

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

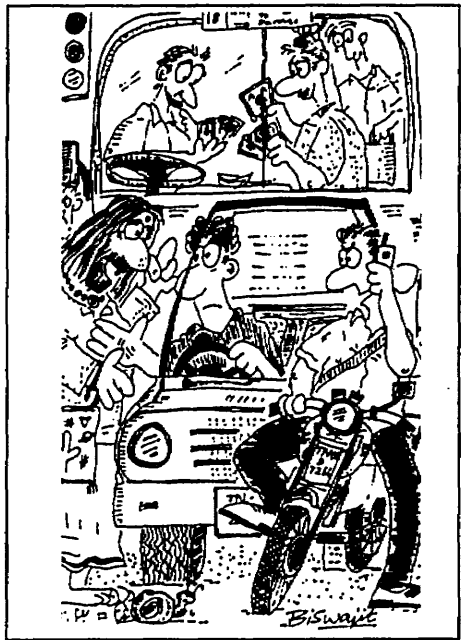
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FREE ISSUE

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Nothing wrong with your hand, sir. It's perfectly alright to be stuck in traffic jams... After all, you are in Chennai!

Long way home

You pack a bag with bottles of water, a couple of sandwiches, some biscuits, a good book (remembering at the last minute to toss in reading glasses), and a few paper napkins.

Then, you pick up the bag, and march grimly to your car.

Teeth set, eyes narrowed – you are now in full deal-with-it mode, all set to travel 5 km down the road... in Chennai's peak hour traffic.

What has happened to this city?

Every road is crammed to the brim with vehicles, exploding at the sides, spilling on to pavements, even informally entering those houses placed a little too close to the street.

As for traffic signals – vehicles nestle together for so long, you can make new friends, start new business ventures, write that novel you've been dreaming about, and possibly even fall in – and out of – love in all that time.

Even the most mundane of journeys requires high-precision planning, with people muttering: "Okay, I go down this road, turn left into that little lane, so I can avoid that signal, then make a U-turn there (unless they've scrapped it) to avoid the 'movie's finished' crowd, then...."

The moving traffic clogs, and chugs right on, and not all the flyovers and one-ways will lure clear roads back to ease our lives.

Maybe we citizens should stay home more often.

Ranjitha Ashok

Ennore expressway to be improved

(By A Special Correspondent)

There's promise in the air again that work will start shortly on the long-pending Ennore expressway project connecting Chennai with the northern industrial belt of Ennore-Manali. The project, estimated at around Rs. 150 crore, aims to protect the road from sea erosion, resettle and rehabilitate 2,000 fishermen families, and widen and improve three roads including the Ennore expressway.

A major stretch of the Ennore expressway has been eaten up by sea erosion and various measures taken over the last few years have not yielded any permanent solution to the problem. To remedy the situation, an MOU was signed in June 2003 between the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Tamil Nadu Road Development Company Ltd. to establish a 50:50 joint venture between the IL&FS and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation, a State Government Undertaking. The TNRDC, open to the idea of expanding its role in the project, has offered to help raise funds for the project and take care of the operation and maintenance.

The Chennai Port Trust has contributed Rs. 38 crore, one-fourth the project cost, as its share, and the State Government has said that the Rs. 30 crore it has spent on improving the northern portion of the Inner Ring Road, connecting NH5 to the Tiruvottiyur-Ponneri-Panjetti Road, be treated as its contribution to the project.

Improving the Ennore expressway has three components to it: erecting 10 groynes in two stretches to protect the road from sea erosion; resettling and rehabilitating fishermen families; and improving the Tiruvottiyur-Ponneri-Panjetti Road, the Manali Oil Refinery

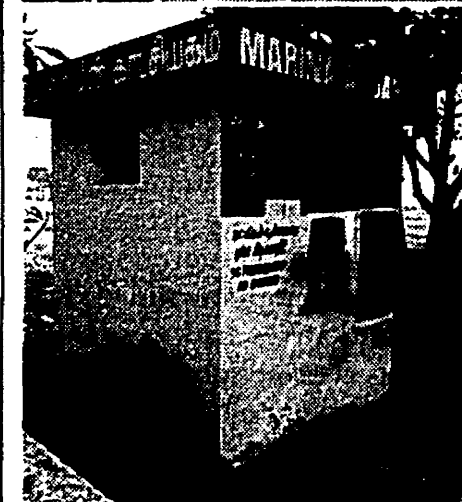
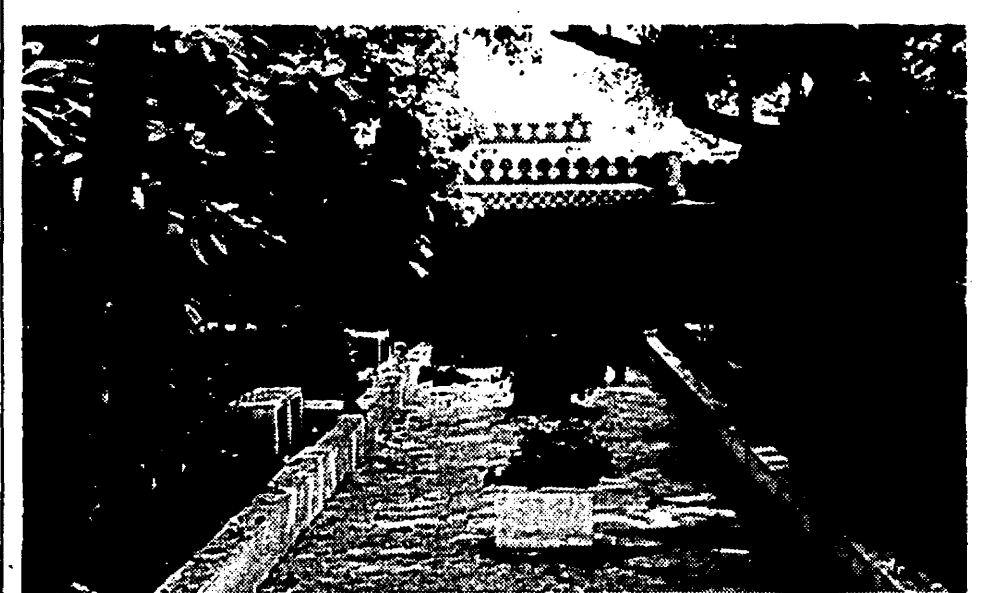
road and the Ennore expressway. If work starts, as is expected after the latest pronouncements, it should be completed by 2006, according to project sources.

After a number of studies, it was found that permanent protection against sea erosion could be obtained only by either erecting groynes or constructing a breakwater. Groynes, it has been judged, would provide the most cost-effective way of providing the necessary protection. Every year, at least Rs. 2-3 crore is spent on providing temporary protection against sea erosion. Crying halt to this and starting work on the groynes as soon as possible is what the project-planners have prioritised.

A 34-acre plot of land has been identified in Manali for resettling and rehabilitating the fisherfolk families. Those involved in the project are keen that the resettlement colony be a model one in terms of facilities and amenities provided. The project authorities will follow the State Government's guidelines for the World Bank-assisted Tamil Nadu Road Sector Project.

The Thiruvottiyur-Ponneri-Panjetti Road and the Manali Oil Refinery road improvements will be completed by June-December 2005 after which widening and improving the 6.8-km Ennore expressway will be taken up. Tolls will be levied on vehicles using the Ennore expressway.

Finding a permanent solution to sea erosion and improving the Ennore expressway and the other roads are crucial not only to industries in the Ennore-Manali belt, but also to the Chennai and Ennore Ports, as all vehicles carrying containers will have to use only this road to the ports and back. — (Courtesy : BusinessLine.)



• The Marina is a public recreation space used by thousands. Once hailed as the 'second longest beach in the world', the Marina was once the pride of the city of Madras that is Chennai. Today, the Marina sand is littered with filth and garbage, although efforts by the Government and local NGOs to keep the Marina clean have made some difference. Not many know about the existence of an aquarium (or is it an apology of an aquarium?) on the Marina, seen in the pictures

above and below. These days, the aquarium remains closed and derelict. But a coastal city and a marine fisheries centre like Madras deserves a major world-class aquarium and Madras Musings hopes that such an aquarium will come up shortly in an environment-friendly location.



MMC now has a web site

The Madras Medical College recently launched a web site and Internet facility. The Dean's (M. Ganapathy) letter addressed to MMCians, displayed on the site, states that the web site will help better interaction between the alumni and other members of the medical fraternity across the world. In his letter, he also stresses the need for interaction between students and alumni so that they can be partners in the progress of the Institution.

The web site provides a range of information, from how the College started as the Gov-

ernment General Hospital in 1664 to the various departments and courses it now offers. For example, from the site, you learn that the College has 84 departments and that three basic courses are offered – post-graduate diploma, post-graduate degree and post-graduate super-speciality.

