to cool it. The suggestion made MMM wonder why the authorities don't do something with seawater to solve NOT Chennai's heat problem but its WATER problem.

Veeranam and similar projects have long been talked about and in the next couple of years these might well come through. But all of them depend on water from the skies and many of them on the goodwill of neighbouring States as well. Seawater however poses no such problems - and though desalination plants might initially prove more expensive, they'll provide more regular supply for more years to come than all the other suggestions to date. MMM has long wondered why greater thought has not been given to water for the city FROM THE

One industrial house has for some years now been urging the use of shore-based seawater desalination plants to solve water problems not only in Chennai but in many other coastal cities in India. MMM hears that Pondicherry has responded favourably to the idea. Why, then, not Chennai? MMM feels it could certainly look with more favour on such a suggestion, particularly, in the first phase, to meet the demands of industry.

For desalination of water

projects to take off, not only is

September 16-30, 2001

the will needed, but many of the existing rules might have to be re-looked at. Whether all those rules that desalination may need relaxed would be possible to relax, MMM is not certain, but certainly something could be worked out if there was enough of a meeting of minds. Certainly requests like classifying desalination plants as infrastructure projects, exempting such plants from Coastal Zone Restrictions allowing private sector investment and ensuring single-window clearance at both Central and State levels should pose no major problems. Environmental problems plants may cause, resulting in Pollution Control Board action, might be a little more difficult, but NOT IMPOS-SIBLE, to solve.

With the water problem becoming more acute in the State every day, and particularly in Chennai, it's time a little more attention is paid to the bounty of the sea, MMM feels.

* The other day, The Man From

Madras Musings read a story that

Sri Sathya Sai Baba had a plan to initiate a scheme to bring water to Chennai from the Godavari and Krishna Rivers. Welcome as the proposal is, will the Andhra Pradesh Government be generous enough to share its water with a city it once coveted, The Man From Madras Musings wonders But assuming that it does, MMM has no doubt the proposal will be implemented as efficiently as all the other social welfare activities initiated by Sri Sathya Sai Baba. But what intrigues MMM about this announcement is the corollary to it, namely, that he hopes to be able to get the World Bank to fund it. MMM wonders whether the World Bank funds private programmes and, if it does, why haven't others in the private sector committed to improving the lot of the masses got around to seeking World Bank funds for their public interest schemes? The other question that strikes MMM is that the World Bank only gives loans and not outright grants. In which case, does the Sri Sathya Sai Baba plan envisage selling water to Chennai in order to repay the loan or has another solution been thought of? Whatever the answers, MMM hopes the dream of connecting the two rivers and then linking them to Chennai will see the light of day; Chennai could do with a miracle on the water front.

-MMM



September 16-30, 2002

Wells and water

bserving trends, I can confi-Udently say that public memory is short. As recently as 1999-2000, South Madras had an acute water problem. Even now, the entire aquifer lying below the Adyar-Besant Nagar-Mylapore area has turned saline. With the coming of Metrowater from the Valluvar Kottam/Kilpauk headworks, however, this problem was lost sight of. Residents in these localities happily switched over to the daily supply from Metrowater.

An entire colony, in South Madras, however, relies on jet pumps and bore-wells. If this moderately dense colony of 500 houses keeps on drawing underground water, I can well imagine what will happen to the 'head' of the aquifer within a space of six months to one year. This raises the question: Are oldstyle wells the answer?

The old-style well would draw water only from the top layer of the aguifer – from 25 ft. to 40 ft. depth. The cost, labour and time factor involved in sinking wells may be less than that of jet pumps. Further, I would say that the valuable resource of deep aquifer water can be given a chance to replenish itself.

Recently, the Chennai Corporation started on a project of registering wells in the city. This may be a step in the right direction. The powers-that-be would get authentic and accurate information on wells in Chennai.

For the long-term, however, only a detailed study of patterns of water usage in South Madras, sources and disposal methods would save us from the repetitive and chronic water problem that plagues this area. Further, a concerted and integrated effort to tap alternative sources (imagine Adyar River water being made potable) would help us survive and grow in the uncertain future.

> K. Karunanidhi Chennai 600 085.

Botanical acrimony

D eader A. Raman's letter from Australia (MM. August 16th) with all those botanical names did interest me but for all the wrong reasons. Like many others, I enrolled for B.Sc. (Botany) (1962-65) without even a cursory interest in the subject. What followed was a nightmare with those tongue-twist-

ing names of plants. Hence, to cir-Unless steps are taken for restoracumvent our ignorance, we used to tion immediately, an invaluable call all plants we didn't know piece of heritage will be lost forever.

"Rodorum sidorum" (roadside C.G. Prasad plants). Even now, I sometimes Chennai 600 079. wake up sweating because of Ficus elastica or Gloriosa superba. The First Chief Minister transition from Botany to Literature was like moving from hell to Prakasam was NOT the first

heaven, with all apologies to Dr. B.G.L. Swamy (late), who was Professor of Botany then. * * *

On the question of free left turns (MM. August 16th), I know of at least one such free left turn which, if followed blindly, will have unpleasant consequences, for there is a pedestrian-crossing which vehicles turning free left will have to cross and risk bumping into pedestrians who cross on seeing the green light. The grisly anomaly is that this is situated at the southwestern compound wall of the Office of the oint Commissioner of Police, Traffic Chennai (where Poonamallee High Road meets Rundalls Road)!!! Gawdhelpus!

When Madras Musings wrote of that heritage structure in Express Estate being in peril (MM, August 1st) it should have issued another S.O.S. for the G.P.O. That wonderful building is fast sinking into a morass of neglect and filth, with no action being taken after the fire that broke out there some time back. After the fire, all work ceased in the building and it was sealed.

Inevitably, squalor closed in

* * *

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The first MNCs in India

wo items in MM, August ■ 16th. the restoration of Tranquebar and John Robs Everybody', brought to mind how European trading firms made a beeline for southern India between 1500 and 1700 to reap a rich harvest of profits. The first were the Portu-

guese (1498) whose interests benefited from the kindliness of Vijayanagar's Raya Krishnadev (1509). They enjoyed a monopoly of Indian trade from 1500 to 1600, but lost their maritime and commercial supremacy by 1640 to the Dutch. who made Antwerp and Amsterdam the great emporia from where Indian produce was distributed to Germany and even England. By 1602 the United East India Company of the Netherlands was firmly in

England's East India Company was established in December 1599. The French Richelieu's Company (1642), the French Oriental Company (1664), and Colbert's Company (1664) helped France to establish her Indian foundation at Pondicherry in 1674.

The Ostend Company (1722) of Germany built its settlements in Madras and Bengal between the English and Dutch settlements, but lost its toehold in India to Henry Koning's Swedish Company of 1731. However, German efforts to revive their trade with India

Chief Minister nor O.P.

