

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Planning for the Marina
- Nothing's changed in 191 years
- Tackling the worst drought
- Holiday on the Coromandel
- TN misses the Ranji bus

Vol. XIII No.3

FREE ISSUE

May 16-31, 2003



Summer camps are great to upgrade your skills... you never know what will come in handy in your old age!

Pizza, Paatti?

School uniforms, school buses, heavy school bags and lunch boxes ... all regular city sights that have now disappeared on their summer break.

Meanwhile, waves of grandparents meet waves of grandchildren, as families get together. If that puts you in a maudlin sentimental mood, conjuring up a calendar art image of a white-haired, storytelling old grandmother, checked saree *et al*, making *bakhshanam* over a kerosene stove, think again.

The *bakhshanams* are still there, the stories are there and the common enemy – namely the parents – remains unchanged. The image, however, has altered slightly, thanks to a certain brand of Chennai's Contemporary Paattis.

These feisty ladies share nail polish and go on beauty parlour dates with their granddaughters and discuss the rival merits of WWF and NWA with their grandsons. They compete for home computer time with their grandchildren, and have cute e-mail IDs. They argue whether Harry Potter is better than Lord of the Rings, and have definite opinions on Vivek Oberoi's way of 'doing' his hair.

This brand of Paatti can cook a smashing spicy *paneer* roll with the same aplomb with which she tosses up a *sepangkilangu varuval*, or create a divine dark chocolate and mint mousse with the same unruffled efficiency with which she makes her famous *badam halwa*.

And – the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Ranjitha Ashok

India's best metro to live in

— & second best city

(By A Special Correspondent)

Believe it or not, Chennai has been adjudged the country's best metro to live in, better than Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi, in that order, and the second best of 55 cities surveyed by Delhi's Indicus Analytics at the behest of *Outlook Money*. The survey placed Chandigarh as the best city to live in and Chennai was followed by Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bangalore, Bhopal, Goa (presumably Greater Panaji), Pondicherry and Ahmadabad in the first ten.

The study was based on 47 city-specific measures that were then divided into 12 broad categories. Chennai's position in these categories is, however, some cause for concern. The city's pluses compensated substantially for its negative qualities and gave it an excellent overall position, but it is worrying that it did not finish among the first five in more parameters than it did. It was a runaway leader in **healthcare**, a poor third to Coimbatore and Hyderabad in **education**, a fair fourth to Chandigarh, Bangalore and Gurgaon in **jobs and income**, a poor fifth to Chandigarh, Kolkata, Gandhinagar and Mumbai in its **finance network** and fifth again

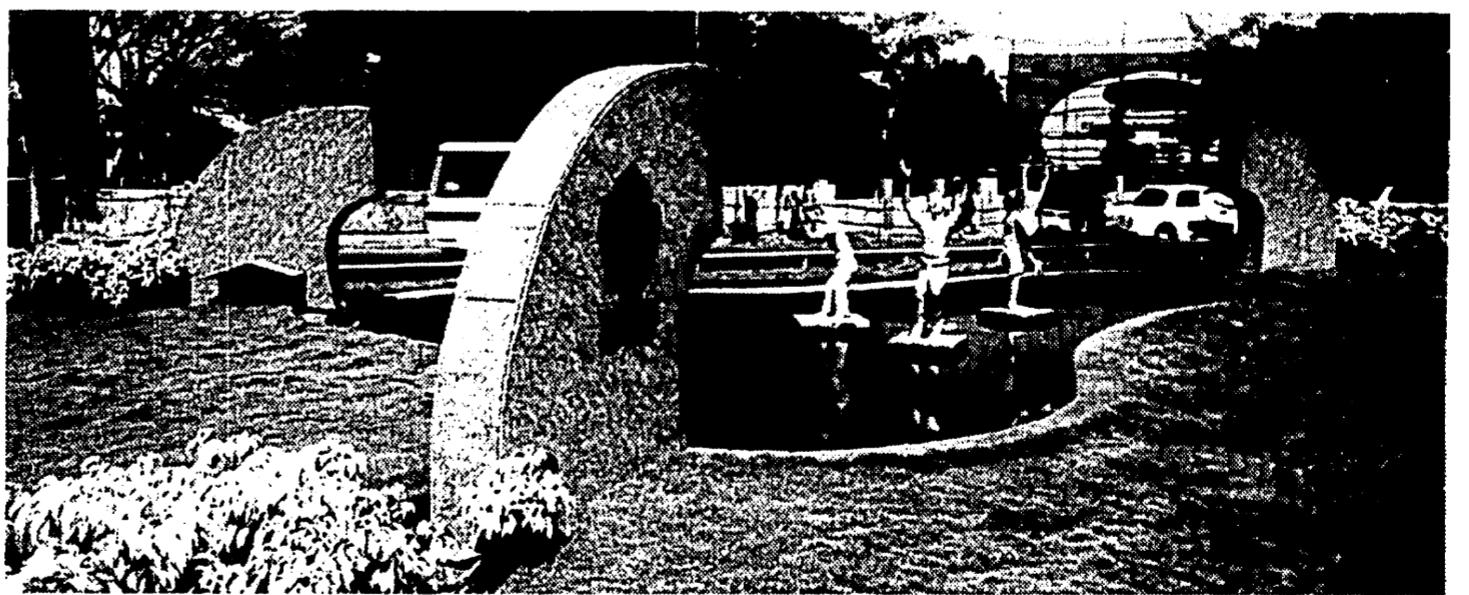
to Raipur, Thiruvananthapuram, Shimla and Kozhikode in **pollution** (or, rather, unpolluted cities).

But since the ranking was based on the number of facilities available to the city's population, Chennai has not kept pace with population growth. In the other seven categories, it was not among the first five and that rather takes the gloss off the final standing, particularly as in many of these categories Chennai would once have been a leader. From the point of view of **prices**, Puri, Cuttack, Daman & Diu, Raipur and Varanasi are the best cities to live in. Kochi, Bangalore, Ahmadabad, Kozhikode and Pondicherry are all **safer**. Surat, Faridabad, Chandigarh, Ahmadabad and Rajkot have better **transport** availability.

(Continued on Page 6)



• Are these the symbols of 'Singara' or 'Ezhilmigu' Chennai, now rated the best metro to live in in India? We hope 'mod' art and tacky sculpture – here seen at the Kathipara Junction by photographer R. ESWARRAJ – are not what are meant to attract people settling in the city. The survey reported alongside reveals that, despite the comfortable liveability of the city, there are several other areas in need of improvement. And we hope they will get greater attention than such beautification measures as seen in these pictures. At the end of the day, green and flowering roundabouts contribute more to a city than all the 'mod' art and cine-sculpture money is spent on. And such separation of the trees from the woods is necessary in every other aspect of city improvement.



Part of polluting mercury goes back to U.S.

Shipped out in a US container carrier from Tuticorin during the first week of this month were 290 tonnes of hazardous mercury waste. The waste had originated at Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL) thermometer factory in Kodaikanal which was importing mercury for its thermometers, primarily

from the US, and shipping back the finished product for sale in the West. All was well till, in 2001, environmentalists drew attention to the way scrap glass with traces of mercury on it was being disposed of by the factory.

Environment NGO Greenpeace noticed the broken glass

in a scrapyard in Kodaikanal. Eventually, more than five tonnes of glass scrap was unearthed and it was proved that the glass tubes were indeed contaminated. As mercury poisoning can cause debilitating diseases, especially affecting the brain and the kidney, HLL promised corrective measures

and closed the factory on March 8, 2001.

The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board then constituted a Hazardous Waste Monitoring Committee to investigate the matter, and HLL, which hired global environmental consultants URS to prepare a risk

(Continued on Page 6)

Drawing up plans for the Marina

It's been officially announced, that is to say, it has been Ministerially announced, that the CMDA has drawn up plans to beautify the Marina and that these plans will be implemented. *The Man From Madras Musings* is delighted to hear that the Government is committed to implementing the CMDA's Marina plan which, the last MMM saw of it, had inputs from several non-official members of a 'Save Marina' Committee that the CMDA had convened. That plan, as MMM remembers it, did not have a new Secretariat building or any other highrise on the Marina. And MMM hopes that is how it remains.

Meanwhile, MMM hears that several NGOs concerned with the coastline are themselves working on a plan for a longer stretch of the beach. The CMDA's plan is from the Coom up to the Foreshore Estate road; the NGOs' plan, MMM hears, is from the Coom estuary to at least the Tiruvanniyur beach. MMM hopes both groups will get together on ONE plan. There are, however, two points to be considered by both groups of planners.

ONE, it is necessary to identify all heritage buildings, heritage institutions, and sites of natural heritage that will not only be preserved but will also not be marred or affected in any way by developments proposed in the plan.

