

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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First they changed the road names, then the door numbers and now the telephone numbers... Thank God, we are the lucky few unaffected by all this confusion!

Two Much!

Poor Chennai-ites.

Remember that recent brouhaha – the Number Change – when perplexed citizens peered doubtfully at their own gateposts to find out what their own numbers were?

First-time guests, confronted with directions like: "Look for No. 54.... that's New Number 54, the old one was 99. Remember...old 54, new 99, no, sorry, the other way round, old 99, new 54...", invariably dropped the idea of a visit and stayed home, opting for either a good book or cable TV.

Then, just as that tumult settled down, along came the telephone guys, with their version of a bright idea.

"Put a 2 before every number," they intoned.

For creatures of habit (aren't we all?), this creates further forehead furrows. If you forget, a disembodied voice chatters reproachfully at you, causing you to hastily disconnect, cursing freely. And, there is something darkly surreal about calling one's own residence number and being told it doesn't exist.

You hear some strange conversations.

"My number is 235..., except now, you have to add a 2 so it is 2235...."

"222...?"

"No, just a 2 before the 2...the old 2, followed by the new 2, ..."

For already frayed urban nerves, this sort of jabber results in communication breakdowns, acidity, and lingering headaches.

As if keeping tabs on ever-changing U-turn rules and one-ways isn't tough enough.

Ranjitha Ashok

Architects urge relook at site

— for Marina Secretariat

Expressing its concern about Government's proposal to build a new Secretariat on the Marina, the Indian Institute of Architects, Tamil Nadu Chapter, has written to Government as follows:

"At the outset, we, the Indian Institute of Architects, Tamil Nadu chapter (IIA-TN), congratulate the Government of Tamil Nadu on the policy decision to create a new secretariat complex in Chennai. In this connection we would like to express our considered views on the proposal in the following directions as normally any project with such magnitude should be dealt with:

- Selection of location
- Selection of site
- Selection of design concept.

Selection of location

When we decide to have a new Secretariat complex within Chennai, the selection of location must be looked into on the city scale with great care in order to avoid all current difficulties and, further, to deliver better solutions for urban issues such as reach, transport, socio-economic factors, surrounding land-use, heritage and imageability and, above all, natural and environmental conditions.

On a close look, we are of the opinion that the location of the proposed site is not suitable enough from the point of view of the urban scenario.

Selection of site

The site selected at present has many constraints, such as the following:

- It is too small in scale and in extent to house a State Headquarters of such large magnitude, with proper setting.
- The scope of vertical/horizontal expansion is totally nil.

(Continued on Page 7)



What is all this work in the middle of the river going to do to the Adyar Estuary? (Photograph R. ESWARRAJ). Inset, a glimpse of others adding their voices of concern over what is happening to the Adyar Estuary.

More voices warn of threat to Adyar Estuary

This is one arithmetic that you hope goes wrong. At the rate at which the Adyar Estuary is being gouged out, environmentalists say, one of the city's last surviving wetlands may soon be lost to us within the next five years.

"And that is a very optimistic estimate," says S. Ramkumar of the Exnora Naturalists Club (ENC) which has been on a 'Save Adyar Estuary' campaign since 1986. It is perhaps this desperation to save a dying estuary that prompted an advocate and Madras Boat Club member, M. Ramakrishnan, to file a public interest litigation (PIL) in the High Court against indiscriminate tree-felling by the PWD in the name of dredging operations, on February 3rd. The court sent notice to the state government and, subsequently, the PWD gave an assurance that the estuary trees will not be felled, "but it could still be too late," says Ramkumar. "We have seen the estuary die slowly before our eyes. The wetland stretch east of MRC Nagar is already gone.

The islets in the river which offered sanctuary for hordes of migrating birds have all been dredged out. Most of the birds have gone too."

By the time the PWD assurance came, enough damage had already been done. A longish stretch of the embankment

• For years Madras Musings has been warning of the threat to the Adyar Estuary. Now, happily, other voices are being heard. Madras Musings hopes all those voices will amount to a clamour that will be heard by those who can do the most good.

The latest expression of concern for the Estuary was in the Chennai Express, where VANI DORAISAMY, wrote this piece under the headline 'Adyar Estuary on the portals of doom'.

from Malar Hospitals right up to Kotturpuram had been cleared of all vegetation by PWD contractors who were hired to work for the much-hyped Chennai City River Conservation Project (CCRCP). The dredgers had hacked away at the Prosopis bushes that had sheltered

hordes of migratory birds earlier. The roots of bushes had held together the embankment soil and kept it from caving in during floods. "The Adyar is basically a flood-carrier. If the floodbanks are tampered with, it will be disaster on shore," says Ramkumar.

Unplanned development along the tidal creek had always been a sore point with environmentalists, not to speak of uncontrolled pollution, massive land reclamation and extensive sand mining, all of which have turned the creek into a watery grave for seven species of frogs, 23 species of reptiles and over 100 species of fish. The present dredging operations by PWD have only added insult to injury. "The crucial thing about the Adyar is that it is a shallow river," says environmentalist Theodore Baskaran. "By gouging it either for dredging or for developing boating facilities, you are destroying its very nature."

The failure of the Forest Department to have the estuary
(Continued on Page 4)

Can't we all get together on a State capital?

Even if a feeling that a heritage monument like Fort St. George is being ill-treated every day has not yet quite sunk in where it matters most, *The Man From Madras Musings* is delighted to find that thought is once again being given to Government moving out of a Fort which is so badly over-congested. MMM might disagree with the proposed choice of site for the new Secretariat (and MMM is glad that other voices speaking in the same vein are being heard), MMM might even disagree with the idea of the development of an Administrative City, in time, on the Old Mahabalipuram Road, and MMM might even wonder what is being proposed for the legislature and the Ministers' personal offices, but MMM is certainly happy that thought is being given to relieve the area of increasing congestion in the Fort.

The answer to the problem, however, does not lie in a location anywhere else in the city or even NEAR it. As this journal — and MMM too — has long held, the answer not only to the difficult working conditions found in the Secretariat and such complexes as *Chepauk Palace* (which is in an even sorer state) but also to the overcrowding of Chennai that is making the city creak at the seams is TO DEVELOP A NEW CAPITAL — and preferably in the centre of the State, making it easier to access by citizens from every part of the State. This is a thought this journal and several of its readers — including many an important Civilian — have long championed. And even before us, Late Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran had considered it and almost signed the 'go ahead'.

A new capital city in virgin land somewhere between Madurai and Thanjavur, on the banks of the Kaveri, may take years to build. But that need not be seen as in decades. If a BOT scheme is suggested and a five-year target date set, MMM is sure a consortium of leading local contractors and international ones will deliver the goods — much as the Golden Quadrilateral is being delivered. But, for such tendering and response to tendering to work effectively and, most significantly, ensure continuity despite changes, if any, in the power equations, there has to be a meeting of political parties to arrive at a consensus that a new capital and a decongestion of Chennai are necessary for a better quality of life not only in the city but also in the State. And this consensus will have to be followed up with meetings with the leading citizens, the major voluntary organisations and the trade unions whose membership will be affected. If everyone gets together on this, moving the capital will be no problem. If there is no agreement, then MMM can only predict the continuing de-

terioration of Chennai and it becoming one of the worst metropolises in the world despite all the advantages it has.