Ramaswami Reddiar the second

(Ouizzing with Ramanan, MM,

August 16th). The same mistake —

describing Prakasam as the first

Chief Minister — was made in an

earlier Quiz also. The term Chief

Minister came into being only after

the adoption of the Constitution in

1950. Till then, the heads of Minis-

ters in the States were known as

Premiers (sometimes even referred

to as Prime Ministers). Thus,

Prakasam, O.P. Ramaswami

Reddiar and his successor, P.S.

Kumaraswami Raja, were known as

Premiers. Kumaraswami Raja's des-

ignation may be deemed to have

changed to Chief Minister since he

was in office from 1950 and till the

General Elections in 1952. The first

full-fledged Chief Minister from the

date of taking office was Rajaji in

The roofs of the Old Madras

Club building coming down

(MM, September 1st) stirred up old

memories. I had worked in that

building from 1953 to 1959 in the

Office of the Postmaster-General,

Madras. The P.M.G's office func-

tioned in that building for over a

decade before its own building on

Mount Road could be constructed.

It moved to its new premises in

April 1959. The monthly rent for

the Clubhouse was Rs.5000 which

was a princely sum those days when

the sovereign (8 grams) was sold at

On the first floor of the West

Wing (second photograph in MM)

were officers' cabins, including that

of the PMG. The ground floor had

different sections including PBX

and Record Room. The East Wing

(in the first photograph) accommo-

dated the reception and other sec-

tions, while the ground floor halls

and rooms accommodated the

Clubhouse memories

K.V. Ramanathan

Chennai 600 041.

succeeded in 1750 when Frederik the Great, King of Prussia, gave his royal patronage to the Asiatic Trading Company. Three years later, he formed the Bengal Company (Bengalische Handelsgesellschaft). Both firms gave the British and the Dutch in southern India many sleepless nights, until both firms were wound up.

The first Scottish East India Company was formed in 1617 when James I granted a patent to Sir James Cunningham to trade in the East Indies, but the charter was recalled in 1618. The second Scottish Company was incorporated by Parliament in Edinburgh in 1695.

'Forms Branch' and a few other sec-

tions. The Card Room and the

Octagon mentioned in the article

accommodated the Dead Letter

Office (now called Returned Letter

Office). There was Whites Road

P&T office too, with the approach

The intenion of K.R. Wadh-

the contributions of S.K.

Gurunathan, P.N. Sundaresan and

N.S. Ramaswamy as cricket writers

(MM, July 16th), is commendable.

Regrettably, however, the article

contains some errors of fact regard-

ing Sundaresan and, as his younger

brother, I would like to set the

Sriman had anything to do with

Raja becoming a sports journalist.

underwent surgery to remove cata-

racts from his eyes, but his ability to

report on cricket matches was not

adversely affected, even though

this was the substance of the canard

spread by some interested parties, a

canard which affected his career.

Some people also spread the view

that Sundaresan was not fit to be

asked to cover cricket matches

abroad, because he was not 'mod-

ern', that is, he was a vegetarian

and did not consume alcohol. I do

not know of any of Raja's peers

abroad who did not respect him be-

cause he was not 'modern' enough

to alter his traditional way of living.

Rather, I know for a fact that many

of them admired his convictions as

well as his deep and nuanced

knowledge of cricket and his integ-

Chennai 600 018.

rity as a writer.

I might add that Sundaresan

waney, to draw attention to

T.M. Sundararaman

Chennai 600 004.

from Whites Road.

Clearing the air

Prior to the establishment of Danish settlement at Tranquebar in 1620, the first Danish East India Company was chartered by Christian IV in 1616; the second company was formed in 1670. New charters were granted in 1698, 1732 and

Such is the tale of the original MNCs which operated in India. Only one of them, namely England's East India Company. milked the subcontinent for over 250 years before handing it over to the British Crown. However, it must be admitted that many a legacy of the Raj is cherished to this day, some unwittingly

> G.D. Patwardhan Mumbai 400 050.

Looking back

D eader K.Padmanabhan's T. Nagar's Heyday" (MM. June 16th) took me back in time.

In 1940-45, I did my schooling in Sri Ramakrishna Mission. At that time, it was one school that could boast of excellent playground

We had all games, including Softball (a softer version of baseball)! We had devoted PT Masters in Viswanatha Iver and Thangavel. In the evenings I have played Volleyball with our banchakacchamclad teachers. Many from our school cricket team later played for Mambalam Mosquitoes.

While Somasundaram Ground was active with T.Nagar Football Club, the Corporation Ground on Venkatanarayana Road was busy with Volleyball, Basketball and bodybuilders.

The intention of Sundaresan, Frequent visitors to the Volleyaka Raja, as also the intention of ball court were the late Maharajathe newspaper's Managing Editor, puram Santhanam, who used to be G. Narasimhan, was that he should an excellent spiker (in his semi-cyjoin as a sports correspondent/ lindrical dhoti) and Rangachari, a writer, but an intramural difference PRO from Southern Railway. I of opinion resulted in Raja being have often been a lifter for them in placed in the Advertisement Dethe team. We had participated in partment. He had a fretful time many tournaments, particularly the there. Later, he joined the sports Ashley Bigg's. desk. It is fanciful to suggest that R.

T.Nagar was just then developing. I remember Chinna Annamalai's Tamizh Pannai and many political meetings next to his building, during the Quit India movement, addressed by Sarojini Naidu and others.

Those were the days!

Prof. K.Balaraman Chennai 600 041.

PLEASE NOTE

- All letters for The Editor's attention should be addressed to The Editor, c/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.
- All business correspondence should be addressed to The Director, Chennai Heritage, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.
- N. Pattabhi Raman Madras Musings does not Editor-in-chief, Sruti accept letters by e-mail.

More talk on managing the urban scene

T xploring the ecosystem University, and Research Asso-Lapproach to manage the urban environment to improve the health of city dwellers, on the 30-year Canadian experience, was the subject of a twoday workshop held in the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) offices recently.

