#### WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MUSINGS

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October 16-31, 2002

#### Vol. XII No.13

### A commitment to sustain eco-friendliness

In MM, August 16th, in the LEnnore-Pulicat Environmental Protection Forum's plea for an eco-heritage site, it is mentioned that the location of Ennore Harbour has been the chief cause of environmental and human tragedies and that, consequent to the construction of the harbour, the Ennore Creek has got clogged. It has also been stated that there has been considerable beach erosion to the north of the port, at Korai Kuppam and Sattan Kuppam. The following information would put these issues in the correct perspective:

A perusal of the records of the TNEB would show that the clogging of Ennore Creek has been a recurring feature much before Ennore Port was constructed. This is part of a natural coastal process. 'Littoral Drift' is quite common on the east coast of India, north of Point Calimere. The accretion and erosion occur depending upon the wind and wave directions and the currents. It is possible that the construction of Ennore Harbour might have resulted in additional clogging, but this can only be confirmed by appropriate technical studies. Therefore, it would be incorrect to state emphatically that clogging of the Ennore Creek is a direct consequence of the construction of Ennore Harbour. Nevertheless, Ennore Harbour is planning a constructive response to the problem. It is proposing to construct four groyne walls, which would arrest the sand movement towards the Creek.

#### Beach erosion

Even during the construction of Ennore Port, as part of a conscious decision, the Company dumped nearly 4 million cu.m. of dredged material as beach nourishment in the areas north of the port. This will be a

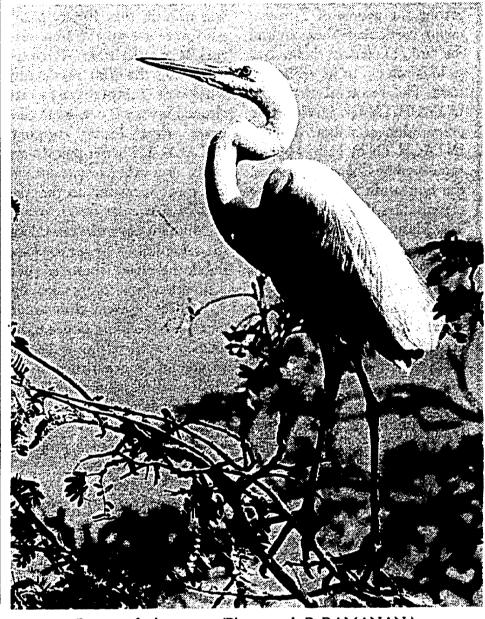
continuous process, more or less on a yearly basis. The dredged material from the port would be deposited on the northern side as a contribution to beach stabilisation and would arrest beach erosion, if there is any.

**FREE ISSUE** 

Ennore Port, aware of its social responsibilities and what it owes to environment and society around the port, is committed to a green and clean port. Some of the measures undertaken by the Port in the last few months to protect the ecological balance and save biodiversity in and around it are:

• As part of its environment management plan, the Port

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Portrait of a lone egret. (Photograph P. RAMANAN.)

## Requiem for bird habitats

Early in 1990, a continuous tree canopy over a theological college campus and adjoining residential complex that spilled along Kellys Road over to the Telephone Exchange provided an ideal attraction for Night Herons which used them only for roosting during daytime. After the first serious study-oriented sighting made by Raghavan of the Madras Naturalists' Society in November 1996, there has been noticed in succeeding years a considerable increase in the number of wetland birds using the area as breeding sites. It was a classic pattern of colonisation by a considerable wetland bird population — Night Herons, Little Egrets and Little Cormorants. But from late 1998, NO birds have been seen here.

In retrospect, it was a typical situation that represented a conflict of interests — human concern for health and wetland birds' ecological necessities. At

the Kelly's college, rumblings of discontent surfaced and touched a peak every time a sharp shower drenched the tree canopy (since bird droppings and fish remains undergo hydrolysis in rainwater, releasing ammonia and phosphine). About which, says naturalist and bird-watcher V. Gurusami, "Only a dyed-in-the-wool bird addict could take the cocktail stench in his stride. The genuine grievance of residents, centred on the impact of bird refuse on children's health, forced the campus authorities to initiate remedial measures. They promised to carry out, in consultation with naturalists, the removal of peripheral branches only after the birds dispersed after the breeding cycle. Unfortunately, unforeseen circumstances caused the tree chopping to be advanced to January 1998, when all the nests in the axed branches were occupied by flightless nestlings".

Newspapers, alerted by several people and many versions of the episode — grounded in a lack of knowledge of the ecology of the birds, along with the residents' apprehensions blew the whole story out of proportion. But the adverse publicity left the college authorities shaken. Their faith in fairminded naturalists plummeting, their willingness to give free access for even serious study waned. By August-September 1998, when the bulk of the birds had dispersed, the 'vexing' problem was thoroughly solved by eliminating all the nesting trees to preclude all chances of future colonisation and later conflict!

Gurusami, Questions "Would a positive write-up in media before the tree-felling episode have motivated the campus authorities to preserve the ecosystem? Would events have taken a different turn had

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No, No ... It says 'Most Recent Photo'!

#### Voices from the 21st Century

Heard about the Keo, the friendly neighbourhood satellite, all set to be launched end-2003 or early 2004, filled with millions of messages, and destined to orbit the Earth for 500 centuries before returning in fiery splendour bearing messages from the past... which is, of course, our own present?

(Is your head throbbing? Well, pain invariably accompanies thought.)

You have to applaud the optimism of a group of people, ably led by Jean-Marc Philippe who, serenely unimpressed by all the evidence pointing to Mankind's fervent desire for selfdestruction, actually believe that the world will still be around 50,000 years from now.

Their mission is to connect people through the centuries.

You know the best way to achieve this?

Through Soap Opera plots.

Seriously – pack a bunch of soap opera plots from around the world and I am willing to bet when these old parchments from the past are lifted out tenderly and read, there will be rejoicing through the land. Storylines will be recognised, and people will learn that shenanigans were intrinsic to their ancestors' lives too, and parents, children, cousins, business partners, friends and neighbours cheated, stole, lied, loved, laughed, cried, were violent and, invariably (and endearingly), managed to mess up the simplest of situations.

Unchanging Human Nature is your connection, and proof that people will always be people.

(Optimism is obviously infectious.)

Ranjitha Ashok

## Finding a way to sustain revival

The Government, the Main, whose effort was the most edy of the city – that so few care time every day visiting every the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Tamil Nadu, and local volunteer groups are all teaming together to revive the Marudeeswarar Temple tank in Tiruvanmiyur – and sustain the revival. Will they succeed where a couple of other attempts during the last 10-15 years have failed on the count of sustainability, The Man From Madras Musings wonders.

This time the attempt to - as Rotary Clubs cannot be exmake the tank live again has started not with the cleaning of the tank and engineering to ensure water in it, but with an awareness campaign aimed at getting the people of Tiruvanmiyur, particularly those around the tank, to commit themselves to look after it in its recharged state. This recommendation by INTACH-TN has involved the preparation of a short film for INTACH-TN by Latha Menon, sponsored by Chennai Heritage, the non-profit multi-corporate organisation that supports Madras Musings and, with surplus funds, helps out with small heritage- and environment-oriented awareness programmes.

The film, with those living around the tank spontaneously agreeing in it that they wanted a clean tank and that they would help in any way - but financially - with the cleaning of the tank and maintaining it thereafter, has been a hit at the several showings of it during the recent festival season in Tiruvanmiyur. That almost everyone of the few thousands who have seen it has reacted positively to its message - 'Together we can save our tank and sustain it' - is the feedback MMM has been getting.

While the ten-day festival was host to several screenings, Corporation officials started planning a two-pronged approach to restoration. Teaming with INTACH-TN, Corporation engineers began looking at plans that would keep water channels permanently clear, that would ensure the inlets were never clogged and that would help retain the water in the tank once it was restored. Simultaneously, officials began a campaign in the neighbourhood to encourage water-harvesting that would recharge the groundwater

levels in and around the tank. As this work gets underway, the film will continue to do the rounds in Tiruvanmiyur, where it will be screened in schools, to citizens' groups and in public places in the colonies around the area. Together with it will go the message of water-harvesting. What INTACH-TN hopes is that the message of the film will be catalytical in getting the citizens of Tiruvanmiyur to bestir themselves in maintaining the tank and its surroundings as a beautiful open space they can be proud of, once the cleaning of the tank and reaching water to it are completed. Ensuring sustainability is what INTACH-TN is aiming at.

