

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE

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It's one week now since the exams — but don't you think our parents are rather overdoing it?!

The March blues

Those faces were back all over the city.

Drawn, haggard, staring distantly into a future which, judging from the bitten-into-something-sour expressions, didn't look too good.

Well, it was that annual feature, at this time of year, for March is always Exam Time.

Poor kids, did you say? Oh no, you've got it all wrong.

I am talking about the parents.

All over the city, mothers and fathers were bent feverishly over books, struggling over maths, science, computer science, social studies... and wishing they had paid more attention in school.

It's funny how what used to be almost solely the student's headache has somehow transformed over the years into Chief Ulcer Creator for parents.

Newspapers and magazines were filled with hushed-voiced articles in new age jargon, counselling parents on how to 'Get Past and Go Beyond This Difficult Time'.

The kids were, however, doing fine, and couldn't see what all the fuss was about.

Those parents who had the forethought to burn their own report cards before their kids began to read were wise. They could now launch into the "Life is real, Life is earnest" speech with no fear of being booed out of the room.

Don't worry — Ammas and Appas, all your troubles are now over.

And the long, long summer holidays are here.

Yeah, I know — it never ends, does it?

Ranjitha Ashok

Chennai a Shanghai?!

NO, please!

(By the Editor)

Make Chennai, a Shanghai, urged Benoit d'Iribarne, President, Asia-Pacific and the Americas, Saint-Gobain Glass, Paris, at the recent CII-Tamil Nadu Chapter-organised conference on 'The Winning Tamil Nadu — An Investment Meet'. God forbid, is all that we can say.

d'Iribarne made the suggestion in the context of summarising what he felt any investment destination needed and how much of those requirements Tamil Nadu had got right. Competitiveness, credibility and committedness were the broad requirements and Tamil Nadu had them all, even if some of the subsections of these, like infrastructure, logistics, transparency, consistency and speed could all do with improvement. But most of all what the State needed, he felt, was a visible symbol that would indicate investor-friendliness, efficiency and a warmer welcome. Make Chennai your symbol, he urged, your gateway, your magnet for investment and growth. And we were willing to cheer with him, till he added, "Make it your Shanghai".

We are quite sure he would not want Paris to be made the

Shanghai of France, just as this journal certainly would not want this city of culture and heritage to be made the Shanghai of Tamil Nadu. He might not have meant it in the way it sounded, but we are only too familiar with how the minds that matter here will take such encouragement. Already, they are pulling down heritage buildings alongside invaluable lung space like the Marina to build architectural memorials to undiminished bureaucracy. Any encouraging reference to Shanghai will have us building more such memorials all along the two beach roads!

What we need is a city that works. And a city that works, a city and suburbs where there are good roads, a better transportation system, ample water, first rate communications, efficient service, is what, d'Iribarne ever-so-tactfully indicated, would be a magnet for investment. And we would go along with him all the way. Shanghai, in all probability, works in that way. But that is not the visible symbol of Shanghai; what is visible is its immense physical growth dwarfing its rich past. And that, Madras Musings certainly does

(Continued on Page 6)

Rajaji's advice on building in the city

On numerous occasions, when he was Premier of Madras and Chief Minister of the State, C. Rajagopalachari expressed how strongly he felt about the tendency to raise more and more buildings in the city, especially taking over open spaces essential for the better health of the people of Madras. During the course of some research on a project, your Editor found another report on Rajaji's views on this matter.

Unveiling the portrait of an eminent citizen of the city in the premises of an insurance company he had been associated with, Rajaji speaking about the investments insurance companies were making in buildings, had said, it was reported:

Even those who had built anew would get good returns for their investment. The intervening area between the Fort and the High Court was once a very beautiful open space, but now the space had been used up to erect buildings. No doubt, the buildings were very beautiful. He only hoped the Island Ground would not be seized by investors in course of time and built upon; at any rate, he hoped it would not happen in his lifetime. It was very dangerous to allow congestion in cities. Insurance companies, interested as

they were in the health of citizens, should see to it that such spaces were not taken up for construction of buildings. 'We must resist such tendencies,' he said and added that people might devise some scheme to insure against such open spaces being built on, and payments being made to municipalities in order to preserve open spaces. It was not impossible, he thought, to work out such a scheme if they thought over it carefully.



Rajaji's views about congesting the city with more and more buildings are certainly pertinent to our times, when we are seeing a concrete

jungle being created both by private investors and the Government, stories of which are the special focus of this issue of Madras Musings. Improving the city's services for its citizens, ensuring their greater comfort, making life easier and less deprived for them, all appear to be secondary to raising new castles in the air. Could we all get together to think about how to make Chennai a more liveable city, a city where everything works for those living and working in it, instead of only thinking of raising new buildings for the benefit of a few?