TWO, both plans have the usual feature of being top down: the 'we know what's best for the people' approach. There is a necessity for this urban coastal management plan or Marina management plan to be discussed more publicly with other stakeholders as well. After the opportunity for such a public discussion, for inputs from the public, the management plan is something MMM would welcome for implementation. Let's not give anyone the opportunity to dub such plans as being those of the "elitists".

On board again

That Rs. 700 crore Nanguneri Hi-tech Park that had "gone with the wind" a couple of weeks ago (see this column, last fortnight) has, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands, been brought back with a fair wind blowing. Of course, in changing times, it must necessarily be re-oriented!

The Park is now to be linked with the Tuticorin Special Economic Zone - and SEZs and AEZs - Agri Export Zones - that is the way the present Government sees industrial and export growth. TIDCO is planning another SEZ at Ennore - and that, together with the development already underway there, is likely to be a threat to the fragile ecosystem of the area, a fear that has agitated several NGOs, looking for relief

to the amended coastal regulations.

MMM hears that special legislation will be enacted to make operation in the SEZs smoother. Procedures for area limits are to be delineated, boards for quick approval on zonal development and an issues resolution committee are to be established. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board will facilitate approvals on a priority basis - MMM is just waiting to see how it reacts in the case of an Ennore SEZ, if it is set up - the promoters and Government will get together to ensure adequate power and water supply, with individual units being encouraged to set up captive power plants, units in the zone will be exempted from all local taxes and levies, including those by local bodies, and labour laws and reporting systems will be simplified to meet the requirements of all units in the zone which will be declared public utility services. No doubt, what seems very rosy now will cause concern when legislators, promoters, investors and local bodies get down to the nitty-gritty, but MMM hopes that not only will they resolve the issues but also ensure the

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

domain of the local bodies and the residents in the surrounding areas are not forfeited in favour of yet another new 'elite'.

The Hill Season

As the annual Hill Season gathers momentum and Udhagamandalam, Kodaikanal and Yercaud begin to burst at the seams, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that the Swedish Mission property in Kodaikanal - once used as a missionaries' rest home - is to be taken over by business interests who have plans for much development. The more such old properties are taken over and developed, the less of the true hill station atmosphere is likely to remain, with urbanisation inevitably ruining the Hill Season. But then no one in this State has time for such 'elitist' views; the people's will, as enshrined in their nominees, the legislators, will prevail.

Strange, how other States think differently. The Maharashtra Government recently appointed a heritage committee for the hill stations of Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani - neither anywhere near as attractive and nature-rich as Ooty and Kodai - after the Bombay Environmental Action Group filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court nine months ago and had its prayer answered by the Government.

The Heritage Committee appointed for the Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani Eco-Sensitive Zone is

headed by a retired Civil Servant, and has the Collector of Satara as Member-Secretary and a majority of members from outside government - a historian, two architects, a structural engineer and an environmentalist. This Committee will administer the heritage list and heritage regulations drawn up for the twin hill stations and their surrounding non-municipal areas. The list includes 217 man-made sites and 49 natural ones, including view points, walks, bridle paths etc. That's far more than what the proposed CMDA heritage regulations for the metropolis of Chennai had listed initially - only to have the document unceremoniously returned to it, querying the listing, it is understood.

With this action of the Maharashtra Government, Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani become the fourth and fifth places in India to receive statutory heritage protection for non-archaeological heritage sites. Bombay, Pune and Hyderabad are the first three places. Nagpur is not among them only because, after listing and passing of its heritage regulations, a Heritage Committee is yet to be appointed.

the 1970s with the founding of EPOCH (The Society for the Environment and Protection of Culture and Heritage), other cities are moving on apace to implement the aims of EPOCH which remain mere intentions in Chennai. In our neighbourhood, Pondicherry has jumped on the heritage bandwagon and will soon outstrip Tamil Nadu as a tourism destination, offering heritage, sun, sea 'n' sand, cuisine and spiritualism. If only it had an airport, it would race away from Tamil Nadu, *The Man From Madras Musings* is positive.

As things are, the Union Territory has signed an agreement with the international programme Asia Urbs and, in partnership with a French city, an Italian one and the European Union, is all set to restore its heritage, starting with the Grand Bazaar. INTACH Pondicherry and the French Institute have identified 300 buildings in the 'French Town' and a thousand in the 'Indian Town' as heritage constructions. (Compare that with Chennai's 200!) The project plans to make a start with the renovation of ten major heritage buildings in the city and 20 heritage houses on one street which will serve as a model for future street restoration.

While all this goes on not far from us, heritage remains a bad word in Chennai, a part only of the 'elitist' vocabulary.

One small step

While envying what Maharashtra and Hyderabad and Pondicherry are doing, *The Man From Madras Musings* must not forget that one small step the South Madras Bharat Scouts and Guides have taken in creating a heritage-consciousness amongst their membership. The step taken is to introduce yet another Proficiency Badge in the 6-17 age group, the Heritage and Culture Badge. For such small mercies MMM is truly thankful.

The badge will be awarded for maintaining a scrapbook on their own local environment, recording physical features, communities and festivals, fauna and flora, art, literature and music, monuments and historic buildings etc. They are also expected to visit sites of built heritage and record their findings, research background in the museum and archives, and generate a historical diary of their town.

MMM has long been advocating a year on the heritage of a student's town (its history, geography, natural environment and culture), a year on the heritage of the student's State and a year on the heritage of the neighbouring States and a year on the heritage of the rest of India be compulsorily taught in schools. That's a dream that will take some time to materialise; meanwhile, MMM is delighted with a first step towards this taken by the Scouts and Guides.

MMM

A big 'Thank You' to 193 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 8.4.03 and 7.5.03, added to the support *Madras Musings* has already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes *Madras Musings* espouses.

