

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

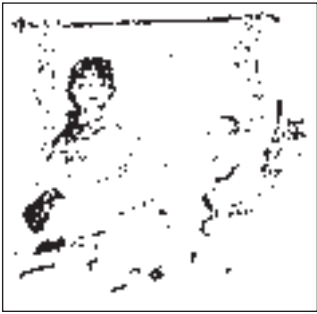
MUSINGS

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Nothing like a hot cup of filter coffee
in this weather!

Chins up, Chennai

If ever a city had a right to the Mood Melancholic, it was Chennai, battered and buffeted by 'low pressures' and 'depressions' for weeks now.

The weather people disclosed that at least six major systems have made their unwelcome way to Chennai.

Did the cosmic comedy crew deliberately gang up on us?

Water certainly made its presence felt.

If you are someone who considers placing a toe gingerly in a particularly small wave coming off the Bay of Bengal as adventure enough, imagine the horror of watching your home turn into an island, or gliding in boats down the very roads you were walking on two days ago.

Frightened, displaced – it was the 'worst of times' for many.

You couldn't help gazing with measured censure at the thirst-quenching liquid nestling innocently in your steel tumbler even as you took a sip.

"Not done," you growled, "Your sort is guilty of serious excess."

And – it is cold enough for advertisements hawking room heaters to appear.

That's right – room heaters.

In Chennai.

"There's another one coming," became the Chennaiite's favourite form of greeting.

Yet, a news image lingers – of a woman in a boat, arms around her children, with a few, heart-breakingly few, belongings scattered about her, smiling bravely into the camera.

That's the spirit of the city.

Chennai bore with – she knew the sun will be back soon.

Ranjitha Ashok



Pallikaranai Marsh – waterfilled after the rains.

A promise to protect marsh

(Text and photographs by
B. VIMALA,
Editor, Reach Velachery.)

It took the November-December floods to bring the Pallikaranai Marsh to the attention of Government. In a welcome statement, the Chief Minister, after visiting flood-ravaged Velachery and Madipakkam, promised that the Pallikaranai Marsh would be protected to ensure that it remains a collection area for surplus water. This commitment by Government has been welcomed by all naturalists, NGOs, environmentalists and residents' welfare associations in the area who have long been campaigning against the degradation of this wetland.

The marsh was once 5000 hectare. It stretched from present-day Madhya Kailash, near the CLRI, to Muttukadu beach. Today, only about 600 hectare are left. Even this is shrinking day by day. According to officials, 75 acres of the marsh were allotted to the Corporation of Chennai as a garbage dump. Today, 2000 tonnes of unsegregated garbage are being dumped daily by the Corporation, Onyx, municipalities in the vicinity and the Alandur Municipality. This dump has encroached into the marsh upto an extent of 250 acres!

The Chennai Metrowater Board's Perungudi Sewage Treatment Plant is located here. So too the National Institute of Ocean Technology's and the Department of Windmill Energy. The MRTS rail-

way project has occupied 200 hectare here. Land has also been allotted to FEFSI, the international flower bazaar, the judicial academy and to many IT companies.

Care Earth, an NGO, made a study of the marsh in 2002 on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board. According to its report, there were 106 species of birds, 46 species of fishes, 9 species of frogs, 21 species of lizards and snakes and 10 species of mammals inhabiting the swamp. This NGO also reported that the tall reeds that grow here act as filters to clean surplus rainwater and untreated sewage water.

The Pallikaranai Marsh is a storehouse for 19 lakes in and around Chennai. A PWD official states, "The marsh received 13,000 cusecs of rainwater from October 27th this year till early

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Burning of garbage near the Pallikaranai Marsh (see background in both pictures) threatens both marsh and settlements.



Traffic improvements ahead?

They're dependent on road-users

Anyone who happens to be on Chennai's roads in peak hour traffic nowadays could write a scathing treatise on the depths to which Traffic Management has plummeted over the years. Add to this inadequate road capacities, laxity in traffic control, and driver indiscipline, and the scenario seems truly hopeless! But respite

seems to be in the offing, with advanced technology applications, like the Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS), that are to be introduced within the city in the next few months.