An overview of related earlier research programmes in Chennai revealed that this fourth largest city in India shows severe signs of environmental stress, with declining air quality, inadequate sewage collection, polluted streams and high noise levels. Some observa- years

• Water quality in many stretches of open water in the city has been measured at levels worse than that of raw sewage, and evidence of pathogenic parasites found banks.

ciate at the McMaster Institute of Environment and Health, did his thesis on 'An Adaptive Ecosystem Approach to Rehabilita tion and Management of the Cooum River: Environmental System in Chennai'. I wonder whether any in authority here has studied its suggestions. Using the ecosystem ap-

proach, Dr. Bunch says, a preliminary conceptual model of Environment and Health in Chennai will be used to identify key issues. Key issues identified at the workshop would be followed up over the next few

Dr. Rajasekhara Murty, who has been working with Environment Canada for the last 35 years, said in his presentation, "Looking for band-aid solutions to environment problems as and when they arise is ridicuin organic sludge along their lous. In our experience, the Government has provided the

by SHOBHA MENON

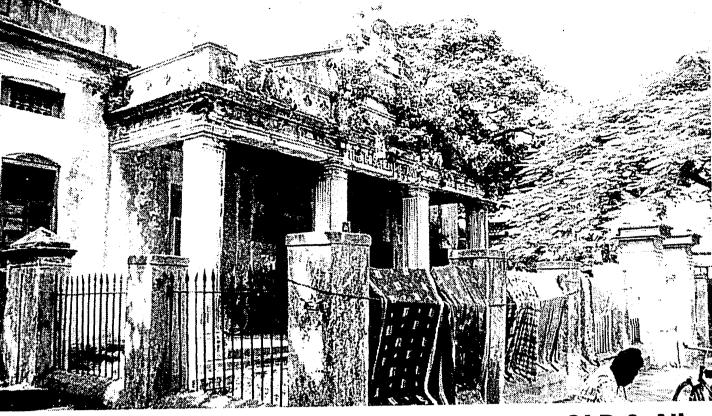
- Chennai is a high-risk area resources and been a facilitator, 40-60% of all cases in Tamil Nadu.
- Urban development, envi- a lot of hard work. Of the 42 isronmental management and public health programmes are characterised by mechanical management approaches (hierarchical organisation, routinisation of tasks, vertical and formal communication channels. centralised decision-making, command style leadership and low tolerance for uncertainty).
- vironment, relying on scientific knowledge entrenched in traditional modes, militates against adaptive approaches which are characterised by innovation and responsiveness to new information, decentralised decision-making, collegial authority, participatory leadership, horizontal formal and informal communications, and organic management structures.

The Principal Investigator of the Canadian-sponsored project, Dr. Martin Bunch, a Senior Fellow at the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York

for malaria accounting for without any interference in the working or the approach. It involves long-term planning and sues we've been addressing in the Golden Horseshoe region — the largest continuous urban region in Canada — for the last ten years, only two have been successfully tackled! Initially, problem identification happens at the local level. Once it gains momentum through public awareness it reaches the Government from where the planning process needs to begin — • The current institutional en- an optimum combination of top-down and bottom-up ap-

Related previous investigatory studies have shown that top five reasons for success of the ecosystem approach were:

- Participation of diverse stakeholders
- Incorporation of multiple perspectives (scientific, technical, lay)
- Development of innovative interventions
- Clear communication among stakeholders
- The multi- and interdisciplinary nature of the

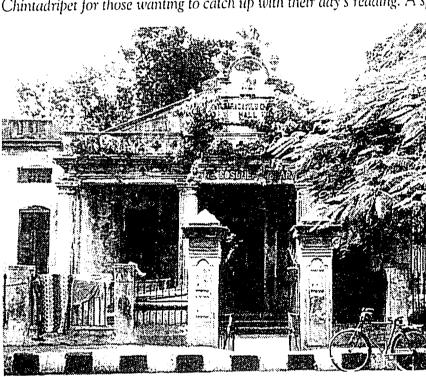


OLD & Decrepit...

OLD & Alive

September 16-30, 2002

Our OLD and the NEW this fortnight takes a different look at the city's buildings. Both the buildings we feature are old but noteworthy. Yet what a difference there is in the way they are being looked after! The picture above is of the Vijayaragavulu Chetty Hall, home of the Lady Goschen Library founded in 1927 which till not so long ago had a collection of 15,000 books. Located near Napier Park (now May Day Park), the library was once a popular venue in Chintadripet for those wanting to catch up with their day's reading. A splendid building in Classical style, together with its neighbours, the similarly styled Zion Church and



Satthianathan Memorial Parish Hall, made an eye-catching architectural complex in a bazaar neighbourhood. The Goschen Library is in a sad state today, within and without, with little attention being paid to it and Nature having free sway. A contrast is the building below, the main block of the Christina Rainy Hospital opened in 1914 in Royapuram. Growing from the work Dr. John Scudder began in 1830, and that Dr. Matilda Macphail formalised in 1888, the hospital was named after a Scottish educator, Christina Rainy, who marshalled support for the institution in Scotland. The focus of a spick and span campus, the main block shows what a little paint, some maintenance even within the framework of a tight budget, and a lot more daily care can do for buildings 90 years old.



The top four barriers to success included:

- Time limitations for project Poor jurisdictional or institutional relationships
- Difficulty in conceptualising or modelling human dimensions of the situation
- Lack of support for the approach among all the stakeholders.

Chief Town Planner Mr. Anand Ranjana Doss spoke of the importance of participation by individuals as "trustees of the environment", but he admitted that "in the hurly burly of dayto-day activities, looking into environmental aspects is often neglected" and reiterated "the need to resolve conflict of indi-

vidual agendas by adopting a holistic perspective".

Former Urban Planner, G. Dattatri, currently with SUS-TAIN (Citizens' initiative for a Sustainable Chennai), said, "It creasingly poor. From the point of view of a civil society, it is our responsibility to bring in a sustainable network where the CMDA, which has the maximum responsibility — and needs a lot of support — will work along with academics, NGOs, professionals and government officials. It is encouraging to see that the CMDA's II Master Plan has provided an opportunity for citizens to par-

ticipate in decision-making.

Dr. Chandramouli, Director of the Census Bureau, stated that a solid database on 'Slum Demography' would be available for planners by March 2003. It would enable them to is more important to measure develop a structured policy for the standard of life through its slums, which are now quality, which is becoming in- unauthorised bodies into which the civic authorities cannot or will not enter.

Speaking of 'the tremendous issues' facing an urban development body like the CMDA, its Vice-Chairperson Jayanthi said, "The last ten years had seen a lack of coordinated efforts. The Sustainable Chennai Project as a top-down project failed due to the difficulty of bringing about a common forum. Miraculous changes have happened in (Continued on page 6)

Anker of Tranquebar

— Artist and Governor

On May 17, 1788, Peter penses were between 140 and Anker took over as Gov- 170 rix-dollars (about £30-35)." ernor of Tranquebar.

many ways not quite as Anker may have wished. He never According to tradition, she was managed to amass any wealth; the love of his life, but they on the contrary, he landed up in relatively great debt. He was she was a widow and a Cathoill much of the time and, on several occasions, he asked to be gland and her address was the replaced before at last being governor's residence at the time able to travel home after serv- of the census in 1790. A numing for 18 years.

ceived books from London, Paris and Copenhagen as soon as they were published," it is recorded. Peter Anker also conducted an extensive correspondence with the Civil Servants in his financial situation, he wrote, "My principles have not permitis customary when one goes to