Hospital statistics available since 2000 indicate the bed strength, number of admissions and discharges, and major operations conducted. There is a list of alumni and a picture gallery as well. To access the web site, you can log on to www.madrasmedicalcollege.edu.

All for a clean and green Chennai

The European Commission-funded Eco Business Plan (EBP) for small and medium enterprises that was formally launched in Chennai recently (MM, February 1st) offers the city opportunities to save on energy and expensive raw materials, avoid waste products and emissions, and optimise operating processes leading to lower costs and higher productivity. The objective of getting the EBP going in Chennai is to enhance the economic and environmental profile of the city and make it an attractive destination for investors. If properly implemented, EBP, with the experience gained from the Vienna model (Athens and Vienna are partners in the programme), can help Chennai tackle a host of pressing civic issues. Our own limited expertise in decentralised water management and industrial waste management can be effectively used to reduce pollution in air and water, manage water and save energy.

While stressing that sustainability is the key in partnerships and programmes such as EBP, Sepp Dabringer, Austrian Trade Commissioner in India, hit the nail on the head when he said that getting the project off the ground is one thing but keeping a partnership in developing business going is quite another. There is the need to build a team of experts, create awareness about environmental compliance and programmes among local Government officials, and get Government representatives and NGOs to work together and exchange views. Sabine Mitterer and Hruschka Thomas from Vienna expressed similar sentiments. They pointed out that it was all very well to say that environmental protection pays but a lot depended on effective communication, professional public relations and speedy legislation. Stakeholders must include the municipal departments and the Environment Ministry.

The response to the EBP from agencies such as the Tamil Nadu Small Industries Development Corporation, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board, the Small Industries Development Bank of India and the State Bank of India has indeed been heartening. SIDBI, for example, has offered direct assistance to supplement the efforts of banks and financial institutions. It has also offered to promote enterprise development and conduct environmental quality programmes to make small-scale industries aware of environmental issues and help them get a green image. SIDBI is likely to extend financial support as grant-cum-loans for five programmes, including three demonstration projects. However, funding for EBP

programmes may not come easily. A senior executive from the State Bank of India suggested the need to bring in appropriate technology, as funding depends on it as well as on proper technology transfer.

Solid waste challenge

Industrial waste management is one of the issues that the EBP will have to tackle once it goes on stream. At the launch of the EBP in Chennai, Lucas Dengal, who works at Auro Annam, Auroville, highlighted the value of 'effective micro-organisms' (EM) in managing industrial waste. EM has been found beneficial in animal husbandry and aquaculture, in solid waste management (SWM), in sewage and effluent treatment and in environmental rehabilitation. Exactly a year ago, *Madras Musings* (February 16, 2003) had carried a story about possible ways of resourcing waste, with particular reference to SWM. The story mentioned that a private company was given the go-ahead by the State Government to run a Solid Waste and Energy Recycling Facility (SWERF), a garbage-to-power project. However, several environmentalists and NGO representatives had expressed serious concerns about the gasification technology (incineration process) that was to be used by the company to treat municipal waste. They felt that such a process was harmful to health as it emitted dioxins, a poisonous cancer-causing toxin, and other toxins and heavy metals. A couple of readers had written in stating that the technology needed further critical evaluation.

One suggestion received was to use another gasification technology called 'thermoselect' that is being successfully used to treat garbage in a few cities in Japan, Korea, Germany and Italy. While, on the one hand, complete combustion is not possible in the conventional incineration plants due to high moisture content — as in Korean waste composition, for example — on the other, there is no space to build new landfills near major cities and towns. Existing landfills endanger drinking water quality. The thermostat technology, overcoming all these problems, converts household refuse, commercial and hazardous wastes, scrap and sewage sludge into usable material and energy. The environment surrounding the factory is clean and unharmed by the process. The process produces a practically pollution-free pure synthesis gas, five times less in volume than the amount of flue gas caused by refuse incineration. Two years ago, a *Business Standard* report on SWM had mentioned thermostat technology as

being the ideal waste management solution for India.

Another suggestion that has just been received by *Madras Musings* comes from three young scientists and may also be worth considering. It comes from J. Somasundaram, R. Krishnaswamy and Savithri who work at the Department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. Sewage sludge, the semi-solid fraction of sewage water (about one per cent of the sewage water), is highly heterogeneous material with extremely variable physical and chemical composition. It contains all plant nutrient elements, particularly nitrogen (2-4%) and heavy metals.

Various disposal methods have been reported to overcome the problem of waste accumulation. The land application method can be used to dispose sewage sludge in India. The continuous use of sewage sludge by farmers for crop production in the areas adjoining sewage sludge plants has become a common practice. However, one constraint with this approach is the accumulation of heavy metals/toxic metals and pathogenic micro-organisms in the soil to such a level that they may become phyto-toxic and eventually

SASHI NAIR pinch-hitting for MMM

hazardous to animal and human health when they enter the food chain. An experiment was conducted at the Department to develop technology to expedite easy and effective handling of sewage and slow down the bio-availability of heavy metals in soil environment. Sewage sludge was pelletised using coir pith (coir industry waste) as a structuring agent. The air-dried sewage sludge and coir pith were mixed thoroughly in a 1:1 ratio with water to keep the moisture content at 35-40% of water-holding capacity. The mixture was fed into a pelletising machine and the resulting products were air-dried. The final product is called sewage sludge-coir pith pellets, which is ready for application. Coir pith, which contains lignin and cellulose, is used to slow down the decomposition rate of pellets, thereby reducing bio availability of heavy metals.

A field experiment was also conducted to test heavy metal transfer in fodder maize using three sources of organic manures — raw sewage sludge, sewage sludge and coir pith mixture and sewage sludge. The

A big 'Thank You' to 41 of you...

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 15.12.03 and 15.02.04, added to the support *Madras Musings* has already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes *Madras Musings* espouses.

A word to all donors. *Madras Musings* remains a FREE issue. Your generous contributions are NOT subscriptions to the journal but a commitment of your support to the causes Chennai Heritage and its publication, *Madras Musings*, espouse.

— CHENNAI HERITAGE

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● May we once again remind all our readers and wellwishers of the fact that a year has passed since Chennai Heritage sought the support of readers of *Madras Musings* for the causes it espouses. We had at the time suggested the readers contribute at least Rs. 100 annually to not only enable *Madras Musings*, published by Chennai Heritage, to keep going but also to enable Chennai Heritage to play a greater role in creating heritage awareness.

We are glad to announce that not only has *Madras Musings* survived, despatching 12,000 copies every week to those who have offered it support as well as to decision-makers and old friends of the journal in Chennai but, more significantly, has taken steps to help create awareness about what is needed for the restoration of Senate House. Chennai Heritage has organised two meetings attended by members of the corporate sector and leading professionals and chaired the discussions on how best Senate House could be helped. Following this up, Chennai Heritage has organised meetings of core groups discussing particularly facts of awareness creation that could help in the raising of funds for the restoration of Senate House.

If, in the coming year, Chennai Heritage receives repeated supports from those who have made a contribution, and many more supporters join the bandwagon of contribution, not only can the support extended to Tiruvanniyur's temple tanks and Senate House be enhanced, but new awareness building projects can be undertaken. We look forward to our listed support in the next few months and would like to see many more new names in our monthly 'Thank You' ... during 2004.

The Editor

crop was harvested on 55th day of maturity. Among the three sources tried, raw sewage sludge recorded the highest dry matter yield of 20.9t/ha and the other two sources also enhanced the yield equally. There was a progressive increase in the trace metals concentrations in soil and also in fodder maize as the level of organic manures was increased. Among the three sources tried, the sewage sludge-coir pith pellets recorded less transfer of toxic metals in plants. This might have been due to pelletisation of sewage sludge with the presence of coir pith as it slows down the rate of decomposition.

The increasing quantity of waste and its accumulation has led to the problem of soil pollution and ground water contamination, causing severe health hazards to animals and human beings. The onus is on experts in SWM, NGOs and society as a whole to find the best solutions. Hopefully, the EBP will show the way.

Initiative that works

Forging a common identity is never easy but the Federation of K.K. Nagar Residents' Welfare Associations has shown that it is possible when, for the first time in urban Chennai, 56 residents' associations came together to try and solve civic problems in the area. One year after its formation, the

Federation, now 60-associations-strong, notched a major victory with the removal of encroachments on PT Rajan Salai and part of Anna Main Road. A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed by the Federation challenging a Government order classifying a part of the 80 ft road as a commercial area. The PIL sought removal of encroachments on all the main roads in K K Nagar. The writ petition is still pending in the High Court, but the Court, as interim relief, directed the removal of encroachments. The result is that there are no petty shops, eateries and handcarts any more along the stretch of road; with the absence of hawkers and parking of vehicles, the sidewalks are neat and clean and fenced as well.