The Rotary Club, Madras

recent to clean the Tiruvanmiyur tank, has since then completed the cleaning of half a dozen other tanks. A couple of other Rotary Clubs have taken up one or two other tanks. INTACH-TN with Rotary Main support documented the 39 temple tanks of that Rotary Main and other Ro-

Chennai. MMM understands tary Clubs would be willing to take up the revival of the tanks. But sustainability is the question pected to stay on looking after the tanks they have cleaned. Getting the local people involved is essential. And INTACH-TN tells MMM, the film would go some way towards this. Rotary Main, who were shown the film, also feel it would help. Perhaps screening the film repeatedly wherever temple tanks are cleaned is what is needed to generate that local support.

INTACH-TN hopes that Rotary

Clubs and other organisations.

like those focussing on the Ma-

rina or particular parks, would

use this film - or make ones along

the same lines – to get the local

public involved wherever such

restoration projects are taken up. MMM agrees that such awareness building is necessary and this excellent film is the way to go, but successful sustainability will depend on whether local groups can be formed and sustain themselves to look after what, after all, is their property. MMM hopes they can.

#### International class?

The UN-Habitat programme . recently celebrated World Habitat Day with the help of several official and unofficial organisations, particularly the Citizens' Alliance for Sustainable Living (SUSTAIN). A two-part seminar was the highlight of the day, the first part focussing on the initiatives needed to make Chennai an international quality city and the second on UN-Habitat's City to City cooperation programme (C2C) by which cities, particularly those partnering each other, could learn from each other's experi-

Sad to say, despite the hundreds of invitations sent out, few attended. The Man From Madras Musings was particularly disappointed that not one of the half a dozen representing corporate organisations, who were listed to speak, turned up, except for the two delivering the Inaugural and Keynote Addresses. Several volunteer organisations also listed as participants were conspicuous by their absence. And all the young, who had come to receive prizes for competitions UN-Habitat had conducted in schools and colleges, left immediately with their guardians no sooner the prizegiving was over. The few who stayed back may have enthusiastically participated, but the absenteeism only reflected the total apathy in the city to the deterioration of Chennai. And that,

what happens to it!

The few who cared, however, had several things to say. But with the believers and the converted talking to each other. MMM wonders what earthly use the whole day was. But MMM also feels that, by recording some of the highlights, there might be one or two more who will add their voices to these voices in the wilderness; perhaps, over a period of time, the voices will be loud enough to be heard.

Of all that was said, the emphawas on two main thrusts. And they might be old hat, but they need to be said over and over again. Several speakers, particularly those who had lived in other metros - Bangalore kept cropping again and again - wondered why those in Chennai not only adopted the attitude, "Let's look after my backyard, and to hell with the rest", but, worse, adopted this attitude mainly out of a sense of defeatism that keeps them saying, "I can't do anything about it, so why waste my time?" This apathy, as reflected in the attendance at the seminar, had to be changed and people made to care for the city again, it was felt, if Chennai was to improve as a city.

## SHORT SNAPPY

Unless the people participated in every move to improve the city, unless they took it upon themselves to be an integral part of the improvement process by contributing at least their effort, no city improvement could ever succeed. Getting people's participation was an initiative essential if people wanted to improve the city even to the status of the best city in the State or the South, forget about it becoming an international class city.

The second initiative essential was dedicated implementation and committed enforcement of ALL the laws, without fear or favour. Acknowledging the excellence of the laws in the country and the regulations in the city, the poor implementation of them, particularly in terms of enforcement, was stressed by all the

speakers. To MMM, however, the answer to both initiatives lies in the political will in the State. If the people's representatives think of the people they represent and not their political opponents all the time, if they spend more time in their wards and get the people to come out and help them improve the respective wards, instead of concentrating on differences in council chambers, maybe the people will begin to think their representatives cared for them and will reciprocate those sentiments by coming out and contributing their mite to the common good of at least improving the ward they live in. Let every MMM feels, is the biggest trag- councillor in the city spend some

street in his ward and listen to what can be done to improve it can improve it – and there just maybe a difference.

On the second issue, implementation fails as much on account of lethargy consequent to the thought that "no one really appreciates what I am doing" or "I'm not being allowed to do my work" as it does on account of political interference or, worse, fractured ethics. This is particularly true of enforcement. In the case of enforcement, MMM finds that the numbers overwhelm the enforcer – stop one or two people for offences at a traffic junction and while the couple of police officials there attend to these cases, scores sail past breaking the law with impunity. Equally, giving and offering considerations for condonation of offences has become so endemic that enforcement much of the time has become a joke, particularly in civic matters and public services.

Here again, unless there is the political will to support the enforcers by requesting them to come down hard on any kind of violation, there's little hope of improvement. This State constantly cites the examples of Singapore and Malaysia as models of development. Will the politicians who do this pass laws like the laws of these two countries and enforce them, say even for just shitting, spitting, littering, encroaching and defacing property in public places? Will they agree to harsher - and other spot - penalties for traffic offences? There has to be a willingness to enforce discipline - and unless that will is there, self-discipline is unlikely to develop in the present milieu in the State where the politician is least concerned with the public and the enforcers unless there is something in it for him or against his political opponents. Tragic, isn't it?

#### Bright moments

The UN-Habitat seminar had its brighter moments too, The Man from Madras Musings found

There were new voices added to what this journal has been advocating for over ten years and others have for at least another decade before that, namely leaving Chennai to commerce and moving the administrative and political capital to a more central location in the State.

There was the case of the woman who virtually singlehandedly fought and got a wine shop shifted from a residential

There was acknowledgement that Government had made some progress in rainwater harvesting and cleaning up the waterways and against plastics and air pollution, all of which NGOs had highlighted some time before the Government effort.

And that collective action by people in Alandur had resulted in 16,000 houses getting linked by a sewage system, when a citizens'

group went around to each of these houses in an 18,000 cluster and persuaded the owners to pay and tell his constituents how they Rs.5,000 each. That seed money enabled the association to negotiate with Tamil Nadu Urban Development Fund for a Rs.34 crore sewage system. Today, the association monitors the work almost daily.

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Citing this example, Dr. K.Rajivan, Managing Director of the Fund, pointed out that though cities were declining with the politicisation of governance. the constraints to reform, and the reduction of public sector funds, organisations like LIC that had funded much of urban development, consequent to increasing privatisation, there still was hope if initiatives on cooperation were

-between cities and neighbouring towns (breaking down the boundaries between them). -between government organi sations and voluntary organisations expressing the voice of the people, and

between Government and city councils whose powers had been taken away by the former, resulting in loss of financial autonomy, legal autonomy and human resources autonomy at the highest levels.

In villages, the voices of the people are heard loud and clear in Indian tradition. How do we get voices in the city heard, wonders MMM, particularly with respect to the answers suggested by Rajivan.

#### Development concern

**X7** hy Government thinks **VV** India which exports talent round the world cannot conduct "feasibility reports" for major development projects and why it thinks only those from Singapore and Malaysia - many of whom are Indians themselves - can come up with the right answers is beyond The Man From Madras Musings' understanding. But be that as it may, what concerns MMM in this item is the news that Government is considering development of the stretch from the Lighthouse to Foreshore Estate, that is, the San Thomé Beach. While that might help in removing the threat to a 'Clean Marina' by the fisherfolk MMM wonders if it is really necessary to strain the city's resources further with urban highrise in an area that was long part of what constituted "the second longest beach in the world". It's also worrisome if the study also looks at tenement areas across from the

In this context, MMM suggests that the Government – both the politician and the bureaucrat - look at and study development regulations in Singapore and Malaysia. These regulations make it clear that all development must be such as to sympathetically integrate the built and natural heritage of an area, both of which should be renewed in the process. Can we expect those regulations to be followed here, wonders

**MMM** 

## Nostalgia

## Memorable still

## The West Indies matches in Madras

match between India and tors already held a 2-0 lead in the West Indies at Chepauk, my mind is a blur of memories of the drama, tension and excitement experienced during the seven engrossing matches the two teams have played in Madras between 1949 and 1988. In each of them there were outstanding feats, some of them world records.