A waking up

The headline read 'Four-lane system to be implemented strictly'. And *The Man From Madras Musings* was rather astounded by this reference to the Anna Salai stretch from Thousand Lights to Anna Circle, because MMM had all along thought that the four-lane system was always in force and being implemented here. Surely any implementation of a rule or law should be strict. Surely you don't wake up from time to time and say you are going to be strict and then go back to being lax and allow indiscipline to occur all over again till the next time you wake up.

MMM has all along been a supporter of the four-lane system on this stretch — and has for quite some time regretted the non-enforcement of it by the Police and the road indiscipline that had crept in, with two-wheelers and three-wheelers and taxis the worst culprits. With this announcement attributed to a senior police official at the end of

least this count. Once, Tamil Nadu Police had hockey and athletics teams that could compete with the best at the all-India level, forget just Police level. In other sports, too, the Tamil Nadu Police had many fine sports persons. But that appears to be a thing of the past. Are we then concentrating on a more cerebral type of force than a physically fit one, wonders MMM.

Then there is the matter of the 14 Police Stations to be pulled down and multistoried structures to come up in their place to provide more space for the Police. Many of these buildings in most heritage-conscious countries would be considered protected monuments and would be tended with great care. Imagine the attention a properly restored heritage station like the Mount Road Station would attract from tourists! To make these Police stations attention-getters in the same class as Police Headquarters only needs a little interaction with organisations like INTACH and conservation architects. They could well come up with ideas on how to save the old and still provide the space needed by the Police. And if they cannot come up with answers, then the wreckers' hammers

nology that offers students opportunities abroad. MMM has for years now called for History, Geography, Nature Study (Biology and Environmental Studies) and Civics & Values to be compulsorily taught right through high school as SEPARATE subjects and not as one clubbed subject taught for three years, as it is in most government schools — which are the institutions that produce the largest number of students in the country. This teaching — as well as the teaching followed in private (public, if you wish) schools — should additionally look at focussing at least for one year in these subjects on the district in which the school is located, another year on the State, a third year on neighbouring states, then on neighbouring countries and only then on the continents. That students should from a young age become aware of the natural, built, historic and cultural heritage that surrounds them and how everyday life and activity are influenced by them is why this journal has long advocated the reform in school syllabi.

The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage's education wing, Heritage Education Communications Service (HE-

with each child developing a family tree. Among the activities suggested were:

- Visits to a historical monument, a natural heritage site and a museum and covering different aspects of the curriculum through them.
- Planning activities on heritage themes for such special days as World Habitat Day, World Earth Day, World Population Day, etc. These activities could include exhibitions of arts and crafts and songs, dances and street plays on the theme.
- Forming Heritage Clubs in each class.
- Organising Heritage Melas.
- Arranging heritage walks and heritage visits to other parts of a city which are seldom visited.
- Inviting lecturers who would make their lectures storytelling sessions.

Providing examples for some of these suggestions, INTACH Chennai organised a George Town walk and a Mylapore walk that had the teachers asking for more. MMM noted with particular appreciation the enthusiasm of the participating teachers for these walks accompanied by storytelling guides. But, will that enthusiasm translate into organising regular such walks in different parts of the city, wonders MMM.

Other INTACH Chennai inputs included a peep into the world of sacred groves arranged by the C.P.R. Environmental Centre, a look at fauna in Chennai with members of the Madras Naturalists' Society, and a discussion on how ancient cultural traditions like folklore should be made meaningful for children.

All this will, however, become meaningful, as MMM sees it, only if such regular training workshops can be held throughout the city — and especially in Tamil for teachers in Government and Corporation schools. And the influence the workshops might have are subsequently monitored. But will part-timers like the INTACH volunteers find the time to do this?

MMM

(Editor's Note: Also see page 5.)

CS), appears to have adopted the view that if we cannot change the syllabus to focus on natural, built and cultural heritage of the country and the environment, particularly of the area where the school is located, the way to go might be to teach the present syllabus differently and arrange supplementary programmes that will get children involved in these studies. And so, Purnima Datt, HECS consultant, teaming with INTACH's Chennai Chapter, recently held a two-day training workshop in Chennai for teachers of the humanities in the schools.

Suggested activities

Purnima Datt and INTACH Chennai resource persons suggested several activities that could get children more interested in their heritage, starting

CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. Road, Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018.

I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs.100/ Rs..... (Rupees) payable to CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS, as token of my support of *Madras Musings* and the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that it espouses.

Name :

Address:

Present Mailing List No.

OUR
READERS
WRITE

Oh! Chennai

It was in the early 1950s. In a letter to *The Hindu*, a visitor from Bengal, after having a bird's-eye view of the city from the then light-house (in the High Court premises), gave expression to his ecstasy in seeing trees everywhere, with a spire jutting out here and there. Even in the early 1980s, visitors from Bombay and Hyderabad used to admire the greenery in our city.

Oh! What a degradation Chennai has undergone in these last twenty years! It is high time the authorities concerned (CMDA, Corporation, etc.) woke up and emulated the good work being done in Hyderabad.

lyer every morning (for legal matters) from our house Acharya Griha, opposite the present Swagath Hotel and now occupied by the Provident Fund Office. Previously, this was known as *Gowri Vilas* and was the house of the eminent Judge Sir S. Subramani Iyer.

Alas, the gracious Madras of yesteryear. For Re 1, you could travel to Mahabalipuram (Seven Pagodas) then! and back by boat in the Buckingham Canal. The amount of rice, straw, lime and other goods transported via this waterway without any pollution is something few would believe today.

T.M. Raghunathan

E-16, 16th Cross Street
Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090.

What's in a name?

Easily is the question asked (MM January 1st) but a rose may not command the same fragrance if it is called *arali* as the mind retains a particular picture of shape, colour, smell, etc. and presents that picture on the utterance of a word. If the name is changed, it might take a millennium to make the mind reconcile itself to, and accept, the change.

How many persons call the road by its designated name, 'Uthamar Gandhi Road'? The same is the case with many roads, localities, etc. Rameswaram, Madurai, Mylapore or Kanniyakumari, each is invested with specific *nama, nipa*, qualities and attributes.

When the veteran Semmangudi Dr. Srinivasa Ayyar boarded the Express at Bangalore, the ticket examiner told him, "Sir, this is reserved for a Dr. Srinivasa Ayyar. Please vacate." It was only when he clarified who he was that the examiner changed the tenor of his command and turned respectful. The great musician always states that the word 'Semmangudi' commands greater respect than the word 'Dr'. True.

