

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE

December 16-31, 2002



I wonder what's 'Happy' about last night!!

New Year – Already?

Time really seems to be on a roll these days.

Seems like only yesterday that festivities heralding 2002 were announced from every bill-board in town. The city wore its brightest lights; and 'Happy' signs blinked on and off all over the skyline.

At least, that was the intention. One assumes that even those rather unfortunate signs with un-cooperative bulbs that resulted in messages like "Hay New ear" meant well.

And here we are — it is that time once again.

It is that time when appearance, food and entertainment become the focus in certain quarters, as tired yet determined party animals get ready for the hectic socialising ahead, grimly ignoring aching backs and grey bags dangling from under their eyes.

It is that time when families prepare for the influx of visitors from all corners of the globe by stocking up on crates of mineral water for all those who once ate *masala vadai* by the roadside.

It is that time to re-make the same list of resolutions that you made, and somehow forgot to keep, last year.

Will December 31st live up to all the anticipation it generates for some?

Hard to tell.

But it is certainly time to wish for happiness and peace on earth for everyone — and really mean it.

The Universe is giving us one more year, after all.

One more chance.

Ranjitha Ashok

A.P. gas could help T.N. boom

The world's biggest natural gas find this year and India's biggest in almost 30 years, at 5 trillion cubic feet, could possibly bring about a spectacular transformation in the economy of not only Madras but also the whole of South India. The Gujarat and Maharashtra economies boomed in the early 1980s after the discovery of Bombay High. It is too early to say whether the discovery of natural gas in the very first well Reliance Industries drilled in the deep-water D6 block in the Krishna-Godavari basin, about 60 km off the Andhra Pradesh coast, will prove as successful. But if it does and Phase II of Reliance's plan takes off, the economy of Andhra Pradesh,

• by A Special Correspondent

Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala and Karnataka could boom impressively.

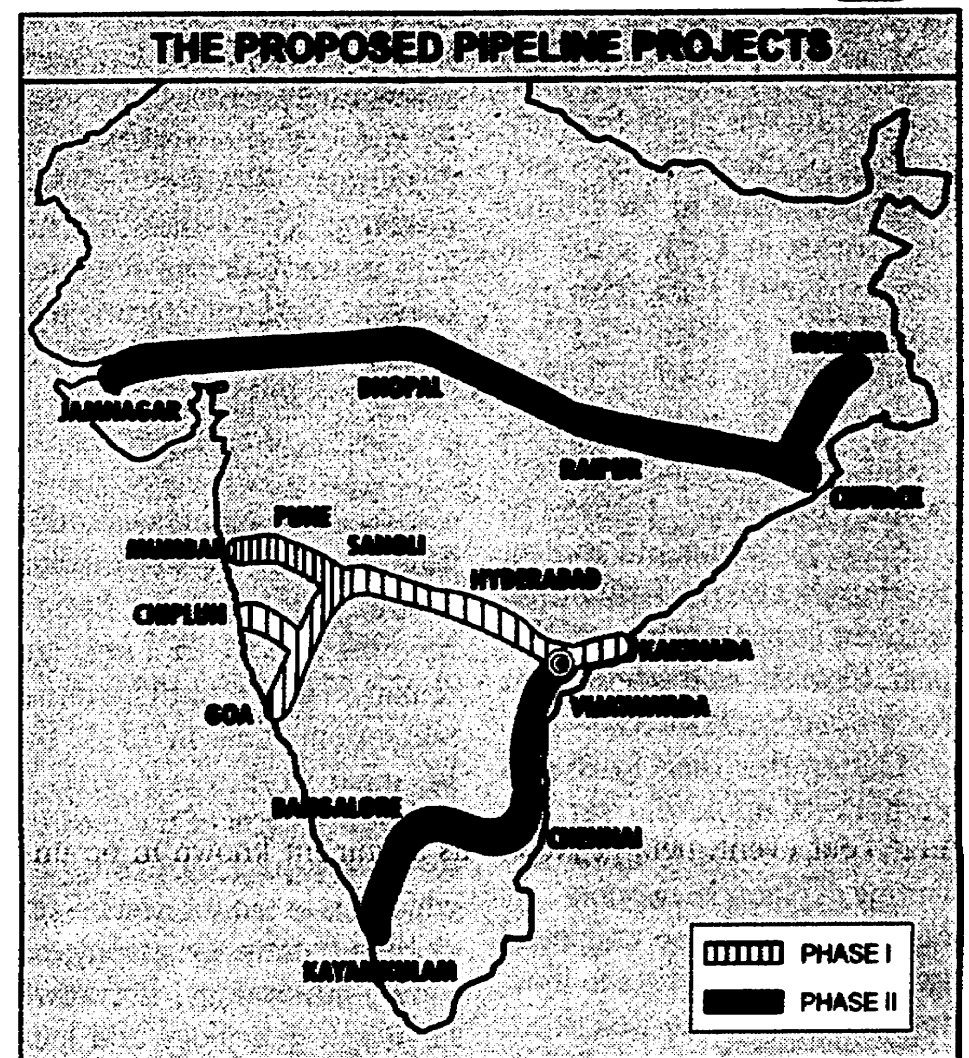
According to a recent *Business World* report, Reliance plans to build in Phase I a pipeline connecting Goa to Kakinada (A.P.) through Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Gulbarga, Sangli and Kolhapur. Two short lines will branch off from the main — one to Mumbai and Pune and another to Dabhol via Chiplun. But it is Phase II that will make a difference to the South. In this phase, the plan is to lay pipeline connecting Vijayawada to Kayamkulam (Kerala), through Chennai and Bangalore. Both phases will cost Reliance Rs. 3,000 crore, more than 30 per cent of the total project cost.

Reliance may just have struck gold with its discovery of natural gas in the Krishna-Godavari basin. If the find assures regular supplies, naphtha-

based plants like Madras Fertilizers, Mangalore Chemicals and Fertilisers, and Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corporation (SPIC) could switch to cheaper Reliance gas. Supply of additional cooking gas and automotive fuel would be available in cities. And once gas becomes available, Bangalore and Chennai could shift to gas-based public transport.

Now that oil has been struck, Reliance will have to tie up with the various user industries in the region and then lay pipelines to distribute the gas. When that happens, the gas pipeline grid will cover the industrial areas in South and Central India. Among the industries Reliance will be targeting are power, fertiliser, sponge iron and steel, petrochemicals, liquefied petroleum gas and perhaps even glass and ceramics.

The Bombay High example saw not only crores of rupees spent on infrastructure — to lay pipelines, transport products and refine — but also prosperity all around. S. Viswanathan, editor, *Industrial Economist*, says that the South has always received a raw deal in being considered a production base for natural gas in the country. According to him, the region had



until now missed out on getting its share of the pipeline infrastructure for transporting oil and gas. "Inept governments of the southern states, mostly headed by parties opposed to the then ruling party at the Centre, failed to realise the significance of gas as a massive catalyst to development and missed getting even a modest 10 per cent share of total supplies of close to 100 million cu.mtrs per day. The region also missed out on getting a share of the pipeline infrastructure extensively built in the western and northern India for transporting oil and gas", says Viswanathan.

The Krishna-Godavari natural gas find, he feels, would take at least two years to reach the production stage but what is important, Viswanathan stresses, is for the region as a whole to plan from now a coordinated network of gas pipelines to feed new fertiliser, petrochemical and power plants and trigger economic development.

The *BW* story clearly shows that Reliance's prized discovery was not just a stroke of luck. Ever since it became the largest private sector oil exploration

(Continued on Page 6)

Concrete-lining of Telugu Ganga channel begins

(By A Correspondent)

Sri Sathya Sri Baba's promise last January, that he would ensure regular availability of drinking water to Chennai residents, is on its way to becoming a reality. Work has been taken up by the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Trust to line the Telugu Ganga

channel with concrete to avert the seepage of water.

The estimated cost of the work is Rs. 200 crore and is being met fully by the Trust.

About 50 km of the total 152 km-long channel from the Kandaleru reservoir in Andhra to Poondi reservoir in Tamil

Nadu has already been lined with concrete. The work is scheduled to be completed by the south-east monsoon in June next.

Nearly half the water from Kandaleru was being lost by seepage and it is hoped the lining will prevent this.

**Madras Musings wishes all its readers
A Very Happy New Year**

Madras Scots dedicated to Botany

(Continued from last fortnight)

William Roxburgh joined the Madras Medical Service as an Assistant Surgeon in 1776 and was promoted to the rank of Surgeon in 1780.