The first match, in Ianuary 1949, set the tone for the Tests to follow. The teams came here for the fourth Test, with the first three drawn. And at the end of the third day, it was on the cards that the Madras game too would end inconclusively. The West Indian batting machine led off with 582, building on the foundation laid by openers Allan Rae (109) and Jeff Stollmeyer (160) who put on 239 runs. Then came Everton Weekes who had already been a nemesis for the Indian bowlers during the series. He had already scored four centuries in the first three Tests and, following the one he had made in the final Test against England the previous season, it gave him five Hall and having to retire. He losses, matched the visitors in hundreds in consecutive in- however came back to score 30 almost every department of the the match, but Bedi and this day. At Chepauk, he seemed set to make it six in a row when he was controversially adjudged run out when he

was 90. Dattu Phadkar, very much the cricketing heartthrob of the day, took 7 for 159 off 45.3 overs in a lion-hearted spell. The Indian batsmen negotiated the bowling fairly comfortably and, with a score of 225 for six at the end of the third day, the home team were in a position to gain the fourth draw of the series. The West Indies, however, benefited from an unexpected day's rest. The Tests had been played without a rest day, but January 30 being the first anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's death, public opinion decreed that it be declared a holiday. Fresh after the day of rest, the West Indian team trio of Prior Jones, John Trim and Gerry Gomez ran through the Indian batting line-up taking a total of 14 wickets for 164 runs on the fourth day as India slid to defeat by an innings and 193 runs.

Ten years later, in January 1959, the West Indies again came to play the fourth Test of the series, but this time at the This episode remains one of the taken in the match, Lloyd's run-cially on the third day, when 15

In the eve of another Test Corporation Stadium. The visithe five match series and proceeded to wrap up the rubber by registering a 295-run victory. Basil Butcher, then an upcoming new star on the horizon, scored 142 while Rohan Kanhai was run out for 99. Gary Sobers. who was then the world record holder with 365 not out compiled against Pakistan the previous season, came to Madras having already scored hundreds in each of the first three Tests. This time, to the disappointment of the crowd, he was restricted to scores of 29 and 9. The pace bowling of Wesley Hall and Roy Gilchrist was something the Indians were not used to and, not surprisingly.

most sordid chapters in Indian

hallowed Chepauk in January 1967 marked the next visit of the West Indies. Played over the Pongal holidays, the Test was an engrossing encounter. The West Indians arrived with a winning 2-0 lead in the threematch series. Cricket interest in Madras, always high, touched fever pitch and packed crowds watched the action for never before had such a clear-cut world champion side, bristling with stars, visited the southern metropolis. There was Sobers, the greatest all-rounder in the game's history, then at his peak, and there were Kanhai, Butcher, Seymour Nurse, they succumbed meekly. I re- Conrad Hunte, Clive Lloyd,

ning, diving and tumbling effort to bring about the dismissal of The return of Test cricket to Borde on the fourth day afternoon took pride of place. Eight years later, it was again the fourth Test of a five match series and played again during

ST CPECE

the Pongal holidays. West Indies held a 2-1 lead but by winning by 100 runs, India levelled the series. Among the many features of the match, Gundappa Viswanath's unbeaten 97 stood out. Simply put, it remains one of the greatest knocks by an Indian in Test cricket and I consider myself fortunate to have witnessed it. For its grace and defiance, it was a peerles innings and I vividly remember N.S. Ramaswami's poetic description in The Indian Express. But then, of course, there were other highlights too and Andy Roberts' pace bowling, which brought him a match haul of 12 wickets, is something that is recalled with awe even today. Also remembered fondly is Erapalli Prasanna's mesmeric spell on the second afternoon which saw West Indies slide from 155 for five to 165 for nine. Prasanna took nine wickets in ing blows even as Vivian Richards and Alvin Kallicharran got half centuries. And yet, could India have won had not yet-young Anshuman Gaekwad, in only his second Test, struck a timely 80 in the

second innings? I shall also not

forget the look of intense disap-

pointment on Kallicharran's

face as he slowly wended his

way back to the pavilion after

being adjudged run out on the

final day nor will I forget Lloyd's

ungainly heave at an alluring ball from Prasanna only for him to be stumped easily. The tradition of holding the Test over the Pongal holiday period was again maintained when the West Indies next came to Madras four years later. By this time, TV coverage had were rewarded by four days of almost non-stop action. For with pace. On a dangerous



Gary Sobers

wickets fell. Kapil Dev and

Karsan Ghavri matched Sylvester Clarke, Norbert Philip and Vanburn Holder and India won a close match by three wickets shortly after lunch on the fourth day for the only decisive result of the six-match series. On this wicket, where even Sunil Gavaskar was reduced to scores of 4 and 1, it was left again to Viswanath to shoulder the batting. In scoring 124, the touch artist from Karnataka negotiated the pace and bounce in his inimitable manner. For the West Indies, skipper Alvin Kallicharran, with 98 in the first innings, and Larry Gomes with 91, in the second, provided the high quality knocks. Kapil Dev's timely belligerence in the second innings proved vital and will never forget how he and Syed Kirmani scampered for the winning bye amidst tremendous excitement and thunderous

By the time West Indies came five years later, there was only lukewarm interest. For one thing, TV coverage had made further inroads into the spectator response. Secondly, the visitors had already wrapped up the for the final game of the sixmatch series. The Test was not even held during the traditional Pongal holiday period and what doomed the match to a draw was the fact that rain washed out the scheduled first day's play on Christmas Eve, 1983. Thanks however to Gavaskar's monumental effort, some interest was maintained in the Test. First he stroked his way to his 30th Test hundred, which surpassed Don Bradman's longstanding record of 29. I can still hear the prolonged cheers that greeted his on-drive off Winston Davis for a single that took him to the all-important mark. On the final afternoon he got to his double hundred, making him the first batsman to score either 13 centuries or three double hundreds against West Indies. There was another mark that lay ahead and just after tea. when he reached 236, he became the highest individual scorer for India, surpassing Vinoo Mankad's 231 against New Zealand in January 1956. also compiled at Madras but at the Corporation Stadium. The Test ended in a tame draw but

(Continued on page 6)

#### • PARTAB RAMCHAND recalls the unforgettable Tests the West Indies played in the City.

member the gusty Gulabrai Ramchand being hit on the back of the head by a ball from and further defiance was provided by local player Kripal Singh and the enterprising Chandu Borde, both of whom got half centuries. But these remained just crumbs of comfort. Unfortunately this Test will

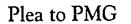
also be remembered for the drama surrounding the resignation of Polly Umrigar as the Indian captain. The political machinations of the Indian cricket board were at work leading to Jasu Patel being included in the team, at the behest, so the story went, of the Board President. Umrigar, pointing out the need for the side to have an extra batsman rather than a bowler, opted for Sen Gupta. With a confrontation brewing, Umrigar threatened to withdraw from the captaincy. The evening before the Test, he attended a reception given by the Madras Cricket Association and on coming back to the Connemara Hotel, tendered his resignation. After vainly trying throughout the night to get Umrigar to take back his resignation, the selectors appointed Vinoo Mankad as emergency captain just hours before the enough to have seen it. And bounced alarmingly, there was

Wesley Hall, Charlie Griffith and Lance Gibbs. But the Indians, shrugging off the earlier game. Indeed, India was in a commanding position midway through the Test that it translated by the final afternoon into a winning position. But Sobers, along with tail-ender Griffith, thwarted for hours the spin trio of Bedi, Prasanna and Chandrasekhar who were weaving patterns around the formidable batting line-up. Sobers scored 74 not out to follow up

his first innings 95 and, in the end. West Indies managed to draw the game. But the West Indians alone did not provide the highlights of the game. Farokh Engineer, in fact, set the trend by almost getting a hundred before lunch on the first day. Hitting out boldly against Hall, Griffith, Sobers and Gibbs, the flamboyant wicketkeeper batsman was not out with 94 at the interval be- made inroads into spectator refore being dismissed for 109. sponse, but there were still large Borde hit his second century of crowds at Chepauk and they the series and there was entertaining batting from V. Subramanyam, Hanumant once, spin was put on the back-Singh and Ajit Wadekar whose burner as the Indians attacked hook for six off Hall is still talked about by those lucky track, on which the ball commencement of the Test. among the many fine catches a veritable bumper war, espe-

#### **READERS**

#### WRITE



There is an old post office called 1 the Parthasarathy Koil Post Office in an old building on Big Street in Triplicane. I understand that this post office was started in 1902, so the building must be more than 100 years old. It certainly is one of those old buildings with a charm of their own. It could qualify as a heritage building of Triplicane which is itself a very old locality.