— The Editor

Cathedral needs urgent attention

The San Thomé Cathedral is in a sorry shape and needs attention. At once. During the monsoon last year, there was rainwater dripping on the altar and, now, the lime and brick plaster is cracking and falling every day.

Archbishop Dr. Aruldas James, who presides over the Diocese of Madras-Mylapore from Bishop's House in San Thomé, is aware of the urgency and importance of restoration, but the managers of the diocese are staring at their empty coffers

and hoping God will come to their help.

A conservation study of the basilica (a church which has some of the remains of a saint) was done in 2002 by Ravi Gundu Rao and Associates, a Mumbai-based firm, which specialises in architectural and structural conservation of heritage buildings. It submitted its proposals in August 2002. But nothing concrete has followed.

Fr. P.J. Lawrence Raj, the parish priest, says that lack of

funds is the major hurdle. "We need a large amount of money in our hands before we can award the work to someone, and raising that seems to be the most difficult task," he states. It is estimated that the basic restoration work alone would cost about Rs. 57 lakh (a cost mentioned in the 2002 report).

Father Lawrence says he would like to start the restoration work now, so that it will be completed before the northeast Monsoon sets in. But he does not have the funds to even

make a beginning. However, some money was spent not so long ago on modernising the exclusive meditation wing of the church. But it is doubtful if this work was carried out after consulting experts. As in many cases, such hotch-potch jobs only mar the historicity and life of a landmark.

Efforts have been made by the church to approach agencies in The Vatican, but they have not borne fruit.

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Will rack railway become India's pride?

There is an exciting possibility of the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) being awarded UNESCO's World Heritage Status site, to bring it on par with the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) which earned that coveted status in 1999. The chances of the Tamil Nadu rack railway – the only one of its kind in the Indian sub-continent – of receiving such recognition are bright. Two experts from UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, spent seven days with officials of Indian Railways a few months ago. The mission comprised Ms. Junko Taniguchi (Programme Specialist) and Mr. Sebastien Dauge (French International Expert on Rehabilitation and Management of Railway Stations). They studied India's proposal for the NMR to be considered for the much sought award, and also to re-consider UNESCO's displacement of Mumbai's Victoria Terminus building from the last short-list of candidates on account of VT's re-naming, which the world body claims to have substantially diluted the earlier selection. The meetings ended in a decision for a visit by Indian Railways officials to the Centre in Paris later this year.