While associations at last getting together and striving as a team to effect civic improvements is welcome, the issue of hawkers always has two sides to it. Hawkers do serve a purpose in the community, serving a large part of it, particularly its service staff, and therefore cannot be done away with. While encroachments need to be removed, at the same time, space has to be found for the encroachers, particularly those who serve the community. Perhaps the Federation should start addressing its collective minds to this consequence of its success.

OUR READERS WRITE



Where is all the greenery?

I agree with reader C.G. Prasad and endorse his suggestion that the Government must create gardens on its lands (MM, January 16th). The new bus terminus at Koyambedu and its surroundings, being devoid of vegetation, do not present a pleasant view. Ashoka trees can be planted on roadsides, flower gardens can be raised and fountains installed wherever space is available. The Chennai Corporation buildings, with its well-maintained garden, are a fine example of aesthetic appeal.

The Ambattur Industrial Estate is yet another area that looks dry and arid without trees. The inner ring road here, except for short stretches, does not have shady trees on either side. *Vanamahotsava* is necessary in these places. It is a pity that greenery has given way to concrete structures in the city. The verdant charm that existed in the past is now only a memory.

M.R. Pillai

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Korattur
Chennai 600 080.

An excellent water source

As feared, rainwater harvesting has not yielded results thanks to the failure of North-East monsoon. It has only served to increase the indebtedness of the middle and lower classes of people who had to spend considerable amounts far beyond their means to obey Government orders.

The Government must pay more attention to harnessing water from rivers and lakes, with well-planned schemes, so that the stored water can come in handy during distress periods. The city has a number of large lakes, which unfortunately remain uncared for. If lakes can be kept clean and unpolluted, they can be a major source of drinking water for the city's residents.

M.R. Pillai

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Korattur
Chennai 600 080.

Free-for-all-style Tamil

The piece 'Konjam Mixing' by Ranjitha Ashok (MM, Feb 1st) highlights the modern Tamil used in Chennai. Apart from the advertisement referred in the cartoon, other advertisements like 'Konjam advice, konjam udans' may take the shape in future like 'Konjam life, konjam wife'.

At any rate, we hear in Madras-nee-Chennai several types of Tamil, like *agharara* Tamil (*Enna varrela, sappidrela*), *cheri* Tamil (*enna nayana summa kundikkinnu keere*), *Sanga* Tamil (high-flown Tamil like *Thinkaral* which needs interpretation), *thooya* Tamil used by select literate, medial Tamil used for lampooning opponents, filmy Tamil using double-meaning and, of late, FM Radio Mirchi Tamil consisting of 70 per cent English

and 30 per cent Tamil which are prevalent in the State.

Visitors to Tamil Nadu should get used to the greatness of the style in developing and promoting Tamil in a free-for-all style.

C. Lakshmi Narain

No.7, (Old No.4)
Kondi Chetty Street, III Floor
Chennai 600 001

After tasty food

The G.T. area is not only a busy area but is also a centre for tasty food with many hotels near the business centre. Rama Vilas' *ada* and *butter* combination and Broadway's *butter masala* are very popular. Those working in offices in this area enjoy the delicious food and sometimes the employers have to go in search of their staff in these hotels!

C.K. Subramaniam

A 101, Syndicate Bank Qtrs
Plot 28, 29, Sector 17
I Floor, Vashi 400 703.

Coronation durbar

Another small landmark is no *Amore*. The Coronation Durbar restaurant at Broadway, opposite the Loane Square, has been pulled down.

I am told by my friend Gopinath, a retired professor of Economics and a historian of sorts, that way back in early 1940s, two brothers who were struggling actors and lived near Broadway used to debate whether to spend their last rupee on bus fare to Neptune Studios or on the Coronation Durbar tea. Usually the tea won and the brothers used to walk from Broadway to Neptune Studios. Their names were M.G. Chakrapani and M.G. Ramachandran!

Speaking of Coronation Durbar, the joke goes that a man walked into a Coronation Durbar in Hyderabad, upset and broke a glass of water, changed his mind about eating or drinking and walked towards the exit. As he neared the cash counter, a voice boomed, "Kaya nahin. Piya nahin. Glass phoda. Panch anna" (Didn't eat. Didn't drink. Broke a glass. Five annas)!"

C.G. Prasad

9, C S Mudali Street
Kondithope
Chennai 600 079

Attention please!

While we are all happy about the way the Onyx does its work, a few problems need attention:

The big lorry drivers generally drive the vehicle very fast and, particularly when it comes to making a turn into a street, their rashness makes me feel that I am witnessing an adventurous movie.

Most of the vehicles are not switched off while the Onyx team collects the waste. In some cases the engines run for more than ten minutes when actually they could be stopped saving the fuel and avoiding noise pollution. When I

Changing lifestyles, increasing morbidity

In the old days, people sitting in hospital waiting rooms and clinics were generally old — in their late 50s and beyond. Nowadays, you see several people, especially men in their 30s, thronging hospitals for treatment. In the past, heart attack was the exclusive preserve of the old. The young suffered "heart attacks" through romantic relationships. But not any more. Lifestyle seems to be the cause for all these problems.

I am reminded of a story. Four men were seated in a clinic. The first man had a receding hairline. He said, "I smoke four cigarettes a day. I drink two pegs of whisky in the evening. I eat both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, but limited quantity, of course. I am 60."

The second had a shock of white hair, he was thin but cheerful and alert. He said, "I take only vegetarian food. I don't smoke. I drink on Diwali

and New Year. I never miss my morning walk though I am 75."

The third was absolutely bald, walked slowly but unaided and spoke in a faint voice. He said, "I never smoke or drink. I go for a short walk in the mornings. I eat only salads and boiled food. I am 92."

The fourth man's hands trembled, he tottered as he walked. He had a pot belly and breathed with difficulty. He said, "I drink half a bottle gin in the mornings and three-quarters of a whisky in the evenings. I smoke 80 cigarettes a day. I take drugs. I eat fast food and never exercise. I am 29."

C.G. Prasad

9, C S Mudali Street
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asked a driver about this once, he told me that the battery had a problem and if he stopped it could not be started again. I hope batteries can be charged better daily to avoid this problem.

C.S. Baskar

17, Ramarao Road
Mylapore
Chennai 600 004

That mobile service

I still remember the excellent service the Postal Department rendered in the olden days. With the invasion of e-mail and courier services, I hardly see a postman, particularly neatly uniformed.

There used to be a mobile service which the Postal Department used to operate at Luz and a few other junctions, which was a hit those days, with plenty of people thronging around it at about 7.30 p.m. every day. The letters got sorted off right in front of you and were sure to reach the destination the next day without fail.

I request the Postal Department to try the service as a re-trial scheme and extend it, if feasible, on commercial basis.

C.S. Baskar

17, Ramarao Road
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Where's that?

A 20-something boy asks his father, "Yes pa, where is this Prince Kushal Towers on Anna Salai?" His father, well into his 50s and whose favourite haunt in the old days was Mount Road, says, "Adhan da, the old Globe Talkies on Mount Road".

The son says, "What Globe Talkies?" Father says, "Adhan da, leave the Safire side. As you come out of the Odeon, Midland, Wellington side, this is right there on the left."

The son is round-eyed. "Odeon, Midland? What are those?" and makes a mental note never to ask the old man again for directions.

C.G. Prasad

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Failed film studios

In the early 1930s, most of the Tamil and Telugu movies were

shot at studios in Calcutta, Bombay and Poona as there was only one studio worth its name in Madras, the Vel Pictures, Guindy. But around 1940, several studios, like Vauhini, Newton, Gemini and Neptune sprang up. Later, AVM, Prasad, Bharani and Arunachalam Studios came up. In the mofussil areas, Central and Pakshiraja Studios in Coimbatore and Modern Theatres and Rathna Studios in Salem came into being and produced a number of pictures for more than three decades.

As Madras studios had more infrastructural facilities, the producers preferred the city and this saw the decline and ultimate closure of the studios at Coimbatore and Salem. In Madras city itself, old and famous studios like Gemini, Newton and Neptune were closed for various reasons, their sites used for shopping malls and hotels, a school and a college respectively. Film City at Taramani, started a few years ago, has now met with the same untimely fate due to lack of support from all concerned.

Now production of films is confined to the studios at Vadapalani and Saligramam. Curiously, the film land here is known as Kollywood after Kodambakkam, where no studio exists or even ever existed. Anyway, Madras that is Chennai is the leading film production centre in India quantitatively but, sorry to say, not qualitatively.

M.R. Pillai

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Environmental audit

"The right to sweet water and the right to free air are the attributes of the right to life, for these are the basic elements which sustain life itself." These words of wisdom of late Justice K. Sankaran Nair find ready application in today's context.

An environmental audit with teeth to punish the polluters and the erring officials is imperative, in view of the mounting pollution-generated crimes perpetrated by private parties hand in glove with corrupt politicians at the top.