I have just learned that this Post Office is being shifted to Triplicane Post Office on Triplicane High Road, possibly in order to pull down the old building which is a property of the Parthasarathy Temple. I hope that the demolition of this building will be stopped and that it will be restored so that the century-old post office may be rehoused in it.

I have addressed the Chief Postmaster General, Chennai 600 002, as follows:

... actually this is one of the oldest post offices — I understand that it was started in 1902 and is due to celebrate its centenary — and the only one for a long distance around, including the four mada streets of the Parthasarathy Temple, after which it is named, and Ice House. Shifting it will cause undue hardship to the public and will do away with one facility which your Department was extending to the public all these hundred years. Moreover, the building in which the Post Office is housed is a heritage building and could be restored and strengthened without sacrificing its atmosphere.

> N. Harinarayana Formerly Director of Museums

Save waterbodies

N To doubt, the old style well I would draw water only from the top layer of the acquifer. Unfortunately, individual residential houses, which managed with a well till a decade ago, have been converted into multi-storeyed flat complexes, which require more water and the wells in almost all these places (including the suburbs) have gone dry, compelling even individual houses to go in for deep borewells. At this juncture, due to the failure of the monsoon, encroachment and closing of waterbodies like lakes, tanks etc., there is obviously no 'toplayer of the acquifer'. Even in the mofussil areas, due to indiscriminate and abnormal drawal of groundwater using highpowered motors and pumps (one of the reasons being supply of free electricity for agricultural purposes), replacing the age-old kapila yetram from big wells, called thuravu, all the wells have dried up.

Unless immediate efforts are catch". taken to save the waterbodies from encroachments and from being filled with rubbish, there seems to be no deliverence for the people and they will have to put up with saline groundwater which gets more saline day-by-day, due to the absence of recharge of the ground.

> T.M. Sundararaman Chennai 600 004.

Crowing about crows

**D** eader Rajaram's diatribe against The crow (MM, September 1st) is most unsympathetic to that gregarious bird. He has really painted the crow black! We all know that the

crow is the most sociable bird, partaking of its food with its kin and cawing loudly. It is a very intelligent bird, as delineated by Dr. Balasubramanian in an article on Corvis sapiens in The Hindu recently. "Kakkai kuruvi engal jaathi" sang Mahakavi Bharati.

My own experience with crows and squirrels has been entirely different from Reader Rajaram's. I no longer see the "Crow School" I saw in my younger days, with several crows sitting in a row on the terrace or parapet. My assumption is the crow population has dwindled. Most times, the squirrel gets quite a share of the cooked rice served for the crow. It was the squirrel which was a nuisance to me, building shelters in between the boxes in the attic and littering. Succour came fortunately in the shape of a street cat one day and the squirrel population was

It is because perhaps of its extraordinary nature that our sages have given bitru status to vaayasa (crow). Thousands of dollars are spent in the U.S. on spraying chemicals on tree branches to keep away birds during the swearing-in ceremony of their President. Singapore boasts of having ridden itself of crows. Let us learn to live with crows, as otherwise there will be none for the average Indian to "crow

My suggestion to Reader Rajaram is:

- 1. Get a linen covering for your car which can be washed periodically or discarded after some time.
- 2. Uproot the African Tulip tree altogether which is the "root cause" for the crow's roosting and nesting especially since the tree destroys the flooring. The chopping down of a tree will reflect being a true Chennai-ite who has developed the culture as a pastime.
- 3. Let him serve some of his home recipes to drive away the crows (joke in Ananda Vikatan issue dated 15.9.2002).

## Save the waterways

The Cooum River and ▲ Buckingham Canal could help Chennai city even today, offering inland transportation facility, apart from beauty, if only they were maintained properly.

Earlier, we used to hear about Cooum beautification schemes and Buckingham Canal dredging plans. Of late, we do not even hear about such programmes. Has the Government of Tamil Nadu given up on the schemes to improve its waterways?

Today, for the younger generation, Cooum and Buckingham Canal represent everything that is dirty, ugly and environmentally offensive. I even heard a suggestion recently, during a casual discussion, that the Cooum River and the Buckingham Canal be reclaimed, similar to the Backbay Reclamation Scheme in Mumbai. The suggestion would appear to indicate a willingness to develop concrete jungles on the beds of our waterways too!

I cannot but think that the present state of these waterways

reflects the indifferent attitude of the Government towards public health issues and maintaining Chennai City in an aesthetic manner. It is amazing that those in charge of the Government who must be criss-crossing these waterways several times a day remain undisturbed by the foul smell and the sad sight. They also do not seem to think what impression the visitors to Chennai would get seeing such sordid conditions. These conditions also reflect poorly on the citizens of Chennai, who seem to be so thick-skinned as to tolerate such conditions as if they are part of their normal life. Nobody seems to be even protesting. The saddest part is the sight of hundreds of people living on the banks

of these waterways along with the cattle, mosquitoes and what not. It is not as if the situation is hopeless. Many worthwhile suggestions have been made in the past. But, if the Government is not interested in doing anything worthwhile, the suggestions are

bound to be useless and wasted. If

the Government of Tamil Nadu is not interested in Chennai's waterways, then it should hand them over to the Government of India, so that it could be taken up as a national scheme.

One worthwhile suggestion made several times in the past is to continuously pump sea water into several places in the waterways so as to continuously flush the sludge and allow the water to flow. The sludge and debris could be let into the sea at a distance by installing submarine pipelines. In several places in the world, such as Le Havre in France, industrial effluents are let into the sea through pipelines after adequately diluting and treating the effluents.

What we need is the will on the part of the Government and sustained pressure from the Citizens of Chennai to save our waters and, indeed, the city

> N.S. Venkataraman Chennai 600 090.

#### The dancing policeman

Apropos the letter by C.G. Prasad (MM, August 16th), let me first designate him more dignifiedly 'Traffic Controller'. He was Mr. Ayyanan, Circle Inspector, Traffic, the insignia being the three stars adorning his white uniform. A well-built person with a strong physique, he had a smiling demeanour. He proved an attraction to all with the extraordinary and inimitable style he used to regulate traffic in the peak hours, both in the morning and evening, near the Music Academy Junction. He would do this personally for one hour at each session, though he had subordinates. With an eagle eye to supplement his lightning speed, he ensured that, even as he danced, his manual signals would keep traffic flowing.

If I am right, in yesteryears' The Hindu there is a story about him stating that children going to school would ask their elders to go via Music Academy so that they could see the dancing police uncle. Then one day, scrutinising the official notifications, I saw his posting on promotion to a rural area as Deputy Superintendent. As a senior citizen of the metropolis for nearly four decades, I have yet to come across that type of Police Officer Reader Prasad described and whom I have never forgotten. May his tribe revive and increase.

> S. Ganapathiraman Chennai 600 086.

The crow is the mount of Lord Saneeswara, the most dreaded of the Navagrahas. Let him not suggest anything to incur the wrath of the Lord or Maneka Gandhi

> R.K. Natarajan Chennai 600 094.

Southern railway exotica

Thank you for stirring my memory **1** with the articles in MM, September 16th. The SIR of Indo-Ceylon Express fame also ran the longest train journey, with its Grand Trunk Express, during the Raj. The Indo-Ceylon Express was formed back in 1898 with vestibuled coaches in both first and second classes. It took 21 hours 50 minutes for the 443-mile journey.

In the economics of Indian railway construction, one feat of the SIR, namely the Great Southern India Railway, has gone unsung; its average construction cost per mile was less than 8,000 pounds sterling, which becomes glaring when compared with the Bombay Baroda & Central India Railway's 20,000 pounds sterling per mile on an average! True, the topography traversed by both railways was not comparable, but the BBCI's insistence on employing construction contractors proved to be expensive compared with the GSIR's prudence in employing its engineering staff for building its

Eating has been integral to train travel for long, but during the Raj it

was something special, quite unlike the departmental (mis)management tasted by the train traveller in later years. It is a long story from the days of catering contractors who managed railway restaurant cars and dining rooms at important stations. Spencer's of Madras, who managed the show on trains run on the SIR and M&SMR, acquired public acclaim for their in-your-compartment meal served by liveried waiters who brought it packed in picnic-style wicker-basket complete with table

A peculiarity of the M&SMR management's locomotive practice was that while it ordered engines from British manufacturers, like all other railways of the country, it also acquired a fleet of exotic locos made by Czechoslovakian Skoda, American Baldwin, German Hannoversche, Henschel and Hohenzollern, and British Hawthorn, Bagnall, Sentinel and Dubs, and many not seen on any other railway of the Raj.