Commonly known as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), these technologies essentially utilise electronics,

communications and control to enhance the efficiency of traffic movement and promote safety. The ATMS is one of ITS's functional areas. Its basic functions are to collect, utilise and disseminate real time data on congestion on arterial streets and expressways. The applica-

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Those waves of destruction

Tsunami is a Japanese word represented by two characters – *tsu*, meaning harbour, and *nami*, meaning wave. They are called 'harbour waves' because they are most noticeable in harbours. They are common in Japan (25% of tsunamis originate from there), although they can occur anywhere where the seabed is liable to rapid movement, by earthquake rupture, volcanic eruptions or collapse, or by sediment slumping (underwater landslides). In the past, tsunamis were referred to as 'tidal waves' and as seismic 'sea waves' by the scientific community. The term tidal waves is a misnomer; although a tsunami's impact on a coastline is dependent on the tidal level at the time a tsunami strikes, it is unrelated to tides, which result from the imbalanced, extraterrestrial, gravitational influences of the moon, sun and planets. The term 'seismic sea waves' is also misleading. 'Seismic' implies an earthquake-related generation mechanism. Tsunamis are not generated by the gravitational pull of the moon or the sun; they are indeed produced impulsively by an undersea earthquake, but they can also be caused by volcanic eruptions, meteorite impacts or underwater landslides.

Tsunami waves cause currents that are mainly confined to a shallow oceanic layer beneath which is relatively calm water. Strong winds may be able to generate even 30-metre high waves in the open ocean, but even these do not move the deep waters. Tides, which occur all over the earth twice a day, produce currents that reach the ocean bottom – just as tsunamis do – but these too are of shorter wavelengths as compared to tsunamis. Once a tsunami is generated, its steepness (ratio of height to wavelength) is extremely low. This lack of steepness, combined with the wave's very long period (5 to 20 minutes), enables it to pass unnoticed beneath ships at sea. As the tsunami crest approaches shore, however, the situation changes rapidly and often dramatically. The period of the wave remains constant, velocity drops, and wave height greatly increases. On reaching the coast, water surges ashore in the form of a very high, very powerful tide. In confined coastal waters relatively close to their point of origin, tsunamis can reach a height of perhaps 30 metres. The wave is a fast, onrushing flood of water. The speed of the tsunami

wave depends on water-depth. If an earthquake on the sea bottom occurs offshore at a depth of 1000 m, the speed of a tsunami becomes about 360 km per hour.

The height of a tsunami depends on the intensity of the earthquake. Assuming that at the initial offshore point, at a water depth of 1000 m, the initial height is 2 m, at the coastline, at 1 m water depth, a tsunami wave will be as high as 11.2 m.

The most destructive tsunamis are caused by subduction zone earthquakes. A subduction zone is where two of the earth's rigid tectonic plates converge towards one another (roughly a few centimetres per year), and one plate, usually

out to the deep ocean (distant tsunami) and another that travels towards the nearby coast (local tsunami). The height above the mean sea level (MSL) of the two oppositely travelling tsunamis is about half that of the original tsunami.

Deep ocean tsunamis travel faster than local tsunamis. In the deep ocean, this wave travels at speeds of 500-1,000 km per hour. The slope of the wave, which extends hundreds of kilometres, is so gentle that even ships travelling on top of a tsunami wave will not feel it. The momentum of the tsunami is so great that it can travel great distances with little loss of energy.

As a tsunami leaves the deep waters of the open ocean and

• Remembering the tragedy of a year ago
– A scientific view by **SANTOSH KUMAR SARKAR** and **Md. AFTAB ALAM** of the University of Calcutta

composed of heavier oceanic material, dives beneath the other which is generally a lighter plate. At the boundary where the two rub against each other, the lower one drags and flexes the top one slightly downward. When the upper plate rebounds to its original position, it causes sea-floor displacement. This disturbance propagates outward as a tsunami. And the wave height will at best be a couple of metres.