The East India Company recognised his botanical abilities and he was made Superintendent of the Company's garden at Samalkot in the Northern Circars in 1781, where he remained until 1793. This garden was an horticultural and acclimatisation station, largely devoted to the growth of economic plants such as coffee, pepper, breadfruit, cinnamon, nutmeg, jackfruit and indigo. Roxburgh also experimented with the growth of the prickly pear, *Opuntia*, as the host plant for the cochineal insect.

During this time Roxburgh embarked upon his serious study of the Indian flora and the writing of plant descriptions. At his own expense he employed two local Indian artists to illustrate the plants he described; these amounted to some 700 by 1790, when Roxburgh succeeded another Edinburgh-trained medic, Patrick Russell (1727-1805), as Naturalist to the Madras Government.

Roxburgh sent some of the drawings and descriptions to London (where 300 of them (were published) in the most lavish format, as the *Plants of the Coast of Coromandel*. The idea of publishing illustrations, with an emphasis on species of economic importance, had originated with Russell.

During this period Roxburgh also started to keep meticulous meteorological records, noting the periodicity of droughts and ensuing famines (phenomena now known to be due to El Nino). As a medic he was very concerned about the devastating effects of famine and recommended the planting of supplementary food plants, such as breadfruit and coconuts, which would be more drought-resistant than annual grain crops.

In 1793 Roxburgh (was transferred) as the Superintendent of the Company's garden at Sibpur near Calcutta where he remained till 1813. By the



Robert Wight.

time Roxburgh left the garden, the number of species grown had increased from 300 to 3500.

All the time Roxburgh continued to have plant drawings made and to write plant descriptions (the two being carefully correlated and numbered) towards a *Flora of India*, which was substantially complete by 1803. By the end there were 2542 drawings. Known as the *Roxburgh Icones*, these are still kept in the Calcutta Botanical Garden. Roxburgh returned to Britain in 1814, and died in Edinburgh in 1815.

Francis Buchanan, another Edinburgh University medical graduate joined the Bengal Medical Service in 1794, and remained with it until his retirement from India in 1815. But his great work was a series of Surveys of parts of the East India Company's territories, for which his broad interests — including botany, geography, zoology, mineralogy, literature, language, genealogy and local industries — stood him in good stead.

When in 1800-1 the British acquired the territory of Mysore, Buchanan undertook a major survey of the area, accompanying from Madras Colin Mackenzie and Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington). In 1815 Buchanan retired to pursue the life of a Highland gentleman-scholar.

Robert Wight came to India in 1819 as an Assistant Surgeon with the Madras Medical Service. He started to collect plants around military stations and employed local collectors to go further afield, thereby covering a large part of southern India. Following Roxburgh's example, he employed artists to paint the species he collected; but unlike Roxburgh he also built up a substantial herbarium.

Appointed as Naturalist to the Madras Presidency in 1826, Wight undertook a nine-month collecting trip, but the post of Naturalist was abolished in 1828 and he returned to surgeon's duties at Negapatam (Nagapattinam).

Wight returned to Scotland on three years' sick leave in 1831, bringing with him his, by then, vast herbarium of 100,000 specimens, including 3-4000 species, in six cases weighing 2

unrivalled among his countrymen, and but for his imperfect knowledge of perspective, rarely excelled by European artists". Wight's Indian career ended at Coimbatore where, from 1842 to 1850, he was in charge of an experimental cotton farm. In 1853 he retired to England to farm near Reading.

Although not strictly part of this story, being neither a medic nor a graduate of Edinburgh University, Walter Elliot follows in the enlightened tradition.

Elliot joined the Indian Civil Service in Madras. He was in India from 1821 to 1860 and ended up as a member of the Council of the Governor of Madras. A 'devoted student of Oriental learning', Elliot was especially interested in ethnobotany and the native names of plants. Although native names of plants had been meticulously recorded by earlier botanists such as Buchanan (no doubt following the lead of Sir William Jones), this had become unfashionable, because of their lack of precision, and was positively denigrated by botanists such as Wight. This interest resulted in Elliot's *Flora Andhrica*, published in Madras in 1859, a dictionary of Telugu (in both native and Roman script) and botanical plant names.

• H.J. NOLTIE

1835 was a member of the Madras Agri-Horticultural Society.

In 1836 Wight was transferred to the Revenue Department of the Madras Government to work on economic plants and agriculture. Publication of the massive series of illustrations began during this period. Two works were produced concurrently, the two-volume *Illustrations of Indian Botany* (Madras, 1840-50), a series of illustrated memoirs on the Natural Orders (i.e. plant families), using Indian examples, with 181 hand-coloured lithographs. The second work was the six-volume *Icones Plantarum Indiae Orientalis* (Madras, 1840-53), containing 2101 uncoloured lithographs of plants with brief descriptions. These included reproductions of some of the unpublished Roxburgh *Icones*, in addition to specially commissioned drawings. Thus by 1853 Wight could write that 'the Indian Flora can now ... boast of being more fully illustrated than any other country under British sway, Great Britain alone excepted'. The project was never completed as, despite being subsidised by the Madras Government and by Wight himself, it was not a financial success. Wight's chief artists were Rungia and Govindoo. Unlike many other British patrons Wight gave his artists great credit, and even named a genus of orchid after Govindoo "whose skill in analytical delineation is, I believe, as yet quite

did "after the morning's duty in the jail and hospital was over". During this period he became aware of the deleterious effects of deforestation and shifting agriculture, already noted by William Roxburgh.

In 1848 Cleghorn returned to Britain and brought the problem of deforestation in India to an international audience at the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1850. He chaired a committee to investigate the probable 'economical and physical effects of Tropical deforestation'. The committee reported in 1851 and had a semi-influence in the setting up of forest conservation policies and departments both in India and elsewhere in the British colonies.

On return to India in 1852, Cleghorn was appointed Professor of Botany and Materia Medica at the Madras Medical College, and the same year he became secretary of the Madras Agri-Horticultural Society. His horticultural and economic-botanical interests resulted in the book *Forests and Gardens of South India* (1861) and in 1858 he was instrumental in upgrading the Lal Bagh garden at Bangalore. Cleghorn's interests in forestry developed and in 1855 he organised a Forest Department for the Madras Government, becoming Conservator of Forests in 1856. Cleghorn continued to take a major interest in forest conservation, climate and soil which resulted in the banning of the destructive practice of shifting cultivation in the Madras Presidency in 1860.

Returning to India in 1861, after three years' sick leave in Britain, Cleghorn took back cinchona plants from Kew for growing in experimental plantations around Ootacamund in the Nilgiri Hills. The same year, along with Sir Dietrich Brandis, Cleghorn became Joint Conservator of Forests for India. In 1867 his Indian career culminated in his appointment as Inspector General of Forests. In 1868 he returned to Scotland.

— (Courtesy: *The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh*.)

(Concluded)

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OUR READERS WRITE

Beds at Rainy

I recently came across a copy of the last will of my grand-aunt, Sarah Govindurajulu of Bangalore, which stated that two beds should be endowed in the Rainy Hospital, Madras, one in the name of Mrs. Anderson and one in the name of the Govindurajulu Family, the endowment not to exceed Rs.5,000. Sarah Govindurajulu retired as Mistress of Girls' Schools in the Madras Presidency. Her younger sister, Dr. Miss Rose Govindurajulu, passed out of Madras Medical College in 1887 and joined the Mysore Medical Service. Can we consider her as the first Indian woman doctor in the Presidency?

I wonder whether these endowed beds are still in the Rainy Hospital.

C.A. Reddi
57, Rundalls Road
Vepery
Chennai 600 007

Not Baroda

I hate to have to correct so distinguished a sports writer as Parbat Ramchand, but the team to which Madras lost in the Ranji Trophy final in 1940-41 was not Baroda but Maharashtra. Probably, the fact that Hazare who subsequently moved to, and played for, Baroda was a member of the victorious Maharashtra team misled him.

K.V. Ramanathan
9, Second Seaward Road
Valmiki Nagar, Chennai 600 041.

Needed for terminus

With some facilities added and proper maintenance, Koyambedu is sure to become a matter of pride for Chennai and envy for other Indian cities. The problem is whether it will be maintained properly. Within hardly a week of its use, there were to be seen eyesores on the surface of the concrete pavements of the parking bays of the City buses caused by oil leaks from the underside of the badly maintained buses. These brownish black patches may prove dangerous during the rains.