> have alarmingly increased. G.D. Patwardhan Dogs, especially stray dogs, are Mumbai 400 050. the main vectors in India of that

#### Railway nostalgia

The several articles on Indian ▲ Railways (in MM from April 16th) brought back so many good memories of my childhood travels by train. We had the privilege of travelling by a white saloon used for VIPs, as my father was the financial adviser to the British Government (1937-1942). The compartment had six berths and a dressing area next to the toilet. The ticket collector would come in from time to time to find out if anything was needed. The food was served by the Spencer's in boxlike trays with crisp white napkins. Ongole was one food stop I remember for carrier Indian meals. All that is history now.

In the article on trains (MM, September 16th), you mention Rameswaram Express, the Boat Mail and the Pamban Bridge disaster. All this is graphically written about in the book Wings of Fire by our President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. His father's new boat got washed away in that storm.

The Anglo-Indian community were great Railway people. They were very hard-working and disciplined, taking a sense of pride in their work. They also had a great sense of humour and fun.

> Padma Krishnamoorthy Chennai 600 017.

#### Tea Centres again

↑ s an ex-tea planter with a British group, I note with great surprise that tea has not been given its proper place in London of all places (MM, August 16th).

Let us face facts. Whether we like it or not, it was the British who gave us our tea industry in India. I am therefore at a complete loss to understand why no 'Tea Centre' has been set up in London.

I remember only too well the one above Bata's in front of Victory House on Mount Road. This place had A/C and a mini cinema theatre showing varied information movies, many supplied by the British Council, as well as real tea plants growing in the hall. The place was spotless, the service unmatchable and this Centre was run that way by the Tea Board. I wish something on these lines could be started in big cities around the

Tackling the stray dog menace disease of Rabies, which affects all am a veterinarian and warm-blooded animals, including was in Government service in man, in whose case its discovery is the erstwhile Federation of Malaya, the British Colony of termed Hydrophobia or fear of wa-Sarawak and the Sultanate of ter. So far, there has not been a certain cure for this disease, where Brunei, from where I retired as death is certain within ten days Head of the Veterinary Services once the symptoms are maniin 1988. I settled in Bangalore affested. The old methods of preventer spending several years in the

> are available, the largest number of human fatalities due to Rabies in the world occurs in India (about 50,000 persons a year). About one million persons approach the various clinics and hospitals in India every year for protective vaccina-

provoked.

and beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen, unless heavily Although no accurate records

tive vaccinations are painful, with

side effects, whilst the modern tis-

sue culture vaccines are expensive

It is incumbent on the authoritions and treatment after being bit-

compulsory annual registration of ten by dogs, mainly stray and un-

Vector elimination is the key factor in the control and eradication of Rabies. India is designated as a Rabies endemic area, i.e. Rabies is present in the country on a permanent footing, mainly in stray dogs, in the urban and sylvatic forms. It is mandatory in many countries that dogs which bite human beings be caught and kept under observation for Rabies under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon for ten clear days, for confirmation or otherwise of the presence of Rabies. Such practices and facilities are almost non-existent here and, as such, any dog bite has to be treated with extreme cau-

ties to promulgate and enforce mandatory regulations for the

all dogs, together with Rabies vaccination. All unregistered and unvaccinated dogs, including stray and ownerless dogs, should be rounded up and done away with humanely, if not claimed within three days. There cannot be any peaceful co-existence between vectors and human beings like mosquitoes in Malaria, rats in

Plague and dogs in Rabies.

Dogs not only transmit Rabies,

but also other dangerous diseases

such as Leptospirosis, Hydatid

Immediately after World War II, Malaya was plagued by a severe outbreak of Cannine Rabies with rabid dogs entering freely from Thailand to border states like Kedah, Perak and Kelantan. To stem this outbreak, an all-out Rabies eradication campaign was promulgated and an immune belt was created in the border states by compulsory vaccination of all dogs and shooting of all stray dogs. The campaign was extended to other states. Although this appeared harsh, these methods produced excellent results and by 1956 Malaya was Rabies-free. Countries like Sarawak and Brunei maintained their Rabies-free status by ruthless elimination of stray dogs and imposing strict control on the imports of dogs and other related species.

The presence of large num bers of stray dogs in India in general and in metros like Chennai and Bangalore in particular is also bad publicity.

> Dr. C.V. Subramaniam Bangalore 560 075.

world to promote our world-famous product.

UK and the USA. What baffles

me wherever I go in India is the

large number of uncontrolled

stray dogs wandering aimlessly in

the streets and residential areas.

Chennai is no exception. I ob-

tained my initial veterinary de-

gree from Madras in 1952 and in

those days the number of street

dogs was insignificant. Over the

years, the numbers appear to

most dangerous, painful and fatal

R.K. Dastur Chennai 600 034.

#### Of doctors & barbers

**D** eader K.Padmanabhan's T.Nagar recollections were wistful (MM, June 16th). Those were the days the Russians sent a dog in a rocket into space and so a feisty little cricket team called the Sputnik Stars gave T.Nagar residents much watching pleasure on Sundays at the R. K. Cricket ground near Vani

Come to think of it. Whenever we think of the past, the first thing which comes to mind is the eminently reasonable cost of food items then. But, in fact, in another area, services, Father Time has turned them highway robbers fleecing citi-

Doctors' fees for instance used to be Rs.2/- or Rs.5/- even in the 60s.

### Wanted **freelancers**

Madras Musings wants young, enterprising and enthusiastic freelance photographers to supply it regularly with pictures. The photographers should be interested in heritage, the environment and civic issues in Chennai and be able to work by themselves on such subjects.

Madras Musings is also looking for freelance writers who can contribute articles on all sport in Chennai. Cricket writers are welcome, but Madras Musings would also welcome contributors interested in other sport in the City/ Tamil Nadu. Also welcome are those who can offer nostalgia pieces on sport in Chennai/Tamil Nadu.

— The Editor

Today, any white coat worthy of his stethoscope charges Rs.200/- (after making you wait for an hour and half), which is almost the cost of a destitute's funeral.

Take haircuts. Those days my crusty old grandfather used to command the barber to virtually tonsure my head for Re. I/- (later on, in college, I relived the trauma when I read Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock'). Today, a decent haircut in AC comfort is so costly my hairline recedes automatically.

> C.G.Prasad Chennai 600 079.

#### Oh, for those games!

When we were children, the W games that we played were very different than those that children play today.

In those days, the girls generally

played Pandi (or throwing up cowries) or Pallankuzhi with tamarino seeds or skipped. The boys mainly played marbles or 'catch' with tennis balls or football or hockey or chaplan gudugudugudu (also known as Kabbadi), holding their breath as long as they were in the opposite team's territory. Other boys were happy collecting match labels of different manufacturers (plenty of brands were available in those days) and exchanging them with their friends or playing bambarum (spinning tops) or gillithaandu (stickcricket). All of us were happy with such simple games. Where are those games gone now? Perhaps they could be found in some remote villages, but in our cities, girls and boys play computer games whenever they find time after homework, which seldom leaves them time for anything else. Oh, for those good old days!

> K.V. Ramakrishnan Chennai 600 086.

#### Semantics of periodicals

Chould Madras Musings be prop-Oerly referred to as a semi-monthly offering? Bi-monthly apparently means once in two months, whereas bi-weekly can mean both twice-aweek (typical railwayspeak) and fortnightly (which, in turn, has the curious etymology of 14 nights). My vintage dictionary having proved somewhat inadequate, I seek the help of enlightened readers for a lucid explanation of these and related words (like bi-annual / biennial and diurnal). or a decent reference, which does not involve a trip to the W (himsical) W(ebsite) W(asteland).

> Thomas Tharu Chennai 600 020.

#### Directory discrimination

This year's Yellow Pages of Chennai Telephones are divided into two volumes - GETIT b2b (meant for businesses) and GETIT b2c (meant for households). But b2b and b2c both were distributed to business establishments. while only b2c was sent to residents. This discrimination prevents householders getting information about trading concerns, for which they require b2b directory, which this year they have been denied.

Whatever directories are published on behalf of Chennai Telephones should be distributed to all subscribers irrespective of their status, business or household.

> S.R. Rajagopal Chennai 600 014.

#### Crafty craft

s an explorer of the lanes and Aby-lanes of south Madras, could not but notice the many bamboo craftsmen on the pavements of R.A. Puram and Adyar. Actually they are mostly women, spending much time, day in and day out, in cutting, weaving and tying bamboo mats. There are very few customers, yet they manage to survive on the sale of the painted mats.