K.N. Narayana Pillai

Shrinidhi
No. 3, IV Street
Dr. Radhakrishnan-Salai,
Chennai 600 004

Another time

Yes, the "Singara Chennai", which is talked about by politicians, did exist a few decades ago. The small nagar called 'Mambalam' then was where we stayed. As a young girl, I used to enjoy going to school because the roads were lined with beautiful avenue trees — the gracious Rain Tree (*Samanea saman*), the flowers of which I used to pick up while going to school.

A few landmarks that I knew were the 'Kundumani Park' which now stands "Woodlands Drive-in" and 'India Coffee House' (it is India Silk House now), the Mambalam Temple and the Shiva-Vishnu temple and, of course, Vani Mahal. Pandy Bazaar was then very quiet with few shops and establishments. One of them was Salaam Stores, where only the best quality goods were sold. There were just two or three theatres. The movies were worth watching — *Savithri*, *Sakuntala*, *Baktha Pothana* and others. Panagal Park was a meeting place for old people to spend a leisurely evening, to chat and to exchange views. These old people were really fortunate that they were well-cared for by the younger generation. In those times, 'Old Age Homes' were simply unheard of.

More than anything else, there was a feeling of friendship among people, there was no rat-race that we see today, greediness, and definitely no chit-funds or finance companies to lure people into foolishly depositing their well-earned money. Though it was not 'utopia', as youngsters may imagine, Chennai, or Madras as it was then called, was a far more beautiful place made up of people who were well-mannered and broad-minded.

Sudha Kasturirangan

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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.

Worldclass education

A recent landmark in suburban Chennai is the American International School, Chennai (AISC), that has come up on the 100 feet road in Taramani. Mid-morning, on a typically sultry day in the city, I'm surprised by the marked, pleasant change in the ambient temperature amidst the imposing red-brick buildings on the campus. Actually, it is not surprising, since the buildings have been specifically designed by the Hiller Group, an architectural firm, to take optimum advantage of the cooling sea breeze on the brand new, 10-acre green campus that now houses one of the finest learning environments in southern India.

As AISC's Development Officer, Michaela Newham, says, "Every care has been taken to

Early childhood coordinator, Padma Srinath, says, "Our early childhood programme seeks to deal with the whole child and attempts to give each child the knowledge and skills appropriate to his or her particular stage of development, interests and strengths. We constantly strive to achieve a balance between a positive attitude and value development."

Says a kindergarten teacher, "We encourage volunteering among the parents and with parents of diverse communities and different skills, it sure provides for very interesting learning for children. Common celebrations of different international holidays are also encouraged to facilitate a global citizenry."

An interesting highlight of the AISC's middle school cul-

as a meeting place for parents and students, the institution offers strong after-school activities including classes in taekwondo, touch rugby, ballet, ceramics, puppetmaking, cooking, TOEFL and SAT-Math Groups.

The music programme encompasses music appreciation and theory, instruction in instrument playing, song and dance.

• SHOBHA MENON finds a common thread running through the American International School, Olcott Memorial School, and the Livelihood Advancement Business School Programme — a quest for excellence.

Students also have opportunities to develop their musical abilities by joining the wind ensemble and choral group. The fine arts department is structured to initiate students in a variety of expressionist media, incorporating art, history and appreciation and the study of different styles and artists. At the annual art fair, the best student pieces are exhibited for the student community.

Looking back on the significant last few months, an enthusiastic head of school, Barry

Clough, who has over 20 years' experience in education with commendable curriculum development and school administration skills, says, "After moving into our new campus, the school has entered a new phase in its development. Shepherding it through the accreditation and self-study process of the Middle Schools & Colleges and the European Council of International Schools is my next challenge."

He added, "While, earlier, our curriculum focussed on the traditional American style, we are now incorporating changes according to the extremely well-written California State standards. Our Board of Directors, highly oriented to holistic education, has encouraged a number of improvements to the overall educational programme — a stronger high school programme, a greater emphasis on information technology on campus, and additional foreign language options for students upwards of Grade IV. As a team of over 100 professionals, we share a commitment that aims at providing a worldclass educational experience to all our students and a sound educational alternative for children of expatriates."



Students at the American International School library.

provide the utmost comfort and security for students on campus — outdoor areas are planned to maximum advantage, indoor low-level-up lighting is used for more comfort on the eyes, windows have been designed to prevent glare, and so on. Designed around two courtyards, and built for a final capacity of 540 students to the current 325, our campus has recently won an American Excellence Award. As a co-educational day school, each class has a maximum strength of 12, and students across 23 nationalities with the student-teacher ratio averaging 7:1.

While an airconditioned classroom block encompasses the library, computer lab, ESL (English-as-a-second language) complex and a well-equipped health office, the adjoining wing houses additional classrooms, three science labs, a foreign languages suite, two art studios, a music room, cafeteria and a black box theatre. The airconditioned sports hall encompasses the basketball arena, volleyball and badminton courts, indoor soccer stadium, fitness room and four rooftop tennis courts. Outdoor facilities include a 25m swimming pool, a soccer field and an athletics track. A back-up generator, a rainwater harvesting and recycling plant and an innovative cold storage system minimise the school's dependence on local utilities.

tural programme is a three-pronged curricular course encompassing three disciplines: information technology, cultural studies of India (an opportunity for an in-depth study of the geography, history and cultural aspects of specific environments within India) and design and construction. The high school is, of course, more 'exam oriented' but a lot of emphasis is placed on creating a mature individual, highlighting the importance of discussion and dialogue and teaching through questioning. The highly qualified 50-strong teaching faculty is drawn from the U.S., Australia, U.K., France and India. The special needs department addresses issues concerned with special needs.

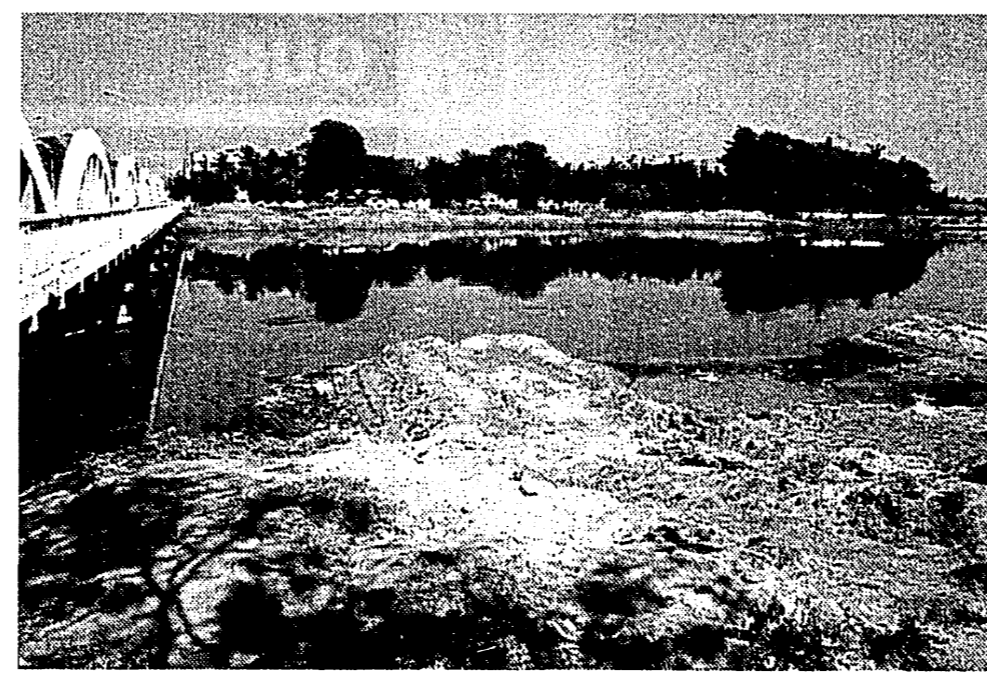
Another goal of the school has been to demonstrate and share US educational methods and practices, those that are achieved through staff participation in educational activities outside AISC as well as sports activities, helping to increase mutual understanding and cooperation between AISC and its host country. The AISC soccer league (in which eight schools participate), founded in 1999, is the first league of its kind in Chennai and is conducted in a manner similar to those in the American middle and high schools. AISC has also established the first girls and boys' basketball league in Chennai with invitation sports meets organised regularly. And

Speaking of 'sustaining interest in partnership' at an annual Conference of Trusts and Foundations organised by Sampra-daan, Indian Centre for Philanthropy, Nalini Gangadharan, CEO of Dr. Reddy's Foundation for Human and Social Development (DRFHSC), Hyderabad, spelt out her plan to 'bring together the best of expertise of all worlds — the commitment, skill and efficiency of an NGO, the financial resources and professional experts of the business sector, and the policy making advocacy competency of the Government.' Which is exactly what the DRFHSC has been doing since 1996 in Hyderabad, with amazing results, and also in Chennai since April 2002 through their Livelihood Advancement Business School Programme or LABS.