— CHENNAI HERITAGE

Rs. 100: Albert, S.; Amalraj, M.C.; Ambirajan, Dr. S.; Arunachalam, K.N.; Ashok, T.; Avudaiappan, P.; Babu, K.; Balakrishnan, Mahesh; Balambal, Dr. V.; Balasubramaniam, E.S.; Baskaran, B.; Behl, Prem; Brahme (Prof.) Millind; Chandramouleeswaran, Soora; Chandrasekar, M.S.; Chandrasekaran, Dr. P.K.; Cherian, Anitha; Damodaran, S.; David, E.R.C.; Derose, R.B.; Dharmaraj, S.E.; Ganesan, Rama; Ganesan, Era.; George, P.; George, Pradeepa; George, Prof. K.N.; Gnanasundaram, S. John; Gopal, Radhika; Govindarajan, M.; Gurumuthy, A.V.; Gurumuthy, K. (Srikalahasti); Jayaram, S.; Jerome, A.; Joseph, Dr. S.A.; Kalyan Raman, K.; Kalyanasundaram, T.V.; Karpathy, K.S.; Kumar, Dr. S.S.; Kuppuraj, C.S.; Laheef, S.A.; Margabandhu, Dr. C. (New Delhi); Mathivanan, S.; Mirajker, Mala; Mirajker, Rajesh; Moses, J.V. John; Murali, Banumathy; Muthukumarasamy, T.N.; Narasimhan, V.; Narayana, P. Bhat; Narayanan, R. Jaya; Narayanasamy, T.R.; Nilakantan, K.; Padmanabhan, M.; Padmanabhan, T.S.; Pandian, M.S.; Raghavan, T.S.; Raghavan, V.R.S.; Raghuraman, M.; Rajagopalan, Lakshmi; Ramachandran, S.; Ramakrishnan, Prema; Ramprasad, B.; Ravichandran, K.; Rishikesh, C.G.; Sagar, A.; Sankarajah, K.; Saradha, J.; Sashikala, C.; Sastry, K.V.; Seetharam, Prema; Selvanayagam, Francis; Selvaraj, N. Kanchi; Seshadri, Brig. (Retd.), M.N.; Shenai, K.R.; Somasekhar, T.U.; Sowmyanarayanan, S.; Srinivas, Dr. B.; Srinivasan, J.P.; Sriramachandran, M.; Subramanian, Dr. J.R.; Subramanian, K./ Satyabhama, S.; Swaminathan, Ravi; Swaminathan, Venkat; Swamy, M.R. Narayana (New Delhi); Thirunelakantam, M.; Thomoharan, B.; Thyagarajan, Agnisha; Titanium Tantalum Products Ltd.; Vaidhyananthan, B.; Vaidyanathan, M.; Valliappan, K.M.; Varalharajan, G.; Venkataraman, T.N.; Venkateswaran, Srasa; Venugopal, R.; Zachariah, Lalitha; Rs. 101: Gopalakrishnan, C.; Jayaprakash, A.; Jesudoss, Rev. Dr. D.W.; Kalish, Brinda; Sachithananthan, C.; Thyagarajan, R.; Viswanathan, S.; Rs. 102: Rajaraman, S.; Rs. 103: Ekambaram, Dr. D.V.; Rs. 104: Ratnasabapathi, M.; Rs. 105: Hanikrishnan, B.; Raghavan, V. Vijaya; Sadasivhan, K.R.S.; Santhanakrishnan, P.; Subramanian, M.; Suresh, D.; Subramanian, Capt. K. Vijaya Raghavan, V.; Rs. 108: Subramanian, K.G.; Rs. 111; Bhuvaneshwar, D.; Panchananthan, Dr. S.; Venugopal, A. Air Force (Retd.); Rs. 115: Joseph, Jimmy.; Rs. 120: Kumar, K.; Greenwood, Owen.; Rs. 123: Edwin Sundaram.; Rs. 125: Rajalakshmi, P.; Srinivasan, B.; Subramanian, D.V.; Suresh, M.V.; Rs. 131: Shankar, T.N.B.; Rs. 150: Srinivasachari, T.; Ramadoss, Dr. K.; Kamath, Vinay; Claruson, J. Allan; Sudandiramani, R.; Rs. 151: Mahesh, K.R.; Balaraman, Prof. K.; Rs. 200: Anantharaman, Lalitha; Anwarudeen, K.M.; Kuthar, Prof. D.S.; Malhotra, Vinod; Narayanan, K.A.; Padmanaban, S.; Raghavan, Nikil; Senthilvel, K.; Sethuraman, M.; Shanmugam, P.; Shenbagam, A.; Steohens, R.P.; Subramanian, Dr. N.; Subramanian, Prof. B.; Tim Murari; Vamadevan, Sunil; Viswanathan, L.S.; Rs. 250; Henry, Ranjith; Ramadoss, K.C.; Sivasankari; Srinivasamurti, T.T.; Sripathi, S.; Sushila Rajagopal; Swami Bhakti Chaitanyananda (R.S. Ramakrishna); Rs. 300: Unnikrishnan, P.; Rs. 500: Adhia, M. Ketan; Anand, K.V.; Anil Kumar, A.; Arun, S.; Balasubramanian, M.; Cre-A; Easdon, C.; Gayatri Krishnaswami Brindavan; Graham Meyer; Ismail, Sultan Ahmed; Kavitha, G.; Kuppam, V.; Palaniraj, C.R.; Rajasingh, J.S.; Sankar, N.S.; Srinivasan, D.; Vipradas, G.P.; Rs. 1000: A.L. Lakshmanan & L.Valliammai; Alexander, ps. A.X.; Elizabeth Abraham; Habibullah Badsha; Krishnan, G.; Mallika Gulvadi; Narayan, S.; Prem C. John; Sachithananthan, A.N.; Seshadri, P.S.; Trust for Restoration of Ecology & Environment; Rs. 1001; Bhasker Shah; Hiren Shah; Pattoo, Srinivasan.; Rs. 1111: Andavan G.M.; Rs. 1116: Nagendranath K.; Rs. 1200: Sumabala, Dr. P.

OUR READERS WRITE



When it was bliss

Some 40 years ago, our State had the best administration, while party cadres were kept in check and a distinction between party and Government was maintained.

In the legislature, honest dissent was never stifled, misunderstood nor penalised; yes, there was immense tolerance of criticism in the regime of that veteran popular Chief Minister of the then Madras State, K. Kamaraj (MM, April 16th).

"If I am not able to be of help to the poor, I have no use for this office," were the golden words of that political giant.

It was most touching that a member of his cabinet died leaving his family in strained circumstances despite being a Minister for several years.

As Wordsworth said, "Bliss was it to be alive in that dawn".

G. Kanakasabai
Greenlands
Lalgudi 625 101.

Not the Estate

Once upon a time, Mount Road sported a lush avenue of trees. For 6-lane traffic, all these trees were ruthlessly axed, though a promise was made at the time that new trees would be grown in place of the felled ones. But even after four decades, Mount Road does not have a single tree! Not surprising. Vandalism apart, ever-increasing emissions from vehicles will not allow any tree to grow.

Amidst this concrete jungle, Government Estate, by the heart of Mount Road, despite not being maintained properly, still has some trees and some greenery. If, as suggested in MM, April 16th, the Estate is chosen to accommodate the proposed new Secretariat building, then the only lung space on this stretch with some greenery would for ever be lost.

Already the city has lost much of its greenery in the name of development and widening of roads. More recently the new flyovers have taken their toll.

Let us strive to preserve what little is left. Either the present buildings of the Secretariat can be refurbished till such time a new one proposed on the Old Mahabali-puram Road is constructed or some other suitable plot, like 'Film City', is chosen. But not the Government Estate, please.

T.M. Sundararaman
19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore
Chennai 600 004.

Heritage hazards

Ranjitha Ashok writes in lighter vein in MM April 16th that "old buildings today are a scared lot, reduced to trembling fear, looking over their shoulders, trying to find shadowy places where they can hide".

But, seriously, the above description better fits the owners of such buildings because if the structure collapses and someone is killed or maimed, our alert police immediately remand the owner of the building, never mind he wasn't born when the building was constructed. The hapless owner will then have to cough up lakhs of rupees to secure his freedom, failing which he will have to admire the heritage structure of the jail from within.

C.G. Prasad
9, C.S. Mudali Street
Konditope
Chennai 600 079.

A simple solution

Reader Chubbyraj's letter (MM, March 16th) has one wish to share with readers, his experience that is working out very well with a little cost.

I too have a vast collection of books shelved in different rooms in my house and faced enormous problems similar to his. During the course of my reading, I came across the following information and started trying it out.

First of all, you should never allow dust to collect on the shelves. In other words, cleaning has to be undertaken at certain fixed intervals.

Secondly, keep green neem leaves, as much as you can, in all the shelves. You can even lay them and keep the books on top of the leaves. Neem has tremendous natural medicinal properties and no insect will destroy the books. The only thing that needs to be done is that when the leaves get dry, they should be replaced with fresh ones.

T.N. Rajalakshmi
"Arundodaya"
A/4 Rajaram Colony
Chennai 600 024.

Madras Veterinary College

As a B V Sc degree-holder from the University of Madras in 1952 after 4½ years of study at the Madras Veterinary College, I feel immensely proud that my great *alma mater* will celebrate its centenary this October (MM, April 1st).

Scientific programmes in Animal Health, Disease Control and Animal Production, coupled with fundamental and applied research in the various disciplines, not only boost livestock production, but also control zoonoses - diseases communicable from animals to human beings - like Rabies. Graduates from the Madras Veterinary College from its inception in 1903 have done yeoman service in the country in animal husbandry, control and eradication of epizootics, coupled with vaccine production and veterinary research.

Outside India too, especially in Southeast Asia, graduates of MVC and the four-year graduate diploma-holders - GMVC - who migrated to the Federation of Malaya prior to World War II and joined Government service there made their presence felt in many ways. Even today, deep in the estates of Malaya where the majority of the livestock are kept, people in their late 70s and 80s would still remember with respect and affection veterinarians such as Narayanan, Spykerman, Rodgers, Vaidyanathan, K.T. John and Benjamin Chelliah.

I migrated to Malaya immediately after graduation in 1952 and joined the Kedah Veterinary Department and was posted to lead a team to control and eradicate a Canine Rabies outbreak caused by migrating rabid dogs from Thailand. Having seen and dealt with a number of rabid dogs at the in-patient ward below *Robbin Hall* at MVC in my final year and attending the lectures on Veterinary Preventive Medicine by such illustrious doctors as Bertie De Souza, Ganapathy and Ranganathan, I had very little difficulty in dealing with the dangerous disease. Appreciation of my work paved the way for my being recruited to the Brit-



Save this historic tower — An appeal

My picture, taken by K. Ramachandran, is of the remains of a wave-swept lighthouse at Point Calimere (now Kodikkarai) in Nagapattinam District. (The place is so close to Sri Lanka that the island nation can be reached by a speedboat in about ten minutes.)

It is believed to have been built by the imperial Cholas in the 10th-11th Century.

All that remains is the vertical lower portion of the structure and, from it, it is difficult to ascertain the actual height of the lighthouse. The upper and middle portions of this brick-and-mortar tower must have been destroyed by the fury of wind and waves over the centuries. (The area is cyclone-prone. I have witnessed two successive storms - one on November 30, 1952 and another on November 30, 1954 - that hit this coast causing extensive damage to life and property.)

The foundation remains firm in the beach sand and the bricks appear to be joined with mortar. There must have been a winding staircase to the top, but there is no trace of it now. Its source of light must have been woodfire.