A variation of the bamboo mats, the mats of Vettiver — a kind of reed — has disappeared from the sidewalks. When I enquired at one outlet, the craftswoman said that the supply of raw material from Andhra had petered out. Vettiver is known to be a highly effective coolant in summer, when the blinds are used for windows. It is also likely that with

high-expense airconditioned comfort coming into vogue, the work of these craftswomen, struggling to eke out an existence, is losing custom.

I have a feeling that this aspect of city life is just the tip of the iceberg: many traditional crafts, such as textile dyeing, water-divining, storytelling (kathakalakshepam) and sculpture may be dying out under the massive impact of modernisation and 'instant' consumerism in Tamil

> K. Karunanidhi Chennai 600 085.

Mirroring spectacles hope it is not too late to join the ■ debate on the name of one of the streets in Madras.

of Guruvayoorappan and I distinctly remember the address given in one corner of the picture: 10 Kanady Street: Was Kanady derived from kannady (spectacles or mirror) and did it get changed to Kanady, and then to Kennedy?

P.S. Seshadri Ahmedabad 380 015.

Unnecessary screams

am unable to fathom what I prompted Madras Musings to publish the article 'The case of the MidAugust 1st and 16th). The matter only remotely concerns the city of Chennai and is not elevating spiritually or morally. There are a few periodicals which specialise in depicting graphically or pictorially the murky affairs of degraded humanity. They do it for sheer survival. Is it necessary in the case of MM? I wish MM does not fall from its lofty ideals and ioin the ranks of yellow journals.

night Screams' by Randor Guy (MM,

M. Sethuraman Chennai 600 088.

#### **PLEASE NOTE**

- My uncle used to print pictures 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.
  - Madras Musings does not accept letters by e-mail.

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Name
Address

Note: Overseas postage Rs. 450/year extra. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period September 16 to 30, 2002. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

- 1. Where were the talks, to resolve the ethnic conflict, held recently between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government?
- 2. Which pyramid's interior was probed for a 'secret chamber' on September 17th, using a 'Pyramid Rover' robot?
- 3. One for the Beatles fans Which of the Fab Four's films was released as a two-disc DVD on
- September 24th? 4. Name the actress, nationally famous for her role of 'Rajni' on DD, who passed away recently.
- 5. Name the three vernacular newspapers to cross the 100 lakh readership mark, according to the National Readership Studies Council.
- 6. Name the much-wanted underworld don and his actress friend arrested in Lisbon recently.
- 7. What prestigious resources project was shelved after spending Rs. 330 crore over eight years? 8. Name the Gandhinagar temple stormed by terrorists on September 24th.
- 9. Who is the new Miss Universe after Miss Russia was stripped of the title?
- 10. Name one of the world's most advanced fighter aircraft inducted into the IAF on September 27th.

\* \* \*

- Where did a major explosion involving crackers, kill 17 people, sending shockwaves across the
- 12. What does the home of the Lodge of Perfect Unanimity in Chennai now house?
- 13. Name the Chennai institution that was responsible for the first broadcasting service in India. 14. One on business. Who is the chairman of CII-Tamil Nadu?
- 15. Name the Tamil Nadu chess player to become India's 35th and latest IM.
- 16. Name the train introduced on September 20th between Tambaram and Tiruvannamalai, for 'pournami' day visits.
- 17. Name the 'integrated industrial park', said to be the first of its kind in the country, inaugurated near Chengalpattu on September 20th.
- 18. Who is the new TNCC president, in place of E.V.K.S. Elangovan?
- 19. Which imposing edifice in San Thomé, Chennai, was designed and constructed under the supervision of Capt. J.A. Power in
- 20. Name the popular stage troupe, started by YGP and Pattu, that celebrated its 50th birthday recently.

(Answers on page 7)

## Ennore Port promises

(Continued from page 1)

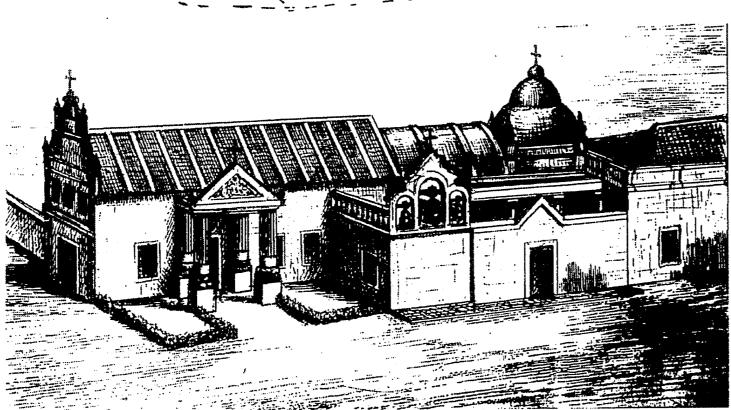
has undertaken large-scale planting of trees and this activity would be stepped up in the coming months. The Port has also retained the vegetation wherever it existed.

- As part of its social responsibility, the Port is utilising Women Self-help Groups to maintain the plantations. This has given gainful employment to more than 60 women from neighbouring villages.
- The Port has recently permitted the North Chennai Ther mal Power Station to draw the coolant water it requires from the Ennore Port basin. This would enable TNEB to henceforth discharge its effluent into the Ennore Creek and not through the Buckingham Canal. This would also help in regeneration of fisheries in and around Pulicat.
- Contributing to the socioeconomic development of the area, the Port is laying a pucca road to Kattupalli village. Further activities, leading to the creation of health and education facilities in the area, are planned.
- Ennore Port, in collaboration with the Forests Department Government of Tamil Nadu intends to develop additional areas of mangrove in the Ennore-Pulicat region.
- The Port has commissioned a consultant of repute to prepare a land-use plan for the port area, which would primarily focus on sustainable development of the entire area, keeping the biodiversity
- The Port has offered to work with the Department of Fisheries, Government of Tamil Nadu, to improve the socioeconomic conditions of fishermen living around the port area and also in the development of fisheries.

These are only some of the activities which are being currently implemented; others would be taken up in the future. Ennore Port is totally committed to the protection of the environment and its developmental activities would be environment friendly.

> M. Raman, I.A.S Chairman-cum-Managing Director



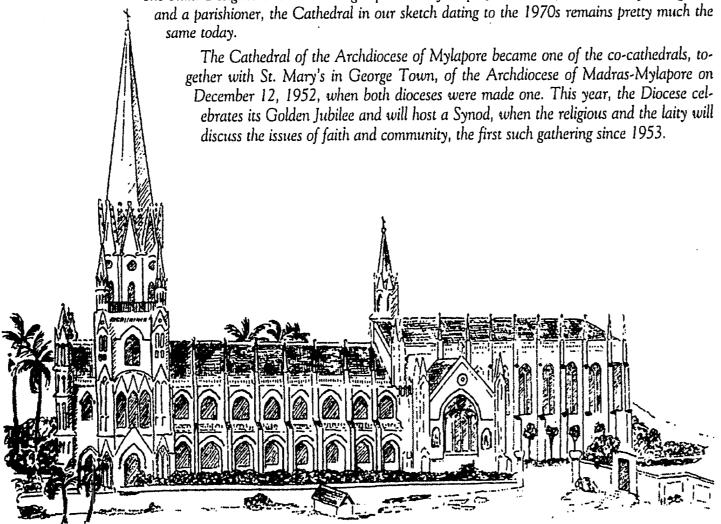


#### The OLD...

#### ...& The NEW

We take another tack with our OLD and NEW this fortnight. Instead of photographs, we feature some rare sketches taken from early 20th Century books. The OLD offers two views of the FIRST San Thomé Cathedral built in Portuguese times. The picture on top is of the Cathedral as it may have been when it was built sometime after the arrival of the first Bishop of San Thomé, Dom Sebastiao de San Pedro, in 1608 ... but even that may have been built in two parts, the domed shrine on right initially, and the pedimented entrance and long nave later. Our OLD, above, is of the Cathedral after later embellishments and the creation of a better integrated unity, quite possibly in the 18th Century. Madras Musings would be delighted to hear from Church archivists the story of the development of the first Cathedral.

Our NEW is of the Cathedral consecrated in 1896, in British times, after the congregation, at Bishop Dom Henriques Joseph Reed da Silva's behest, agreed to have the old Cathedral pulled down (in 1894) and a new one built. Designed and its building supervised by Capt. J.A. Power, a retired Royal Engineer same today.