Unlike a tidal wave, a tsunami extends deep down into the ocean waters. That is, a tsunami crest is just the very tip of a very vast mass of water in motion. Within several minutes of the quake, the initial tsunami will split into one that travels

travels into the shallower water near the coast, its character changes. In the course of its travel – and it can travel thousands of kilometres – a tsunami power remains virtually unchanged. But, as it enters the shallow water in its approach to the coast, a tsunami's speed slows and its height grows. Imperceptible at sea, it may swell up to 10 m, or over 30 ft, near the coast. When it reaches the coast it may appear as a rapidly rising or falling tide. Tsunamis may reach a maximum vertical height onshore above sea level of 10, 20 and even 30 metres.

Although a tsunami loses its energy as it hits the shore, it still lands with tremendous power. Tsunamis have great erosion

Scenarios in history: Five deadly tsunamis

Year	Place	Casualties
856	Damgham, Iran	200,000
1138	Alleppo, Syria	230,000
1556	Shansi, China	830,000
1923	Kwanto, Japan	143,000
1948	Turkmenistan	110,000

Ten destructive tsunamis of the recent past

Date	Place	Max. wave height	Casualties
2.11.1992	Nicaragua	10m	170
2.12.1992	Flores Island	26m	>1,000
12.7.1993	Okushiri, Japan	31m	239
12.7.1993	Papua-New Guinea	15m	>2,200
2.6.1994	East Java	14m	238
14.11.1994	Mindoro Island	7m	49
9.10.1995	Jalisco, Mexico	11m	1
1.1.1996	Sulawesi Islands	3.4m	9
17.2.1996	Irian Jaya	7.7m	161
21.2.1996	North coast of Peru	5m	12



potential, stripping beaches of sand that may have taken years to accumulate and ripping up trees and other coastal vegetation. Flooding hundreds of metres inland, the fast-moving body of water can crush homes and other structures.

Once a tsunami hits land, a part of the energy is reflected back into the sea. Besides, a tsunami can generate what are called edge waves that travel back and forth in relation to the shore. These effects result in many arrivals of the tsunami at a point on the coast. Because of this it is not advisable to go to the beach several hours after a tsunami hits.

December 2004 tsunami

The December 26th tsunami that hit India and Southeast Asia was the biggest, in terms of earthquake that triggered it, the extent of destruction it caused and the number of deaths (273,000) since 1900. The causative sea disturbance was an earthquake of magnitude above 8.5 on the Richter scale – the most recent value given by United States Geological Survey (USGS) is 9.0 – whose epicentre was off the west coast of northern Sumatra (3.3° N, 95.78° E) and at 10 km depth. The quake occurred at 00.59 hours Coordinated Universal Time (CUT) – same as Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). The location was 250 km south-southeast of Banda Aceh, Sumatra, 1,260 km south-southwest of Bangkok, and 1,605 km northwest of Jakarta. Professor Jeffrey Park of Yale University states that the quake's rupture moved giant slabs of rock at least 20 metres over a distance equivalent to that between Florida and New England. Dr. Park warned that the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake would continue to affect the region for many years.

The Tamil Nadu coast was about 2,000 km from the epicentre. The wave seemed to have hit Cuddalore first, barely one and a half hour, after the event. That made the tsunami hit an extremely fast one, with a speed of about 900 km per hour. The first wave to hit Chennai, according to the Surveyor General of India, was at 08.40 hours Indian Standard Time (IST); Machilipattanam

was struck at 10.00 hours. The Survey of India (SOI) maintains tidal gauges along the eastern coast. There are only three of them located in the affected region: Chennai, Nagapattinam and Tuticorin. Apparently, all three were destroyed in the disaster. Therefore, only rough estimates of the run-up are available. The ports, however, maintain what are known as tide poles with markings on them. The Chennai Port recorded a tidal wave height of 4.1 m, while the Ennore Port recorded 3.5 m. The normal maximum tolerance that these ports are designed to handle is about a metre of tide. These are, of course, rough parameters, and the SOI is trying to determine the exact values.

The killer waves claimed at least 3,000 islanders in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. About 5,000 people were reported missing and thousands of buildings demolished. The worst affected areas were Car Nicobar, Mayabandar, Rangat, Diglipur and the Nancowrie groups of islands. Significantly the Andaman tribes, the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa and Sentinelese, collectively known as Negrito tribes of African descent, made to high ground early to escape from the tsunami.