A facility immediately needed is an enquiry booth for city bus routes.

A grade separation arrangement, like a fly-over, is badly required at the intersection of the Inner Ring Road and N.H. 45 (P.H. Road).

Kaveri water for Chennai

Reader M. Susikaran's 'A second look at the Veeranam Project' (MM, March 1st) is certainly food for thought.

The farmers of the Kaveri Delta region agree the Government of Tamil Nadu was to initiate urgent steps to find a permanent solution to the drinking water needs of Chennai in the event of irregular supply from Krishna. It is obvious some alternate arrangements need to be made to receive over 3000 m.c. ft from other sources to ensure drinking water for the city.

Government has mooted a 'New Veeranam Project'. But the Kaveri is the only source, besides the Vadavar River to feed the Veeranam lake. When the Kaveri Delta farmers are fighting tooth and nail to get 205 TMC of water in the Mettur Dam every year from Karnataka, will it be possible to get enough water to feed the Coleroon and then Lower Anicut to feed Veeranam? Moreover, Kaveri water is generally released by June 12th and closed by January 28th every year during periods of normal rain. During closure period, barely 1200 cusecs is released for drinking purposes in nearby towns besides water for industrial concerns between Mettur and Grand Anicut.

Moreover, Veeranam tank itself has to irrigate 44,856 acres of Chidambaram belt and, more often than not, the authorities find it difficult to meet the needs of the existing ayacutdars around the area. When that be

the case, how can water be made available for Chennai from Veeranam Tank? Farmers who are the backbone of food production cannot be sacrificed in the interest of the city users, though water for drinking is a priority.

Hence, the suggested Pallipalayam Scheme (Erode) might be a good choice. It is suggested that from a release of 205 cusecs from the Kaveri and 90 cusecs from the Bhavani, the proposed canal from Pallipalayam to Chembrambakkam, a distance of 517 k.m. can be easily fed and taken to Chennai.

Of the 205 cusecs from Mettur, about 17 channels in Tiruchy District and umpteen channels in Thanjavur besides Pandy have to be given water for irrigation. Nevertheless, numerous villages and factories draw water from the Kaveri for their

daily requirements. The closure period in Mettur is another handicap for the Pallipalayam Scheme. Moreover, serious health hazard has to be taken into consideration. Near Pallipalayam and around Erode, over a dozen major industries in cotton and other small units along the river bank discharge their effluents, causing a health hazard. Hence it is not advisable to take this water along the new route to Poondi reservoir.

Taking this into consideration, it is felt that the Hogennakal water scheme for Chennai is best suited.

Thirty kilometres west of Mettur Dam is the Hogennakal falls with pure water. By gravitational force, water can be taken to the feeder canal at the Poondi reservoir, which is already linked with other main reservoirs to the city.

An alternative must also be in place

The State government's Veeranam water supply scheme for Chennai envisages laying concrete pipes from Veeranam to Chennai for a distance of say, 200 k.m. Since Veeranam Lake gets its supply from the Coleroon River, which generally is dry during the summer months, an alternative during the dry months to feed Chennai is essential.

Last year, water was transported by trucks from Neyveli to Chennai at enormous costs during the water crisis. Since Neyveli is fairly close to the proposed alignment of the pipeline

from Veeranam to Chennai, it would be prudent to lay a pipeline from Neyveli to the nearest convenient point on the Veeranam-Chennai pipeline so that during the period when the Veeranam Lake is unable to supply water — an alternate supply becomes available. This will entail additional expenditure to lay a branch pipeline from Neyveli for a distance of about 10-20 km to connect it to the Veeranam-Chennai pipeline. This expenditure will be marginal compared to the project cost. By this, Neyveli can not only supply water dur-

The channel under this scheme will flow through Koonandiyur (Salem Dt), Idappadi, Mallasamudram, Sendamangalam, Thuraiyur, Keerampur, Krishnarajapuram, Chinnasalam, Kallakurichi, Sathanur, Cheyyar, Kancheepuram and Poondi — a distance of 490 k.m. There will be enough gravitational force and the cost will be the same as the Pallipalayam-Chennai link.

With the Hogennakal-Chennai Project the most viable scheme, Reader Sasikaran is justified in advising a second look at the Veeranam Project.

R. Subramanian
43, Varun Nivas
Telephone Colony
II Main Road
Adambakkam
Chennai 600 088.

K.S. Krishnaswamy
B-1, 'Ashok Suparna'
27, III Main Road
Kasturbanagar
Adyar
Chennai 600 020.

Tip tap

I refer to that rare civic consciousness graduating to action (MM, November 1st).

Tip 1: No proviso is admissible.

Tip 4: Usage should be from a mug and not from open tap.

Tip 5: We should learn to attend to minor repairs and our children should be involved in the distarb. I have seen our "Pappa Chithi" and her daughter Visalam used to set right leaks, decades ago in Mumbai.

Tip 7: Isgarden (and hence gardening) a luxury!

Last Tip: Superb guidance and personal involvement to boot! Kudos to Mr. K.R.!

N. Dharmeswaran
21, Kumaran Nagar
Guduvanchery 603 202.

PLEASE NOTE

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seen vacant now. This vacant land should be put to better use before it is occupied by slum-dwellers or unauthorised hawkers. If something is not done immediately, it is for sure the whole space will be taken over by unauthorised elements.

If there are no plans drawn for putting this place into immediate use, let it at least be used as a paid car parking area temporarily. Parking space is very much required in this area but little is available.

P.G. Rangarajan
Chennai 600 106.

Scholars' street

Reference to letters in MM, December 16th, from Readers Raghu Tagat and Dharmeswaran about "Kalvivaru Street" Mylapore. It is Telugu word meaning "Scholars' Street". Sir S. Varadachariar and the like adorned the street, occupying the whole length of it.

R. Javanthinathan
88/2, Indira Colony
Ashok Nagar
Chennai 600 083.

Ugly anachronisms

The hullabaloo over the declining greenery of Chennai sometimes becomes comical when the Press gets agitated over felling of old, dead, gnarled and horribly noduled trees on pavements, like

M.R. Pillai
H 64/5, Central Avenue
Korattur
Chennai 600 080.

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Tryst with Thiruvallikeni

Looking out of the window of my fifty-year-old house, I can see only a collage of green and this despite the sea of apartments we are marooned in. It's hard to believe that I am in Madras which I have seen denuded of its green spaces in the past few years. Harder still to believe are the descriptions in ancient times of one of its famous landmarks, the Parthasarathy Temple in Triplicane.

Sacred to the worshippers of Vishnu is a collection of 4000 Tamil verses composed by 12 saints who lived between the 5th and 8th Centuries AD. Their works were however compiled only in the 10-11th Centuries and the *Divya Prabandams* have since then been recited or sung by thousands of devotees and studied by those interested in the nuances of Tamil. Many of the verses are in the *Nayika bhava*, where the poet compares herself/himself to the lover wilting away from the pangs of being separated from his/her beloved. Other verses talk of famous temples. The Parthasarathy Temple itself is mentioned by three of the Azhvars. While we have no historical evidence for the periods the Azhvars lived in, it is significant that they are unanimously considered saints.

Pey-Azhvar in his 100-stanza poem gives a brief description, *Corals and pearls that are washed ashore*
Rival the flickering lamps that illuminate the evening sky.
By this seashore in Thiruvallikeni
Resides my master with Lakshmi.
(Munram Thiruvandadi 16.)

The saint is said to be from Mylapore. Another of the 12 saints, popularly known as the Azhvars, was born in nearby Thirumazhisai. He too makes a passing reference to the temple.

The more well-travelled and probably the last of the Azhvars was Tirumangai Azhvar. He is



The Sri Parthasarathy Temple.

said to have been a bandit chief who was reformed by a couple and took to visiting shrines and singing of them. Writing of the 86 temples he visited, one even in far off Nepal, he devotes ten stanzas to the temple at Thiruvallikeni. The song occurs in the second decade of his work, *Periya Thirumozhi*.