Even so, it is wrong to call the locality 'Mandavalli' as though it represents 'a dull Valli (person) or valli (a plant)'. Before the dawn of the 20th Century, the place was part of a wooded rural tract. Much of it was so even during the first half of the century when, in my teens, I used to cross it to reach Adyar to take tuition under Sri Papanasam Sivan. In settlement, there is a distinct category called 'mandavalli', denoting grazing ground. That popular name stuck to it. Sri Kapaliswarar with His Consort was taken to the area for the *Vana Bhojan* festival once a year, giving credence to this view. All has changed, but the name is intact!

C.G. Prasad

9, C.S. Mudali Street
Kondithope, Chennai 600 079.

Looking back

A few reminiscences!

- Just beyond the old Iron Bridge at the end of the Marina, there used to be a gun emplacement in what was then called 'a soldiers' beach'. I have heard of many instances of children playing there finding small gold coins!
- Many people don't know that Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar renovated the Govindarajawamy temple at Chidambaram, making peace between the *Aikshitar/Archakars*. I know this as my father, T M Kasturi, assisting Nirteng Grant, was taken to Chettinad House by Vaidya Subramania

N. Rajagopalan

7, 24th Cross Street
Indira Nagar, Chennai 600 020

Whose idea?

The tall and impressive Ashok Pillar standing sentinel at the four-way traffic junction in Ashok Nagar is really a unique structure in the city's roadscape.

One: Can any of MM readers throw light on who thought of and put this up?
Two: Will the authorities concerned care to comment whether periodical inspection is carried out to avoid upward incident, which would be serious, God forbid!
N. Dharmeswaran
Guduvanchery 603 202.

Digging — a road-user's nightmare

Chennai used to have shady stretches of trees on either side of the road. With urban development in the past four decades, trees are disappearing in residential areas. The emergence of flats has further reduced the tree population. Permitting commercial set-ups like SSIs to operate in residential areas has increased the noise level. Constant digging by EB/BSNL has rendered roads and pavements unfit for the purpose.

Residents' permission needs to be taken prior to digging and also a completion certificate after restoring the site to its original condition should be obtained from the residents. When local authorities give permission to dig, they should be accountable for restoring the site to original condition within a stipulated timeframe. In the event of failure to do so, the firm needs to be penalised on a day-to-day basis, like 'demurrage'. Also, in the event of a road accident, the firm should meet all the expenses of the injured in the best hospitals.

Wherever the Fibre Optic Duct 'wells' have been constructed, the pavements have been made unsafe for pedestrians. In addition, gravel/sand have been left on the road, causing damage to two-wheelers. Aren't the authorities who give permission to these companies to 'dig' also responsible for ensuring that the areas of work are restored back to their original condition within a timeframe?

Failure to remove construction material from roads/pavements must be viewed as a serious offence and the firms penalised. In some places, the new sewage pipe has not been connected to the houses. The contractor, after receiving payment, seems to have disappeared. Area Engineers plead helplessness. All digging contracts should include stipulations to cover these issues, if Chennai is to become a Singara city.

Cdre. Prem Kumar

3B, Rear Block
Sri Venkatesa Nilayam
107, St. Mary's Road
Chennai 600 018.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The state Chennai's roads are reduced to is shown graphically in the drawings and notes sent by Reader Prem Kumar and published alongside.

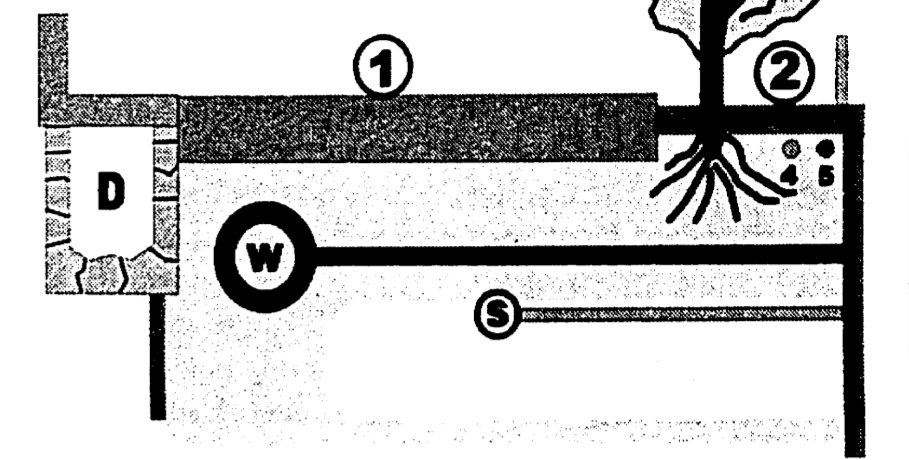
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All letters for The Editor's attention should be addressed to The Editor, c/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

All business correspondence should be addressed to The Director, Chennai Heritage, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.

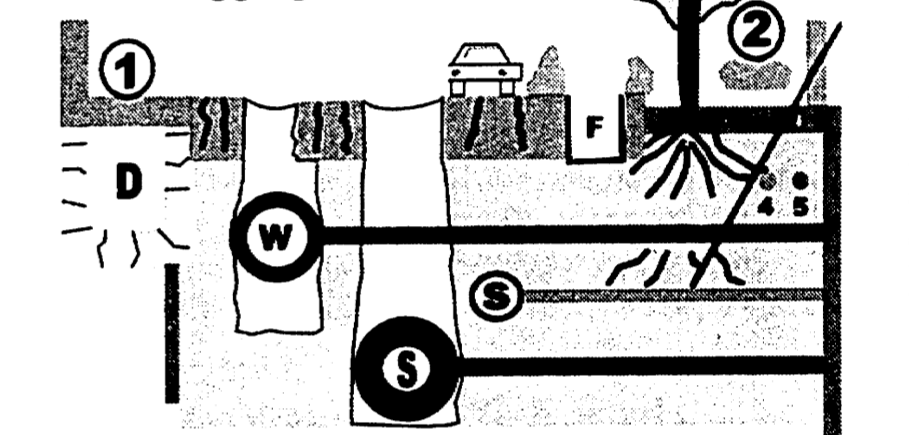
Madras Musings does not accept letters by e-mail.