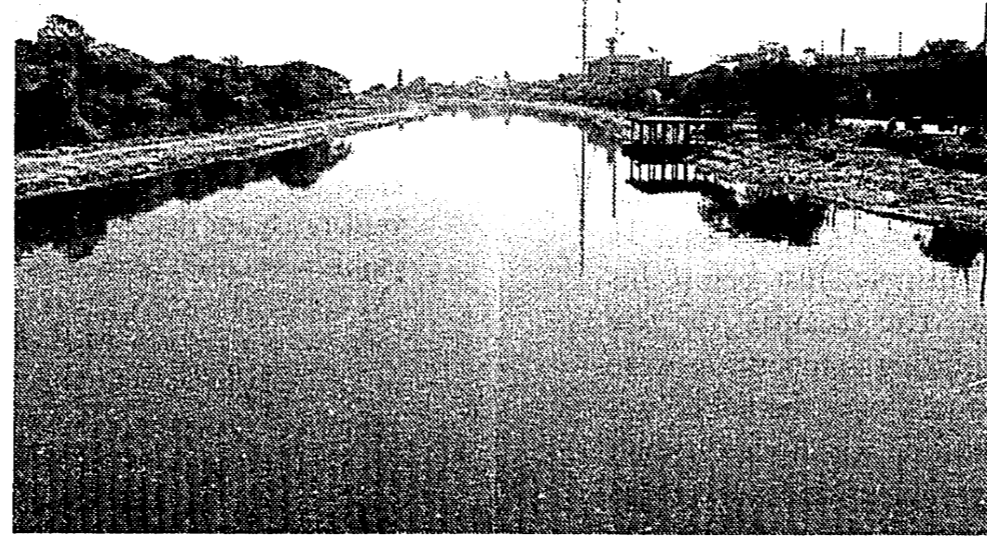
The programme was successfully initiated in Hyderabad in early 1999, with the alleviation of urban poverty as its mandate. LABS' mission is to provide young adults from economically weak backgrounds an opportunity to assimilate into the competitive job market. LABS helps them to acquire livelihood and social skills in an environment of learning and mentoring that is responsive to an individual's emotional and developmental

needs. According to Nalini, "Traditional educational opportunities (mostly government-sponsored) are not geared to prepare students for entry-level positions in emerging job markets. Students, therefore, join the ranks of the unemployed, underemployed or dropouts after school or high school as they see no connection between education and livelihood opportunity. Disillusioned, they join the ranks of the potentially "at-risk" youth. LABS was conceived to bridge this gap — where, on the one hand, emerging jobs in the new economy in the new-growth sectors were finding it very difficult to source people especially at the entry-level positions and, on the other hand, hundreds of thousands of youth were joining the ranks of the disillusioned "at-risk" category.

Says Shanmugam, project officer of the Chennai wing of DRFHSC and member of the faculty, "Our team first identifies needy youth through road shows staged in economically deprived areas. Sometimes, we meet the already existing community-based organisations and conduct group meetings. Generally, our target group comprises school dropouts between 18-26 years. Once a convenient date is fixed, we go back to the area and regis-



The Cooum River, one of the city's water courses, has in recent years remained smelly, dirty and badly clogged. People have been used to seeing the stagnant Cooum with both banks overgrown (our OLD today), its southern banks lined with slums. However, desilting work is in progress around the Island Grounds (our NEW, below) and along the mouth of the Cooum near Napier Bridge. This welcome effort will improve the flow of water in the river. Madras Musings hopes that those responsible for desilting stretches of the Cooum River will continue with the good work so that one day in the not too distant future the river can be considered suitable for navigation.



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Laudable teaching effort

Very much in the limelight of late is the Olcott Memorial High School, Besant Nagar, recently chosen as one of the three schools in India (among 900 applicants) to receive the Intel-Best Integration of Technology into Classroom Award 2002 for 'exemplary use of resources', and a monetary grant of Rs. 100,000. This recognition coming to a school that caters mainly to first-generation learners — sons and daughters of fisherfolk, coolies, flower-sellers and domestic workers — has been a shot in the arm for this Tamil-medium school founded in 1894 by the-osophist Henry Steel Olcott with the objective of providing education to the less privileged. In the 2003 SSLC exams, the school's pass percentage dramatically improved — from 43 per cent to 72 per cent — with the school topper scoring 475/500 marks.

Lakshmi Suryanarayanan, Headmistress since 1999 (who started her teaching career as a Primary School teacher in 1972 in Karaikudi went on to head a private school in Mumbai before moving to Chennai), remembers feeling that 'something had to be done about the bright young boys and girls very often ending up not

so bright at the public exams'. Her first step on taking up this "enormous challenge" was to assess, in a year-long study, the many problems that existed — lack of curriculum orientation in teaching methods and accountability among the teachers. It all boiled down to time management, planning and developing skills and content for the teachers, to empower them to help and teach children in a manner that improved their thinking skills. The problem of rote learning, which did not foster literacy or numeracy, was tackled first. So, reading and language skills became the focus. Good reading material is consciously made available for students with each class having its own libraries, and three library periods in a week (so that children enjoy reading and learning in a non-threatening environment).

Teachers focus on their own individual strengths and share specific responsibilities, besides working on thinking questions and regular testing for their students. One-hour subject meetings, where subject teachers share methods and work out strategies for the week, are planned within the teaching pe-

riods, on all days in the week, so that they do not feel taxed but enjoyed the learning and developing process for themselves, enabling them to make positive differences for children.

The 'transformation' was made possible by the basic ELPS 'mantra' adopted — providing real experiences wherever possible through laboratory experiments, educational visits and through audio-visual aids. Discussions were held in classrooms to verbalise their understanding and develop the language required for the subject.

It provided regular non-threatening opportunities for

students to put down their learning through writing — symbols were mainly used. Testing was judicious and regular with teachers setting their own question papers with the objective of finding out areas of difficulty. Re-teaching and remediation were attempted at and course corrections provided.

In the computer room, nearly 750 underprivileged children form Olcott Kuppam, Kakkani Colony, Dideer Nagar, and Damodarapuram study. Two years ago, a few teachers attended a training programme in computers conducted by Intel, where they were taught the



Children at work in the crafts section at the Olcott Memorial School.

Helping integrate youth into society

ter those interested (for a token fee of Rs.100). An aptitude test follows to facilitate them to choose their vocations. This is followed by parent counselling.

The courses developed cover areas of hospitality management, customer relations and sales, homecare nursing, IT-enabled services, automobile services and hardware. Following admission, a week-long induction module helps in orientation and goal-setting. Then it is on to the meticulously planned course itself, spread over 12 weeks of theory, practical and assignments. From the second month onwards, repeated reviews and reinforcement classes ensure optimum standards. Interesting life skill modules stress on punctuality, time management, work etiquette, grooming, health and so on. Guest lectures from corpo-

rate houses are regularly arranged.

Gopalan, who teaches customer relations and sales says, "Regular interfaces with different corporate offices help to ascertain what new skills these youngsters, who are in one way or other dropping out from life itself, will need to survive in a competitive market. Only an optimum blend of both theory and experience can impart effective skills to young minds. In the individual youth development programme, punctuality, interpersonal skills and communication skills are taught. Identification of grey areas for specific counselling is important. For courses like home care nursing, theory is followed by practical training at Sundaram Medical Foundation. Wherever possible, we counsel the youth through home visits that help as-

sess family backgrounds. A marginal drop-out rate is inevitable."

Sharon, director of Forerunner, a marketing agency that has taken in ten youngsters from Chennai LABS, feels, "The youngsters are hardworking, sincere, and more mouldable. They also learn quickly. However, spoken English and confidence building need to be focussed on". T.R.Nandakumar, manager, Laserwords Pvt Ltd., is very happy with his recruits from Chennai LABS and their word processing, data entry and creative skills but suggests, "Language skills need to be honed better along with overall guidance. Probably, more training in a corporate environment will do wonders to boost their confidence levels". Meanwhile, Gurusamy, service manager at KLN Automobiles, waxes eloquent on the "100% discipline and responsible nature" of his service recruits from LABS. "As mechanics or helpers, they are good at their work, and come with a guarantee letter from LABS. So, if there is any problem, the coordinator takes charge".

Says Shanmugam, "Based on feedback from our early batches, we now focus more on workplace expectations and work readiness in our training modules. The co-

ordinator at our placement cell regularly interacts with corporate houses to get relevant feedback. When needed, we take charge of the youth concerned, to counsel and provide the necessary skills. Our industry interfaces help to continually upgrade our teaching. We are grateful for the unstinted support offered by mentors from corporates such as the Murugappa Group, India Cements, Khirvraj Automobiles, and the Centre for Excellence in Organizations, who regularly and voluntarily interact with our students, and assist our faculty, too".