Another thing that the ac-The years in India were in count book reveals is his relationship with a Mrs. Mallard never married, it is said, because lic. She went with him from Enber of people believed that she It was also a lonely life in had a little boy from an earlier many ways. "Reading was the marriage, but there are few means of repelling loneliness. It traces of him in the accounts. is amazing to see how people, at Mrs. Mallard died in May 1791 least in the upper circles, kept after a period of illness and was up to date with the literary life given an expensive funeral. of Europe. Governor Anker re- Anker is reputed to have built a memorial to Mrs. Mallard in India, of which nothing remains

The fact that he tried to bring about some order to put an end to the corruption and the nearby English colonies. On double bookkeeping in the colony, to a great extent, adversely affected his own fortune. ted me to amass any wealth, as In addition, it cost a lot being governor: "At the end of last the Indies." Nevertheless it does September I had the honour of appear that Peter Anker made a visit from Lady Clive with sure he was able to live in keep- both daughters and Francoise; ing with his position and to sur- her husband Lord (Edward) posed to the rich lady on the somewhere was unbearable.



Copy by Nils Gude of an old oil

1743 after marrying Anne Cathrine Tank. Erik who had taken over his uncle's timber firm in Christiania sold the business when he moved to Fredrikshald, where he established himself as a businessman, probably within the timber trade.

In April 1749 Erik Anker and his partner Mathias Waern purchased the Moss Ironworks for 16,000 rix-dollars. In 1756, he moved with his family to Moss to better supervise the works, but it did not develop into the gilt-edged business he had expected. Erik, who lived beyond his means, bought out his partner, but eventually had to sell the ironworks returning only in the autumn of 1765 after visiting England, France and

What Peter did from 1766 to

wrote, "They are so perfectly handsome... In the Central Office of Customs and Excise they used the word (especially Erichsen) 'masterpiece'." The drawings today are in the National Archives and constitute: considerable number of precise, descriptive drawings of, inter alia, salt-works, the steam engine and the carding machine.

With hindsight we cannot escape the fact that what Anker was commissioned to do reminds us very strongly of industrial espionage. British industry was making such radical im provements, and it is understandable that the Dano-Norwegian Civil Servants wanted to keep up to date.

The career ladder that Peter Anker climbed hereafter is clear. From Hull he went to London in 1777 as consul gen-

1781 consul in Falmouth, and

then in 1783 was appointed

Consul General for Great Brit-

ain. On May 24, 1786, at the age

of 42, he was offered the post of

Governor of Tranquebar and

the appurtenant areas, as well as

the title of Colonel. Immediately

afterwards he was promoted to

the rank of Major General.

Probably it was the possibility of

making a quick financial gain

that was the basic reason for his

accepting the post in India.

The road to Tranquebar eral, after which he was from

1773 is very unclear, but in

1773 he was appointed consul in

Hull in England, a post he held

consul was to procure informa-

tion about new machines and

devices that the dawning indus-

trialism utilised. He was in-

structed to ensure that drawings

were obtained of these inven-

tions, which he did. Drawings of

the steam engine and so forth

were pretty quickly sent to

One of Anker's duties as

until 1776.

Deter Anker and his younger brother Carsten were taught privately in Moss and acquired an interest in history. As part of their education, and as was usual for the children of the upper class, it was decided that the two brothers Peter and Carsten should travel around Europe with their tutor Andreas Holth. The little group left Moss in August 1760.

Peter Anker was born in July 1744 in Fredrikshald, Denmark, to which his father Erik Anker moved in the spring of

servants in India were causing

him to lead at that time, he saw

Carsten. The drawings clearly made an impression. Carsten poor health is reputed to have farmers or families, who are just

no solution than to enter into matrimony. He had cast his eyes on a certain Mrs. Vorn... The worthy Carsten ... pro- the very thought of another post shows the bare wooden walls.

been one of the main reasons for a little above the farming class, dia. Anker felt so exhausted when he arrived in England that

his applying to get away from In- the outside of which alone has a couple of larger windows than usual, and the inside of which not even panelled, but like the lofts painted with oil paints, but 2 rooms thereof with their walls hung with splendid hand drawings and fine prints, the floors covered with fine, figured carpets and in particular in the innermost of these, the actual workroom a collection of art and books, the like of which in choice and elegance, though not in numbers, one does not easily find outside England. The books are all bound in crimson morocco leather with gilt edges and arranged with English cosiness not on shelves, but lying on sloping tables, whereun-

> "Round about on the furniture, yes even on the floor, there stand arranged Indian antiquities, idols, sacrificial instruments and the like, which the owner collected in his government post and on his other travels."

der there are again shelves for His commissioners were not keen on his relinquishing the prints and objets d'art. July 10, 1807 was he granted retirement on full pension. Yet in complete contradiction to what

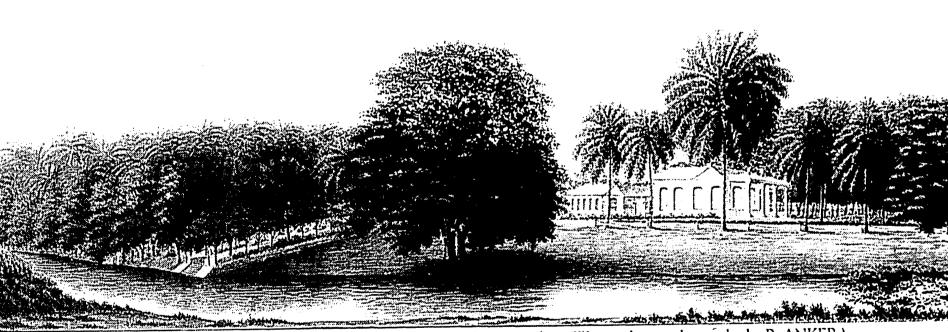
In Norway, Peter Anker settled on the farm at Oraker. A newspaper article published in 1826 gives an impression of what Peter Anker's residence

"Just imagine an ordinary Norwegian country building such as they are inhabited in their hundreds by well-to-do

Dorthea Hysing

(• Excerpts from the catalogue of the 'Memories of India' exhibition of Governor Peter Anker's work during his 20 years in Tranquebar, held recently at the University Museum of Cultural Heritage, Oslo, Norway.)

> (To be concluded next fortnight)



Tillally, Governor Peter Anker's country residence outside Tranquebar. (Watercolour and gouache by P. ANKER.)

and costly objects.

house with furnishings. This debt he had to bear with him throughout his period as gover-1788 he took with him to India kitchen utensils and furnishings for no less than £3191... The rest of his equipment, clothes, at somewhere between 40 and hats etc. were on an equivalent scale. Masses of books — a der to save himself and to be in complete little library — he a position to return home to a likewise took with him. His life in Norway, more carefree monthly housekeeping ex- than the troubled life his civil

round himself with beautiful Clive is Governor in Madras. She arrived with one hell of a It has been recorded, "Gov- train of officers, civilian offiernor Anker had equipped his cials, cavalry and infantry amounting to about 800 indimore desperate.