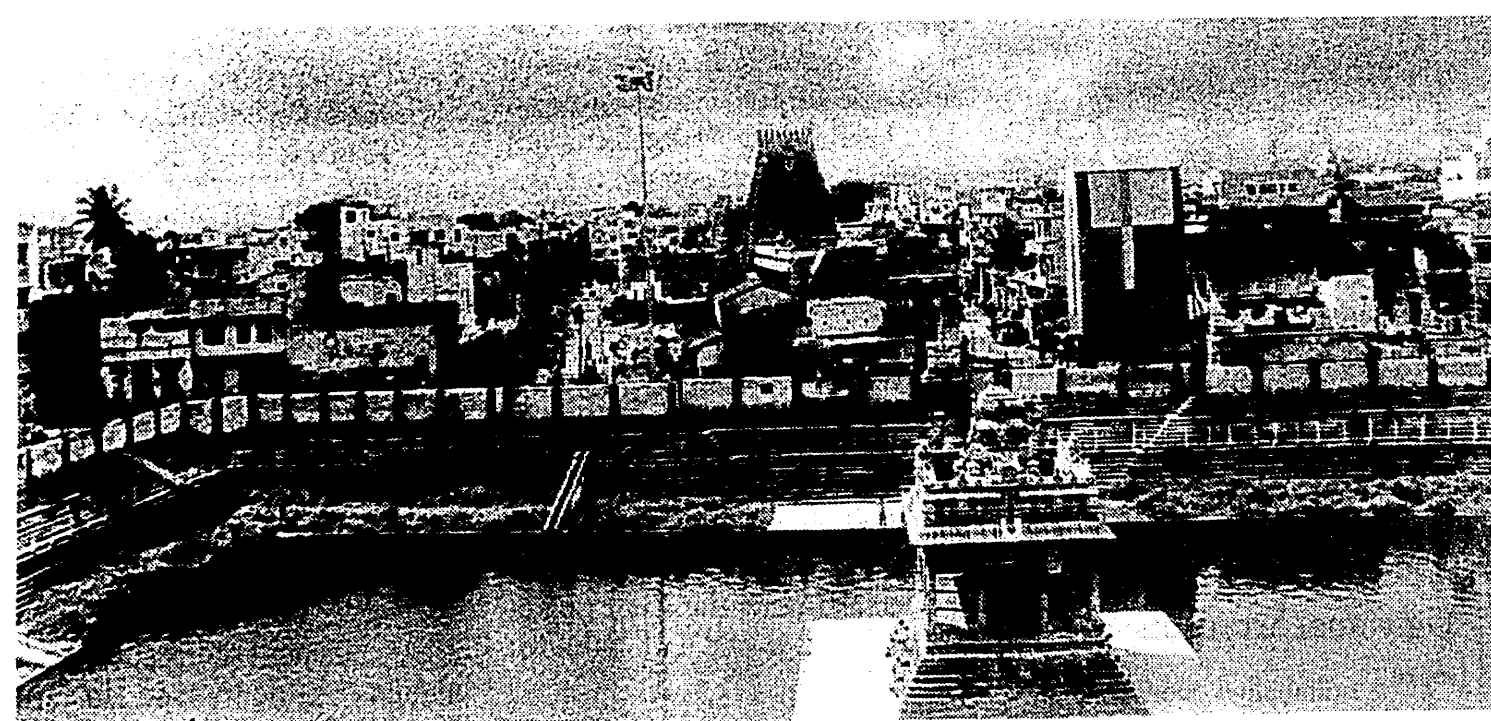
The song is typical of his other songs on temples. The first three lines speak of a scene from the *Ramayana/Mahabharata* and ends with the poet saying, "I have seen him at Thiruvallikeni". The 2nd, 7th and 9th stanzas also describe Thiruvallikeni as "the town with women of matchless beauty".

Ravana's vanquisher, surrounded by his family
Lives amidst fragrant groves where the cuckoos sing
And the peacocks dance under a canopy
The sunbeams find hard to penetrate
In the town of Thiruvallikeni.
(Periya Thirumozhi 2.3.7)

"In Myilai with fine mansions and verdant groves dripping with nectar" is what he writes in another stanza. The last stanza is probably the most significant, not only for its reference to the town but for its reference to an actual historical personage that is rare in all the 4000 verses. The poet concludes,

Lakes, gardens, garrison walls and palaces
Were all given to Myilai - Thiruvallikeni by the Thondaman king.
This garland of songs by Chiefstain Kalikanri of Mangai
Shall give its singers
A good life in this world and the next.
(Periya Thirumozhi 2.3.10)

The mention of Myilai and Thiruvallikeni as separate towns is not surprising, for in that period, as in many other settlements, the worshippers of Vishnu and Shiva lived separately. The name of the town itself comes from a tank of the Alli



The Triplicane temple and tank. (Photographs by S. KAMINI.)

Another two-page spread for the Season

They made music in Triplicane

(Lily) flowers, with 'Thiru' conferring it a sacred status due to the presence of a temple.

Most of the inscriptions in the temple have been damaged, but the few there are well documented by T.V. Mahalingam, among others. The earliest dates from the Pallava period, to AD 808 in the reign of Dantivarman. It records the elaborate arrangements made by a Pugalunai Visaiyariyan for the providing of *prasadam* at night. To provide for this, he donated land in Karumarch-cheripulam and donated a specific measure of paddy and five *kalanjus* of gold. Sangasarman and Sattisarman agreed to supervise the process and were held accountable for the lamp, pot and *vaitil* (cup) that were provided.

Among the Nayak inscriptions is one dating to 1525, where an icon of Thirumazhisai Azhvar given by the Vijayanagar King Veera Venkatapathi Deva Maharaja I, was consecrated. He also presented a gift of twenty *varahas* to the shrine. A later inscription, also of the Nayak period, records that a private individual built / extensively renovated certain portions of the temples namely the shrines for Krishna, Vedavalli Nachiyar, the Thiruvoymozhi Mandapam, the kitchen and the *prakara* wall, installed a number of icons and granted three villages, Pudukkamm, Veper and Vesharupadi (Vyasarpadi), to the temple.

Other inscriptions date from the reigns of the later Cholas, Rajendra II and Rajaraja III, among others, and speak of various gifts to the temple and to Siva temples close by, particularly in Thiruvanniyur and Kottur Nadu. A damaged 13th Century inscription also refers to the Azhvars', *prabandhams* and the *Tiruppavai* of Andal in almost every house in the surrounding streets.

Great composers visited the Sri Parthasarathy Temple. Tradition has it that Tyagaraja (1767-1847), who visited Madras in 1837/39, worshipped at the temple, but he does not appear to have composed any song on the deity. Muttuswami Dikshitar (1775-1835), whose father Ramaswami Dikshitar (1735-1817/19) received the patronage of the Mudaliars of Manali, spent a few years in Tiruvottriyur from where he visited the Triplicane temple and composed a song on it. Strangely, unlike other works of this great composer, this song is remarkably silent on the many unique features of this temple.

Subbaraya Sastry (1803-1862), the son of Syama Sastry (1762-1827) and possibly the only person to have learnt from each of

such artistes of repute as G.N. Balasubramanian (1910-1965) (about whom more later), the flautist TR Mahalingam (Mali) (1926-1986) and TN Krishnan (b 1928) the eminent violinist. Both Mali and TN Krishnan lived in houses on Triplicane High Road when they were young children.

In Bandala Venugopala Naidu Street lived Dwaram Venkatasami Naidu (1893-1964). Dwaramgaru, as he was popularly known, was a famous violinist of his times. Born in Bangalore to a family that specialised in music and military service, Dwaram opted out of conventional schooling due to weak eyesight and took to learning the violin. In 1919, he applied for admission as a student in the music faculty at the Maharaja's College, Vizianagaram, only to find the Board of Governors so impressed with his performance that he was appointed Professor of Music. He spent a large part of his life with that institution. Known for his love of books, which were read out to him, and 78 rpm records, Dwaram built up an enviable collection of both. In 1941, Dwaram became the first violinist to be honoured with the title Sangeetha Kalanidhi by the Music Academy. Renowned for long as an accompanist, he took to performing solo after a while, perhaps the first violinist to do so. His frequent performances in Madras necessitated his travelling down from Vizianagaram often. To save him the trouble, legislator Ramakrishna Raju, one of his ardent admirers organised a Sammana Mahotsavam in Madras at which a purse for Rs. 35,000 was presented to Dwaram with the hope that he would acquire a residence in Madras. Dwaram used it to build the house that is now No. 8 and lived there till almost his last days. His son Satyanarayana and daughter Mangatayaru, both respected violinists, continue to reside at the address.