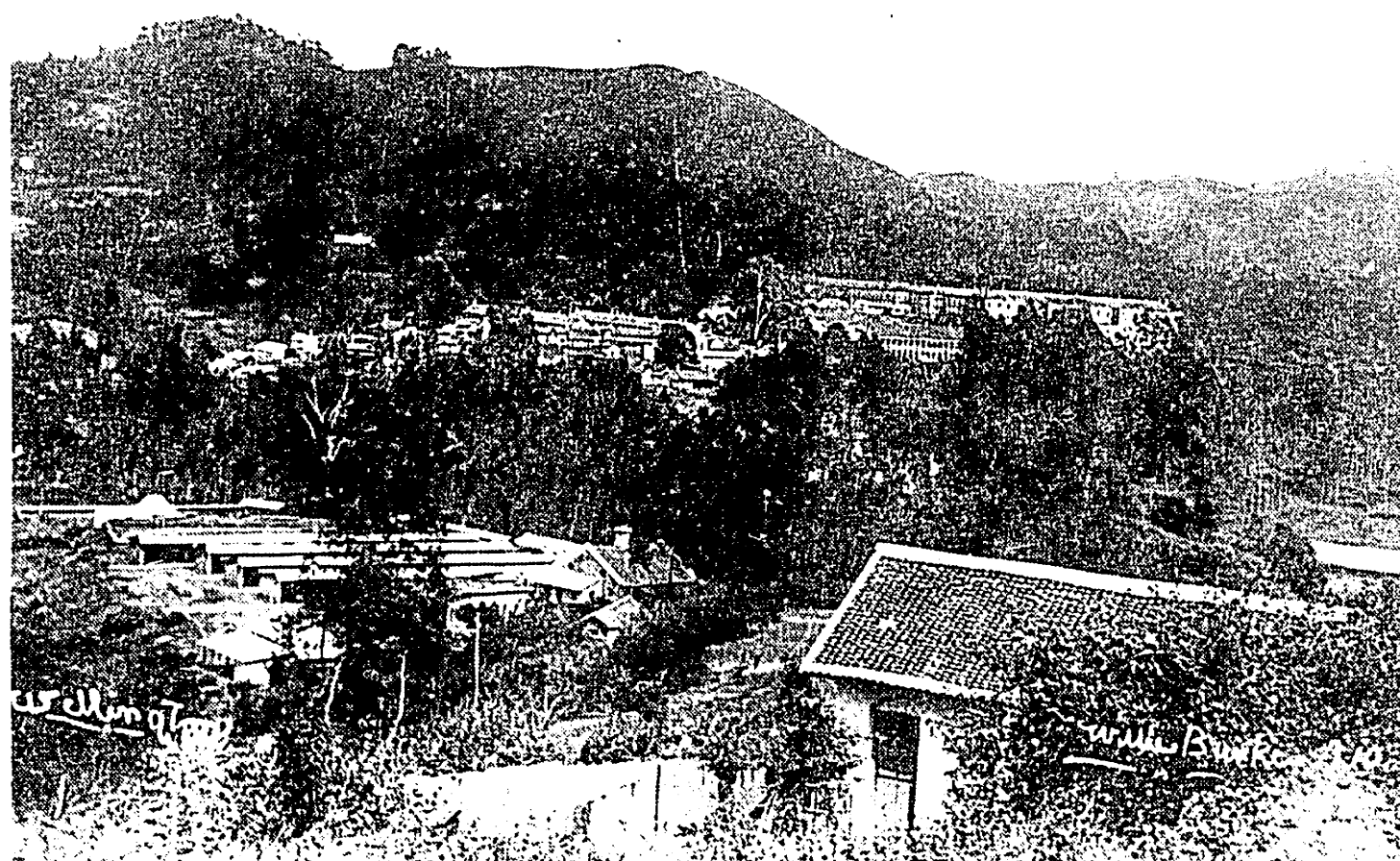
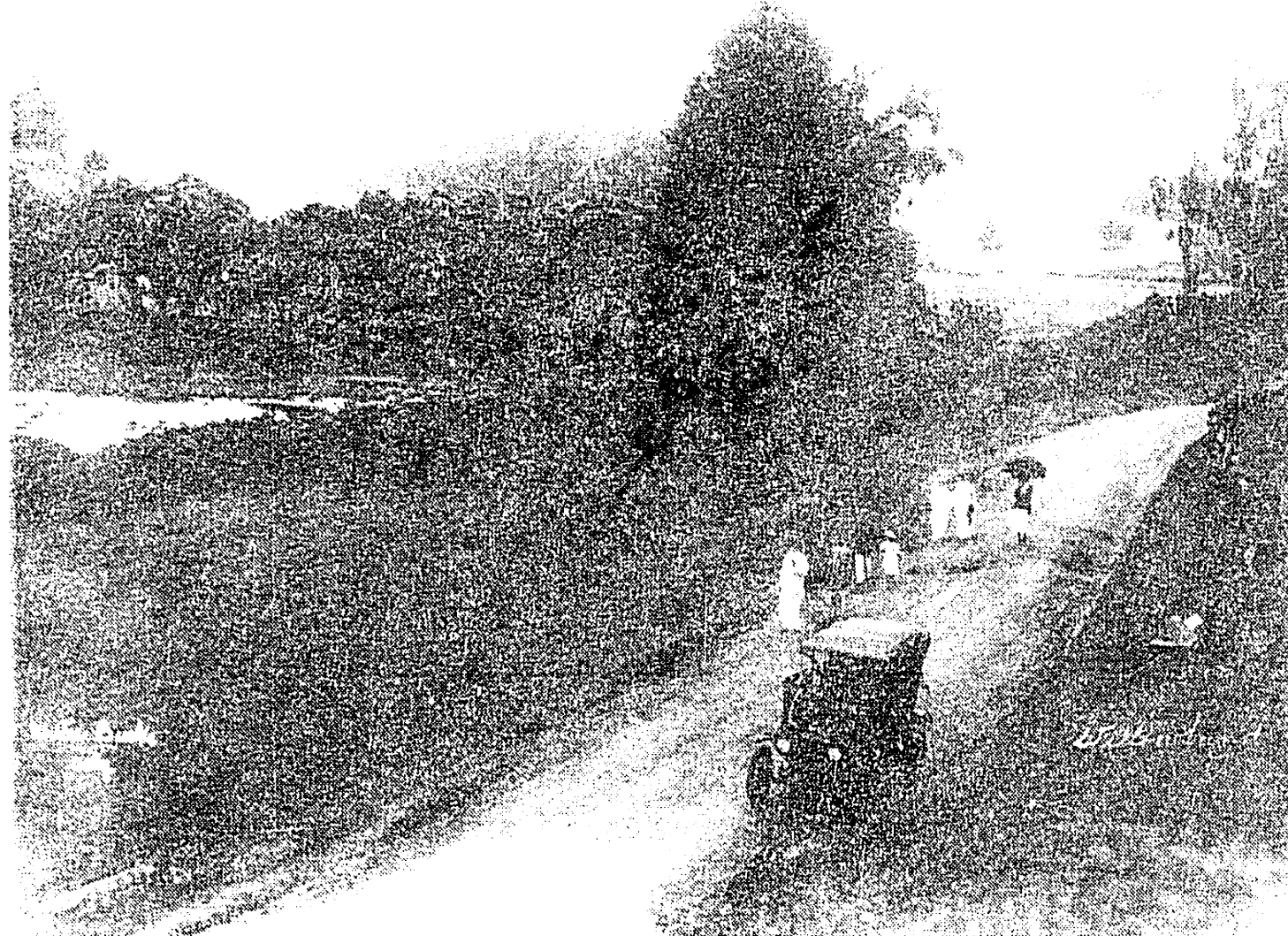
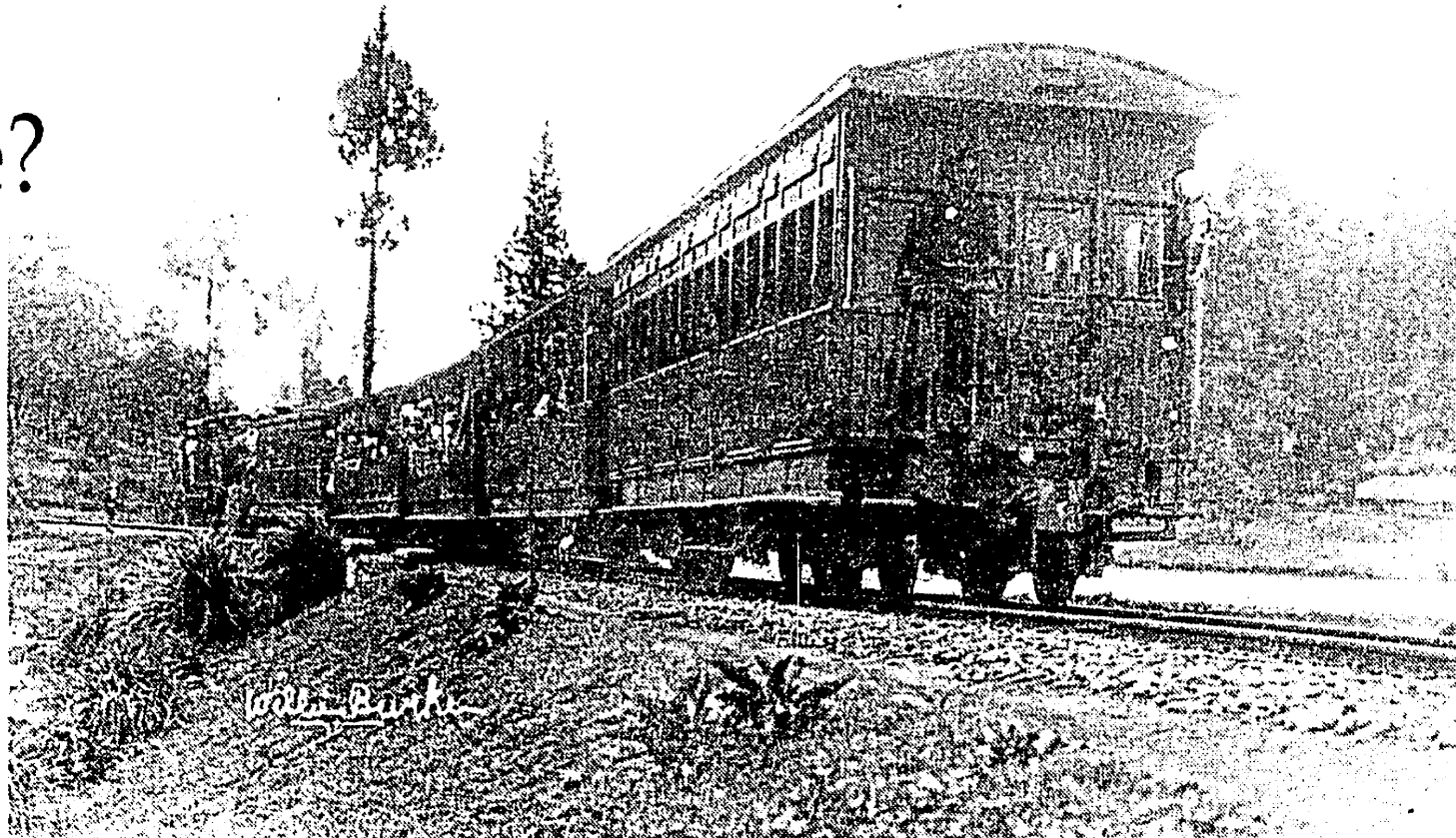
There isn't a huge difference in the vintage of the DHR and the NMR; they are 1886 and 1899 respectively. The routes of both railways traverse nature's best scenery. Yet, in my opinion, the NMR scores over DHR in many respects.