In 1798, Anker put his debts 50 thousand rix-dollars. In or-

turned him down.

was no cheap affair and it made viduals. She stayed for three no small contribution to the days and was particularly satisfied with the honour and attention with which she was renor. The accounts in the Anker ceived." Entertaining of this family's archives show that in kind made Anker's financial situation become more and

governor's behalf — but she Carsten continued the hunt post of governor, and not until

for a suitable marriage candidate, and wrote to Peter in 1799: "Now for your information I must recommend Miss he had expected, he was to have Rumohr for my dear brother's a long life, and it was not necesbest." But nothing came of this sary to give up either titles or

Eventually, Peter Anker relinquished his post in October 1805 and sailed from Tranquebar on February 7, 1806. In July he arrived in England and stayed there until the spring of 1807 when he travelled to Norway. The reason why he postponed his return to Norway was his reduced state of health. His

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current affairs questions are from the period August 16th to 31st, 2002. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

- 1. Fill in the blank with the appropriate number: Bhairon Singh Shekawat is the Vice-President of India.
- 2. Who is this year's winner of the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award? 3. Which eminent lawyer is heading the 7-member Kashmir Committee that visited the State on the eve of the elections?
- 4. Name the 'King of Rock n Roll', whose 25th death anniversary was observed on August 16th.
- 5. Name the Indian batswoman who scored 214 to set a world record for the highest individual score in a Test innings.
- 6. What feat did chess player Sergey Karjakin of the Ukraine achieve recently?
- 7. To what important Constitu tional post has former Tami Nadu Chief Secretary P. Shankar been appointed?
- 8. Name the Shiv Sena MP, who recently quit as Union Minister for Power.
- 9. Name the former Karnataka Minister kidnapped by Veerappan.
- 10. Where was the U.N. Earth Summit held recently?

* * *

11. Concerned about ancient sculptures what ban has been enforced by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments De-

partment?

- 12. What Indian first is the Tamil film Muthamidalama claiming credit to?
- 13. What is the other terminal point (one being Chennai) of the 'lan Shatabdhi Express' flagged off on August 27th?
- 14. In Ashokmitran's latest book My Years with Boss, which Tamil film legend is referred to as 'The Boss'?
- 15. What does a red sticker, pasted on Chennai city's hoard ings by the Corporation, indicate?
- 16. Name the Tamil scholar who won the 1985 Sahitya Akademi Award for Kamban Puthiya Parvai and who passed away recently.
- 17. Name the State Minister who was asked to resign following his participation in a macabre temple ritual.
- 18. Another on the same theme as above. For what 'slip-up' was the Minister for Rural Industries. R. Vilwanathan, relieved of his portfolio?
- 19. What is now housed at Moubray's Cupola by the Adyar? 20. Which famous industrialist is credited with founding the Indian Overseas Bank?

(Answers on page 7)

Those behind the sound of music

W yet to start, the makers of musical instruments, especially percussion instruments, are busier than ever, striving to succeed in what is essentially a niché market.

The brothers Fernand, Sebastin and Sengol belong to a family of traditional mridangam (mrid plus angam — animal organ, meaning an object made out of organs of an animal) makers, who are passing on to their children the knowledge they learnt from their forefathers.

A. Dhas, son of Sebastin, says that he's the fifth generation of mridangam craftsmen in his family. He runs a mridangam repair shop tucked away in a corner of Veeraperumal Koil Street in Mylapore. This enthusiastic craftsman has even visited the US to teach music students the art of mridangam-

These traditional mridangam craftsmen have long been established in Veeraperumal Koil Street, Apparsamy Koil Street and Mathala Narayanan Street of Mylapore. Quaintly, pictures of the Virgin Mary adorn the walls of these shops that make the accompaniment to what is essentially 'Hindu Music' as Carnatic music could well be considered. But here, devotion to a sublime craft dominates over the mundane. Caste and religion lose their significance in the triumph of sustained effort

The legendary Palghat Mani Iyer was a regular client of Fernand's family. His relationship with Fernand was so close that he gave the mridangammaker the sandalpaste garland given to him in Mumbai as a gesture of gratitude. He even gifted a piece of land in Thanjavur to Fernand

to perfect a technical skill.

On a technical level, "the correct tightening of braces and the rigid stiffening of the skin covering are essential to produce the right sound," explains A. Dhas. His present customers include Karaikudi Mani, Palghat Raghu and Thanjavui Ramdoss. Each shop has its own set of 'vidwans' who are regular customers. C. Varadhan, for example, has superb mridangam exponents like Vellore Ramabhadran and Thiruvarus Bhaktavatsalam as customers.

The outer shell of the mridangam comes from the wood of the Panruti Jak-fruit

W/hile the music season is tree and the leather from the tanneries of Chennai. Occasionally, the wood of the Kondrai tree is used for the shell. To make the right head drum skin (valam thalai – right head), goatskin is placed between two layers of cowhide and in the centre of the valam thalai, a combination of kittangal stone and rice powder is pasted. For the left head drum skin (idam thalai), two layers of buffalohide and a layer of goatskin are used. This provides a balanced bass and tenor sound when the mridangam is played.

> While standard sizes of mridangams today are 22 to 24 inches, some vidwans, like Palghat Mani Iyer, have experimented with a 26-inch instrument. Instruments with a length of 18-inches are called 'baby mridangams'. This baby mridangam carries a price of Rs. 2,200, while the standard size 22" and 24" ones are priced at Rs. 3,500 and Rs. 4,500 each.

> While current trends of high-tech and modernisation are wiping out entire crafts and the families practising them, it is indeed gratifying to see Fernand, Sebastin, Sengol and others in Mylapore keep this sublime craft alive.

> > K. Karunanidhi

The Telugu contribution

In his recent lecture on 'The contribution of Telugu-speaking Lpeople to the culture of South India', Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao, Director (Programs) of the American Institute of Indian Science, appeared to stop with the 16th Century.

More recent contributions, like the linguistic states, received no

Tracing the history of the Telugu language, Dr. Rao described Tamil and Telugu as being Proto-Dravidian languages with origins 5000 years ago. Telugu, though Dravidian in origin, was Sanskritic in development and therefore served as a bridge. Reciting from the Yajur Veda and the Upanishads, he cited the differences in pronunciation between the North and South and pointed out that the mastery of pronunciation possessed by Telugu scholars led to their being sought to perform the Vedic rituals.