When Madras began transforming itself into the Carnatic Music capital, many musicians moved to the city and Triplicane was a preferred address. Its proximity to aristocratic Mylapore, where many Chettiar patrons lived, led to many aspirants seeking lodgings in the tenements and 'mansions' that Triplicane possessed aplenty. Some of those who made it big moved on from Triplicane. But to many it became home and they stayed on. In the first category would fall

the Trinity, paid his respects at this shrine and composed one of his few songs on the deity. Mysore Sadasiva Rao (c. 1800-1870), one of the illustrious descendants of the Tyagaraja school of music, came here and sang in praise of the Lord. So did Cheyyur Chengalvaraya Sastry (1810-1900), a prolific composer whose patron was the Zamindar of Cheyyur. Latter day composers who dedicated songs to Sri Parthasarathy Swami include Subburama Dikshitar (1839-1906), Ramanathapuram Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar (1860-1919) and the greatly admired vocalist MD Ramanathan (1923-1984).



Mysore Sadasiva Rao.

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Dwaram Venkatasami Naidu.

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At the intersection of Car Street and Singarachari Street, is No. 3. This house, named *Jaganmohini*, was the residence of Vai Mu Kothainayaki Ammal (1901-1960), a pioneer of her times. Part novelist, part editor of the popular *Jaganmohini*, freedom fighter and champion of women's rights, Vai Mu Ko was well known as a singer with a large repertoire that included Tyagaraja's songs, Tamil songs and the works of the Azhvars. It is said that her singing elicited praise from even the poet Subrahmanya Bharati, who was a perennial critic of music and musicians. Vai Mu Ko started giving stage performances after being convinced by Bangalore Nagarathammal, who kept the drone on the *tanpura* for Vai Mu Ko's concert debut. Later, Vai Mu Ko took to singing nationalist songs, especially at Satyamurthy's meetings at the Marina. It was also largely due to Vai Mu Ko's efforts that DK Pattammal's (b 1919) father agreed to let his daughter become a concert artiste. The orthodox Dikshitar was appalled at such a proposal for his daughter and it is said that Vai Mu Ko travelled eight times to Pattammal's house in Kancheepuram to convince her father. Vai Mu Ko's house is largely unchanged and her family members continue to live there.

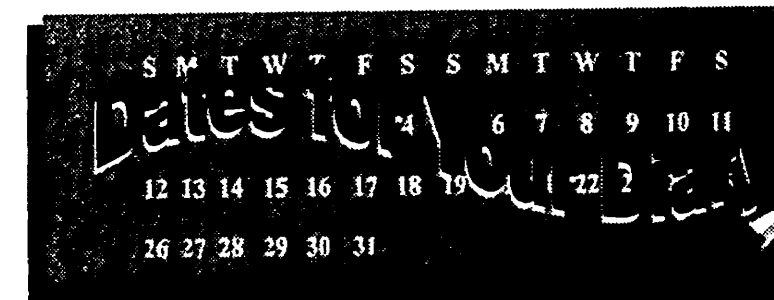
Close to the Temple are the four Mada Streets, Car Street, Singarachari Street and Tulasinga Perumal Koil Street. In Car Street, in what is now No. 14, lived S Satyamurthy (1887-1943), the well-known freedom fighter, Corporation Councillor, Mayor and eloquent Member of

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Till December 21: An exhibition of paintings by K. Babu. (At C.P. Foundation.)

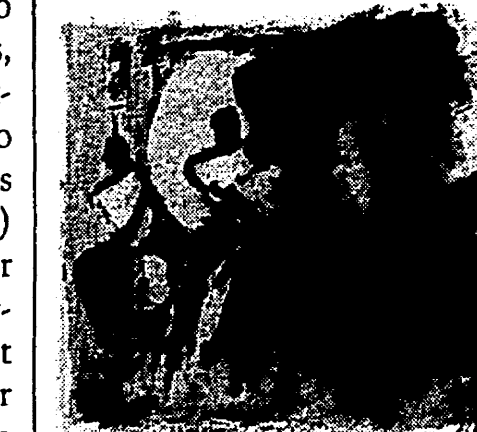
Till December 23: Chennai Series by A.V. Ilango. The exhibition features the "Hustle, bustle, pollution of Madras!" It is the traffic that catches the artist's eye in the pictures exhibited here: modern vehicles competing with bullock carts, alarmingly overloaded MTC buses, reckless water tankers, swerving autorickshaws and two-wheelers. Amidst all this are the most engaging dramas of daily life ... at the Saidapet market, the traffic jam at Virugambakkam junction, the gold rush on Usman Road and the hustle and bustle of the Mylapore temple area. Ilango in this series captures the psyche of Chennai. (At Forum Art Gallery, Adyar.) 3 pm.



'Fish Cart'



'Jostling for Space'



'Hanging On'

Till December 23: Creative Cross-over, a multidisciplinary exhibition of art, fashion and design featuring paintings by Shambhavi Singh, ceramics by Manisha Bhattacharya and body attire by Kimono. (At Apparao Galleries.)

Till December 23: An exhibition of paintings by K. Benitha Perciyal, P. Ashok Kumar and M. Shiva in the series *Young Artists*. (At Studio Palazzo.)

December 18: *Future Perfect*, a dynamic new British work about

diaspora across three continents. Judith Weir's music shapes new maps of arrival while Vayu Naidu's story weaves a contemporary tapestry colonial history, and the politics of encountering one's self. Sarvar Sabri on *tabla* beats time across cultures while he performs with BCMG's Ulrich Heinen - Cello, Lynn Fletcher - Violin, Kevin Gowland - flute, and Robert Johnston - Harp. The dynamo in forging these partnerships are Simon Clugston, Stephen and Jackie Newbould and Anthony Sargent.

Judith Weir was anxious to get musicians involved somehow in story telling, after hearing, Vayu Naidu. In 1997, the two teamed together with BCMG to perform versions of the Greek myth *Psyche* and the 11th Century Tamil epic the *Manimekalai*. The tour was so interesting, they resolved to take storytelling-music hybrid further and *Future Perfect*, based on an original story by Vayu Naidu, is the result. (At the British Council, 6.30 pm.)

From December 20-30: Chennai Fest (see newspapers for programmes and details of special offers).

December 20: *Urbanscapes*: a reading by the Culture Café Poetry Circle. (At Forum Art Gallery.)

December 20: Lakshmi Vishwanathan and group. (At Music Academy, 7 pm.)

December 23: Exhibition of abstract and cubism paintings in all mediums by Bhujana Rao. (At Lalit Kala Akademy.)

December 25: Exhibition of paintings by Susai Raj. (At Studio Palazzo.)

December 25: Dance drama *Rukmani Kalyani*. (At Kalakshetra, 6.30 pm.)

December 26: Chitra Visweswaran *Kutrala Kuravani*, a dance drama. (At Music Academy, 7 pm.)

December 27: *Kiratan*, Kathakali dance. (At Kalakshetra, 6.30 pm.)

December 28: Kuchipudi dance by Alekhya. (At Kalakshetra, 6.30 pm.)

December 29: Kathak recital by Uma Sharma. (At Kalakshetra, 6.30 pm.)

December 29: 5th Exhibition. Sale of the products made by disabled persons in Chennai. Around 40 disabled persons will participate in the exhibition sale of paintings, toys, dolls, consumable items, decorative pieces etc. (At Andhra Mahila Sabha, between 10 am and 8 pm.)

December 30: Sonal Mansingh. (At Music Academy, 7 pm.)

December 30: Dance drama by Kalakshetra. (At Kalakshetra, 6.30 pm.)

(Continued on Page 6)

Pradeep Chakravarthy

Quizzin'
with
Ram'n'an

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

- Who is the first Indian to be appointed a Reuters trustee?
- Which tennis star retained the year-ending Masters Cup in Shanghai recently?
- Name the 'tough-guy' Hollywood actor, memorable for his role as a knife-thrower in *The Magnificent Seven*, who passed away recently.
- Who is the new Prime Minister of Pakistan?
- Who recently became the first member of the British Royal family to be criminally convicted in modern times?
- Name the retired Supreme Court judge whose appointment as Chairman of a new authority raised a controversy leading to his resignation.
- The world's longest running play completed its Golden Jubilee on November 25th. Name the play.
- Name the latest temple to be attacked by terrorists. Nine persons were killed in the attack on November 24th.
- Which Oscar-winning Hollywood actor is to get a divorce from his wife, Lisa Marie Presley, the daughter of Elvis Presley and ex-wife of Michael Jackson?
- In which African city did terrorists devastate an Israeli hotel and fire missiles at an Israeli aircraft, leading to global concern?