The English chanced upon Ootacamund in 1820s. Later, Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of India (1876-1880), while spending a holiday in Ooty, described the place thus: "It far surpasses all that its most enthusiastic admirers and devoted lovers have said to us about it. The afternoon was rainy, and the road muddy, but such beautiful English rain, such delicious English mud. Imagine Hertfordshire lanes, Devonshire downs, Westmoreland lakes, Scotch trout streams, and Lusitanian views." (R.R. Bhandari). Lord Lytton had opened the first segment of the DHR. He returned to England in 1880, nine years before the first section of the NMR was inaugurated.

Another wordpicture of Ooty, by Mollie Panter-Downs, in the book *Rise of the Raj*, reproduced by R.R. Bhandari, says the following about this ancient abode of the Todas: "The Victorians enchanted with this discovery, developed Ooty, built little gabled cottages called *Apple Cottage*, and *Cheerful Cottage*, turreted houses called *Woodcote Hill* and *Grasmere Lodge*. From the 1820s onwards Madras families built their summer houses, and by the 1870s the Governor of Madras and his whole secretariat moved up to Ooty for the hot weather."

Hopefully the re-naming of Ootacamund will not come in the way of elevation of the NMR to World Heritage Status site!

G.D. Patwardhan



The Season — with Willie Burke

● Almost in anticipation of the annual trek to the hills, Madras Musings received an unexpected treasure trove. Only this journal would consider three old photographs "a treasure trove", but that's by the way. Those three pictures Madras Musings received from Dharmalingam Venugopal, of the Nilgiris Documentation Centre, bear the signature of a photographer who first came to Madras in the early 1900s and who we caught up with in Madras Musings on January 1, 2003. At that time we had written – echoing Omar Khan – that few photographs of Willie Burke's or his father John's – about whom Khan had written a book – existed in India. And in response to that came these three pictures by William (Willie) Henry Burke who had studios in Madras and Ootacamund. The pictures show, from top to bottom, the rack railway of the Nilgiris (see article alongside that additionally marks the 'Hill Season'), Ootacamund c.1915 and Wellington of the same period.

A century of animal care education

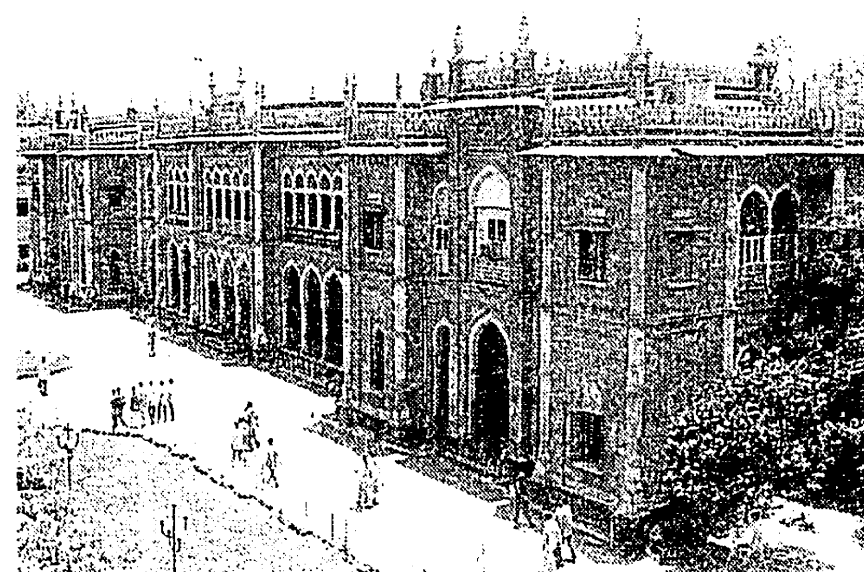
The Madras Veterinary College, one of the premier institutions of its kind in India and the first college to offer instruction leading to a degree in veterinary science, will celebrate its 100th year this year on October 1st. After modest beginnings, the College has made great strides during the past ten decades. It became the first veterinary college in the country to be affiliated to a university. Hundreds of students from India as well as from Burma, Ceylon, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaya, Iraq and the Philippines have trained at the College.

The history of the Madras Veterinary College goes back, in fact, to 1878 when the Agricultural College at Saidapet offered students a basic course in Veterinary Science, after successful completion of which they were provided hospital practice at the Saidapet Veterinary Hospital. A turning point came at a military personnel conference in Ambala in 1900 when steps were initiated to formulate a suitable curriculum of activities to be adopted by the various veterinary educational institutions in India (military personnel were then in charge of veterinary education and cattle farms). The Conference decided that all the Indian veterinary colleges – in Lahore, Bombay, Calcutta and Ajmer – would run three-year programmes. Veterinary Major W.D. Gunn, a member of the conference, was specially drawn from the Government Cattle Farm in Hissar (Haryana) and sent to Madras to set up a veterinary institution.