Besides its purpose to guide ships and boats, it is likely that the lighthouse also served as a lookout station during war. Both Rajaraja Chola (985 - 1016) and his son, Rajendra Chola (1012 - 1044), had mighty navies stationed at Nagapattinam.

The ruins of this historic tower need to be declared a protected monument at the earliest and action taken for its preservation.

R. Soundararajan
1/46, Sivasakti Nagar
Nagapattinam 611 003

ish Colonial Veterinary Service and posted to Sarawak and then to Brunei where I retired as Head of Veterinary Services.

C.V. Subramanian
1017/1023 Gitanjali Layout
HAL III Stage
Bangalore 560 075.

Still more on names — I

With reference to the letter "More on names" (MM April 1st), the name Bunder Street is spelt correctly. The meaning of Bunder or Bundergh is Harbour or Port. As the harbour is very near the street and the people who came by ship stayed in this street, the street was named Bunder Street.

Banddaar Street, meaning 'Street of Shops', is unlikely as, till recently, this particular street was a residential area. Shops came there only a few years ago, particularly after shifting Kothval market and Fruit Bazaar.

Syed Mohammed Ibrahim
6/175, Kalaimagal Street
Senthil Nagar
Otreri Extension
Vandalur
Chennai 600 048.

Still more on names — II

Bunder Street was actually Banddar Street. 'Bunder' is a Persian word, meaning a seaport or harbour. The merchants used to store and sell their merchandise on this street for more than 150 years. The sailors also used to stay in this street. It is certainly not a Monkey Street. It is unfortunate that many roads, streets and localities get their

names incorrectly expressed due to official apathy.

Ameenuddin
328/3, T.T.K. Road
Royapettah
Chennai 600 014.

Photograph 'em

With all the heritage buildings in Chennai facing their end one by one, it is time they were recorded, as already suggested in my letter (MM, August 1st, 2001). All the heritage buildings in Chennai should be photographed on a war-footing and the pictures exhibited conspicuously near them with detailed descriptions so that passers by will know the history of these heritage buildings.

P.S. Krishnamoorthy
34, Ramanatha Iyer Street
Gobichettipalayam
Erode District 638 452.

PLEASE NOTE

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

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

• Madras Musings does not accept letters by e-mail.

Nothing's changed in 191 years

• Dr. Thomas Trautmann, who has been researching the life of F.W. Ellis, the founder of the College of Fort St. George, recently sent *Madras Musings* this finding of his from the Madras District Records, vol. 1009A, folios 477-481, in the Tamil Nadu State Archives. Where have we heard this before?! Nothing seems to have changed in 91 years. And what does that say of us?!

* * *
Madras Cutcherry
April 1812

To
F.W. Ellis Esq.
Collector of Madras

Sir,
Being requested by the Justices in Sessions to superintend the works and duties which are carried on from the Assessment Funds, in order to correct a system of fraud in this department, which I had discovered to exist, and the repairs of the Streets in Black Town, being a principal duty which requires much attention, I, in this capacity, beg to represent to you, that the Streets in general have of late years, been so much incroached upon by the Inhabitants that upon an average they are reduced from 1/4 to 1/3 in their general breadths, from the erection of Varandahs, Horse Stables, Pandals, Hutts &c. of every description.

To such a degree are those projections carried, that Doctor White on a Personal view of them lately, declared to me, his opinion was, that they must affect the health of the town materially; and as this has evidently been a great object with the Legislature in empowering to levy an Assessment, it becomes a matter of the first consideration. Besides this, the Principal and most populous Streets, have become so narrow and contracted from these causes, that in many of them, two carriages can scarcely pass, and many accidents happen therefrom.

Having the object of health in view, I have considered that small open channels constructed in each side of the Streets for the purpose of carrying off the dirty water which is continually running from the Houses into the general Drains, of such consequence, for that water at present remains stagnate in pools before every house almost, and causes the Streets to be filled with impure air.

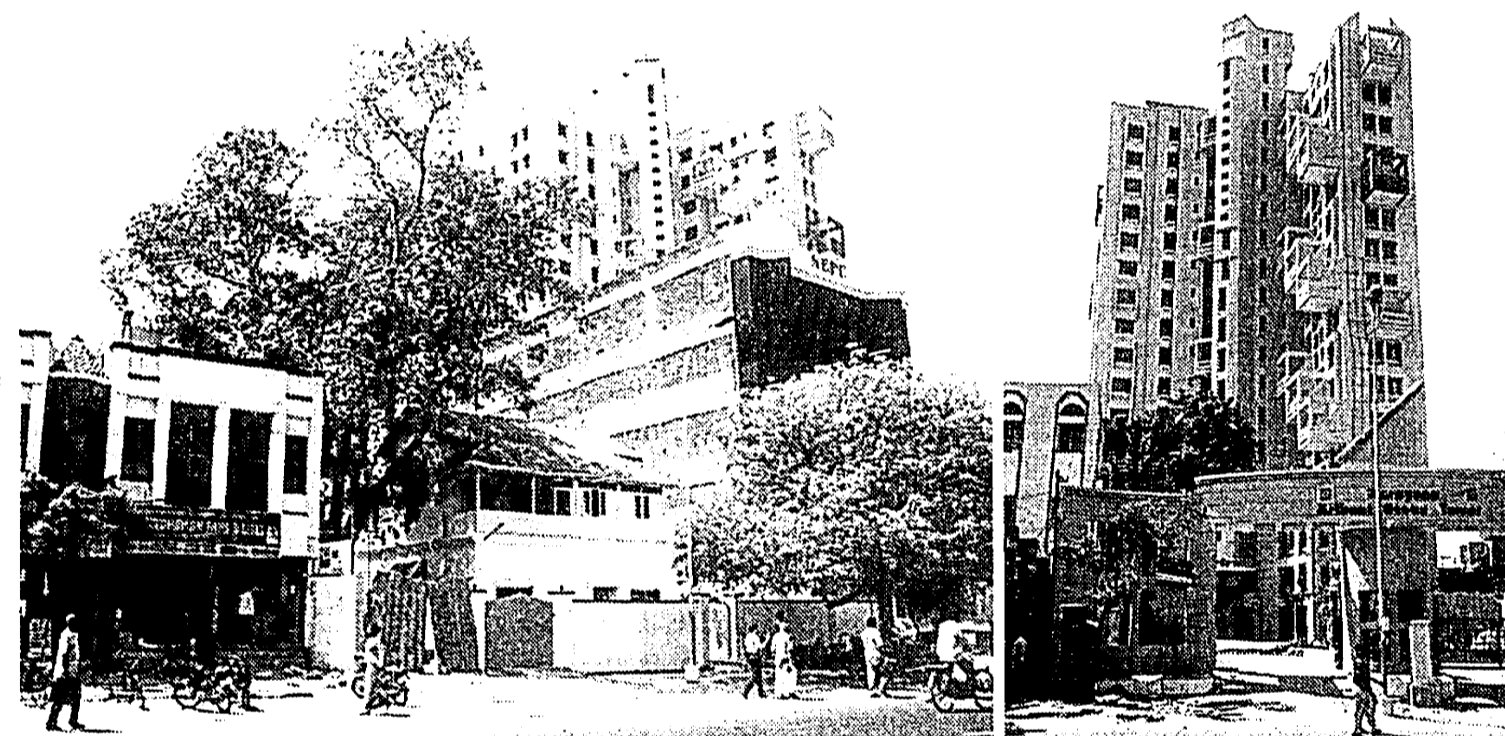
I have accordingly in two or three Native Streets, cut away upon my own responsibility, a



Our OLD and the NEW this fortnight features the changing face of Wallajah Road. Till a year or so ago, there was hardly any highrise on the Road, the variety of architecture of the late 19th Century, but mainly of the first half of the 20th Century, with later embellishments, creating a fascinating architectural mélange of commercial Madras's shop-styles. Now, the first highrise buildings have come up and it will be only a matter of time before our OLD, above, with all its variety, vanishes. Our NEW, below, is of the Arianth Towers whose size makes you wonder where there's space around the building and in the vicinity for the parking space it will need. But squeezing space from an already busy road would no doubt have NOT been thought a problem by the planners. Less likely to gobble up restricted road space is our NEW at bottom. The six-floor highrise providing housing for Police officers replaces those old Sergeants' Quarters which deserved to be preserved as heritage sites, so quaintly distinctive were they of a particular type of colonial architecture. But like many other distinctive police buildings they too have vanished at the hands of the ever-so-busy Police Housing Construction Department. It must, however, be said the department has tried valiantly to conserve some of the older Police landmarks, like Police Headquarters on the Marina, Government House (NOT Admiralty House, please) in Government Estate and the Traffic Commissioner's office on Poonamallee High Road. It would be a good idea if the department formed a conservation cell and had its engineers trained in conservation work to do a still better job on such buildings. (Photographs by R. ESWARRAJ.)