After-effects

Much of the "earth is ringing like a bell" after the December 26th earthquake that triggered the tsunami around the Indian Ocean and is still ringing today, emphasises Dr. Ronald Burgmann, Professor of Earth and Planetary Science, University of California. According to Burgmann, adjustments in the earth's mantle could have triggered an earthquake of 8.7 magnitude in the same area on March 28, 2005. The quake also set records for the longest fault rupture and the longest duration of faulting.

Australian university scientists said hyper-sensitive gravity-measuring equipment had picked up the reverberations, a rare seismic event. Ringing corresponds to about a millimetre of vertical motion of the earth, says Herb McQueen of the University of Earth Sciences Research School.

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A two-page pull-out on threatening water and water threatened

Failure to save city from water

The flooding of much of Chennai and its suburbs has been traumatic for thousands of citizens and the scores of relief providers. Areas submerged included parts of Kottivakkam, Neelankarai, Palavakkam, Injambakkam, Okkiyam Thoraipakkam, Sholinaganallur and Karapakkam, besides areas west of the Pallikaranai Marsh, such as Velachery, Madipakkam, Pallikaranai, Kovilampakkam, Nanmangalam and Perungudi. In many areas, sewage pipes have been overflowing for days. A Velachery resident wails, "I feel I'm in the middle of a massive sewage tank".

Official reports say the flooding has been largely "between the Buckingham Canal and the East Coast Road" and mainly due to "unprecedented rainfall on a geographically flat terrain". C. S. Kuppuraj, former Chief Engineer, PWD, says, "Why call the situation 'unprecedented' when similar rains occurred in 1943, 1961 and again in 1971? People did not suffer this much then because there were fewer encroachments, less density of population, and pre-monsoon works (that involved keeping the mouths of the main waterways open) were regularly carried out (till upto 1975, that is). The official machinery has become more lackadaisical from the 1970s".

Kuppuraj adds, "If Pudupet and Chintadripet are inundated it's because the mouth of the Cooum is closed. And with MRTS over the Buckingham Canal alignment from Chintadripet to Taramani for about 10 km, what else can you expect? The PWD granted permission to the Railways on condition that there would be no hindrance to the flow of water. So, where the original canals are blocked, an alternate canal must be provided alongside by the Railways. That's not been done. And I hear that the Corporation, that has not been maintaining all the existing stormwater drains (along 700 km of roads), is now planning to construct many more for the remaining 2300 km!"

Flooding occurs mainly because water does not flow smoothly along the water carriers in the city which suffer from silting, encroachments etc. While surface drainage is a function of the Corporation, underground drainage is the

CMWSSB's and the water bodies are with the PWD. Co-ordination between these agencies is the responsibility of the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA). With four different authorities each with its own agenda, co-ordination inevitably suffers. A senior CMDA official cited "the tremendous pressure on the land due to the urban impact" as the reason for encroachments along the rivers, which, though "not encouraged in principle are very difficult to prevent." Paucity of funds to help relocate the slum dwellers, and politicised resettlement issues complicate the process, the official says. "Planning is going on, and project implementation is un-

derway, but at a slower pace. Both these, however, do not match the rate of development." "He recommends: "First, a suitable investment pattern to move poor people to safer places. For low-lying areas, providing proper drainage and sewerage facilities with the involvement and help of private organisations."

raised by the PWD was 'How do you dispose of the large amounts of soil that would need to be relocated?'. Why not dump it in big quarries or use it to make soil-cement blocks for construction purposes?

"There has been a steep erosion of the planning and coordinating functions of the CMDA. When the CMDA was instituted, till about the 1980s, it functioned as a coordinating authority. It was even expected to oversee the budget of the various departments involved. Unfortunately, the heads of the State Government Departments never lent their power to the collective body, that is the CMDA. And the CMDA too has failed to push its mandate," he says. Kuppuraj affirms, "If so

• by SHOBHA MENON

much construction has taken place where it shouldn't, it just means the CMDA has failed as a regulatory body."

"Doesn't the CMDA realise that it is not Planning Permission Authority but Developmental Authority that sits at the apex of the city's developmental measures? It is their job as the main custodian to coordinate with all agencies involved. The CMDA seems to have, over the years, forgotten what it was originally formed for – to comprehensively look at and coordinate the whole development process of the city. A Developmental Agency refers to a body that should look at the city's future expansion and provide for growth and urban impacts. Why point fingers?" wonders a Water Resources expert.