Gunn had started the Bengal Veterinary College and his experience there stood him in good stead while choosing a location for the Madras Veterinary College. Gunn felt that Saidapet was not a suitable place to establish a veterinary college with the necessary hospital for practice. The best place for the college, he thought, was the vacant ground in Vepery, near the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) infirmary, situated in a busy part of Madras. However, Gunn's initial representation to the Revenue Board to establish the facility at Vepery met with a firm 'No'. The Board, stating that it was unable to submit the proposals made by Gunn for the consideration of the Government, recorded in one of its resolutions, "The proposal to estab-

lish a Veterinary College in Madras (city) has already been fully discussed and negatived on grounds which still hold good."

Nevertheless, Gunn found support for his cause in the Superintendent of the Civil Veterinary Department, the Inspector-General, the Principal of the Agricultural College, and the Director of Public Instruction. They all agreed that an insufficient number of patients attended the Saidapet Hospital. On the other hand, SPCA records showed that a number of healthy horses, ponies and heads of cattle were received at its hospital for treatment. Finally, after much debate, the Revenue Board arrived at the conclusion that "the uncertainty of obtaining sufficient number of patients at Saidapet to allow of proper veterinary instruction being imparted is a fatal objection



Built by Mastomani Muddaliar on the site of Dobbins Hall and inaugurated in 1904 as the Madras Veterinary College's main building, this Indo-Saracenic building still stands in good condition.

to placing the school there... (and) would recommend that to begin with the school should be placed in Madras in the immediate neighbourhood of the building owned by the SPCA at Vepery."

The SPCA, in turn, readily agreed to place at the Government's disposal, for use by the College, all its stables, stalls, dog-kennels, shoeing forge and other buildings, except the Society's office building. There was one stipulation by the SPCA, however; that the name of the original owner of 'Dog's Home' (run by the SPCA, next to which the new hospital would be located), Raja V. Kishun Bahadur, be perpetuated in the same way in the new hospital.

And so, with 20 students on the rolls, the Madras Veterinary School, subsequently named 'College', started functioning from 1.10.1903 in a building known as *Dobbins Hall*, situated 175 yards from the SPCA and rented at Rs. 60 a month. Gunn, then Superintendent, Civil Veterinary Department, Madras, took over as part-time Principal.

During those years, veterinary

science was taught in English in the Bombay and Bengal Veterinary Colleges, while in Lahore and Ajmer, it was taught in Urdu. However, in the Madras Presidency, there were no qualified lecturers in Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese or Malayalam. So, teaching was conducted in English, "as the large majority of the educated natives of Madras understood, read and spoke English well".

The curriculum of instruction, for the first year, included Anatomy, Elementary Chemistry, Elementary Botany, Materia Medica, Handling of Animals, and Pharmacy. In the second year, students learnt Anatomy, including Comparative Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, Horseshoeing, Theoretical Veterinary Medicine and Surgery, and General Nursing. Third year students studied Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Surgery, Disease of Dogs, Operative Surgery, Therapeutics, Meat and Milk Inspections, and Soundness of Horses and other Domesticated Animals. In order to improve the standards, the Royal Commission on Agri-

culture recommended revision of the curriculum and this was done in 1930-31. A special feature of the revised syllabus was that students were made to study the comparative anatomy of the hare, a reflection perhaps of the desire to train veterinarians to help in the farming sector rather than send some of them to the Army as had been the practice earlier (the Army used horses, ponies and mules).

Although the Madras Veterinary College was the fourth veterinary institution established in India, it was the first to get affiliated to a university. The University of Madras recognised it as a constituent college in 1935 to impart instruction for the Degree of Bachelor of Veterinary Science (B.V.Sc.). Admission to the College picked up thereafter and remained steady for years. In 1958, based on the recommendations of the first Indo-American team on Agricultural Research and Education, the institution was upgraded as the Southern Regional Centre of Post-graduate Education and Research. The