## MEMORABLE STILL

(Continued from page 3)

the quality of Gavaskar's batting was something to cherish for

Test during Pongal returned when the West Indies came in 1988. This time it was the fourth — and final — Test of the series with the visitors holding a 1-0 lead. But India took only four days to wrap up the game by 255 runs and level the series. A truly astonishing debut the utter panic in the West In-

of an under-prepared pitch, Hirwani made the ball turn and West Indian batsmen had no deceptive googly in the first innings. His dismissal symbolised

tacled 19-year-old leg spinner, unplayable, though he would be overshadowed all else. In taking the first to acknowledge the 16 wickets for 136, he set a help received from Kiran More. world record for the best figures The Indian wicketkeeper also by a bowler on debut in Test set a world record by stumping The tradition of playing the cricket. Making maximum use five batsmen in one innings and six in the match. But even on this much-maligned pitch, bounce viciously to which the Kapil Dev stood out with a breathtaking innings of 109 in counter. Not even Vivian the first innings, while local Richards, who was bowled by a player Woorkheri Raman, making his debut, impressed with a polished 83 in the second.

Will this year's match be as by Narendra Hirwani, a bespec- dian ranks. Hirwani was quite memorable as these seven?

## A guru's word — In his centenary year

grees in Physics. He also quali-

fied in Geography through di-

ploma courses. In 1925, he

worked as a science assistant in

the Ramakrishna Mission Resi-

dential High School, Mylapore,

later moving to P.S. High

School, Mylapore. He served as

Demonstrator in Chemistry at

Wesley College from 1926-28,

in Physics at Madras Christian

College during 1929-30, then

took over as Assistant Lecturer

in Physics at Wesley College in

joined the Ramakrishna Mis-

sion High School in T. Nagar as

First Assistant. He served for 14

years in the Main High School,

and then, in 1947, took over as

Headmaster of the North High

enhancing

institution's reputation. His stu-

dents, people like K.

Santhanam and many others,

went on to win accolades for

themselves and the country. In

the Ramakrishna Mission Main

High School as Headmaster,

where he served till his retire-

Given his unique thought

processes, he ensured that his

students received exposure to a

judicious mix of religion and

science — the mark of a true

thinker who has no difficulty in

bringing these two streams to-

gether. During his tenure, the

schools were witness to both

through advice and sympathy.

rare attitude for a man of his

generation, and power in his

was, naturally, given his own

upbringing and background,

very austere and religious, and,

even today, firmly believes that

setting an example is the best

ing' has been his creed always,

and also thrift and aversion to

waste. He wouldn't throw away

even a pin or piece of paper, and

always used the backs of invita-

A person's progress through

life invariably follows the pat-

tern: Home-School-Society.

For Srinivasachariar, the role of

the teacher in a student's life is

all-important, and is defined by

the generosity of spirit and char-

What builds character? "Pu-

rity of thought and mind, and

dedication to service of soci-

ety", comes the brisk answer,

acter of the teacher.

unhesitatingly.

tion cards to write his notices.

'Plain living and high think-

way to get students to listen.

ment in June 1964.

N. Srinivasachariar, an unforgettable guru.

dusty by-lane in Mambalam. An old house within a school compound. A cool, dark verandah runs along the front of the house, evoking memories of childhood visits to grand-aunts. Inside, an old man reclines on a wooden bench. Children's voices ebb and flow around him as they chant their evening prayers.

He is thin and frail. Well, maybe that's only to be expected — he is 99 years old. But his eyes twinkle, and he smiles the tolerant benign smile of one who has no quarrel with fate. He is N. Srinivasachariar. former Headmaster of the School, a post he held for 10 Ramakrishna Mission Schools, Teacher and Mentor.

Born on the 9th of December, 1903, into an orthodox family in the village of Nagai, near Mannargudi, Tanjore District, Srinivasachariar grew up in Madras in the home of his paternal uncle, Sriman Maharishi S. Vasudevachariar, to whom the Ramakrishna Mission Institutions in Thyagaraya-

nagar owe their existence. In 1910, Srinivasachariar joined the Wesley High School, Royapettah. He was fortunate in the calibre of teachers and role models he encountered through his schooling. He studied Tamil under many renowned scholars. Among them science exhibitions and reli-Mudaliar who, on one occasion, observer, he was able to bring took Srinivasachariar, along erring students back on track with other students, to meet Bala Gangadhar Tilak when he He had no faith in the rod, a visited Madras in 1918. Under the guidance and advice of dedicated educationists like hands became a gentle tool. He Rev. C. Pollard, Rev. T.R. Foulger and Rev. H. Ashcroft, Srinivasachariar had a successful career in school, winning prizes for academic skills.

He joined the Madras Christian College, acquiring both graduate and postgraduate de-

#### **Answers to Quiz**

1. Sattahip in Thailand; 2 Great Pyramid of Cheops; 3. A Hard Day's Night; 4. Priya Tendulkar; 5. Dainik Bhaskar, Dainik Jagran and Malayala Manorama; 6. Abu Salem and Monica Bedi: 7. The India-Oman natural gas pipeline; 8. The Akshardham temple; 9. Miss Panama; 10. Sukhoi-30 MKI.

11. Athur town near Salem; 12 The Police HQ on Kamarajar Salai 13. Madras Presidency Radio Club started in 1924; 14. P.K Mohapatra; 15. T.S. Ravi; 16 Giriyalam Special; 17. 'Mahindra City'; 18. S. Balakrishnan; 19. The San Thomé Cathedral; 20. United Amateur Artistes.

English. Being proficient in both chaos down to the fact that English and Tamil, he has written extensively on a variety of religious subjects. His translation into English of the Nyasa Thilakam, along with a clear commentary, won for him the 'SadVidhya Pracharaka' title for religious services. The head of the Arogya Ashramam, Adyar, bestowed the little 'Vidhya Visharadha' upon him for his cul-

tural and educational activities. In 1978, he became a mem-1932-33. In June 1933, he ber of both the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Committee and the school committee, finally taking over as President of the Ashrama Committee in 1983, a post he held for 18 years till 2000. Today, he continues as President of the Sri Ahobila Math Vidhya Abhivardhini Sabha, which has a full-time Veda Patashala. He monitors the progress of the Maharishi Vasudeva Vidyalaya School, started in 1963 in memory of his 1957, he was transferred back to uncle, and spends his time dispensing advice to those who run the schools.

Blessed with a prodigious memory, the 99-year-old even today reels off quotes from Milton and Shakespeare with the same aplomb with which he recites from the scriptures.

A TV sits silently in one corner of the verandah. "He doesn't watch entertainment channels," smiles his nephew. "He prefers the newscasts." He also reads newspapers,

was T.V. Kalyanasundaram gious discourses. Being a shrewd but tends to tire easily. Does he have anything to say about the socio-political situation in the country, given his almost panoramic view? He shakes his head, and puts anarchy and

"we've lost sight of the indi-

As conversation with him progresses, stereotypical queries about his "views and opinions" on the "changes" around him suddenly seem out of place. Strangely, it seems absurd to talk of change to a man who has seen a century go by. Especially when you realise that, in his eyes, the principles of life stay the same whatever happens. "All things ripen and rot. Change merely means 're-arranging'," he smiles.

The "changes" you talk and hear so much about them become almost superficial, and yes, while they do call for some adiustment, vou can stav largely untouched by them. This is a view endorsed by his nephew, Vasudevachariar, with whom Srinivasachariar lives and who avers that "basic living and attitudes have stayed the same for us through the generations".

Srinivasachariar firmly believes that a person's character shapes his or her destiny.

The ultimate goal of any teacher is to help the student along a path which renders him "individual-centred with a social outlook".

To find a teacher who teaches is easy. To find a teacher who can impart academic knowledge and, at the same time, provide nourishment for a student's soul is rare For gurus like N. Srinivasachariar, there is no such thing as 'retiring' as a teacher.

Ranjitha Ashok

drawings and paintings by the students of the Indradanush School of Art. (At Studio Palazzo.)

October 21: An exhibition of

Till October 25: 'Women Artists of India' — an anniversary exhibition of paintings. (At Artworld.)

October 24: 'French Science Today': Alain Abarnou, an environmental specialist in water pollution, talks on marine pollution. (At Birla Planetarium 6.30 p.m.)

October 25: Jazz Concert by the Florian Ross Sextet. Florian Ross, paintist and bandleader, has been described as "may be the most interesting jazz musician to come out of Europe in quite some time". The Sextet offers "inventive and original small-group jazz." (At Music Academy, 6.30 p.m.)