Discussing Andhra sculpture and temple architecture, with illustrations ranging from the 2nd Century BC Amaravati stupas to the 13th Century Siva temples, he narrated how, during the Satavahana and Ikhshyaku dynasties, Saivism replaced Buddhism as the predominant religion and the Smarthic practice of worshipping five deities, Siva, Vishnu, Devi, Surya and Ganapathi, came to be practised widely, their profuse representation in temple architecture and icons following thereafter. The Kanchi and Mamallapuram sculptures of the 6th Century, like the Kailasanatha temple and the Shore Temples, were a consequence of this fine expression of Greco-Gandhara fusion of styles. The Pallavas themselves, according to Dr. Rao, originated from Andhra, from Palanadu.

The greatest contribution of the Andhras has, however, been in music, dance and drama, stated Dr. Rao. He spoke of the contribution of Annamacharya, Narayana Theertha, Sadasiva Brahmendram and Sidhendra Yogi, the father of Kuchipudi. Annamacharya composed more than 30,000 songs and inscribed them in copper plates which were kept in safe custody at Tirupati. His mudra was 'Venkateswara'. Unfortunately only 14,000 songs are now available, the remaining copper plates having been melted for vessels. Annamacharva was the genius who divided the structure of a song into pallavi and charanam.

According to Dr. Rao, songs composed in Telugu by 15 musicologists who lived between the 13th and 18th Centuries are also common for the three other languages of the South. Yaksha Gana, the popular drama and dance form used by Thiagaraja in his Prahlada Charitram, originated in Andhra, added Dr. Rao.

Indeed, a rich heritage of contribution to art, culture and religion. But what after that?

C.V. Karthik Narayanan

MANAGING THE URBAN SCENE

(Continued from page 4)

places like Shanghai and Bangkok. We can bring about miracles too, but working within our own parameters. Mere paperwork is ineffective. There is a strong need for a Government Management Plan which would look at coordination after encouraging an open dialogue and exchange of

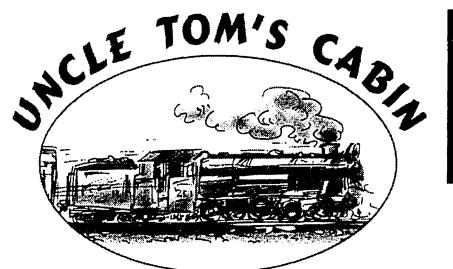
Post-workshop, Dr. Bunch felt, "Jurisdictional fragmentation and prevailing institutional rigidity are, I feel, the major hurdles. And, of course, the lack of meaningful public participation which has no support from the institutional mechanism. Major institutional changes are needed to effectively manage public environments. So are newer mechanisms that can effectively manage the innumerable constraints and challenges in today's environment. Mere awareness campaigns are not enough. Compre-

adopted at high levels that can build mechanisms for cooperagether with our Indian collaborators, the University of Madras, we'll be developing mechanisms so that concerned stakeholders can effectively participate and make a difference to the Chennai environment." However, Dr. Murty con-

fides, "I've been trying to introduce this approach in Bangalore, where I am from, for the last ten years, but with only marginal success. The problem lies in the prevailing blinkered mindset, which encourages compartmentalised thinking. It is sad to see people caught in a technological fix, an euphoria of development and technology, a phase where, say, Canada was thirty years ago. In India, environmental agendas have not become important enough to topple governments. And, of course, there's a lot of bureau-

hensive programmes need to be cratic red tape. A combination where scientific experts are subservient to bureaucrats who are tion and coordination among shuffled so fast they have to beagencies and the public. To- come 'instant experts', along with politicians who don't want to plan long-term, is a very destructive mix. India has excellent resources within the country itself. Developing in-house capacities and expertise, along with interdepartmental government cooperation, will definitely pave the way'

With the projected ideals of decentralised decision-making, projects defined by natural boundaries (rather than artificial/political ones) and institutions working collaboratively but led by a single local initiative, ecosystem planning is all about choosing and planning a desirable future. How effective the recent workshop was, will be seen by how soon the ecosystem approach will figure in high-level planning decisions in



My uncle Tom is one of those patriarchs steeped driver reported sick, his firemen would follow suit. So there they in wisdom and anchored in well-satisfied self-respect. Like Podanur and Erode, Madurai most of my relatives, and per- and Trichinopoly, Villupuram haps as in most other Anglo-Indian families, Tom Brewart was Waltair, these bands of men, a railwayman. Looking at him set me imagining that a blend of their love for their rolling-stock, steel and coal burned in the intrepid in the carrying out of core of every true Anglo- their duties. You had the Uncle Tom once mentioned D'Cruzs, Paynes, D'Sylvas,

this himself, and when I pressed him for more information on the subject, he said, "Boy, the Railway is the lifeline of our community. We were the pioneers; we set the wheels in motion; we brought the different Indias together; we nurtured this monolithic organisation and gave it meaning; but, when the hardest part of the job was done, we were, more or less, jettisoned. Still, the railway is part of our heritage. Remember, always remember, without tradi-"The steam-engine years,"

Indian.

tion no one can survive." Uncle Tom continued, "marked the heyday of our people. Boys only waited to complete their elementary school to be intook years to be upgraded as chine that was his life, the glit- Colombo. second fireman, but, inevitably, almost everyone made it. Then to first fireman and finally to the coveted post of driver. I too had my internship, over a period of ten years, but by keenly watching my cabin-mates, I learnt all the ropes, even as the shovelling and collecting of the 'all-clear' keys toughened my body. I wanted very much to be my own man, and at the age of 32 that dream became a reality.

"Right from the beginning, Madras was the hub around which the entire railway machine in South India revolved. It was with immense pride that the loco drivers of my day rode in state into the artistic marvels of Central and Egmore Stations. The drivers of mail and express trains, hauled by Mallard Express steam engines or even the Ellerman Lines specials, all of them wore spanking white uniforms just to show how really clean the foot plates were. When the crews checked in for duty they would report hours before time, just to see that the engines were spick and span, the brass fittings gleaming burgundy and gold against the let the past dominate the thunderous blackness of the boiler and the quick-silver sheen of the perch. And it was an unwritten rule that if the

would follow suit. So there they were, at Cochin and Shoranur, and Arkonam, Kasipet and intent on their jobs, intense in Bentleys, Gouldings, Vieras, Platels, Smiths, Cleurs, Rozarios and oh-so-many more. "Every driver," Uncle Tom

went on, "had his own signal, while leaving station or returning, to tell the family in the railway quarters that he was on board. The whistle would delicately and accurately identify the respective driver so that, especially on the down run, Chota and coffee could be kept ready. After the porter had secured the driver's box in the running room, and after the goodbyes to his mates, the man would be home in fifteen minutes or so, either walking or bicycling the distance to the lines. Long before the next run, the driver would be back at the yards, sutering steel of the coupling rod, crank, connecting rod and combination lever, the burnished gold of the levers and gauges within the cabin. The exercise came to an end with an inspection of the blood-red buffers, front and back, and a check of the water-filler, with the handrail for support.' "When I was in my cabin,

riding the foot-plate," Uncle Tom remembered proudly, "I was on top of the world, yet grounded in reality because of the direction-finding tracks. I knew every siding, every signal tower, every culvert, every span of every bridge. Every runningroom had its own speciality and the cooks in those days were tops: idlis and kurma, dosas and fish curry, parottas and vindaloo, idiappam and paya, appam and errichi curry, all sent down with metre-long draughts of chai or