Before Digging



- D: Stormwater Drainage
W: Metrowater pipeline
S: Sewage (old) Line
1. Broad Road
2. Flat Pavement
3. Erect Shady Tree
4. EB Cable
5. BSNL Cable

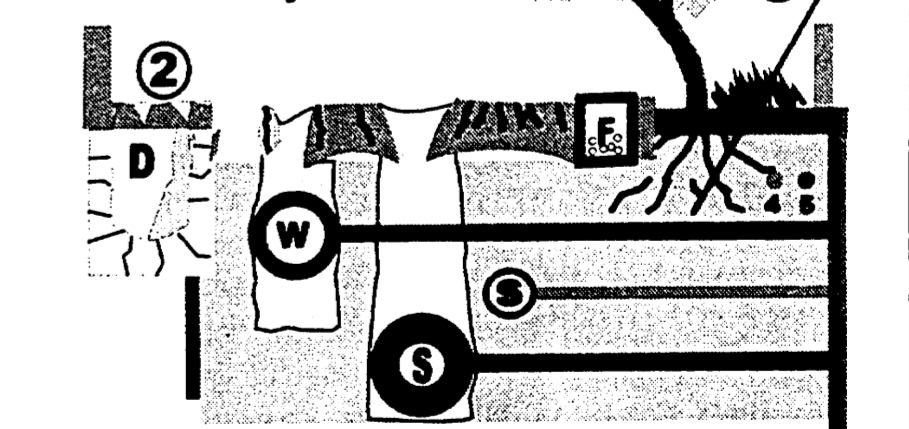
After Digging



- D: Condition Satisfactory
W: Imported Flexible line to consumers (By L&T)
F: Fibre optic duct well 6 x 4 *carte blanche* permission given to firm.

- No time frame imposed to "close" well and restore to original condition (if not better).
- 1: 70% of road unusable. In many places single lane traffic only possible.
 - 2: Pavement covered with debris, unfit for walking.
 - 3: Trees, some over 50 years old, have roots weakened due to allround digging.
 - 4: EB & BSNL constantly digging to repair defective cables have rendered pavements perennially unfit for pedestrians.
 - 5: (Not shown) fibre optic ducts in various colours sticking out of the roads posing threat to two-wheelers.

After Heavy Rains



- D: Stormwater drain walls collapsed due to soil erosion. Stagnant water poses potential health hazards. Breeding ground for mosquitoes.
W&S: Sinking soil. Gaping potholes. Integrity of homogeneous clay soil affected. Heavy rains have caused wet clay soil to flow into the adjoining areas. Road surface has sunk nearly 6 inches. Cracks have appeared on the road surface.
- F: Slab covers of the 'well' are sticking 6" to 9" above the road surface. Threat to vehicular traffic.
 - 1: Tree leaning due to weakened roots.
 - 2: Slabs over drainage broken or collapsed.
 - 3: Pavement covered with debris forcing pedestrians to walk on the road avoiding fibre duct cables etc.

When lignite was found in Neyveli

It was in 1941 that the Madras Circle of the Geological Survey came into being, with five Assistant Geologists, under the supervision of Dr. M.S. Krishnan. A party of officers, comprising Dr. Krishnan, Dr. K. Jacob and I, camped at Vriddhachalam to prepare the geological map of the surrounding areas.

It so happened that the tahsildar of Vriddhachalam, Anandan, was a student of geology. He called on us and suggested that we visit Azhinagar and Neyveli where there were artesian borewells. He also mentioned that the well at Neyveli jetted to a height of more than six feet. The well in Azhinagar was in the criminal settlement, whereas the one in Neyveli was in the property of a Jambulingam. We proposed to visit Neyveli the following Sunday, accompanied by Anandan,

samadhi and Perumal Lake. I argued against the suggestion and said that I would locate the drill hole where water for drilling and other facilities were available. He was displeased and merely said, "Do as you like". This meant there was a possibility of losing my job if I failed to strike lignite.

The drill was unloaded at the Neyveli train halt, and I set up the rig by the pond in Gangaikondam village. I anticipated the lignite bed at a depth of 200 ft. and was relieved when black sludge emanated from the drill hole, heralding the presence of the lignite bed at 210 ft. The lignite bed was 30 feet thick.

I reported to Dr. Krishnan in Chennai. Accompanied by Sir S.V. Ramamurthi, Adviser to the Governor of Madras, he soon arrived by car at our camp. I hosted lunch at Vriddhachalam traveller's bungalow

and received their congratulations.

I located the next bore hole at the site indicated by Dr. Krishnan, at the crossing of the Chennai-Kumbakonam Road and the Cuddalore-Vriddhachalam Highway. Artesian water charged with sand was thrown up. There was no indication of any lignite bed. It was providential that I had stood my ground, despite the possibility of losing my job.

After the first find, further sanction was given by the Government and I proved the occurrence of the lignite bed over more than one square mile. But the presence of water, under artesian pressure, was a problem for mining. There was the danger of the mine being flooded, in case of accidental puncturing of the clay bed below the lignite. The Geological Survey of India obtained the services of an expert from the United States Geological Survey, Dr. Paul Jones. He, with geologists from the Geological Survey of India, carried out field measurements of the discharge from the various artesian wells and obtained the specific yield i.e. the draw-down/metre cube per day. With this data, he was in a position to give the quantity and the rate of pumping to be done per hour if the artesian pressure was to be lowered to a safe level. Having completed all necessary measurements required for safe mining, the Geological Survey of

India, handed over the project to the Government of Madras. There were several teething troubles in the years that followed and it was in 1956 before the Neyveli Lignite Corporation was incorporated.

India, handed over the project to the Government of Madras. There were several teething troubles in the years that followed and it was in 1956 before the Neyveli Lignite Corporation was incorporated.



The Old... & the New

Our OLD is of 4, Commander-in-Chief Road, where the French Group, founded in 1948, used to meet. This building was about where 'Cane and Bamboo' now is. The French Group grew into the more formalised Alliance Francaise in 1953 and in 1954 moved into 36, Mount Road, then known as 'Paradise Building'; it is today the LLA Building. In 1974, the Alliance moved again, this time to 40, College Road, where it remains.

Jamsheed Ahmed Rizwani, as a child in the 1950s lived next door with his family and came to study and play in the garden of No. 40, where one of his friends lived.

Years later, as a committee member in 1975, he helped negotiate the sale of the property to the Alliance, the sale going through in 1979 for Rs. 9,00,000. A 3-year loan helped finance the construction of the second floor where the art gallery and the auditorium are located, seen below left, shortly after construction. Below right, 40 College Road after a facelift in the 1970s. More recently, the garden was re-planned, renovations made and the library was transformed into an information centre — and the building is as in the view at the bottom — with a paved performing space in front of it. (Photographs courtesy: ALLIANCE FRANCAISE).

New life for old manuscripts

A recent news report spoke of the first major effort taken in South India to preserve old manuscripts. And of the Cultural Heritage Trust, 'a coalition of some of the most influential people in Chennai', as 'the first digitisation initiative' committed to 'make India's cultural heritage accessible to the public'. Tracking down the digitisation initiatives of CHT, I chanced upon a whole heap of little-known facts.

C.S. Radhakrishnan, Reader in Sanskrit, at the Vivekananda College, Chennai, and the Executive Trustee of CHT, says, "It is shocking that in spite of over 25% of the world's literary heritage being written by the Indian hand, much of this vast literature has not been published. Over 4.5 million manuscripts still await publication. Of the 2.5 million palm-leaf manu-

scripts (others are of birch-bark, paper and bamboo) believed to be in India, about 65,000-75,000 are in the Madras Oriental Manuscripts Library of Madras University, the Adyar Library has 35,000-40,000 manuscripts, and the Saraswati Mahal in Thanjavur about 1,00,000. But a majority of the manuscripts all over the sub-continent have never even been registered. About 100 years ago, the art of copying manuscripts was lost, except among a very small and rapidly dwindling number of pundits who were still able to read and reproduce these manuscripts. Which simply means that in about 50-100 years most Indian palm-leaf manuscripts would have disappeared (the lifespan of a palm-leaf manuscript is between 150-200 years)!"