- Simple. Where in Chennai was 'Asia's largest bus terminus' inaugurated on November 18th?
- The Whites of Madraspatnam lived in Fort St. George in the early 17th Century. What did they call the Indian settlement they helped develop north of the Fort?
- Who recently completed a nationalised database of the last 50 years of Tamil films?
- Name the eminent doctor, the first Vice-Chancellor of the Dr. MGR Medical University and the first woman dean of MMC, who passed away on November 24th.
- In Chennai, if the pub at The Park is called Leather Bar, what is it at the Hotel Park Sheraton?
- Which present-day temple in Chennai was originally called the 'Great Pagoda'?
- In 1800, what legal position was Sir Thomas Strange the first to hold in Madras?
- Which Chennai-born, one-time tennis champ's film production unit is called Hyde Park Entertainment?
- Kazhugumalai, near Tirunelveli, is home to which community's historic temples?
- Name the classic, made by Veena S. Balachandrar and starring Sivaji Ganesan, narrated in Kurosawa's *Rashomon* style.

(Answers on page 7)

Not the first Madras exhibition, but an unique one



The Governor proceeding to the pavilion.

(Continued from last fortnight)

When the Madras Exhibition was declared open by the Governor, Lord Pentland, on December 27, 1915, he and Lady Pentland were received at the triumphal entrance archway of the Exhibition Court by the former and reigning Maharajas of Cochin and their consorts, the dewans of Cochin and Travancore, the Maharaja of Bobbili, the Rajas of Vizianagaram and Kollengode, Members of Government, judges of the High Court, various zamindars and other prominent citizens.

Lord Pentland, in his speech, mentioned that it had been twelve years since the previous exhibition was held. He appealed to the public to patronise the exhibition, as the proceeds would go to the War Chest. He then released the official guide. He also drew attention to the sectors into which the Exhibition had been divided, namely the Central Court, the Model Indian Village, the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery, Industries, Native States, Artistic Exhibits and the Health pavilions.

The 300-page guide was priced at 8 annas and contained detailed maps of the Exhibition layout as well as summaries of the various speeches to be delivered at the pavilions. The lectures scheduled included reviews of Madras Agriculture and its Future by DT Chadwick, ICS, Director of Agriculture, Insects in Agriculture ('The Farmer's Joy, The Farmer's curse') by TV Ramakrishna Ayyar, Government Entomologist, Tea ('From Clearing the Jungle to The Cup') by A Martin of UPASI, Poultry ('How to Breed and Manage') by AC Bullmore, Wells ('Pumping and Boring') by KTB Tressler, Director of Industries, Cooperation in Agriculture by Diwan Bahadur LD Sivakannu Pillai, Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Wealth of The Forest and its Exploitation by Ray Bourne, District Forest Officer, Fresh Water Fisheries in Madras by HC Wilson, Fisheries Expert, Sea Fisheries in Madras by James Hornell, Government Marine Biologist, Economics of the Fishery Industry by V Govindan, Asst. Director of

Fisheries, Weaving by N Subrahmanya Iyer, weaving expert, Soap by Sir Frederick Nicholson, KCIE, Director of Fisheries, Physical Fitness by Surgeon General WB Bannermann, several lectures by Dr U Rama Rao (eminent physician, MLC and founding father of the Music Academy) and Indian water supply and its risks (an ever-green topic?) by WA Justice,

• by V. SRIRAM

Source: *The Book of the Madras Exhibition, 1915-16.*

Sanitary Commissioner. Two other lectures of great interest were on the School of Arts by WS Hadaway and the VJTI by Dr JR Henderson. The reports include an amazing wealth of statistical details. The volume also gives a good picture of the Madras Presidency of 1915.

A committee of judges, comprising Sir Harold Stuart, Sir Francis Spring, J.O. Robinson, A.B. Strange, Gordon Fraser, Pitty Tyagaraya Chetty and W.S. Hadaway, decided on the Diplomas of Excellence and of Merit to be awarded to the par-

ticipants, most of whom had put up eye-catching stalls. The Diplomas of Merit were given to over 60 participants, many of them prominent corporate names of Madras then, but now no longer in existence. Among those awarded Diplomas of Excellence were Binny & Co, The School of Arts, Departments of Forests, Fisheries, Industries, Medicine and Agriculture, Govt. of Madras, VRS Chokkalinga Chettiyar of Kumbakonam and Macmillan and Co of Madras.

It was originally decided to close the Exhibition on January 8, 1916, but so great was the popularity that it was kept open till the 16th. Sir Bernard Hunter, proposing the vote of thanks at the valedictory function on January 15th, reported:

Visitors to the Park Fair (27.12.15 - 1.1.16) — 27,775
Visitors to the Exhibition (27.12.15 - 15.1.16) — 139,549
Entrance Fee collected from Park Fair — Rs. 26,961, As. 8
Entrance Fee collected from Exhibition — Rs. 34,145 As. 12 P6

Money donated to the Madras War Fund (including sun-

dry and other contributions) — Rs. 69,700.

The official post-Exhibition report stated, "The Madras Exhibition of the Arts and Industries of Southern India (1915/1916) was not the first exhibition ever held in Madras, but it was unique in the scale on which it was held, the variety and extent of the exhibits, the enthusiastic support which it received from all sections of the community and the crowd of visitors which it attracted not only from the city but from all parts of the mufassal (sic)... It is widely hoped that this exhibition will be followed at suitable intervals by similar undertakings in order to display to the people of Southern India the variety and extent of its resources, the capacity and skill of its artisans and craftsmen and the efforts which are being made by the Government to develop the former and support and encourage the latter."

So every time we pass by the Trade Fair on the Island, let us spare a thought to this pioneering exhibition that set the trend.

(Concluded)

They made music in Triplicane

(Continued from Page 5)

September 12, 1921. The house is now a memorial to the poet. Bharati was known for his catholic tastes in Carnatic Music and was a music critic in many of the periodicals with which he was associated. His poems have been absorbed into Carnatic Music today, thanks

largely to films such as *Naam Iruvar* and *Manamagal*, where they were sung by artistes such as D.K. Pattammal and M.L. Vasanthakumari. Dr S. Ramanathan (1917-1985), well known musician, intellectual and teacher resided at 118, which his family continues to occupy. Much loved as both a

person and singer, Dr Ramanathan did pioneering research into the *Silapadikaram* and also Tyagaraja's *Prahlada Bhakta Vijayam*, among other areas. He was for many years a Professor at Wesleyan University in the US. Widely honoured and decorated, he received the Sangita Kalanidhi Award from the Music Academy in 1985. He had also served as Professor at the College of Carnatic Music, in Brodie's Castle, Madras. Dr Ramanathan was also proficient on the veena. His guru, Devakottai Narayana Iyengar (1905-1987), lived close by in No. 35. Iyengar was a true representative of the Karaikkudi style of veena-playing. A recipient of many honours, Iyengar was better known as a teacher. He had taught at the College of Carnatic Music and also at the Teachers' College of Music, Music Academy, Madras.

(To be concluded)

V. Sriram

A.P. GAS COULD HELP T.N. BOOM

(Continued from Page 1)

company in India, it began putting in place technology, systems and procedures and benchmarking these against the best. It head-hunted senior managers from ONGC and Oil India Ltd. and recruited geologists and geophysicists from Indian institutions of repute. US consultants were engaged to train the staff.

Mumbai-based Reliance Industries has now well and truly

opened the gates for perhaps an unprecedented South Indian economic boom. Whether the boom actually happens, only time will tell. Reliance only knows too well that for a massive project such as this to succeed, it is not a matter alone of technological brilliance and fortune favouring the brave. Support from State governments and the pressure they can together put on the Central Government are indispensable.

The menace of urban dingoes

The desperate action of the Porur Municipality to get rid of stray dogs sparked a debate in Chennai recently. The argument only went to show that some well-meaning, over-enthusiastic supporters could ruin a good cause like animal rights. The temptation is to muster support by emotionalising the issue.

Consider the facts. Rabies, the deadliest of all infectious diseases, claims 35,000 lives in India each year; that is 81% of all the rabies deaths in the world. Rabies is caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system, killing the victim in a few days through convul-

tinational in India earns them more than Rs. 100 crore.