The expert adds, "Though the CMDA gives planning permission, the real crux is with the local administration body. There is always better coordination during a crisis, but little or no cooperation at all other times. Theoretically, the CMDA is an apex body that has no real authority. Each department it coordinates has its own agenda and priorities. For instance the Metrowater is focussed on supplying water, not on deepening and desilting tanks. Every year funds must be allocated to address ALL aspects. There is no proper inter-departmental cooperation (almost a generation gap even), as intra-departmental cooperation itself is an issue.

derway, but at a slower pace. Both these, however, do not match the rate of development." "He recommends: "First, a suitable investment pattern to move poor people to safer places. For low-lying areas, providing proper drainage and sewerage facilities with the involvement and help of private organisations."

The recently launched project by the Prime Minister on December 3rd, the Rs. 1 lakh crore Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, for integrated development of infrastructure services in 86 cities, of which Chennai is one, now seems to be the next looked-forward-to event by the 'infrastructure developers', with the States and municipal bodies undertaking the necessary reforms to avail of Central funds. "Implementation might be difficult initially, but the situation will be under control in 3-5 years," says a CMDA official.

G. Dattatri, former Chief Town Planner, however, points out, "If there was proper maintenance of drainage channels, there would definitely have been a 30-40% reduction in the stagnation of water. An additional 30% would have come down if existing tanks had been deepened to hold more water. Besides the deepening, there is also a need to sink a number of recharge wells. Around 1985, when the CMDA initiated a project through the PWD on deepening the tanks, the issue



The radial Velachery-Tambaram road days after the fury of the floods. (Photograph by B. VIMALA.)

"The question of reducing the number of local bodies has recently been raised. For instance, in Delhi, city planning is easier because the Delhi Development Authority dictates what to do and what not to do. Here, the CMDA, a coordinating agency, lacks proper access to knowledge resources in specific areas for effective planning. Access to current topographical data itself is an issue because of the resource crunch. Local bodies too need to have a sense of ownership and involvement to ensure the success of any project aimed at bettering the local conditions."

Besides the State's now enunciated commitment to protect natural wetlands, such as the Pallikaranai Marsh, a detailed report is expected on the possibility of having a regulated canal (straight cut) direct to the sea from the Buckingham Canal area adjoining the Okkiyam Maduvu. Says Chief Engineer R. Natarajan, Water Resources Organisation of the PWD, "The Buckingham Canal, originally a navigation canal, has no slope, but was forced to become a flood carrier as the city developed. According to the earlier route followed, the waters had to traverse 13 km from Madu to Muttukkadu to meet the sea. Two factors affect the flow – the distance traversed and the high tide and low tide levels. From the straight cut planned at Okkiyam Maduvu – whose projected cost is Rs. 10 - 15 crore, besides land acquisition charges — the distance of flow to the sea will be around 2½ km. But the need to cross the ECR involves land acquisition hurdles."

Kuppuraj calls this "an absolutely stupid idea". "The Buckingham Canal is already connected to the sea at every river crossing – Kortalayar, Cooum, Adyar, Muttukkadu, Mahabalipuram, right upto Marakkanam – and controlled by a system of locks that have remained unused for the last 50 years (since boat traffic ceased). In fact, a group of locals had to 'unjam' the lock at the Muttukkadu Junction to

alleviate the flooding in Neelankarai. With so many existing facilities to connect to the sea, one more is totally unnecessary," he feels.

Already there are many PWD projects underway to tackle these very same issues. A Rs. 30 crore project begun in 1999 mainly for desilting the Canal from Muttukkadu to Ennore Creek is now complete. But everywhere the PWD says it faces the same problems. "Land acquisition issues hinder new projects and encroachers hinder improvements in existing structures. If these two hurdles are taken care of, the project can be completed within a year. We're also planning to widen the Buckingham Canal in certain stretches, particularly Sadayankuppam to Ennore Creek."