THE OLD...

...& THE NEW



number of open Pandals & c. and constructed Channels which had a great effect; but in pursuing this work have been arrested in Erraballoo Chitty Street, by several upstairs Varandahs, projecting 10 feet into the Public

Street (leaving about 14 feet only for the public) but which would be too much for me to attempt to pull down - notwithstanding they are evident incroachments.

To get these removed in a Le-

gal manner is the object of my addressing you, and I hope you will take such means as lay in your power for this purpose, for if those are but removed it will have such an effect that no

(Continued on Page 6)

How they tackled the worst drought

Madras city water supply was, and still is, a big continuing problem. Even after construction of Poondi reservoir, the supply remained unsatisfactory because Cholavaram and Red Hills lakes, which had a small catchment, received full level supply only occasionally. With the additional storage in Poondi, it was expected to tide over even two consecutive drought years without seriously affecting the city water supply. These hopes were completely belied as the annual rainfall was erratic, the population was growing rapidly - already exceeded one million - and the planned industrialisation of the city needed more and more water.

One serious drawback was, while Poondi water could be brought to Red Hills lake through Kortalayar river and the upper and lower supply channels, the only conduit which brought water from Red Hills lake to the Kilpauk Waterworks remained the same. This had a capacity of 25 million gallons and there was no means of taking advantage of the extra storage of water in Poondi. I got plans and estimates quickly prepared for laying a second conduit from Red Hills to Kilpauk with a carrying capacity of 35 million gallons. After obtaining the necessary sanctions and awarding the contracts, we started the work on the 8-mile long underground conduit. In order to ensure speedy completion we divided it into bits and invited separate tenders for each. This greatly helped us in completing the entire work in less than two years and in bringing more water for supply to the city.

Due to the Mambalam extension and various town planning and house-building schemes which came up in South Madras, water supply there was very defective, especially at the tail ends of the distribution system. I got a separate trunk main laid to South Madras from the 48" pumping main at Kilpauk at a cost of about Rs. 21 lakh. This gave considerable relief to South Madras...

In order to ensure that water supplied to the consumers was bacteriologically safe and chemically pure, the Corporation established a water analysis laboratory with expert staff. They used to take samples of water from the filter beds and from the distribution system at various points. As the necessity of analysing more samples became apparent, we extended the laboratory and strengthened the staff. The analysis brought out clearly how

the water behaved differently in different seasons and how the treatment of water had to be adapted suitably from time to time in different seasons. I was happy when the chief analyst got his doctorate from the London University for his thesis on the Madras water.

Apart from the trunk mains and sub mains, there were 350 miles of distributaries and street main varying in size from 8" to 4". If the consumers' needs were to be fully met, these had to be replaced by larger size distributaries and street mains. This work of replacement was taken up division by division under an approved plan and was executed speedily despite difficulty in receiving supply of pipes in time and in adequate quantities.

I was unfortunate in one respect. I had to face in 1952 the worst drought year in the history of Madras. Poondi and Cholavaram almost went dry even by February. There was very little water in Red Hills lake. The city supply was cut down from 35 million gallons to just 10 million. Most of the wells in the city dried up. The situation was alarming. The Council discussed the problem at length and authorised me to take whatever steps I wanted in order to tide over the situation

C. Narasimham, IAS

(Personal Assistant to the Commissioner, Corporation of Madras, 1943-1947, then Commissioner 1947-1953)
(From: *Me and My Times* by C. Narasimham. 1986.)

and to spend as much money as was considered necessary by me on this account. I consulted my officers, knowledgeable persons, and took the following steps.

i) There were only pools of water in Red Hills lake. Through proper channels cut in the bed of the lake, all the water was brought to the intake tower and collected there. Whatever little water was there in Poondi and Cholavaram, that also was brought to Red Hills lake. In order to reduce the seepage during its passage through the high and low level channels before reaching Red Hills, we cut a straight narrow channel in these water courses and laid over the whole length of the newly cut channel tarpaulins supplied by the military at my request. We saved every drop of water and brought it to Red Hills.

ii) Red Hills lake was never given for fishing. The shallow waters in the lake could not contain the enormous num-

bers of big fish and they were dying in large numbers. The inhabitants of all the nearby villages were getting into the lake, stirring up the water for catching fish and making it muddy. Police were posted to prevent people from entering the lake.

iii) M.S. Sivaraman, I.C.S., Director of Agriculture, was known to be an expert water diviner. He and I walked along the conduit with our officers and he located some spots for digging big wells. I made urgent arrangements to dig the wells. Excepting one or two, they all proved successful, thanks to Sivaraman. I got pumpsets installed at all these wells, electrified them by extending the electric main along the conduit and had the water pumped into the conduit itself. These wells yielded substantial quantity of water, which was so badly needed.

iv) On the advice of experts that shallow wells on the Marina would yield drinkable water, I had six huge wells dug up to a depth of nine feet only. On testing we found the water good and had it pumped into the nearest main feeding Triplicane.

v) The old Seven Wells which

were the earliest source of supply to the city and were abandoned decades ago were renovated and put into use after thorough treatment. They were of great help at that time of severe scarcity.

vi) A quick survey was made of all existing private wells in the city and whichever were found to yield substantial supplies were taken over by the Corporation with the consent of their owners and overhead tanks and pumpsets installed at each of those wells. They served quite well the needs of people living in the localities.

vii) Those who owned small private wells were requested to draw their requirements from them and spare some water to their neighbours. They were very cooperative. The Corporation got all such wells renovated at its cost and arranged for their regular supervision and proper chlorination. With all these measures we carried on till May 52, and main-

Self-help this summer

With the summer on us, a severe scarcity of water will soon be felt. The State Government is trying to bring Krishna water. The Veeramam project is also in the offing. But we should not depend upon Government for everything. Don't people have a responsibility too? What and where are the local resources? What can the Government, bureaucrats and engineers do when the resources are below the minimum?

It is said that during the World War II, when Britain was running short of sugar for the use of defence personnel in the war front, on a single call by the government, people stood in queue, to return their sugar ration quota, foregoing their need for the sake of the defence forces.

It is already too late to think about what to do for water this summer. But we can think about some things the citizens can do for their part.

1. The rich with small families living in palatial mansions and having better water facilities can come forward to give water to NGOs in the area for distribution to the needy.
2. Discourage people coming from other parts of the state/country on a visit to the city for excursion or to spend holidays.
3. Celebrate family functions in native places/villages or postpone them beyond July.
4. City dwellers may go to their native villages to be with their kith and kin during the summer holidays.
5. Attend to the repairs of taps to avoid wastage or leakage of water when the taps are kept closed.
6. Use Metrowater supply for drinking and cooking only, even in low-lying areas where more than the minimum quantity of water comes in the taps.
7. Some villagers in the adjoining districts are willing to give sweetwater from their wells. Government and Metrowater alone should tap these sources and distribute the water in the city and NOT permit individuals to bring it for business.

8. MOST IMPORTANT. All print and electronic media should continuously educate the people from now NOT to waste even a drop of water but save it.

9. About a lakh of people come daily to the city to work in offices and for business, by suburban trains, from the peripheries where water is available. They may bring drinking water in 'Jhola' jugs for their own use in offices and save the available city water.

10. Water should not be poured on the ground or on floor in houses; cleaning with wet cloth is enough.

11. Fresh water should not be used for plants; water after washing clothes and vessels may be used.

12. Any other suggestion to be respected.

Chennai is blessed with the sea close to it. As a permanent solution, if desalination, though costly, is done, the problem of drinking water in the city can be overcome, at least from next year. Funds will be the question. We need NOT go for loan from WB or ADB or IDA. Millionaires in Chennai, cine artists, businessmen, flat owners, marriage hall owners, corporate houses, industrialists, hospitals, food promoters, hoteliers, lodge owners, various goods manufacturers, nationalised banks, IDBI, LIC and users of large quantities of water can finance the project on charity/loan basis. Has not a small nation, Israel, done it? Industrialists can discuss, plan and execute it in the private sector with the permission of the Government and charge a reasonable rate to be paid by appropriate people. And let all of us pray for a good summer rain.

God helps those who help themselves.
Success comes to those who dare and act;
It never goes to the timid and lazy.