The trouble is a rabid dog appears perfectly normal in its first days of infection and, so, is able to get close to humans as usual. So how do you deal with the problem of stray dogs? Can we prevent them from being carriers of rabies by castrating them or spaying them? What do we do with rats in a plague epidemic? Do we catch them, neuter them and hope to eradicate plague? No. We use fumigation. If we had not resorted to fumigation, we would still have bubonic plague around. Or is it feasible to administer anti-rabies vaccine (Rs. 80 per shot) to all stray dogs? What about booster doses?

In India, we have 25 million stray dogs, the world's largest population of strays — not just in absolute numbers but in proportion to human population. In our cities there is a stray dog for every 35 humans. India, Bolivia and El Salvador are where the risk of contracting rabies is the highest in the world. I have noted with shame the warning posters to this effect in travel agencies in Europe.

Is it possible to contain the population of stray dogs by neutering them? The Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Hyderabad, did a census of stray dogs in the Twin Cities and the figures show that spaying is a pointless exercise. A pair of dogs can produce 400 dogs in three years and 7000 in seven years. So, unless you operate all the dogs, male and female, in one go, it is impossible to contain their increase. For certain problems there cannot be a partial solution. While you operate a token few, a million others are happily littering away. Look at the cost: Rs. 300 to spay a bitch, post-operative care not counted. A veterinarian tells me that 50% of the strays operated die due to lack of post-operative care. The only way to check rabies is to eliminate stray dogs.

This debate had run its course many times and most of the countries see the strength of this argument. In June 1997, following incidence of rabies in Taiwan, the government organised the largest ever mass extermination of stray dogs in history. Seven lakh dogs were destroyed in a matter of days. Countries that have traditionally set the standards for dog care, like the United Kingdom, destroy strays. If a dog is not claimed in two days, an inspec-

Policy change needed

The letter from Dr. M.S. Jayaraman (MM, November 16th) is a silver lining in the dark clouds of the current policy adopted in stray dog control, vis-a-vis canine rabies. There is no doubt that everyone loves dogs, provided man's best friend is kept as a pet and given proper attention and treatment. Stray and ownerless dogs have no place, as they are potential vectors of the sure and dangerously fatal disease Hydrophobia.

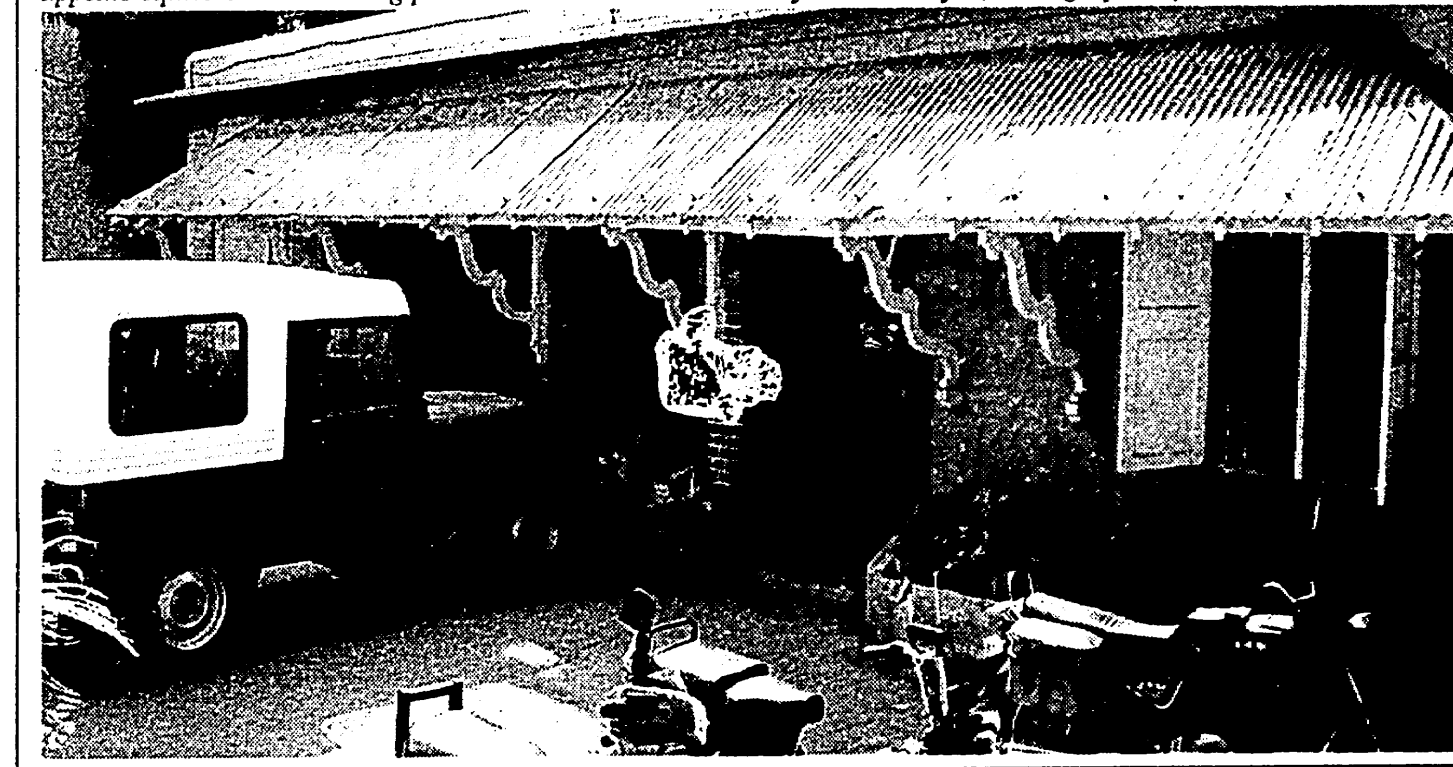
Unfortunately, animal activists who should confine their activities to the care of injured and sick animals are posing as authorities on Rabies and Hydrophobia and issue sweeping statements which are detrimental to Public Health. It is high time that the Authorities take cognisance of this and give the Medical and Veterinary Departments power to handle the Rabies problem as in other countries.

Dr. C.V. Subramaniam
1017/1023 Gitanjali Layout
HAL III Stage
Bangalore 600 075.

sive seizures. Once infected, death is certain. This lethal virus is passed on to humans, mostly by stray dogs. (There are no stray dogs in Lakshadweep and no rabies either!) Each year in India, about 3.5 million get bitten by rabid dogs and go in for anti-rabies shots. Most of the victims are poor and 40% are children. India's estimated need of anti-rabies vaccine for humans is 1500 litres per year. Since the vaccine produced in the 12 centres in the country falls short of this requirement, we import this life-saving vaccine from France and Germany. The sale of this vaccine by mul-



Celebrating its centenary is our OLD, the Myslapore Police Station (E1) on Kitchery Road. Its heritage building, little changed from the day it opened in November 1902, happily still favours the distinctive look police stations in the Madras Presidency once had — red-brick facades outlined in white. Sadly, few police stations today retain the appearance that made them identifiable as police stations. Our NEW is one of them. The Teynampet Police Station retains the red brick-and-white outlines in its pillars, but has overpainted its facade in a nondescript bluish-grey that makes it look like anything but a Chennai police station now. While celebrating the centenary of the Myslapore Police Station, wouldn't the Police leadership like to look at once again making police stations in the city and State easily recognisable by getting them to look uniformly the same, just as they once were in their red-and-white? The present trend of changing the traditional colour scheme for whatever seems the painters' fancy appears equivalent to allowing policemen to wear whatever they like on duty! (Photographs by D. KRISHNAN.)



tor of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals puts the animal to sleep. If there is no legal provision, we have to provide one in our country.

This insight is nothing new. Decades earlier, the municipalities were authorised to destroy strays. Section 218 of The Madras City Municipal Corporation Act of 1919 authorised catching and killing stray dogs. All unlicensed dogs were likely to be caught by the municipal workers. In the early 1970s, the number of stray dogs destroyed by the Corporation was so high that the Central Leather Research Institute, Madras, designed products — such as neckties and wallets — from dog skins. But the dog licence regulation, like many other civic rules that made our lives safer in the old days, has fallen into disuse. Remember the days when you could not ride a bicycle in the night without a light?

Dr. M.K. Sudarshan of the Rabies Epidemiology Unit, Kempegowda Institute of Medical Sciences, Bangalore, speaking at the Commonwealth Veterinary Conference in Bangalore in February 2000, pointed out that most rabies victims are the poorest of the poor — with

no access to anti-rabies vaccine — workers returning home late, and children who walk to school.