"Son," Uncle Tom said, "it's a good thing, at times, to keep the past before you, because there's so much that can be learnt from it — both good and present; that makes you brood, makes you an escapist." — (Courtesy: Anglos in the Wind)

Bryan O. Peppin

Vignettes from the 150-year railway saga

The trains of yesteryears

systems of Railways. The metre gauge system with its terminal at Egmore was managed by South Indian Railway Company (S.I.R). This was known as "Chinna Rail". A broad gauge system with its terminal at Ma-The Madras & Southern Mahratta Railway Company (M. & S.M.R). This was known as "Peria Rail".

The Boat Mail

dras Dhanushkodi Express, also submergence of Dhanushkodi in 1966 due to a severe storm, waram Express.

In its heyday, the train left 'thief train'! Egmore at 7.30 p.m. and reached Dhanushkodi by about midday on the next day. At morning hours, there was a lull, Dhanushkodi Jetty a steamer waited to ferry passengers across—scended on the station to make the Palk Strait to Talaimannar in Ceylon. Two ships, the *Irwin* and the Goschen, owned by S.I.R. were used for this. From Talaimannar, passengers took ducted as khalasis. Sometimes it pervising and tending the ma- the night express train to reach

traffic between India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) by this its destination in the evening of route, mainly Indian labours for Ceylon's tea gardens. Since both India and Ceylon were under British rule, there were no formalities to be fulfilled for such migrant movement. The route was also used to carry mail and freight.

Dhanushkodi Express being Refreshment Room (NVRR) called Indo-Ceylon Express. Terming it a Mail train is also acceptable. But why a "Boat Mail"? Was that because of the ferry? Not by a long shot! An ocean liner is referred as a 'boat' for short. How is an ocean liner relevant to an Indian train? In those days, the British

administrators, service personnel, businessmen and others would do a stint of two or three years and then go 'Home' on long leave of four to six months, known as 'furlough' or 'home leave'. 'To catch the boat', as the saying went, Bombay would have been the preferred port. but the ships to and from bad. But it's a terrible thing to Bombay carried a mixed load of passengers and goods and did not offer the best of passages. longer at his sambar course, For the liners calling at Co- rasam would be poured over it! lombo, the Australia-England

only reliable transport in In- Thus, the Madras-Dhanushdia was by rail. Madras had two kodi Express got the name "Boat Mail"!

The M. & S.M.R. trains

Most of the M. & S.M.R.

mails and expresses started from or arrived at Central Station in the late evening or early night. dras Central was managed by Unlike Egmore, which was frequented mostly by Tamil-speaking passengers, Central was thronged by people from different parts of India. From 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., the station was like the tower of Babel. With the S.I.R.'s star train was the Madras-Nellore passenger train at about known as the Indo-Ceylon Ex- midnight, the station attained press and Boat Mail. Since the some semblance of calm. This train maintained indifferent timings and was patronised by a this train is now terminated at host of motley ticketless passen-Rameswaram and has been regers. Hence the public called it named as Chennai-Rames- the "Bairagi Special" or "Dongabandi" which in Telugu means

After this, till the arrival of incoming trains in the early when an army of cleaners deit spick and span for the day ahead.

Perhaps the best known of the trains from Central was the There was heavy passenger hottest part of the then composite Madras Presidency to reach next day.

The midday meals station for this train was Cudappah, which has the dubious distinction of being the hottest place in the Presidency. This station had three refreshment rooms. The Vegetarian Refreshment Room These facts justify Madras- (VRR) and the Non-Vegetarian were departmentally managed. The Western R.R., favoured by Europeans and Anglo-Indians. was on contract with Spencers. First and Second Class passengers could order a meal to be served in their carriage itself while the crowded Inter and Third Class passengers had to go to the refreshment rooms for their meals. Reservations for these crowded classes were un-

known in those days. At Cudappah, VRR had a spacious dining hall which could seat nearly 500 lunchers at a time. As soon as the train came to a halt, the passengers rushed to the dining room, to be served with robotic precision and speed. If a diner harried Within the scheduled forty minroute was the preferred way of utes or so two batches would | Chidambaram Chettiyar

Prior to World War II, the going 'home' or returning. have been served. Five minutes before the departure of the train, a bell would sound in the dining hall for all passengers to board the train. The guard of the train would come there and drag all slow eaters to the train, after which the train would

steam out. At Cudappah, both up and down expresses arrived at about the same time. The train to arrive first was received on the platform line of the station. The other had to wait at the outer signal until lunch was completed and the first train was ready to start. Only then would the second train be received into the station.

To beat the midday heat, various methods were used in these trains.

At every important station, a "waterman" was available who walked along the halted train with a bucket of cold water and a brass lota. Any passenger could ask for this water to quench his thirst. In those days, Spencer's manufactured aerated soft drinks which were equal, if not superior, to any of the soft drinks sold under international brands today. They were a lot cheaper too. In every fast day train, there would be a vendor Bombay Express. The train of the company travelling in started from Central at 8.30 each eight-seater compartment. a.m. and passed through the He stocked it with crates of soft drinks of which he had a good sale, and blocks of ice.

Upper class passengers could order a block of ice to cool the compartment. A zinc-lined tray with big block of ice would be kept on the floor between berths. With all doors and shutters closed and the ceiling fans directed against this ice block, it quickly cooled the compartment, although an angry sun raged outside relentlessly.

M. Sethuraman

Answers to Quiz

I. 12th; 2. Abhinav Bindra; 3. Ram Jethmalani; 4. Elvis Presley; 5. Mithali Raj; 6. Became the world's youngest Grandmaster (at the age of 12 years, 7 months and 2 days): 7. Central Vigilance Commissioner; 8. Suresh Prabhu; 9. H. Nagappa; 10. Johannesburg.

11. Banning 'sandblasting' to clean the statues; 12. First digital film made for theatres; 13. Vijayawada; 14. S.S. Vasan; 15. That the hoarding is 'unauthorised'; 16. A.S. Gnanasambandan; 17. C. Durairaj; 18. For referring to Jayalalithaa as 'former Chief Minister'!; 19. Madras Club; 20. M.Ct.M.