It was against this background that the Trust was conceptualised with the help of an Oxford Indologist and a software expert friend from Germany, Gunthard Mueller, whose wife Srilatha (earlier based in Chennai) is also an Indologist and currently curator at the Heidelberg University. A concerted effort of this kind is the first in about a hundred years. We want to enhance public awareness of the immense value of these old manuscripts in the subcontinent and en-

courage people to collect manuscripts in safe places like universities, colleges, mints and governmental organisations". Mueller affirms, "Digital copies are by definition perfect copies, the first such human technology. Within the certified lifetime of digital media (for example, every 150 years), they can be transferred to other media, thus ensuring virtually unlimited tradition potential." Narrowing to his subject, Mueller adds, "While the resolution in microfilming is around 300-400 dpi, depending on the quality of microfilming equipment, digitisation can produce 800-2700 dpi resolution, depending on the size of the original. Only about 50% of the Indian manuscripts in the German National Library in Berlin can be microfilmed, because the low contrast would render the film illegible. The extremely high contrast provided by digitisation is almost microscopic in quality. Detail down to every fibre can be analysed, and all originals used. No flash is necessary. With cold-light technology, light exposure is of low-intensity. Exposure area is minimal (slit) involving minimal damage to originals."

"Microfilm is a problematic, non-lasting material. Many microfilms in all major libraries and national archives are already damaged. In Berlin, some significant manuscripts that were microfilmed are no longer readable. We are negotiating for post-digitisation of many endangered microfilms. In an analog material like microfilm, defects such as black or white spots are not easily recognised as such, and are sometimes assumed to be part of the image. So, the defects slowly grow until the material is rendered worthless. Modern media, such as normed Ricoh Premium material, is certified upto 200 years. The low reproduction costs enable us to publish and distribute these materials efficiently and worldwide. The increased level of physical distribution in higher quantities is a significant contribution to preservation."

Apart from the existing digitisation station at Taylor's Road, Chennai, one or more stations are projected for other organisations with manuscript holdings in Kanchipuram, Thanjavur and Thiruvananthapuram. Work will be done at

• by
Shobha Menon

MORE VOICES WARN OF THREAT TO ADYAR ESTUARY

(Continued from Page 1)

area declared a wildlife sanctuary has only hastened the damage, says Bharath Jairaj of the Consumer Action Group (CAG) which, ever since 1997, has been moving the courts for redress. "That year, in a suit filed by us, the High Court had given the state government six months' time to decide upon

declaring the estuary as a protected sanctuary. That would have meant an immediate stop to all damage being done to the estuary. In a meeting held in February 1998, the then Director of Environment had even recommended that it be categorised as a Coastal Regulation Zone I — an ecologically fragile area. Despite several representations by us, nothing happened."

The CAG moved the HC once again in 2001 and a HC bench had pulled up the Forest Department for not implementing the earlier order and said it must be immediately acted upon. However, with the PWD

adamantly refusing to hand over the estuary land to the Forest Department, the estuary is today on its way to doom. No PWD official was available for comment.

"Had the government acted upon its promises, much of the damage could have been reversed," says Jairaj. "As it is now, we will shortly be moving a contempt of court petition against the Forest Department."

Right now, with alarm bells tolling for the estuary, some kind of judicial activism becomes absolutely necessary to give a last lease of life to the dying estuary, aver environmentalists.

DAYS TO MARK

January	February	March	April	May	June
12th National Youth Day	2nd World Wetland Day	8th International Women's Day	7th World Health Day	18th International Museum Day	5th World Environment Day
25th India Tourism Day	21st Int'l Mother Language Day	21st World Forestry Day	18th World Heritage Day	21st World Day for Cultural Development	8th World Oceans Day
26th Gujarat Earth-Quake Day		22nd World Water Day	22nd Earth Day	31st Anti-Tobacco Day	
30th World Peace Day		27th World Theatre Day			
National Cleanliness Day					
July	August	September	October	November	December
1st Van Mahotsav Day	6th Hiroshima Day	14th Int'l Cross Cultural Day	1st Int'l Day of Older Persons	14th - 21st World Heritage Week	2nd National Pollution Control Day
11th World Population Day	12th International Youth Day	16th World Ozone Day	1st - 7th Wildlife Week	20th Child Rights Day	3rd National Conservation Day
		24th Girl Child Day	3rd World Habitat Day	20th Universal Children's Day	
		27th World Tourism Day	4th World Animal Welfare Day		
		28th Green Consumer Day			8th - 15th All India Handicrafts Week



I CARE

For the wonders of nature that are in my hands to protect. For the richness of our culture that is in my heart to connect.

The Heritage of India is mine to respect.



Project sponsored by Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Government of India). Prepared by INTACH. Design by Umesh Menon.

Getting children to care about heritage

A recent teacher training workshop in the city organised by INTACH Chennai had resource person Purnima Datt of the Heritage Education Communication Service, a wing of INTACH, India, suggesting that heritage melas could be held in schools on special heritage days throughout the year, when exhibitions (paintings, drawings, photographs, modelling etc.) on the theme of each day and edutainment — songs, poetry reading, dance, street plays, debates, oratory etc. — could be organised, together with essay writing contests and film shows. The calendar above lists those days. And marking these days, urging children to care, is this INTACH poster (left).

(Continued on Page 6)

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period February 1 to 15. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Name Israel's first astronaut killed along with Kalpana Chawla and five others during space shuttle Columbia's destruction on February 1, 2003.
2. Why was 19-year old Nikita Anand of New Delhi in the news?
3. Simple one. Whom did India defeat in a Davis Cup tie in New Delhi recently?
4. The first detailed map of which astronomical event, compiled by a satellite called Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe, was unveiled recently?
5. How did Bangladesh's H. Sarkar, M. Ashraf and E. Haque become part of one-day International history?
6. Which famous town in the news some years back for military actions and still under the range of Pakistani guns, was airlifted on February 14?
7. Name the famous first cloned adult mammal put to sleep on February 14 after six years of existence.
8. How many awards did 'Lagan' win at this year's National film awards on February 13?
9. Name the brilliant South African fielder-batsman who bid adieu to the game after suffering an injury in the World Cup.
10. Name the supersonic anti-ship cruise missile test-fired successfully on February 12.
11. What distinction does 'The Spectator' launched in 1836 in Madras hold?
12. Which eminent 20th Century Indian's museum would one find at Avvai Kalai Kazhagam in Royapuram?
13. What new unit of the Chennai Police has been set up to handle children-in-distress problems?
14. Which Chennai-based schoolgirls contested the final of the Asian junior squash championships in Islamabad recently?
15. After whom has the TN State Government instituted an award for bravery, carrying a gold medal and Rs. 5 lakhs, to be given away on Independence Day to a woman displaying courage and daring enterprise?
16. In a significant deviation from the National Immunisation Schedule, what two immunisation schemes is the State Government planning on a pilot project basis?
17. Which Chennai-based tennis legend holds the record for most Davis Cup match wins by an Indian?
18. After which entrepreneur was the Leith Castle in Santhome named?
19. Which place did ancient Romans refer to as Melange?
20. Which school in Tamil Nadu is probably the only school in Asia to have two full-fledged museums, both well maintained?