Rabies is not the only danger from stray dogs. Last year, in Hyderabad, 4-year old Swapna, daughter of a labourer, was ripped apart by a pack of strays even as people watched. Instances of newborn babies being snatched away by strays from our crowded government hospitals are reported periodically. Add to this the number of road accidents caused by street dogs. Last October, the former principal of Christian Medical College, Vellore, Dr. Bhushanam, died in a road accident near Pondicherry caused by a stray dog. Ask any two-wheeler rider about this problem.

These dogs are not the pets you associate with homes. Stray

dogs are urban dingoes, spreading death and disease. It's a case of man's best friend turning his worst foe. Last June, the Lokayuktha of Karnataka, responding to a petition from an NGO called Stray Dog Free Bangalore, directed the Police Commissioner and the Municipal Commissioner to draw an action plan to eliminate stray dogs. Panaji Corporation had on its payroll a sharpshooter who set out in a van every morning with his .22 rifle and a box of cartridges.

The question often raised against eradication of stray dogs is an ethical one. Can you kill a dog, or a bandicoot or a rat? When the choice is between the life of a poor child and a stray, I know for whom I will put my hand up.

S. Theodore Baskaran

Answers to Quiz

- Mammen Mathew, Editor of *Malayala Manorama*; 2. Lleyton Hewitt; 3. James Coburn; 4. Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali; 5. Princess Anne, for letting loose her biting dog; 6. Justice Venkataswami, heading the Tehelka Commission of Inquiry; 7. Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*; 8. Raghunath Temple in Jammu;
- Nicholas Cage; 10. Mombasa in Kenya.
- Koyambedu; 12. 'Black Town'; 13. 'Film News' Anand; 14. Lalitha Kameswaran; 15. 'Dublin'; 16. Chennakesava Perumal Temple; 17. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Madras; 18. Ashok Amrith; 19. The Jains; 20. *Anaha Naal*.

It may once again be a tennis treat



Paradom Srichapan

That Chennai is the spiritual home of Indian tennis cannot be denied. The presence of the Krishnans and Amritrajs has ensured this for the last half a century. Thanks mainly to their exploits, at both the national and international levels, interest in the game in the city has always been high.

And yet, for years, Madras did not get to stage a truly world class event. True, the city hosted the Davis Cup matches against Mexico in 1962 and against Australia in 1973 and 1979. But these were organised in hastily constructed temporary wooden 'stadia', at the Madras Cricket Club or the Island grounds. Plainly, the city lacked a world class international facility to host major events. The conduct of the South Asian Federation games in December 1995, however, saw Madras get a sparkling new facility at Nungambakkam to host the tennis event. It was only a matter of time thereafter, before a big time international tennis event came to Madras.

When the Indian Open, an ATP Tour event, held at New Delhi in 1996 was not exactly a success, particularly from the view point of crowd response, the Nungambakkam stadium beckoned and the International Management Group re-christened the tournament, the Gold Flake Open and came to Chennai in April, 1997.

From every point of view, the tournament was a success. The facility, which is second to none, earned praise from all the participants, the organisation was superb and the fare dished out was world class.

It did not matter if both Richard Krajicek and Malivai Washington both lost in early rounds, as did Pat Cash, who was clearly past his best. The final between Mikael Tillstrom of Sweden and Alex Radulescu of Germany was a classic, full of drama and excitement. The 6000-seat stadium was almost packed to capacity that Sunday night and they certainly had their money's worth, Tillstrom finally prevailed after a thrilling three-setter. And the fans' cup of joy was filled to the brim when Paes and Bhupathi won the doubles title.

A year later, the organisers gave Chennai something special to remember, the participation of Boris Becker giving the competition added lustre. Even though the German legend had won the last of his three Wimbledon titles back in 1989, his presence still an awesome aura and the crowd entered the centre court for his first match, cries of 'Boris, Boris' rent the air. For once, the Chennai crowd, which is traditionally known to be sporting and balanced, made its alignment known in no uncertain terms. But Becker won only one round, going down to a shock defeat in the second and from then on the tournament was just not the same, despite the presence of Patrick Rafter who went on to win the title, dethroning Tillstrom. The reigning US Open champion, the charismatic Australian, was a popular winner. And for the second successive year Paes and Bhupathi won.

In 1999, the organisers again managed to rope in a reigning Grand Slam champion, French

Open champion Carlos Moya. The gifted Spaniard was popular off the court, but made himself unpopular by his on-court demeanour when, citing injury, he retired early in his first round match. The amiable Slovak Karol Kucera, then ranked in the top ten in the world, lost early and the tournament lost much of its sheen.

In a way, the growing disinterest in the popular annual tournament can be traced to these events even though Paes and Bhupathi, backed by a vociferously partisan crowd, inscribed their names on the doubles trophy for a third successive year.

Things did not improve when Yevgeny Kafelnikov, reigning Australian Open champion, lost in the first round the next year. To make matters

• by
Partab Ramchand

worse, another well known star, Frenchman Cedric Pioline, a player whose credentials included being finalist at both the US Open (1993) and Wimbledon (1997) before losing to Pete Sampras on each occasion, went out early. Another major disappointment was the non-participation of Paes and Bhupathi in the doubles.

As if all this was not enough to dent the popularity of the tournament, the 2000 Gold Flake Open was shifted from April to January. Ostensibly, this was done to offset the oppressive weather, even though matches commenced only

around 5 pm and went on till almost midnight. While the change was welcome from the point of view of both players and spectators, it also meant that the marquee names would be missing. The big names would prefer to play the circuit in Australia to prepare for the Australian Open at this time of the year.

The discerning Chennai spectators, having seen the likes of Krajicek, Becker, Rafter, Moya and Kafelnikov (even if their exploits in the tournament turned out to be disappointing) was not going to be satisfied with seeing in action players in the top 20 or 30 who were not crowd-pullers, being neither marquee names nor reigning Grand Slam champions. Also, the poor performance of the Indian contingent in the singles was a telling factor in diminishing spectator interest.

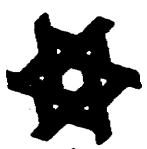
The 2002 tournament – christened the Tata Open after the withdrawal of ITC as the sponsors following the Government ban on public tobacco advertisements – saw the downward trend being maintained with a lack of big names and a gradual decline in attendance. It had its moments, notably with Kucera, the ultimate winner, ousting Santoro in a memorable quarterfinal that was hailed as among the best matches in the six years of the tournament and with Paes and Bhupathi reclaiming the doubles crown.

But if initial indications are anything to go by, the seventh edition of the tournament, to be held from December 30th to January 5th promises to call a halt to both the downward trend of the general standard and dwindling public response. Leading the field is Mark Philippoussis, the fast-serving, fast-talking Aussie. The 26-year-old, 6' 4" powerfully built player is no longer near the top ten slot, but none can deny his

crowd-pulling abilities. Another competitor bound to be a big hit with spectators is Paradom Srichapan of Thailand. He has proved to be one of the leading players in the world and is rated No.16. Canas, currently ranked in the top 20, will be around. Bound to attract attention is Shalken, the amiable Dutchman currently in the top 30, who reached the semifinals at the US Open, where he lost to the ultimate winner Pete Sampras, and the quarterfinals at Wimbledon where again he lost to the ultimate champion, Lleyton Hewitt, but not before taking him to five sets. Then there will be the towering 6' 7" Croatian Mario Ancic who is being hailed as the next Goran Ivanisevic. Indian interest will revolve around Paes and Bhupathi. Paes has been given a wild card and will also play in the doubles with David Rikl of the Czech Republic. Bhupathi will play only in the doubles where his partner will be one half of the famous Woodies, Mark Woodforde, who at 37 must be one of the oldest active players on the circuit.

There is little doubt that the successful conduct of the ATP tournament year after year has done much to give the game a boost in the country. The organisation is superb, the hospitality is second to none, and the fare dished out has generally been classy. The glitz and glamour, have gone down well with tennis lovers in the city. Most important of all, in six years, the City's tennis buffs have seen a reigning Wimbledon champion, the Wimbledon runner-up, the reigning US Open champion, the reigning French Open champion, the reigning Australian Open champion, a former Wimbledon champion, a legend and several players in the top 20 in the comfort of a world class facility. Surely, not many ATP Tour tournaments can boast of such a record.

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