Protection of eco-sensitive areas

(Continued from page 1)

- V. River-Beds, like those of Arni, Kortailiyar and Palar. (Save from illegal sand-mining).
- VI. Drinking Water Sources, like Red Hills, Sholavaram and Poondi Reservoirs.

(Save their catchment areas from human interference).

- VII. Waterways, like the Cooum, Adyar and the Buckingham Canal.
 - (Save from pollution and slums, and develop for orchards, navigation and fisheries).
- VIII. Lakes, like the Pulicat and Chembarambakkam, and Chengalpattu lakes. (Save from pollution, develop fisheries).
- Wetlands, like the Adyar, Pallikaranai Swamp and Chembarambakkam Lake. (Save from pollution, develop fisheries and promote birdlife).
- Scrub jungle and Wildlife, as in the Guindy Park, IIT campus, Theosophical Society campus, Madras Christian College campus and Kaattupalli Island. (Promote afforestation, wildlife and nature studies).
- XI. Hillocks, like the St. Thomas' Mount, Pallavaram Hills, Tambaram and Vandalur Hills. (Promote afforestation, wildlife and tourism).
- XII. Industrial complexes, like the Manali-Ennore Industrial Complex, and Madras Atomic Power Plant. (Save from hazardous chemicals, radiation hazards to the
- XIII. Solid waste disposal spots, like the Perungudi and Kodungaiyur dumping sites, Biomedical dumping sites. (Save from pollution and public health hazards).
- XIV. Airport. (Save the lawns and runways from raptor birds which cause bird-hit hazards to aircraft).



From September: The Hayagriva Study Circle for Adults who wish to enhance their knowledge profile without the hassle of formal admission and exams. On the lines of Learning in Retirement courses offered by Universities in the West. Limited admission. The courses will be of 8-10 lectures over a month and will be as varied as 'Understanding Archaeology', 'Gardening'. For details: Telephone 491 5913.

September and October: 'Artist of the Month': P. Sridhar, a recipient of the Lenin Museum award from Moscow in 1988 and Mother Teresa award in 1994 (at Max Mueller Bhavan).

September and October: 'Studio Pottery', a certificate course conducted by Kaveri Bharath, a talented potter trained in Pondicherry under Ray Meeker.

The second stage, from 18th to 21st September, will introduce the importance of firing and resist work.

The advanced stages will be conducted from 2nd to 6th October and again from 23rd to 27th October. This will include an introduction to wheel work, centring and pull-up. The final stage will deal with the finer aspects of wheel work, shaping of pots and application of slips and glazes. (At DakshinaChitra, Telephone 491 8943/446 2435 for details.)

Till September 20: 'Finding the Centre at the Margins', an exhibition of art by Muralidharan, Rm. Palaniappan, C. Douglas, Ravinder Reddy, Valsan Kolleri, Krishnamachari Bose, A. Balasubrahmaniam, Ravikumar Kashi, G.R. Iranna, Jitish Kallat, Natraj Sharma, Shibu Natesan, Babu Eshwar Prasad and Harshavardhana (at Apparao Galleries).

Till September 20: Pammal Mudaliar's Sambandam Chandrahari, presented by Koothu-p-Pattarai Trust in its mini-theatre on the first floor of Plot 84, 3/399, 9th Street, Sri Venkateswara Nagar, Kottivakkam. Daily at 6.30 p.m. Seating limited to 25 persons. For bookings, telephone 4510302 or 4511821.

Till September 25: A photo exhibit, "After September 11: Images from Ground Zero", featuring photographs by Joel Meyerowitz (at Artworld, Ganeshpuram 3rd Street, off Cenotaph Road).

September 20 and 21: Paper-Mache Mask making (at DakshinaChitra, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

September 21: 'French Nightingale', the fifth singing competition organised in India by the French Embassy-Cultural Service and open to 16 to 25 years old. The first five winners at national level will win a trip to France (at Alliance Francaise, 3.00 p.m.).

From September 22: Inaugural exhibition of the new venue of the gallery. Participating artists include Achutan Kudallur, Yusuf Arakkal and Manu Parekh (at Forum Art Gallery).

From September 22: Exhibition of paintings by Mani Krishnan Nair (at Vinyasa).

September 22: The Sixth Annual Citizens' Run will start from Queen Mary's College at 4 p.m. go to the War Memorial, then back to Gandhi Statue on the Marina.

The target of the Run this year is around Rs. 12 lakh, to be collected as usual through donations, sponsorship of banners and sale of T-shirts to be

Reviving the craft of Chettinad plaster

September 16-30, 2002

The M.RM.RM Cultural **1** Foundation, which is intent on reviving the dying crafts of Chettinad, like basket- and saree-weaving, recently organised a workshop for masons on the techniques of the famous Chettinad eggplaster (Madras plaster). But in the belief that documentation without training masons would not be effective in reviving the craft, the workshop was held for modern masons. Ponniah Kothanar, assisted by Mookiah (master craftsman), demonstrated the plastering technique.

Once used in every house built in Chettinad, today, there is hardly anyone with the knowhow except for a few elderly masons. The Foundation identified Ponniah Kothanar, a traditional mason, and documented this plastering technique.

The Foundation, headed by Visalakshi Ramaswamy, would be willing to organise similar workshops for those interested if there are sufficient numbers. Contact (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) Tele/fax 044-4361498. Email: vvisalam@vsnl.com

worn during the Run. The cost of a T-shirt is Rs. 100/- and T-shirts are available at the Citizens' Run Trust Office, 10, Raja Krishna Road, Teynampet, Tel: 4330164.

From September 25: Exhibition of paintings by women artists (at Artworld).

October 5: Doll making workshop (at DakshinaChitra).

October 5-13: Dusshera and Navaratri festivals will be celebrated at DakshinaChitra. Nobody does Golu better than DakshinaChitra.

HERITAGE LESSONS FROM MUMBAI

(Continued from page 1)

The Prince of Wales Museum — the Indo-Saracenic GPO's twin, designed by John Begg's pupil and associate George Wittet — is one of the few heritage buildings in Mumbai that is insured against fire. "But for a ludicrous sum: Rs.86 lakh," a director reveals. This works out to less than Rs. 1,000 per antiquity. The museum, however, has installed safety measures like smoke detectors, fire alarms and sprinklers.

The five-storey Eruchshaw building, which was among the three listed buildings on D.N. Road that burnt down in August 1994, was insured for a measly five lakh rupees. Engineers believe that the government should set up an expert team to survey heritage build-

ings for both structural strength and electrical faults. "The heritage committee and conservation groups should actively take up this issue. Also, the Indian Heritage Society should examine unglamorous but vital issues like wiring and safety precautions, while deciding on subsequent urban heritage awards," suggests a former chief fire officer. — (Courtesy: Times of India.)

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