(Answers on page 7)

Nostalgia

The sounds of old Madras

I did not realise till late in the evening of my life how much the volume of sound generated in Madras had grown over the years. Even three decades ago, if you awoke at 2 a.m., you could hear the low hum of the city somewhat like the sound of an oil-fired furnace — a sound which grew in decibels by the hour. (Some English poet — Blake, I think it was — has likened the sound of a city to that of a beast in torpor.)

Not any longer. A variety of sounds assails your ears at all hours and is dominated by the noise of vehicles of all types. There is no part of the night which you can call really silent.

In the early Thirties, as a child waking up in the wee hours in Egmore, I could hear the moan of the hooters of the steamers in the harbour (those were the days of the steamships). Many of the city dwellers may not know or may have forgotten that there was a zoo in People's Park, near what is now Periyar Thidal. As a child, sixty years ago, I could hear the lions in the Zoo roaring in their cages and would listen in dreadful fascination as their roaring reached a crescendo before it died.

If you had lived, as I did, near a Railway Station, you would wake at 2 a.m. to the sounds of the clanking of steam engines in the shunting yard, the tremendous bang of the buffers of one coach dashing against those of another and, sometimes, the angry letting-off of steam in stationary fury. And, you would wonder why the unfortunate engine driver had to work at that ungodly hour.

Hall's Road in Egmore was idyllic in the Thirties — a quiet street — not the quiet of the cemetery — but so quiet that in the afternoons

(siesta time) you could hear a coppersmith bird sounding off in the Museum Grounds, a furlong away... "tonk, tonk, tonk, tonk", then a pause, and then off again.

Street hawkers were many, but the one who lingers in my mind is the vendor of Chinese silk. The Chinese vendor came carrying an enormous bundle of his wares on the carrier of his cycle and his cry went "China Seeekkh". We children fell over each other with fear and curiosity, but we were warned by our mother not to try any of our tricks with him.

Another vendor of whom we could make neither head nor tail was the seller of curd. He apparently hailed from the Telugu region. He came with a rugged blanket draped over his head and shoulders and his call sounded like the whoop of an owl — interpreted by us as "Thairoaaaaah".

One other occasional street noise thrilled and scared us. This was the sound of small groups of Congress volunteers shouting *Vande Matharam* and *Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*. We would rush to the gate to see a small group carrying the Tricolour, but Mother would rush out and hustle us back into the house. Remember, it was the days of the British Raj and Father was an officer serving it.

Old time residents living in other areas of the city would have had similar or different experiences of how the city sounded then. For the residents of the stretch from San Thomé to Royapuram, the sound of the sea would have been overwhelming. It would be interesting to know what the city said to them in those days.

V.R.S. Raghavan

New life for old manuscripts

(Continued from Page 5)

the host organisations with e-ternals.com equipment free of charge. While the host organisation will provide the manpower and give permission to digitise and publish, it will receive a full copy of each digitised manuscript.

Radhakrishnan says, "We already have an MoU with the Academy of Sanskrit near Melkote, Mysore, for undertaking digitisation of 20,000 manuscripts. An understanding with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, Delhi, is in the offing. A Digimobile for South India, which can digitise on location, is also planned, designed by the TVS Coach Division without charge. We've come across manuscripts in the strangest of places, like the loft of an old house, which treasured a rare collection of 13 dramas of the pre-Kalidasa writer Bhasa! Public awareness campaigns for preserving and bringing them to safe places is also on our agenda. A CD on the *Tatva Viveka* of Pillai Lokacharya has been the Trust's first product."

But no digitisation is possible without accompanying research. Manuscripts have to be identified, their contents assessed, catalogued and transliterated. The Trust brings pundits, who possess unique manuscript knowledge and skills, together with the best known university researchers, fusing cultural knowledge with the future,

joining the palm-leaf and the computer. Aiming to conduct epigraphy courses, teaching scripts and manuscript-related issues, and also to create a database of scribes who can read the Grantha script and also the rare Sharada script, the Trust is gradually compiling a register of the literary heritage of the country for purposes of research. Plans are also on to approach UNESCO for funds, besides identification of international organisations, which might be approached to support work in South India.

Meanwhile, Allhad N. Kamath, an expert in Records Management and Business Imaging (both in commercial paper and historical documents and artefacts) of MILCOM Software Ltd., Chennai, who realised the "tremendous opportunity in Tamil Nadu and the rest of India" about "six months ago" says, "It is only three months since MILCOM plunged into this area on seeing the possible openings. We have already demonstrated to many institutions, including the Government Museum, how manuscripts can be digitised both for storage and retention. Relevant technology needs to be used for storage and retrieval of such repositories of national wealth. This could then be used to generate tremendous revenue with the existing infrastructure. We are, however, concerned at the entry of people from abroad in the field, since there is no lack

of expertise within our own country. Only there is no regard here for conventional technologies."

Kamath also points out, "Any sophisticated foreign technology will be expensive and difficult to maintain."

Dr. R. Kannan, Commissioner of Museums, Chennai, says, "Our Department initiated the digitising process about eight months ago, using a low-cost method with a 6X Optical camera. The manuscripts used have been taken from the Oriental Manuscripts Research Library, besides sources in Tirunelveli and Palani. We are planning to convert them into CDs so that we can earn some revenue, and make this heritage information available for scholars without the threat of piracy."

But G. Sundar, Director-in-charge of the Raja Muthiah Research Library in Chennai, presents a different angle. "Worldwide, archivists agree that preservation of microfilming is the best way to preserve printed material. This way, the contents can be preserved for at least 500 years, provided they are filmed, edited and stored as per the norms. However, to capture images of colour material, it is desirable to digitise them. Since there are no chemicals used in digitisation, there are fewer problems in preservation. But with the storage medium constantly being upgraded, depend-

ing on technology, we do not know what is in store for us after a few years. With a microfilm, whatever the change in technology, all you need is a magnifying glass to read the images, which is very safe from the preservation point of view. In printed materials that have been produced during the past century, very little colour material has been produced (with the exception of paintings and other art materials). And it is always possible to convert a microfilm into a digital medium whenever required. If the initial cost of the Wicks and Wilson microfilm scanner is very high, the recurring cost is minimal. And there may be better equipment down the line, say, in the next 50 to 100 years, that will help to obtain images of better quality than today. Considering all these facts, to preserve old materials, I would strongly suggest that microfilm is the best method of preservation."