K. Sundararaman

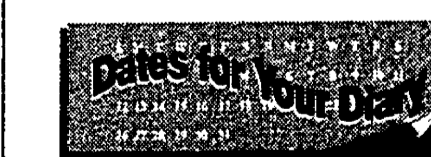
5, K.V. Apartments, 101, G.S.T. Road
Chromepet, Chennai 600 044.

tained some sort of supply which was wholly inadequate to the needs of a big city but the people who knew the situation bore all the difficulties with patience and extended their help in every way possible. As no rains could be expected for another three to four months and Red Hills had almost dried up, the Corporation and the citizens turned to God, the only unfailing source of help in need. The mayor and councillors appealed to the people to conduct prayers in temples, mosques and churches. The mayor himself led a huge prayer meeting on the Island Grounds. A miracle happened! The Almighty heard their prayers and mine too and, so, on May 21, 1952, there was an unbelievable torrential downpour, which filled Cholavaram and Red Hills lakes! 21 inches of rain in mid-summer was nothing short of a great miracle. Tennyson was correct; he believed that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of".

I cannot close these paragraphs on city water supply without expressing my unhappiness over the leisurely and somewhat callous manner in which the Corporation and the Government dealt with this very important problem of water supply to the fast-growing city. The Government's approach to this urgent problem was negative. For half a century and more, they considered various schemes, never came to grips with the problem and shelved scheme after scheme.

I am happy that Krishna waters would flow into the city through the Telugu Ganga project in a few years from now and help the industrial growth of the great city apart from satisfying the domestic needs of an expected population of five million. I may add here a personal note. I myself conceived of a scheme for supply of Krishna water to the city. I thought that as the Buckingham Canal connected the Krishna river with Madras, it

should be possible to take advantage of the existing channel and bring Krishna water to Madras. I suggested to the Corporation council to sanction a special division for preliminary investigation. O.T. Raghavan, Senior Executive Engineer, Corporation Water Supply Department, headed the new division and produced a feasibility scheme for widening and deepening the Buckingham Canal, diverting it at two places, Mypad and Ennore, where it entered the shallow waters of the sea and pumping at one or two places on the way. The Council supported the scheme and forwarded it to Government, but the latter never cared to do anything about it, apparently because the Government engineers were cold and unenthusiastic about it. Result: Instead of spending less than Rs. 10 crore then, they are shelling out now about Rs. 400 crore or more and, worse, the city has been forced to suffer for four more decades.



From May 18: Lalit Kala Akademi and the Tamil Nadu Archives present a photography exhibition in connection with the birth centenary of JP Narayan. (At Lalit Kala Akademi.)
May 22: Painting Exhibition by Prithi. (At Art World.)
May 23-28: Workshop: You can

learn jugglery with Gauthier Ruyant who will share his secrets and techniques. Contact Alliance Francaise for registration and information. Call 28279803.

May 23: In the Travelogue series, Doctor Shantha, founder of the Cancer Foundation, Chennai. (At 6.00 p.m., Alliance Francaise.)
May 25: Workshop on puppets and masks, games, song and dance, traditional style. (At Dakshina-Chitra.)
May 31: Les Acrostiches Personnel-

lement Votre features three acrobats, exuberant, hilarious, well-endowed, delicate, rudimentary, archaic, burlesque and stupid. Since 1994. Jean-Philippe Cochey-Cahuzac, Philippe Copin and Michel Navarro, all three teachers of acrobatics and jugglery, have with Christian Coumin, formed Les Acrostiches. This show has been performed more than 450 times the world over. (At 7.00p.m., Music Academy. Passes available at Alliance Francaise.)

Holiday on the Coromandel

This summer, how about exploring the heritage of the English, the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch? Instead of booking yourself on the Royal Caribbean...

You can do the heritage holiday in parts, or you can do it all in one go.

For those of you who haven't even planned a long summer holiday as yet, there is one to be taken every weekend, and these destinations are not far from your neighbourhood.

A holiday need not necessarily mean a week in Kotagiri in the blue-hills or a drive through God's Own Country.

It can be fun discovering an old bungalow set inside a whispering grove on the east coast off Kovalam. Rent it for three days and just laze around. There are many places close to this city you can head to, and take in, over two or three days.

Had I been in the tourism business I would have charted a few holiday packages that city slickers would find handy.

Take the East Coast Road, for example.

Any creative travel agency can come up with a fabulous weekend holiday package that is fun, attractive and interesting.

A weekend at a home off the backwaters of Muttukadu is one destination. The first morning for boating and reading a book, the evening for dream fishing. Day two: the morning for discovering the town of Kelambakkam and its salt pans expanse. The evening set aside for a drive into Kovalam - the church, the *dargah* shrine and the *kuppam*. That done, you may want to stop for dinner at a highway *dhaba*.

Just rid yourself of the nagging thought that you are still so close to your city and, hence, how can this ever be a holiday?

Holiday is a state of mind, you see. That is why you can even enjoy a holiday while reading a travel magazine or a travel book.

A weekend at Mahabalipuram is another choice. Don't opt for the beaten itinerary. Spend a morning with the traditional stone sculptors of the region. Set off for a beach walk in the evening. Spend the next morning, discovering a rural *agraharam* off the road to Thirukazhikuram, and climb the stony expanse of Mahabs in the evening, till you feel hungry and head to a good restaurant for some great seafood.

Reserve a day to discover Sadras, which is Kalpakkam's neighbour, and lies off the East Coast Road. A Dutch fort and trading settlement once, today archaeologists are discovering many things Dutch. Just the place for those who like a hit of history and heritage.

I can go on and on with cool suggestions for a three day holiday, but I might just be writing the manuscript for a tourist guide!

And why not?

Outlook Traveller magazine's books on 52-weekend destinations out of Delhi and Bombay are said to be selling very well.

That is because people of those cities are discovering little places, not far from the metro, which make for a nice holiday.

Recently, my weekend was spent in Thiruvananthapuram. Surprised by the early pre-monsoon showers and relaxed by the *Mohiniattam* and the *Kathakali* shows.

Now, I hope to stop at the far end of the East Coast Road, near Marakkanam. There is an old fort to be discovered, and boating on the backwaters.

It will be hot. But at the end of that highway, restaurateur Vincent Mathias always has a stock of chilled beer in Pondicherry. (Courtesy: *Adyar Times*.)

Vincent D'souza

Polluting mercury goes back

(Continued from Page 1)

assessment, reported on June 28, 2002 that the "unaccounted loss" of mercury from its factory was 2,031 kg. The TNPCB ordered it to ship the waste out of India. The company packed 290 tonnes of mercury waste for shipment to Bethlehem Apparatus in Pennsylvania, US, the world's largest recycler of mercury. The 1999 Basel Convention allows such waste to be shipped back from a country that is unable to manage it. As for the plant and machinery, they will be decontaminated and disposed of as scrap as per protocol.

Environmentalists, however, feel "large quantities of mercury have been pushed into the environment". HLL's studies estimate that 1,353 kg of mercury has gone into a valley behind the factory premises and 290 kg is present in the nearly 7,500 tonnes of soil within the factory premises. This soil may well be brought to the plains and landfilled at hazardous waste disposal sites after permission from the TNPCB, the NGO fears.

However, the debate continues over the level of the mercury in the soil outside the factory, the means to clean it up, as well as the possible poisoning that former employees have suffered. According to the ex-employees' association, at least 10 workers have died in the past 18 years, but HLL does not accept this figure. (Based on a report by **Arun Ram** in *India Today*. *Madras Musings* carried a report on the threat the factory was posing in Kodaikanal in its issue of July 1st, 2001.)

Cuddalore's beach heritage

Marina beach is now the focus of much attention, activity and cleaning-up. I don't know about it being the second largest beach in the world, but there are other long stretches of beach on the Coromandel Coast. One such beach which I explored in the early 1970s was the Cuddalore beach. The town Cuddalore itself takes its name from its proximity to the sea (*cudal*-sea, *oor*-town).

The Cuddalore beach stretches from the fishing village of Devanaampattinam to the piers of the port of Cuddalore New Town. When I used to walk on its shores in 1973, the sand was soft, and rose in gentle waves of sand-dunes. I could see puff-balls of a thorny littoral plant blowing in the wind. There were in the tidal zone many delicate shells, with their mollusc inhabitants still living.

In the monsoon season, migrant sea-birds like the River Tern, the Skua and the Brown-headed sea-gull would be seen flying just a few metres above the sea-level. Once, I even spotted a huge black sea-bird - probably a vagrant -

which I could not identify. Later, I guessed it was a Jaeger, but how very far from its home in the Antarctic!

A variety of marine life thrived in the estuary of the Coleroon (*Kollidam*, in Tamil): long, slippery eels, Tilapia fish, snails, and even sea-snakes. Though I dreamed of stepping into the lagoon to swim, I could never gather enough courage to actually do so, seeing the snakes and electric eels.