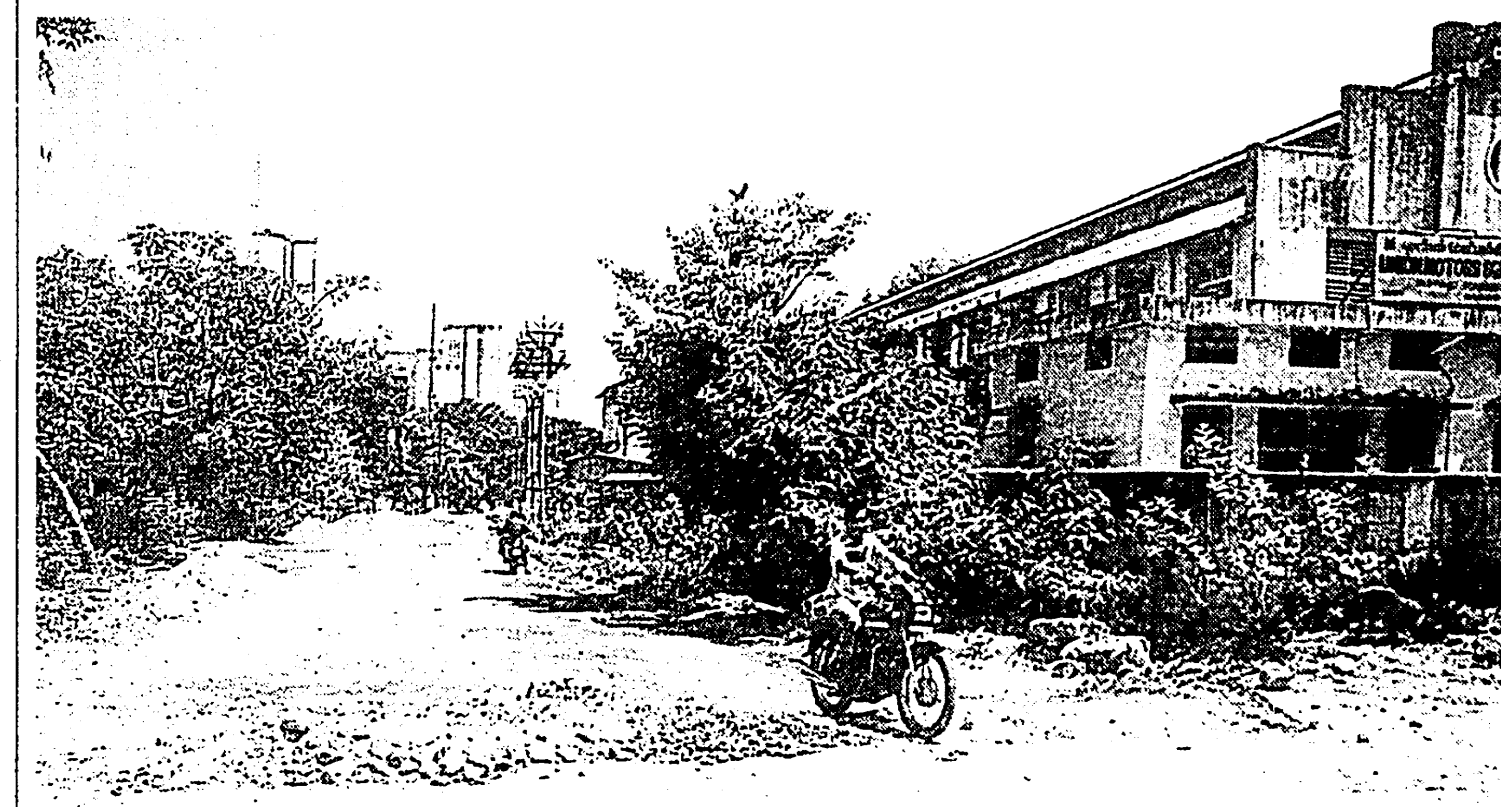
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With the Government allotting funds to upgrade the infrastructure in the two premier industrial estates in the city" that have, according to their Associations, "lost their lustre in the absence of maintenance of the infrastructure", our OLD and NEW this fortnight are the most telling images of the state of these estates, once not only pioneering ventures in India but also models copied elsewhere. Whether the funds allotted — or whether township status if ever given — will make a difference to these estates is a moot point, considering the sorry state they are in. These pictures were taken recently by R. EASWARRAJ in the Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate in Guindy, established in 1958 over 450 acres. Most of its 400 units are closed, but an occasional NEW building has come up. Alcatel's and a software company's buildings (above) contrasting sharply with the OLD, little looked after shed below. But whatever the state of the buildings, there are no worse roads in Chennai than those found in the Guindy Estate, as may be seen in the other pictures below.

THE NEW... & THE OLD

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Chennai gets coach to promote rugby



Emil Vartazarian is an Armenian from Kolkata. He is a rugby player and coach and has been brought to Chennai by the Tamil Nadu Rugby Football Union.

He will be their coach and technical director to promote the game of rugby in Chennai.

He spoke to S. Srivatsan about the sport.

Q: How were you introduced to the game of rugby?

A: I came to India from Iran when I was just ten years old. I then studied at the Armenian College at Kolkata. This school has a heritage of rugby going back 110 years. I have been playing since my school days.

Q: What is the state of rugby in India?

A: Rugby was brought to India by the British. The Calcutta Cricket and Football Club in Kolkata and the Bombay Gymkhana in Mumbai have been the traditional centres for rugby in India. Even Chennai had a long history of rugby. But the Madras Gymkhana, that was the main team, stopped playing in 1963. Rugby then died out in Chennai.