There certainly seems to be a lot going for the preservation of old palm-leaf manuscripts, with many players, techniques and opinions. But it is rather ironic that the only known manuscript of the Pippalada version of the famous *Atharvama Veda* is now available only at the Heidelberg University, Germany, where it is insured for one million Deutsche Marks. Digitised and copied on to 154 CDs, it was presented as a gift to the Indian Government by Mueller himself early this year.

Art sets its place in interiors

Chandar and Vidya, architects and interior designers, have been treating art as an integral part of interior design for corporate offices and include it even in the estimate which they present to the clients. They found an amenable client in ABN-AMRO, when they designed the offices of their Global Trade Operations at *Raheja Towers*, Mount Road, which takes care of the Bank's entire operations in South East Asia and Europe.

In fact ABN-AMRO was willing to sacrifice eight work stations so that a large mural could be viewed without disturbance. Says Sainath Radhakrishnan, Vice President &

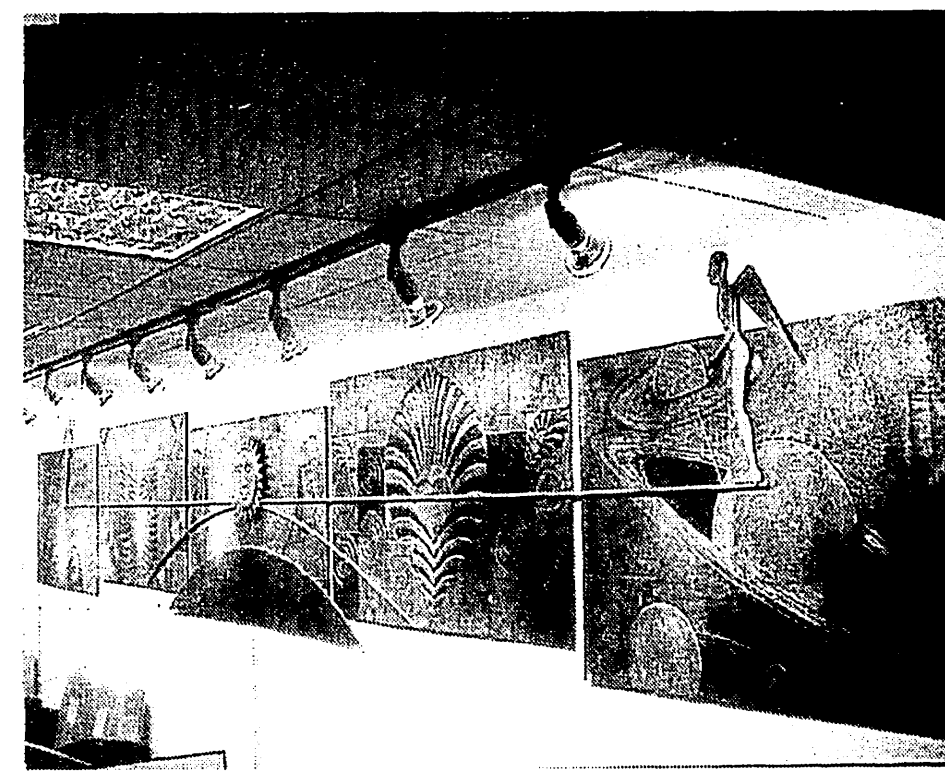
Head, Trade Operations (Asia), "We want to be good corporate citizens and grow with the community; art forms a kind of cushion". Chandar confirms that the employees too became very enthusiastic when the art works were brought to the office and started discussing where each piece should be put up.

"Paintings and sculptures break the general monotony of plain walls and also provide visual and even mental relief from constantly viewing computer screens and looking at numbers and documents. The employers have paid considerable attention to providing an easy atmosphere to work in for the employees, as this is a 24-hour op-

erational centre to suit international timings, with the staff working in three shifts. There is a gym, a resource centre for relaxing, a canteen and plenty of real plants. In fact ABN-AMRO has been very particular about using only real plants in specially made-to-order stainless steel pot holders to go with the general ambience."

Given just the skeleton of the second floor of the building, Chandar and Vidya took care of every bit of the interior layout. This included conforming to safety norms, providing a/c drain facilities, humidity control and lighting and making all this an integral part of the design. Colour accents have been provided on walls and columns, which often do not appear as columns at all. With carpets available as tiles, they have specially designed the floors and upholstery with matching designs and colours. Repetitions have been avoided and, depending on the functions of the halls, care has been taken to provide them with different types of floors and furniture. Even the glass doors have been engraved with horizontal lines to go with the rest of the design. To break the monotony of straight lines, the reception area has a curved ceiling and back wall.

The large mural based on



The mural by Umesh.

ARCHITECTS URGE RELOOK AT SITE

(Continued from Page 1)

- Hardly a couple of such open areas exist along the beach road from Cooum to Adyar. Moreover, along this stretch, it is only in this site that there are nearly 20 huge, well-grown trees, some of which are standing right in the middle and others scattered all around, which are worth preserving, particularly when the State itself is seriously in the process of constituting an exclusive 'Tree Authority' to effectively deal with these "green" aspects.
- The proposed activities will affect the current educational and other activities within the site as well as on both sides of the site, which is not desirable.
- Due to this site selection, the lifestyle and the activities of the fishermen's tenements and hutments behind the site will be disturbed. This may lead to serious and constant conflicts of social nature around the proposed Secretariat.
- The proposed site is not only surrounded by historical and heritage sites and buildings,

but also houses the Willingdon Training Institute valued for historical importance. A model girls school now functioning here will have to be relocated within this neighbourhood.

Above all, the site is highly lacking in 'Approach vista' and 'Perception distance' which a building of such magnitude, importance and image rightly deserves. Hence, we appeal to the Government to consider more befitting sites before finalising such an important urban intervention.

Selection of design concept

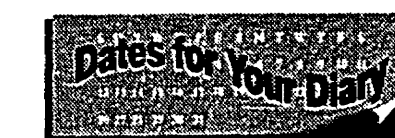
A project of such importance also deserves a holistic approach in finalising the architectural proposal. An open architectural competition will be the right approach to get the best design from a wider choice with appropriate architectural inputs through providing all information of the site and environs, detailed user requirements and design brief to the architects (registered with Council of Architecture) who express interest to participate. It is perri-

nent to follow the competition guidelines framed by the Council of Architecture, a statutory body formed by an Act of Parliament governing architectural education and profession.

Conceptualisation time

This should be adequate to study and analyse the site and requirements, prepare an efficient plan and, finally, visualise and present a holistic proposal, including desired imageable view.

Technology is available to construct a building fast, provided adequate time is given for proper conceptualisation, detailing, designing, drawing and planning the execution sequences before going to the site.



Ongoing: An exhibition of Aditya Basak's paintings. (At Art-world.)