Interaction with the enthusiastic and cheerful youngsters in the various classrooms at LABS is truly a heartening experience. As Karimurugan, a hardware student, says "Thanks to LABS, I can look forward to earning something more than Rs.60, as a daily wage earned". While Abdul says, "My father, a watchman, could not afford to educate me further. I'm glad to be able to continue my computer studies here".

Right from the first batch of alumni who met in October 2002, the LABS Alumni Association has aimed at creating a database from which alumni can learn and share experiences. The Police Department has also evinced a keen interest in work-

ing together with Chennai LABS in their ongoing community youth programmes.

Batches of trained youth come from the Saidapet slums and deprived cobbler communities from Perambur, as well as from the Thousand Lights area, besides many referred by earlier trainees from Ayanavaram, Vyasaripadi, Perambur, Ashok Nagar, Sulurpet and Gummidipoondi. Now 85-strong the centre plans to enroll 120 candidates.

However, the most critical hurdle the LABS concept has faced is the attempt to hijack this programme to the not-so-poor categories of youth. Says Nalini, "Youth who have barely completed their higher education are ready to take up fairly lucrative and non-exploitative jobs with promising careers in major business organisations. This naturally attracts many youths to be part of this programme for short-term gains. The LABS programme is conceived and designed for the most marginalised to provide them the first step through entry-level jobs into the new economy, to challenge them to become lifelong learners, and to help them grow personally through advanced learning opportunities. It does not attempt to sustain the not very marginalised, as their aspirations are at different levels".

basics of computer and how to use it as a tool to teach students. Today, almost all teachers are computer literate. All students, class 5 onwards, have two- and a-half hour sessions a week — followed by a half-hour discussion. Classes 1-4 have one half-hour session in a week. Interested children are given time to gain extra computer skills. In the language lab set up with Intel Grant, 40 headsets connected to MP3 players have been provided to help improve reading skills and a TV-cum-video player. The School is eagerly awaiting a consignment of 20 used computers from Japan through an NGO called Peace Boat.

Lakshmi feels that this transformation is possible in any school, provided school management are supportive of all-round empowerment — of the heads, teachers and the students. Cashing in on strengths and remedying weaknesses is important. "And a good head believes strongly that all children are capable of learning, they know how to run the school and creates other good heads!" she concludes, smiling. Olcott School's determined strides into 'the whole school approach' and wholesome child development are laudable. It certainly has helped 15-year-old Sujeendran develop quiet confidence and a sense of purpose when he talks of "becoming an IAS officer because I can then make positive differences to so many people".



Hands-on training at the LABS' computer department.



(Current Affairs questions are from the period January 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Name the comic-book sailor who turned 75 on January 17th.
2. Which popular South Indian actress has made her comeback, albeit on the small screen, in *Malini Iyer*?
3. Name the former Australian cricketer who succumbed to his injuries, after an assault, leading to shock all round.
4. Who is the successor to J.M. Lyngdoh as the Chief Election Commissioner?
5. Name the aircraft carrier, along with MiG 29K fighters and other systems, that India is buying from Russia for approximately \$ 1.5 billion.
6. Chetan Anand and Aparna Popat are the new National champions in which Olympic sport?
7. Name the two recipients of the country's highest peace-time gallantry award, the Ashok Chakra.
8. Of the three personalities honoured with Padma Vibhushan, the nation's second highest civilian award, one is the former CJI, M.N. Venkatachaliah. Name the other two.
9. Name the second NASA probe that kept its tryst with Mars on January 25th.
10. Which global cyber-business icon has been honoured with a Knighthood by the Queen?
11. Where did the steam-loco driven 'Heritage Special' train run on January 18th in the city?
12. Name the former head of Hindustan Lever appointed the chairman of EID Parry Ltd., a company of the Chennai-based Murugappa Group.
13. How many Lok Sabha seats are there in Tamil Nadu?
14. Where in the Tiruchi District did a fire at a marriage hall leave at least 59 dead?
15. From which high-profile case was the Chief Minister, J. Jayalalitha, acquitted on January 23rd?
16. Thanks to a new initiative by BSNL, what words of wisdom would one get on dialing (044) 1250113?
17. Which Tamil Nadu and India cricketer, known for his gutsy all-round shows, announced his retirement, recently?
18. Why were Veeramani, a Class VIII student from Vedaranyam, and P. Durai Murugan, a Class VI student from Manapparai, the cynosure of all eyes at the Republic Day parade in Chennai?
19. Total trivia. Name the stations between Tirumayilai and Tirunavmiyur on the now-extended MRTS route in the city.
20. The pioneering industrial estate, the Guindy Industrial Estate, is named after which person?

(Answers on Page 8)

Memories of 1948

"We must be immortal, as far as we can". These words of Aristotle perhaps best sum up the spirit of the Olympics.

I qualified for the 1948 London Olympics by clocking my best ever time of 10.6 seconds for the 100 metres sprint at the Bangalore trials, which was the qualifying mark for the Games. There were only seven track and field athletes. But hockey, football and water polo teams and a coterie of wrestlers, boxers, weightlifters and a cyclist in all made a very large Indian contingent for London. We could afford it as it was a year after Independence, and we had a very large sterling balance to our credit for supplies of khaki regimentals during the war.

The ship journey from Bombay to Liverpool was a 17-days' voyage, but we were comfortable and enjoyed it. We kept fit with on-deck running and exercise. Among us was our marathon runner, Pritam Singh. He would start an hour after breakfast, running round and round on the upper deck, and go on and on till near lunch time, performing with perverse repetition something which was completely unintelligible to the amused passengers sitting with a book and a drink in their deck chairs. They, the commodity-producing and commodity-exchanging beings, all part of a credential-oriented society that honours titles and where a degree behind a man's name determines his credibility, could not fathom this cocoon of commitment which had no market value. Pritam Singh, running alone on the upper deck, however, was burning with a tiny flame inside him. He felt the adrenaline flowing, his pulse racing. He had to resist the desire to quit, to put it off until tomorrow or the day after. He had to convince himself and continue to renew his faith that there was no substitute for hard work and discipline. So he let the deck-chair wallahs stare and laugh. What did they know of a marathon runner's suffering and joy?

In the Persian Gulf we picked up the Iran contingent. Our wrestlers practised with theirs during the voyage. From Liverpool we took a train to London. London was still recovering from the ravages of World War II. The food rationing and the piles of rubble on the streets did not daunt the British who put up a great show, typical of their never-say-die spirit.

On our first day in London we lost and found our marathon runner. Our coach took us to the famous Law Co, makers of sprinters' spikes, marathon runners' cross-country shoes and jumpers' special arch-support shoes. A pair of the best was bought for each of the seven of us. While the bill was being settled, Pritam Singh, wanting to try out his new shoes, took off on the London roads. We waited for an hour but he did not return. A nice English couple, who took him in for the night when he cupped his right palm to them for *paani*, came the next morning to the Olympic camp at Richmond Park and with a delightful laugh handed over Pritam Singh. We did not know then that every laugh in London was a treasure because there weren't that many.

King George VI was in the

Dutch track and field legend Fanny Blankers-Koen, remembered as "the flying housewife" after clinching four gold medals at the 1948 Olympics, died recently, aged 85.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) in 1999 named her the best female athlete of the 20th Century. Koen swept the London Olympics in athletics when she was 30 and the mother of two children. She topped the 100 and 200 metre sprints, the 80 metre hurdles and the 4x100 metre relay race — a record four golds that still stands for a Dutch woman athlete.

She set 20 world records and 85 Dutch records in short distance running, the pole vault, hurdles and the long jump.

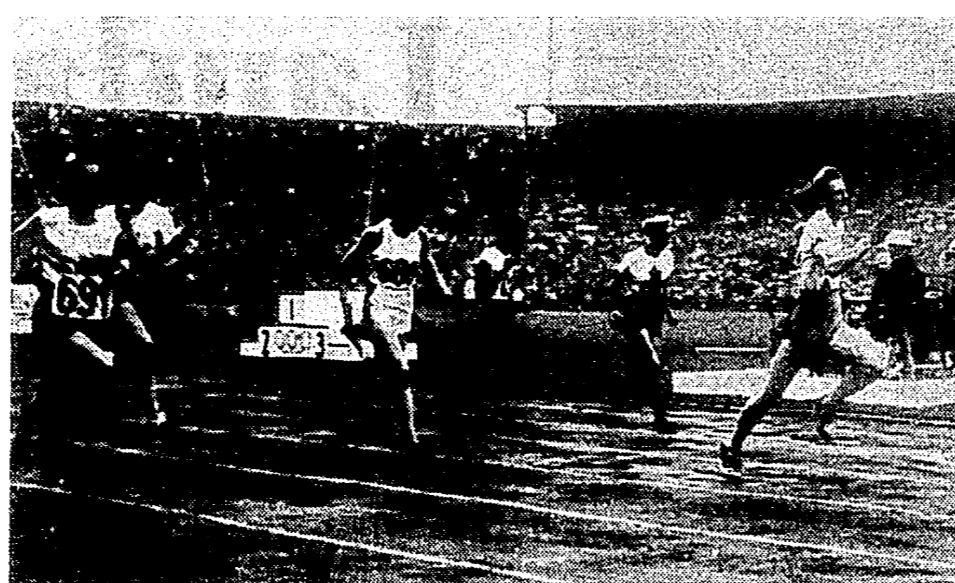
ERIC PRABHAKAR, who reached the quarter-finals in the qualifying stages of the 100m sprint in the 1948 Olympics, captures the spirits of those Games after reading of the death of Blankers-Koen.