Q: When did you decide to take up playing rugby professionally?

A: Even in Kolkata, we have only amateur clubs and not professional ones.

It was only in 1998, when the Indian team was formed, that I started playing for it. So far I have represented India in seven tournaments abroad. We will be going to Sri Lanka this month for a tournament.

Q: How did you come to be associated with the Tamil Nadu Rugby Football Union?

A: This Union was formed by a group of enthusiasts who wanted to popularise the game. I have been in touch with them all along. But as they now require a person to train players and coaches, I was invited to come here.

Q: How do you plan to take this sport to the people?

A: We want to take this game to schools and colleges. Our target is to achieve six clubs and 12 school teams this year. We are already making good progress. Some neighbourhood institutions like the Patrician College and St. Patrick's School have rugby teams. We will also be training the Tamil Nadu Police. We conduct the annual national rugby sevens tournament at the Elliot's Beach.

Q: Many people think that rugby is a very rough game and only strong people play it.

A: That is a common misconception. This is a game for all sorts of people.

In fact, there are certain positions in the game where fat and slow people will be suitable and some positions where short people are required.

Q: This seems to be a male dominated sport. Are there any women teams?

A: Except for one school team in Kolkata, there are no women teams in India. But as I already said, this is a sport for all types of people and there is no problem with women playing it.

Countries like Britain, Sri Lanka and Kazakhstan have women's teams.

Q: What are the constraints that you face now?

A: We don't have good grounds to play. Rugby requires a thick grassy surface so that the players don't get hurt when they fall. Most of the playgrounds here are hard and unsuitable.

The tournament at the beach is mainly because of the lack of proper grounds. But it also fetches us a lot of publicity.

Q: How can institutions reach you if they want to form a rugby team?

A: Our association is affiliated to the Tamil Nadu Olympic Association and provides coaching for players and coaches. We do not charge teams for this coaching. (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*.)

Vartazarian can be contacted at No. 9, Arunachalam Road, Kotturpuram. Ph: 24475845, 24475846, 2447-0976.

Answers to Quiz

1. Hu Jintao; 2. David Coulthard; 3. Research and Analysis Wing; 4. Serbia; 5. Potti Sriramulu; 6. Malaysia; 7. Alberto Fujimori; 8. Brett Lee of Australia; 9. Fidel Castro; 10. Jupiter.

* * *

11. Women self help groups,

taking over from TEXCO; 12. Alagappa University (Mr. A. Ramasamy); 13. Dharmapuri; 14. Thally; 15. Advocate General; 16. The Southern Railway HQ and Central Station; 17. K.M. Mammen Mappillai of MRF; 18. St. George's School; 19. Credit-based semester system; 20. K.B. Sundarambal.

Swimmers of promise

Eight young swimmers of promise have been selected for special support under the Champions Development Scheme of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu. Three of them are featured here.



V. Arun came second in the 50m backstroke, his main swimming event, at the Hyderabad National Games. He had a string of firsts to his credit last year, notable among which were the 50m backstroke at the National Junior Aquatic Championships in Chennai and the 100m backstroke at the University Meet in Kolkata.

"I had just wanted to learn swimming, but in the space of three months I won a district championship. My dad's encouragement and coach's efforts have helped me get this far," says Arun, who practises at the Hotel Savera pool, 11 sessions a week. However, he is miffed by the attitude of his college. Assistance provided by SDATN has helped him with his swimwear and food supplements. But he wishes his college is as considerate, at least to the extent of showing understanding when he has to miss classes/exams when he participates in representative meets.



Saba Sait is a sprinter in the pool. At the National Games in Hyderabad, she set a record in the 50m breast-stroke event, timing 36.06 seconds, her personal best. The 16-year old also won a bronze in the

100m version of the event. Last year, at the Asian Age Group Swimming Championship in China, she was first in the 50m breaststroke. Sait hopes to win a medal at that championship this year too.

"The psychological workshops, which are very good, should be conducted regularly by SDATN. The nutrition workshops too. Basically, the children are on their own and coaches should also be made an active part of the CDS," points out Sait's mother.

Sait practises for a couple of hours every morning and evening at the Indu Aquatic Club. It's rock music she likes to



listen to in her spare time.

Harika Reddy has won more than 200 medals in different events in swimming. She shone particularly in the second half of 2002 when she won one gold, two silver and one bronze at the Tamil Nadu Senior Open Swimming Meet, two gold and two silver at the South Zone CBSE Meet, and one gold and one silver at the National CBSE Meet. At this year's South Zone selection trials, she won four gold, one silver and one bronze.

"My focus will now be on the 50m and 100m butterfly and the 200m individual medley," says the 13-year-old student of SBOA Matriculation School. Her father, Nagarajan, a former Andhra Pradesh hockey player, provides her the inspiration.

Sashi Nair

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