Till March 20: Time, Trace, Transitions, Recent works by S.G. Vasudev, C. Douglas, Rm. Palaniappan, K. Muralidharan. Face to Face 10th March - 4.30 p.m. (At Forum Art Gallery.)



Nandagopal's 'Dragon Fly Catcher' as part of an interior.

globalisation and the balance of ecology and business, is the creation of young artist Umesh of Artistic. This white metal work is partly etched and partly embossed and painted to appear like pewter and attracts the attention of the visitor as he enters the office.

While paintings and a few prints of originals (to accommodate the budget) have been put up on walls, special niches have been provided for sculptures. The small bronze pieces are by Pushpa Devi and a couple of them by her husband Rajkumar Panwar. 'The Dragon Fly Catcher', a creation of senior artist S. Nandagopal, takes pride of place. A special space

has been provided for this frontal metal sculpture, offering a clear view from a long distance. Besides a few Tanjore paintings specially requested by the clients, the contemporary works include those of Sooriya-moorthy, G. Raman, Susairaj, Subramaniam, Krishnaswamy, Marc, Raja and several others, for whom this provides a good exposure as they are as yet not too well known. There are about seventy original works on this floor and in the third floor office. The designers have succeeded by knowing where to stop and by avoiding overindulgence.

Lakshmi Venkatraman

Answers to Quiz

1. Ilan Ramon; 2. She is the new 'Miss India Universe' title winner; 3. Japan; 4. The map of the Universe at the time of the 'Big Bang'; 5. They were the three batsmen dismissed by Vaas during his hat-trick with the first three balls of a match; 6. Kargil; 7. Dolly; 8. Eight; 9. Jonty Rhodes; 10. Brahmos.

* * *

11. It was the first daily in the

Presidency; 12. Srinivasa Ramanujan; 13. Juvenile Police Units; 14. Joshua Chinappa and Vaidehi Reddy, with the former winning the title; 15. Kalpana Chawla; 16. The administration of MMR vaccine to children and rubella vaccine to adolescent girls; 17. Ramanathan Krishnan; 18. Parry's Castle; 19. Mamallapuram; 20. Kalaimagal Kalvi Nilayam School at Erode, which has a Coin museum and an archaeological museum.

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Champions under development - 2

Five more athletes to watch

We feature today five more of the 15 sportspersons chosen for Athletics training under the Champions Development Scheme of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu.



Pooja Merita Jose was first in the shot put event at the most recent Junior Inter-Zonal Athletic Meet, held in Kolkata. She set a new national record (12.27m) in the Under-18 category at the South Zone Athletic Championships. Pooja, one of the first batch chosen by the CDS, was helped by the SDATN to make it to the Fajar International Meet in Iran, where she came fourth. "Last year, I missed six months of class and I now have to concentrate on my studies," the SBOA student says. Jose plans to do B.A. Literature, but her focus will be on improving her mark in the shot put.



M. Prasanna is the national junior 100m champion. With a timing of 10.88 seconds and improving with every race, it is only a matter of time before he makes his pres-

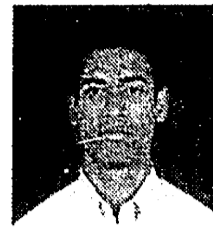
ence felt at the senior level. Prasanna was first in the 60m and 200m dashes, clocking 7.10 seconds and 23 seconds, respectively, at the Fajar International Indoor Athletic Championship in Iran last year.

A final year science student at Loyola College, Prasanna trains regularly in the evenings at his college grounds, at the YMCA and Anna University campuses under the watchful eyes of his coach Riyaz. Unfortunately Prasanna could not take part in the National Games in Hyderabad as he was laid low with mumps.



K.N. Priya's main event is the 100m hurdles though she is a triple jumper as well. At the 42nd Senior Inter State Athletic Meet in Bangalore last year, she came first in the 100m hurdles and followed it up with a win in the 4x100m relay. Priya was in fine form at the selection trials for the Asian Junior Meet in Bangkok, coming first in both the 100m hurdles and the triple jump. However, she could not quite reproduce that form in Bangkok. She has consistently done well at the State and national levels and won the 100m

hurdles title at the All India Inter-University Championship in January. She could not take part in the Hyderabad Nationals due to injury. This third-year SIET Commerce student hopes to find a job in the Customs and Central Excise Department.



Rajesh Pran Mathias came into the spotlight after he finished second in the 100m and 200m sprints at the National Junior Athletic Championship last year. An Arts student at Tiruchi's St. Joseph's College, Mathias has performed creditably in several State and national athletic meets. This year, at the 18th National Junior Athletic Championship, he was part of the bronze-winning Tamil Nadu team in the 4x100m relay.



K. Revathy specialises in the long jump and triple jump events. At the 17th Tamil Nadu State Inter-District Junior Athletic Championship, she was first in the triple jump, setting a new meet record of 12.02m. She also bettered the meet record in the long jump, although she came third. But it was at the 14th South Zone Junior Athletic Meet in Thiruvananthapuram that she really shone - she came up with a personal best of 12.55m in the triple jump to set a new national record in her age category and stood first in the heptathlon event as well. The Class 12 SBOA student plans to study Commerce in college. "I find no problem juggling study and sport. In fact, I even find time to play cricket, football, throwball and kho-kho," Revathy smiles.

Recommended Trees - 2

For Town Centres

Trees for Main Roads

Acacia auriculiformis (Australian Phyllode Acacia)
Ailanthus excelsa (Matchwood Tree)
Azadirachta indica (Neem)
Caryota Urens (Fish-tail palm)
Cordia sebastena (Red cordia)
Delonix alata (Vadanarayanam)
Jacaranda mimosifolia (Jacaranda)
Mimusops elengii (Indian Nedlar)
Roystonea Regia (Royal Palm)
Saraca indica (Asoka)
Tabubia Rosea (Tabubia)
Terminalia catappa (Indian almond)

Trees suitable for Interior Roads

Bauhinia variegata (Bauhinia)
Cassia grandis (Horse cassia)
Gliricidia maculata (Madera)
Guaicum officianale (Tree of Life)
Madhuca longi folia (Mahua)
Melia azadarich (Persian Lilac)
Michelia champaka (Champak)

Trees suitable for Open Spaces & Parking Areas

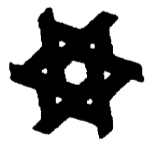
Acacia holosercea (Manvelvel)
Cassia fistula (Indian Laburnum)
Cassia Siamea (Kassod)
Hardwickia binata (Aathi)
Sesbania grandiflora (Sesban)
Thespesia Populnea (Portia)

Trees in Tubs for Parking Areas & Lanes

Araucaria excelsa (Christmas Tree)
Ficus benjaminia (Java fig)
Murraya exotica (Kamini)
Mussenda erythrofilla (Mussenda)
Tecoma Stans (Tecoma)
Thuja Orientails (Arbor Vitae)
Schinus molle (Pepper tree)

G. Pattatri, K. Hariharan and Prof. S. Dayanandan

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