There was a Danish church adjoining the lagoon, partially in ruins. From the broken walls grew a large banyan tree, jutting picturesquely in mid-air over the lagoon. I could see the huge White-bellied Fishing Sea Eagle regularly roost there, in intervals between its hunting flights. This was a solitary bird, one-and-a-half times the size of the pariah kite, with a jet black back and a pure-white belly. Obviously, the lagoon must have been rich in fish life, to attract such a large bird to the area. Its direct, vertical dive into the water, to emerge with a silvery fish in its claws, was a visual treat, like watching Discovery Channel in real life (fortu-

nately, television had not come then!).

Every Sunday, the Cuddalore Police Band would play near the beach, seated on a small platform by the lagoon. The quiet tune, *Vasanth Kaala Alaigalile*, a popular Tamil song, sounded sweet in the calm evening. In fact, I was one among a 'crowd' of about 10 people in the audience - the beach was so free of human visitors in the early 1970s.

What is the status of the Cuddalore beach in the New Millennium? I last visited it in 1997. The ONGC had started drilling for oil offshore in the late '90s and, so, there were definitely chances of oil spillage and pollution.

Cuddalore town, a district headquarters, is now a commercial centre, its population density is high, and so there would be many more visitors to the beach. No longer can you hope to find the virgin marine ecology and fishermen's villages surviving - given the winds of change. Yet, my memory of this lovely beach and my discovery of Nature in my tenth year will live on. **K. Karunanidhi**

INDIA'S BEST METRO TO LIVE IN

(Continued from page 1)

ity. And Gandhinagar, Hyderabad, Vadodara, Thane and Chandigarh lead in housing. Darjeeling, Goa, Shimla, Kolkata and Thane offer greater scope for entertainment. Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Hyderabad, Delhi and Bhopal are better markets from the point of view of consumption. And the best weather is offered

by Mysore, Shillong, Bangalore, Guwahati and Dehra Dun.

What is even more worrying is the fact that though Chennai has surprised the pack, three of the worst five cities are Vellore, Tiruchirappalli and Madurai. The other two are Allahabad and Kanpur. Vellore, the worst city on the list, is worst on prices, consumption and transport.

The methodology used in

the survey could be questioned. But, as a broad indicator, the survey does reveal that it is time Tamil Nadu began to pay attention to its other urban areas and even the two better areas, Chennai and Coimbatore, could do with much improvement, particularly in areas that were once the State's strength, like safety, transport, prices and consumption.

ECR extension in a few months

The Rs. 2118 crore Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project (TNRSP), focussed essentially along the east coast for 732 km, is to be taken up shortly, it was stated in the Assembly recently.

The stretch from Nagapattinam to Tuticorin will be developed under the project.

A Staff Reporter

Nothing's changed in 191 years

(Continued from Page 4)

future obstruction of the bill will create any question, or cause any delay.

I beg, in the event of your not considering yourself authorized to order those projections to be pulled down, that you will have the goodness to represent the Subject to Government, and if considered requisite I shall lay the subject before the ensuing Grand Jury.

The only objection which has struck me, is the length of time those Varandahs have been built, and if this should turn out an insurmountable one, nothing less than an Act of Parliament will be sufficient; but Government could easily obtain this I presume, for as the health and cleanliness of the Town is the express object, which the Legislature had in view in granting an Assessment, if this object cannot be effected, from obstacles which that Legislature only can remove, an appeal to it I should suppose would soon attain the object.

And until this object is effected I can with safety assert, that it will be impossible to keep the Town healthy and clean. But if those projections and incroachments into the Public Streets are removed, and the Plans which I have adopted of repairing the streets and constructing open Channels, are carried into full effect, I will pledge my responsibility, that in a very few years the health, appearance and face of this large and Populous (but I am sorry to say hitherto totally neglected) Town, will have a different effect and appearance.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,
Your most obedient Servant
L.H. Greig

P.S. I beg to enclose a Plan of Erraballoo Chitty Street showing the projections painted.

L.H.G

• Quizmaster RAMANAN is on holiday. His column will resume on his return.

Tamil Nadu miss Ranji bus

It is a sorry indication of the importance attached by both the public and the administration to Indian domestic cricket that the Ranji Trophy final is played in May inside a sweltering inferno of a stadium in front of a handful of spectators. Worse, the cricket on view rarely transcends the pedestrian, batsman after timid batsman paying respect disproportionate to the bowling quality on offer, until a couple of Mumbai batsmen decide to dig deep into their collective memory and produce a fight-back of the kind the Gavaskars and Mankads or Patils and Parkars regularly staged decades ago.

Tamil Nadu flattered, only to deceive. They bowled Mumbai out for 260, with a great deal of cooperation from the batsmen, but their batsmen, after promising a substantial lead, managed only a meagre one, largely through what seemed to be an overcautious approach to batting. It was good to see Sadagopan Ramesh back among the runs, and he must have reminded the national selectors with his solid batting in the semifinal and final matches that he should be back in the reckoning in their scheme of things, but he—and the other batsmen—failed to take Tamil Nadu to an unbeatable position.

In the second innings, the Tamil Nadu attack was cruelly exposed, and so was the folly of going into the match in May heat with one specialist spinner in off break bowler Dandapani, a game trier, no doubt, but not the most penetrative of bowlers. (Ganesh Kumar, another off spinner who seemed some years ago to be developing into a fair bowler-allrounder, now plays for Assam.) You have to go back a long way in the history of Tamil Nadu cricket to find a playing eleven so bereft of bowling options, especially of the slow variety, as the one that played the recent final. There was S. Sriram, the left arm spin-

ner, a promising talent of the Eighties, but now known for his batting rather than his slow bowling. Unfortunately, Sriram and Sharath, the most prolific Tamil Nadu batsmen, both failed in the final.

Lakshmiopathy Balaji, the medium pacer who has impressed one and all with his exploits over the last couple of seasons, had some excellent matches, his explosive bowling against Delhi in the semifinal crowning a magnificent season. Even in the final, he was accurate as ever, but the conditions were hardly conducive to seam bowling. The other Tamil Nadu medium pacers Gokulakrishnan and Shrinivas struck some telling blows in the match but the

• by V. Ramnarayan

Mumbai recovery in the second innings was too good for them.

The selectors, who changed the playing eleven with unusual frequency throughout the season, did have an unenviable task in picking the right combination for Tamil Nadu, faced as they were with the problems of plenty in some departments and poverty in others and having to strike the right balance under varying conditions through the season. The competition for batting spots in the squad is so intense that some of our best talent is forced to migrate to other states and some quality batsmen are left out of the playing eleven. The talented Hemanth Kumar played for Kerala this season, his prolific scoring for Tamil Nadu in the recent past notwithstanding. Badrinath and Madanagopal sat on the reserve benches most of the time. Badrinath showed in the final what a sound player he is by playing a crucial role in his first innings partnership with Ramesh, but it is a mystery why another young batsman, Vasanth Saravanan — who played two vital knocks in the semifinal—had to make way for him. Young left hander Vaidyut

Sivaramakrishnan missed a couple of matches through injury but was dropped for a couple more, including the final, in which he might have played a useful role with bat or ball.

There is no shame in losing in the Ranji Trophy final, that too to experienced Mumbai which had bowlers of the calibre of Agarkar and Bahutule, on their home ground, but fans were disappointed that the contest became one-sided after Tamil Nadu took the first innings lead and maintained a grip on it for three-quarters of the way. Missing was the fight one expected from one of the most talented sides in the country.

The Tamil Nadu skipper, S. Suresh, a controversial choice in the opinion of critics who felt the captaincy should have gone to Hemang Badani or S. Sharath, managed to earn respect with his low key, quiet style of leadership, coming good with bat and ball in the final rounds of the tournament. In the next season, though, he will have to make more consistently sizeable contributions to justify keeping a quality batsman out.

It is imperative for Tamil Nadu to unearth bowlers who can win matches. The batting is not as much of a worry and its overall quality should be adequately enhanced by the introduction of three-day matches in the first division of the local league next season. With Balaji, Shrinivas and Gokulakrishnan leading a pack of aggressive medium pacers, that department of bowling is less of a problem than the slow variety. The latter department will continue to be a source of worry unless the State develops a stable pair of spinners who can bowl long spells effectively in conditions favouring batsmen. Unless sporting, quickish wickets become the norm in Indian cricket, the spinners will continue to call the shots in domestic cricket. It is up to the selectors and captains to place their faith in two or three spinners and enable them to blossom by giving them every encouragement.

All in all, the Tamil Nadu boys raised hopes at least for a brief while that all the investment the State's companies have been making in the sport was beginning to pay dividends. If they and the administration identify and sincerely address the problem areas of our cricket, there is no reason why the team cannot reach the final again next year and actually win the title.