Royal Box to review the teams. The march past was led by the team from Greece, the original Olympic country, and the end brought up by Britain, the host nation. British sports commentators covering the inauguration of the Olympic Games at Wembley were surprised that, unlike the teams of other nations, the Indian team had not dipped its national flag in salute to His Majesty the King during the march past. Some went as far as to venture suggestions that the failure was intentional. The British columnists did have reason to believe that it was an act of truancy. For, in all previous Olympics, India as a British colony was forced to march behind the flag of Great Britain. But in the dressing room before their final match against Germany in the 1936 Berlin Olymp-

way a mark of disrespect to His Majesty the King.

Outside, ticket scalpers were getting as much as £20 for a £2 ticket. Television was not so widespread then. But the TV screen seldom shows the dazzle of the overall view. And when I looked up and saw the Olympic Rings, "Oh Boy", I said, "this is not just another track meet".

For all its various sports, the Olympics are primarily a track meet. Fanny Blankers-Koen, the 'Flying Dutchwoman', was the star of the London Olympics, winning four gold medals. The prejudice against women athletes had long roots. The criterion for women long remained aesthetics rather than athletics. There was an irrational dread of Amazon muscularity. Pierre de Coubertine shared fully the prejudices of the age



Fanny Blankers-Koen, on her way to winning the 100m dash in the 1948 Olympics. She created a world-record with a timing of 11.4 seconds.

and opposed the participation of females in the modern Olympic Games (Athens 1896). It was due to the effort of an equally obdurate French person, a lady named Alice Milliat, that women were finally admitted in 1928 (Paris Olympics), albeit only in team gymnastics and five events in track. And now the superstar in the 1948 London Olympics was a lady, mother of two.

Our great medal hope was triple jumper, Henry Rebell. He was young, just 19 years, and was in great form, crossing 51 feet routinely. Just before his event, the results of the weightlifting competition were announced over the public system and he was forced to halt his warming up and stand to attention with the other athletes as the national anthem of the nine gold winners, flyweight to super heavy weight, were played. This went on for 40 minutes. By now, the organisers were running behind schedule and Henry was told to take his first jump immediately. He didn't protest and without warming up, went straight into his jump. He tore his hamstring muscle and had to be carried off in agony. He had never had any muscle trouble until then. Ahman of Sweden won the gold with a 50'6" (15.40m) jump.

In the 100m sprint, I won the first heat, and came second in the quarterfinals. In the semi-final, which was won by Lloyd Labeach, the eventual bronze medallist, I finished fifth and my Olympics was over. The finals was won by Harrison Dillard in a time of 10.3 seconds, which was equalled by Jesse Owens, an Olympic record. Norwood Ewell came second in 10.4 seconds.

When our hockey coach called for volunteers to work out with our hockey team, I volunteered, as I wanted to be active. Our hockey team won the gold, victorious for the fourth successive Olympics. The president of the Pakistan Olympic Association told Reuters in London that he was quite dissatisfied with the draw for the matches in field hockey. He explained that it was so organised that India and Pakistan would not have a chance of meeting in

(Continued on Page 7)

Maratha contributor in Thanjavur

Raja Serfoji II, ruler of Thanjavur from 1798 to 1812, was a major contributor to the cultural landscape of India. His contributions were the focus of the first day of a three-day seminar recently organised by the Karthik Fine Arts.

Chief convener of the seminar, Bharata Natyam exponent Sudharani Raghupathy, spoke of how the fine arts flourished in the Thanjavur region continuously for several centuries, mainly due to the enlightened patronage extended by successive ruling dynasties: Chola, Nayak and Maratha. The services to the arts rendered by Raja Raja Chola (late 10th and early 11th centuries) were particularly significant.

Serfoji II was, in many respects, the last of the great patrons, she pointed out. He was a versatile and colourful personality with a wide range of interests. A monumental contribution of the scholarly king was the development of the Saraswati Mahal Library as a treasure-house of knowledge.

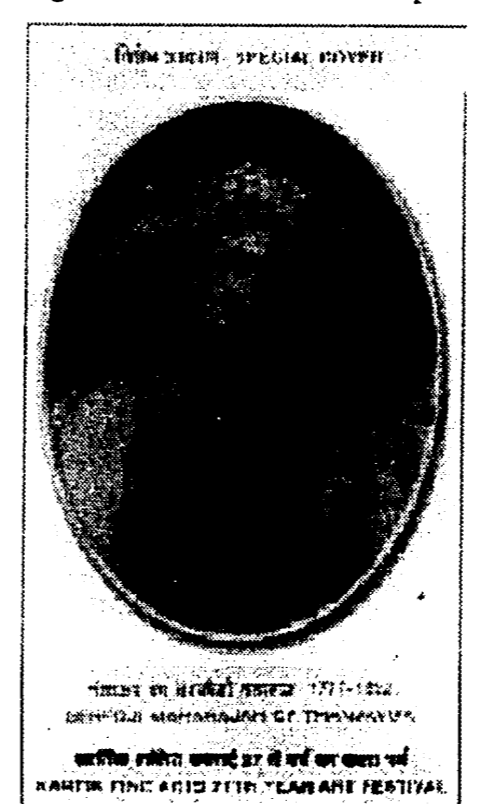
Babaji Rajah Bhonsle Chattrapathy, a descendant of the royal family and now the Senior Prince as well as the Hereditary Trustee of the Palace Devasthanam which administers about 90 temples in the region, highlighted the humane qualities of Serfoji.

Serfoji, he narrated, was adopted by King Tulaja as a child and placed in the care of Amar Singh who before long ill-treated the minor and seized the throne. However, when the throne was restored to Serfoji, he did not try to wreak vengeance but ensured decent treatment of Amar Singh.

Many of Serfoji's services, including collecting materials on different subjects like educa-

tion, culture and medicine, were motivated by his concern for public good. A proof of the affection the common people held for him was the large gathering of about 100,000 people at his funeral.

P. Perumal, Conservator in the Saraswati Mahal Library in Thanjavur, stated that the Library's rare collections include manuscripts and books in many languages — some of the books are highly valued first editions — drawings, atlases, maps and lithographic engravings. Such a collection was pos-



Raja Serfoji Maharajah of Thanjavur as he appears on the 'First Day Special Cover'.

sible mainly due to the multi-focal interests and tireless efforts of Raja Serfoji. He also had a catalogue prepared with the necessary information. Proper organisation and preservation have enabled considerable research work and publications based on the material.

Dr. T. Padmanabhan, Library Director of the Tamil University in Thanjavur, described the varied contributions of Serfoji. He explained how the Saraswati Mahal

Library and the valuable knowledge contained in its archives were utilised in a variety of functions due to the innovative strategy of the Raja. This also required staff equipped with the necessary skills. Besides serving as an information centre, the Library became the nucleus of multiple services pertaining to education, medicine, religion, culture, social services, judicial functions, and promotion of research-cum-productions. It also became instrumental in setting up a printing press and a paper mill.

Sucheta Chapekar, the Pune-based Bharata Natyam dancer and scholar, focussed on the compositions of Serfoji II and the earlier Shahaji. T.N. Viswanathan, Telugu pundit at the Library, pointed out that both *Sangeeta Melam*, presented by women, and *Bhagavata Melam*, performed by men, developed considerably in Thanjavur during the Maratha period, with State sponsorship. From the time of King Shahaji, there were many multi-lingual productions in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Marathi. These were presented in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Mannargudi and elsewhere during festivals and included *Sankara Pallaki Seva Prabhandam*, *Vishnu Pallaki Seva Prabhandam*, *Pancharatna Prabhandam* and *Tyagesar Kuravanji*. Shahaji was himself a scholar and composer of high calibre. The patronage was sustained by later rulers, reaching the heights under Serfoji II. The cumulative impact of such interactions was quite significant, leading to the evolution of many composite forms, introduction of items like *todayamangalam*, *saranudaru* and *mangala daru* and also of many new *raga*-s. Many of these survive today.

Literature regarding all the dance-dramas presented in Thanjavur during that period is well preserved in the Palace Library. The costumes and musical instruments required for Bhagavata Mela presentations are preserved in the Palace and made available when required. Thus the patronage continues to be effective.