October 26: Beyond the Natural 2 directed by Krupasagaran Shridharan with art installation by B.O. Shailesh. (At The Amethyst, 8.30 p.m.)

October 26: Exhibition of paint ings by Venu from Kerala. (At Artworld.)

November 1: The British Council India, has been closely associated with the Royal Court Theatre, London, in promoting new writings in English. Over the past three years, several playwrights and directors from Chennai have attended the residencies and workshops conducted by the Royal Court. While some of them have been invited to the International Residency in London, others have been part of the playwrights' and directors' workshops held in Bangalore and Mumbai in 2001 and 2002.

Culture Café's Theatre Circle and Writers Circle present Working on Plays, bringing together the playwrights and directors who have been through the Royal Court workshops to share their experiences and learning with anyone interested in attending. (At British Council, 6.30 p.m.)

## REQUIEM FOR BIRD HABITATS

(Continued from page 1)

the NGOs approached the campus people with understanding, without a patronising attitude to 'educate' doctorate holders? Our collective failure to protect a precious ecosystem is definitely a sad commentary on what happened".

Other instances where bird habitats have suffered include the twin iheels of Manali-Madhavaram — which, between the early 1980s and 1990s, proved to be a haven for breeding Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. These wetlands are now desolate and greatly degraded, just sheets of drying vegetation. Continuing neglect by the owners, the State Veterinary Department (TANUVAS), will, without doubt, ensure the loss of this wetland ecosystem in two

or three more seasons. Srinivasachariar is well ver-The Madras Fertilizers comsed in Sanskrit, Mathematics. plex at Manali is another such the Sciences, Geography and

tered Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, Cotton Teals, Moorhens, Waterhens and Coots, besides winter visitors like Garganey Teals and Waders. One naturalist recorded nearly 40 species of birds in a single visit. But all these wonderful things ended by 2000. The destruction was wrought by local poachers shooting basketfuls of Night Heron and Egret as they left the heronry at dusk to feed or while they returned to roost. This was compounded by the degradation of the lily pond. The authorities meanwhile jealously guard the 'security' of the complex, refusing study by serious naturalists, while remaining indifferent to the mass slaughter of birds just outside their com-

The Chitlapakkam Lake is already beyond recovery.

example. Between 1998-99, the Dumping of wastes by residents and poaching have scared away lily pond in the complex shelthe wetland birds that used to colonise the lake a few years ago. The latest on the hit list is the Pallikaranai marshes, whose former regulars, the elusive Bitterns, have almost disappeared. Not to speak of what is happening at the Adyar Estuary. In spite of public interest litigations over the last five years, how long will it be before the fauna in this area will vanish

> "Stringent action is needed to end the menace of wetland encroachment, and it is a process that needs much planning imagination, and interaction with NGOs," concludes the 70year-old Gurusami, whose passion for his feathered friends enables his continuing crusade against the insensitive handling of bird habitats in Chennai.

> > Shobha Menon

The Police, an integral part of the public, are in fact citizens, acting on behalf of fellow-citizens and, therefore, entitled to the full support of the citizenry. Equally, Police success cannot be achieved without public support and cooperation.

In order to secure and maintain good public relations, the Police must establish satisfactory contacts with the individual citizen and also seek to influence the large majority of the people with whom it may not be possible to come into personal contact but whom it can contact through the Press.

But is the Police Force which has the best Press Relations the most popular or has the Police Force which is popular with the public achieved that position by maintaining good relations with the Press?

For example, the British Police, without doubt, enjoy the greatest amount of public support and goodwill. Is this due to maintaining excellent relations with the Press? The answer is 'yes' and 'no'. Good Press Relations is only part of the answer.

Why then is the British Police so popular with the public? A historian has suggested that they are popular because they are kind and helpful. It is true that the British Police have a long and splendid tradition of patience and courtesy, but that does not satisfactorily explain how the British Police can afford to be kind.

The truth is that the popularity of the British Police is due to it enforcing laws acceptable by and large to the majority of the people. This, in turn, is due to, firstly, the laws having been enacted by a democratic process in a country where the common man understands what is being legislated and, secondly, the Police not enforcing unpopular

## The Police, the Press and the Public

laws, such as Fuel and Price Controls, the enforcement of which is undertaken by special officers of the Ministries concerned. The third reason for the popularity of the British Police is that the British are law-abiding and have a fairly high sense of social responsibility.

Thus, good Press Relations alone is not the answer to the issue of popularity. But it is a very important factor. As the mass media can be used to influence the large majority of the public with whom the Police may not come into contact and as the Press has a tremendous capacity to mould public opinion, it is necessary for the Police to cultivate the Press consciously and continuously.

Nothing whets a newspaper reader's curiosity more than the stories of human interest uncovered by the Police. They are the stories of plots, incidents, feuds, successes and passions of mankind. Criminal offences occur in all social and economic classes. In their investigations, the Police lay open the secrets of private lives for the curious and morbid public to feed on. These are the dramatic stories which boost circulation. Every newspaper reader feels he has a right to such stories and it is this thirst for news which produces the characteristically aggressive and competitive nature of the Press. And so, in its search for news, the Press always keeps a close eye on the Police and its reporters try to establish contact with the Police at all levels.

But should Police news be purveyed to the Press and how

should it be channelled? Should a beat constable or an investigation officer be permitted to answer questions or release information about a Police incident? It is felt universally by Police administrators that they are not sufficiently qualified to deal with representatives of the Press. The Press for its part is reluctant to accept this point of view for the following reasons:-

 Such a policy prevents reporters from obtaining a first-hand account of Police incidents.

#### by F.V. Arui Former Inspector

Former Inspector General of Police, Tamil Nadu

- It prevents the reporter from getting the correct answers to all his questions.
- It causes the reporter additional work and very often keeps him from getting the story on time.
- It often causes the reporter to give the credit for good work to a supervising officer, when actually the credit is a subordinate's.
- Many good stories of human interest are lost to the Press because they are matters of official record and the sources of such stories have been blocked.

These disadvantages to the Press may result from the policy of prohibiting the lower ranks from communicating with the Press. On the other hand, it results in the policy of top officers of the Police Department being

safeguarded. It is not my case that wrong acts or mistakes should be hushed up. Any remissness on the part of the Police should certainly be taken note of and disciplinary action instituted where necessary, but publicity tending to adversely affect the whole Department, in turn hampering public relations, should be avoided.

There is, thus, in the field of crime investigation, an inescapable conflict of interest between the Police and the Press. The sole business of the Police is to trace the criminal and bring him to justice. They are not concerned with the popular taste for sensational stories. In fact, public interest may often be a hindrance rather than a help. The reporter's business, on the other hand, is to secure stories, the juicier the better. Competitiveness amongst papers and reporters is keen. A reporter's success is judged by the steady supply of information he gives the public on a sensational case. He must watch the movements of the investigating officers. He may sometimes interview relations and friends of the victim. He is even sometimes tempted to do a certain amount of investigation on his own. This inevitably embarrasses the officers on the case who have to expend energies and ingenuity in eluding the attentions of the reporters when they should be concerned solely with the case. A more important point, from the Police view, is that a certain degree of secrecy is necessary in many instances, to prevent a criminal trying to evade capture finding out what line of enquiry

the Police are following, what places they have visited and who they have questioned.

We must at the same time acknowledge the great services rendered by the Press both to the Police and the public, both in the matter of prevention and detection of crime. Quite recently, a woman travelling to Bombay by train was found murdered when the train reached its destination. Neither her identity nor the culprits' was known. The Bombay Police sent a photograph of the deceased woman to the Madras Police who gave copies to the vernacular papers for publication. Within 24 hours, the relations of the deceased woman, who were in Salem, identified the photograph. This helped a great deal in the investigation. But for the quick identification of the deceased, a number of valuable clues would have been lost. There was another case of murder in Dindigul and once again the identity of the deceased person was not known. No sooner the vernacular newspapers published photographs given by the Police, some relations identified the deceased. This helped solve the case.

Thus, the Press is of great service both to the Police and the public. It also renders great help in preventing crime. When a cheat is at large adopting a particular modus operandi or there is a spate of crime of a particular kind in a certain locality, publication of the information that the Police have gathered enables the public to be alert and to avoid becoming victims. There is, therefore, no doubt that by close co-operation between the Press, the Police and Public, the good of the community at large can be promoted.

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