They aim to rule the waves

We today present four whose aim is to rule the waves, either sailing or rowing. The four young water sports-persons are benefiting considerably from support given under the Champions Development Scheme of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu. They are:

Sandeep Srikanth has found joining the CDS a great experience. "I was inducted at a crucial time, in the Asian Games year (2002)," — and Sri-

kanth came second in the Aisan Pacific Championships, in Thailand that year.

"SDATN's funding enabled me to purchase much-needed equipment, which ensured that I qualified to represent the country. I was also able to raise my standards considerably. In fact, the kind of support SDATN provides is normally not given in India," he says. Srikanth feels that the programme is an excellent initiative that should be continued in the long-term with the objective of winning medals at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Niloufer Jamal was beset by a series of illnesses between March and September 2002 — she had an appendix operation followed by

toe surgery, then typhoid, a relapse and, finally, a gall bladder surgery. However, the 16-year-old sailing champion is raring to get back to the training circuit now that her Class 12 Board Exams are over.

Jamal and Rohin Rau form the strongest Chennai pair in yachting. They were the youngest competitors at the 2001 Nationals in the 420 Saiboat Category, in which they came first. Jamal was only five years old when she began sailing. She represented India in the Optimist Class at the Asian Games in Bangkok in 1998 and at the Irish Open Championships the next year. In 2000, she took part in the World Championships in Spain. Next, it was the UK Open in Plymouth and the Asian Sailing Championships in Singapore and South Korea. The Good Shepherd

Convent student relaxes by playing the base guitar.

Rohini Rau started sailing at the age of 12. Although she was selected for the Asian Optimist Sailing Championships in Singapore in 2001, she could not represent the country because she was underage. Rau represented Tamil Nadu in the 4.7 Laser Open Class Category at the National Games and came fourth — the first three places went to men from the Services.

After an enforced rest, nursing a fractured leg, Rau is keenly awaiting the selection trials in the 420 Class for the Asian Championships in May. The assistant school captain of Chettinadu Vidyashram, she writes poetry, plays the piano and the violin, dances and sings. She has sung the title song in the yet to be released Tamil film, *Three Roses*.

Romith Rao has had a rich haul of gold in the D. Sculls and Coxed Fours categories at the

National Sub-Junior Rowing Championships in 2001 and 2002. At the latest Amateur Rowing Association

of the East Championship, which was in Chennai, Rao stood first in his category in this international competition. He plans to row in the Open Nationals next year.

Romith's father, Ravindranath Rao, is an oarsman himself who gets the Merchants & Bankers Tournament going every year.

"Rowing equipment is very expensive and SDATN has helped me immensely by getting me the kit. Usually, the Services get the better chunk of support, but now the CDS will make a difference to sportsmen like me," says Rao. Rao practises with his coach, James Joseph, an experienced oarsman, at the Madras Boat Club. "I have been able to manage studies and sport so far. But next year when I will be in Class 12, it will definitely be a grind and I will have to choose my events carefully," he adds.

Sashi Nair

Back into history

A memorable ride

It's that time of the year once again to take that 'toy train', the Nilgiris Mountain Railway (NMR), from Mettupalayam in the foothills of the Nilgiris to the 'Queen of Hill Stations', Ooty, traversing a 45.88 km climb in around five hours.

The NMR negotiates 208 challenging curves, penetrates 16 long and eerie tunnels and crosses 250 bridges over deep ravines and gushing mountain streams, its snail's pace allowing travellers to marvel at the scenic beauty they pass through.

The more marvellous feature of this 104 year old railway that brings people up to the junction of the Eastern and the Western Ghats, at a height of 7,500 feet, has motivated the Ministry of Railways to seek world heritage status for it from UNESCO. The NMR has the distinction of having the only rack and pinion system of rail operation in all Asia. The system prevents the 'toy train' from slipping down while moving up against the downward pull of the gravitational force. A railman in each of the wagons and coaches of the NMR independently operates hand brakes and rack brakes, following the whistle codes of the driver of the train. The NMR is comparable to the Alps Mountain Railway system in Switzerland.

The first stop after Mettupalayam is Kallar, from where the mountains start. From Kallar, the plains give way to dry deciduous forests, the broad-leaved trees, the mark of this region upto near Ketty. It is at about 5,900 ft that the transi-

tion imperceptibly occurs to moist evergreen forests.

As the train approaches Ketty, tea plantations with their soothing green cover appear beneath the blue haze formed by the mist. It was in Ketty that John Sullivan, the then District Collector of Coimbatore, is said to have experimented with tea from 1835 to 1840.

Half-an-hour later, the famous shola system of forests, a combination of shrubs and herbs and low-lying plants along with taller trees, begins. It is a cool, dark temperate zone, between 5,900 ft and 6,000 ft. Coonoor is its major town. Near Coonoor are the Defence Services Staff College and the Madras Regimental Centre,

• by M. Jaya Singh

Wellington. The final destination of the train, Ooty, is the next stop.

Ups and downs are not confined to the tracks alone for this train. Its history goes back to 1854 when various technological proposals were made. Some of them fell through for technical reasons while those of technical excellence failed to enthuse on economic grounds. In 1862, the Madras Railway Company opened a rail link from Madras to Beypore, now Calicut, via Coimbatore. The proximity of Coimbatore to the Nilgiris made a rail link to the hills a more attractive proposition. Completion of the laying of a rail link between Podanur near Coimbatore and Mettupalayam gave further momentum for the planners to moot the

proposal for the rail project to the hill top. N. Riggensch, the inventor of the famous Rigi system of mountain railways, came forward with a proposal to use a rack rail system. The estimated cost was £132,000. This again got rejected for economic reasons. But the determined Riggensch came to the Nilgiris in person and formed a local company to translate his vision of laying a line into a reality, but eventually he ran out of steam and gave up.

It was in 1885 that an entrepreneur called Richard Wooley established The Nilgiri Railway Company (NRC) with an investment of Rs. 25 lakh. After the signing of a contract between the nascent company and the Secretary of State for India in 1886, the first sod of the line was cut in August 1891 by Lord Wenlock, the then Governor of Madras Presidency. The company encountered many hurdles in carrying out the difficult task of laying the rail line on the rugged and forbidding terrain and, sadly, went into liquidation in 1894 when the task was half completed.

In February 1886, another company purchased the interests of the Nilgiri Railway Company and began the work. The Sappers and Miners of the Madras Army lent a helping hand in the earthwork for the construction of the line. Finally, the green flag was waved for public utilisation of the NMR from Mettupalayam to Coonoor on June 15, 1899, by the Madras Railway Company. From Coonoor, the line was extended to Ooty by 1908. — (Press Information Bureau, GoI.)

Recommended Trees - 7

TREES SUITABLE FOR PARKS & INSTITUTIONS

(Very showy, shade providing and of immense botanical value)

Medium Trees

- Cassia fistula (Indian Laburnum)
- Butea monosperma (Flame of the Forest)
- Jacaranda mimosifolia (Jacaranda)
- Roystonea regia (Royal Palm)
- Araucaria excelsa (Christmas Tree)
- Adenanthe paronia (Bead Tree)
- Guaicum officinale (West Indian tree of life)
- Guettarda speciosa (Panneer)
- Clusea rosea
- Cassia nodosa (Pink cassia)
- Ptergota alata (Buddha's coconut)
- Santalum album (Sandalwood)
- Pterocarpus Santalinus (Red Sanders)

Small Trees

- Ardesia crenata (Spice Berry)
- Bambusa bambos (Bamboo)
- Crescentia cujete (Calabash Tree)
- Ficus elastica (Indian Rubber)
- Ficus religiosa (Peepal)
- Muntingia calabura (Singapore Cherry)
- Putrenjiva roxberghii (Child life tree)

Trees which attract birds and butterflies

- Ficus benghalensis (Banyan)
- Malphigia puniceifolia (West Indian Cherry)
- Muntingia calabura (Singapore Cheery)
- Ficus Macrophylla
- Ficus religiosa (Peepal)
- Manilkhara hexandra (Pala)
- Bassia latifolia (Iluppai)
- Polyalthia longifolia (Mast Tree)
- Santalum album (Sandalwood)
- Ficus glomerata (Indian Fig)

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

Sport on Page 7

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations:



Amalgamations Group



Ashok Leyland



Go Placidly

KASTURI &
SONS
LTD.



CONSTRUCTION DIVISION
LARSEN & TOUBRO LIMITED

LOKAVANI
HALLMARK PRESS
PVT. LTD.



MURUGAPPA
GROUP

Rane
Rane Group

SAINT-GOBAIN
The future of glass. Since 1665.



Sundaram Finance
Limited



Sundram Fasteners
Limited



TATA
TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES



TVS MOTOR COMPANY



UCAL AUTO PRIVATE
LIMITED

Since 1856,
patently leaders
— A WELLWISHER