As part of the seminar, a 'First Day Special Cover' of Serfoji II was released by Dr. U. Srinivasa Raghavan, Chief Postmaster-General, Tamil Nadu, and a *kathakalakshepa* on *Maamannan Serfoji* was presented by Revathy Sankaran. There was also a photo exhibition on Serfoji and his reign in the foyer of the Narada Gana Sabha. (Courtesy: *Srutii*)

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(Signature of the Publisher)

MEMORIES OF 1948

(Continued from page 6)

the final. He complained that undivided India was the holder of the Olympic Championship and that it was only fair that both countries be enabled with chances to reach the final. India was in the 'A' Group and Pakistan in Group 'D'. The winner of 'A' group was required to meet the winner of 'D' group in the semifinal, an unusual procedure. Normally, A would meet B in one semifinal and C would meet D in the other. As you know, the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics established India as the world's number-one power in hockey. Led by 22-year-old Dhyana Chand, an army captain from U.P. who scored 15 goals, the Indian team whipped through the tournament without conceding a single goal. Ever since Amsterdam, Great Britain had studiously avoided playing the Indian team, apparently afraid of the embarrassment of losing to one of its colonies. However, in the 1948 London Olympics, India gained not only independence from Britain, but also a chance to face its former sovereign in what had then become India's superstar sport. The match for gold turned out to be a no contest,

as Great Britain, which had advanced to the final without conceding a goal, was itself shut out 4-0. We went on to win the hockey gold in 1952 (Helsinki) and in 1956 (Melbourne) while Pakistan won the gold in the 1960 Rome Olympics.

At the closing ceremony, the lowering of the Olympic flag, which had flown in front of a billboard at Wembley carrying de Courbetin's last message, riveted my attention to those immortal words of the founder of the modern Olympic Games.

"The important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part. The essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well."

It is this message that I carry most in perpetual remembrance of the London Olympics.

The entire contingent left for India on 15th August. I stayed back as my Rhodes scholarship in Oxford was to start a month later. As I was not given the return seafare, I had to fend for myself. I worked for a youth club in the East End for board and lodging. I enjoyed the experience for it was mostly cricket, hockey and sports with young people.

Balaji in for long spell

It took me a few seconds to recognise the tall, rangy young man who was smiling at me as I entered my office premises. At closer quarters, I was able to place him as L Balaji, the new fast bowling sensation of the Chemplast cricket team. This was a couple of years ago and the young man with the lean and hungry look had just returned from a tour of the West Indies with the India A team. The usual pleasantries exchanged, I asked him whether he had had a good tour. He had not exactly set the Caribbeans on fire, I knew from newspaper reports, so my question had more to do with the quality of his bowling than the number of wickets he had taken. His reply surprised me with its directness and honesty: "I bowled reasonably well, but Avishkar Salvi bowled really well."

Balaji had by then been expected to play for the senior Indian side, and popular opinion in his home State had it that a place in the India A squad was poor compensation for his sterling deeds in domestic cricket, in which Balaji's ascent had been nothing short of meteoric. His relatively lack of success on the West Indies tour had been a disappointment, but he obviously had the character to accept his shortcomings and work hard at improving as a bowler. In the years after that conversation, he has made great strides and left the competition including Salvi far behind. Initial failures at the international level have only made him more determined, as when he fought back after the hammering he

received from the West Indies batsmen on a typically slow Indian wicket on his ODI debut, and being dropped for the New Zealand tour that followed.

Balaji used to turn out for AG's Office Recreation Club in the third division of the TNCA league—he was coached then by another Balaji—until the summer of 2001, when he toured England with a group of youngsters led by former Indian wicket keeper Bharat Reddy. Followed an invitation to become a member of the Jolly Rovers team in the league, and Balaji never looked back after that. He was consistently among the wickets in the Tamil

Nadu in the national tournament, and getting selected for the BCCI President's XI against the touring England team, though he did not figure in the final eleven. He has been Tamil Nadu's leading wicket taker ever since he made his debut, his brilliant bowling against Orissa and Delhi taking the team to the Ranji Trophy final.

In Australia this season, Balaji made a slow start, taking time to adjust to the faster, bouncier tracks there, but once he got the hang of it, he began to make intelligent use of those conditions, bowling within himself or striving for pace as the situation demanded. He is obviously a big match player and has a keen sense of occasion, as he has demonstrated by repeatedly snaring the top Australian batsmen like Ponting and Hayden. To his natural inward movement, he has added a very useful away-

• by V. Ramnarayan

Nadu Cricket Association's senior division league, but more important, managed to impress onlookers with his speed, accuracy, movement and subtle change of pace. The state selectors were among those who saw merit in the lad, and they picked him to represent Tamil Nadu in the Ranji Trophy, but he spent a whole season on the reserve benches.

Next season, Balaji made it to the playing eleven, making a strong debut against Kerala, taking seven wickets in the match. Balaji also performed quite brilliantly at the Under-19 level, where he captured 5 wickets for South Zone against England U-19.

Within the short span of one season, Balaji made rapid progress, taking 32 wickets for

going delivery, deceiving batsmen by what seems very similar to reverse swing — even with the new ball!

Balaji idolises Australian paceman Glenn McGrath, whose accuracy and never-say-die spirit he tries to emulate. He pays considerable attention to his physical fitness, and is considered a good fielder. As a tailend batsman, he has shown admirable resolve, if not sparkling talent.

In a very short career, Balaji has already picked up 146 first class wickets and has shown himself to be a quick and willing learner. This likable young man seems destined for a longish innings in the Indian team, improving steadily rather than making spectacular progress.



February 20: Exhibition of paintings by R.B. Holle. (At Apparao Gallery.)

February 21 and 28: Kids Cookery workshop. Workshop will include introduction to the kitchen, easy-to-make recipes and enable children to rustle up their own breakfast or snack. (At Creative Arts Studio. For confirmed dates and time please call Anjana Sunil at 98400 32146 or 24346225.)

February 21: The Banyan presents its annual spectacular music and dance evening featuring the vocal talents of Begum Parween Sultana and the grace of danseuse Sonal Mansingh. All money raised is in support of The Banyan's work with homeless women. Mail: the_banyan@vsnl.com or call 9840020161 or 26530504 for information. (Donor passes are Rs. 2,500 per head, including dinner and cocktails. (At DakshinaChitra.)

February 21: Vinyasa Art Gallery presents paintings by M. Senathipathy. (At Vinyasa.)

February 23: On exhibit are recent works of A.V. Ilango. (At Vinyasa Art Gallery.)

February 23: *The Fisher Girl of Lake Constance* directed by Harald Reini. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m. Open to film enthusiasts.)

February 23: Paintings by Venkatraman. (At Lakshana Art Gallery.)

February 23: A one day exhibition on glass paintings by Nandita Vijayan. (At C.P. Arts Centre.)

February 24: *Echo of the Mountains* directed by Alfons Stummer. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m. Open to film enthusiasts.)

February 25: *High up on the Mountain* directed by Geza von Bolvary. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m.)

February 25: The Indo American Chamber of Commerce brings you a seminar on 'The Other Side of BPO' sponsored by Electronic Software Promotion Council. Vivek Harinarayan, Secretary, IT, Government of Tamil Nadu, will be one of the speakers. (At Hotel Residency Tower. Please contact the Chamber at 24990506/8391 for details.)

February 26: *Lady Country Doctor* directed by Paul May. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m.)

February 27: *The Girl of the Moors* directed by Gustav Ucicky. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m.)

February 28: *The Farmer's Perjury* directed by Rudolf Jugert. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m.)

February 27: TrendsSmith, the country's most unique jewellery and lifestyle store is showcasing the breath-taking signature line collection designed by the celebrated jewellery personality Nirmal Zaveri. (At TrendsSmith.)

February 29: *Roses Bloom on the Grave in the Meadow* directed by Hans H. König. (At the Film Chamber Theatre, 6.30 p.m.)

Answers to Quiz

1. Popeye; 2. Sridevi; 3. David Hookes; 4. T.S. Krishnamoorthy; 5. Admiral Gorshkov; 6. Badminton; 7. Lt. Triveni Singh and Commando Sanjog Chhetri; 8. Litterateur Amrita Pritam and astronomer Jayant Narlikar; 9. Opportunity; 10. Bill Gates.

* * *

11. Between Chennai and

Vandalur; 12. S.M. Dutta; 13. 39; 14. Srirangam; 15. SPIC disinvestment case; 16. A Tirukkural couplet; 17. Robin Singh; 18. They were the recipients of this year's Anna Medal for Bravery; 19. Mandaveli, Greenways Road, Kotturpuram, Kasturba Nagar and Indira Nagar; 20. Labour leader and writer V. Kalyanasundaram.

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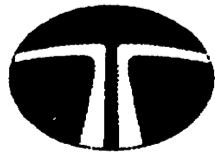
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