Says Dr. S. Mohan of the Department of Civil Engineering, IIT, "The many agencies involved have not realised the harm that encroachments on and beside drainage channels in the city can cause. The Buckingham Canal, a recent study revealed, can even be a good barrier to sea water intrusion besides being a good flood carrier (if no waste water is discharged into it and pathways are cleared). Cleaning up and maintenance of the existing waterways is itself enough to ensure good drainage."

On June 30, 2005, the High Court in its order called for "ruthless and pitiless" removal of all structures encroaching on water bodies all over the State. How much of this has happened? "Who is interested in this happening, is the question? And unscrupulous politicians conveniently blame poor people for encroaching while they merrily carry out open sale of approved layouts on reclaimed water tanks, as in the Maduravoyal tank area," says a former PWD official.

Have one body to control the water bodies and ensure unitary control, suggests another expert. But says yet another, "What if that too functions like the CMDA?"

Even more unfortunate is
(Continued on Page 4)

The threat to rivers, beaches and seas

(By A Special Correspondent)

Virtually every waste product discarded by mankind eventually ends up in the aquatic environment. Untreated sewage, chemical discharges, industrial pollution and agrochemicals are the most obvious sources of pollution. But there are myriad other less noticeable sources too. Leaks from landfill sites, discharges from old mines and the run-off from roads all pollute our precious water. Airborne pollution also enters lakes and rivers through contaminated rain.

But it is not just freshwater that is under threat. Almost all of the world's major rivers eventually find their way to the sea,

carrying with them the pollution from the settlements that line their banks. Historically, our wetlands soaked up much of this pollution, but many of these are also under grave threat. Around 50 per cent have been destroyed over the past century alone.

Many of the world's cities are on, or close to, the sea. As a consequence, many coastal waters are contaminated with raw sewage, agricultural run-off and industrial wastes. As a result, marine ecosystems are in serious danger. Round the world, pollution is playing a major part in destroying reefs and the fisheries that depend on

them. Global warming is also having a significant impact. To make matters worse, over-fishing has devastated many of the world's great fisheries. Clearly, the loss of such great natural resources can worsen regional instability and conflict.

Whilst it is vital to preserve the natural world for its own sake, the future of humanity also rests on the health of our marine and freshwater environments. A significant proportion of mankind's food supply is harvested from rivers, lakes and seas. This food is becoming increasingly contaminated with industrial waste. To make matters worse, certain pollutants are becoming increasingly concentrated in the body fat of marine fish and animals. These find

their way into humans when they eat this contaminated food.

Unless we act to preserve our aquatic environment, not only will we be hungrier and poorer, but the future of our civilization itself could be threatened.

Britain, the cradle of the industrial revolution, was as a consequence the first to suffer the ill-effects of large-scale pollution. It has learnt a lot from its past environmental mistakes and developed expertise in correcting them. The UK now has some of the cleanest rivers in Europe. Around three-quarters of its rivers are now classified as being of 'good' quality or better. Europe's dirtiest river – the Mersey – was cleaned up to such a degree that it is now a thriving salmon fishery.

Cleaning up rivers has had a significant positive effect on the seas that surround the country. The seas are cleaner than they have been for at least a century – and water quality is still improving.

Water quality has improved massively over the past 30 years. This is largely a result of increasingly stringent legislation, which has compelled industry to clear up its water-borne pollution. In addition, new 'high-tech' sewage treatment works have been built in many of the major conurbations to further clean up waste waters. These measures, which have so far cost many billions of pounds, have resulted in the elimination of large-scale pollution from the UK.

Water quality is a priority in the UK and one of its headline indicators of sustainable development.

The UK's previous efforts at reducing pollution focussed on cleaning up the effluents from localised sources, such as chemical plants and sewage

works. This was time-consuming and expensive, but relatively straightforward. It is now poised to tackle the far more difficult problem of 'diffuse pollution'. This arises from innumerable low-level sources, such as drainage water from farmers' fields, or run-off from roads. Agricultural sources now account for around 80 per cent of aquatic pollution.

Tackling diffuse pollution is extremely difficult as it requires the positive input of huge numbers of individuals, businesses and organisations. To achieve this, farmers, for example, will be encouraged to manage their land in a more sustainable manner and to minimise the leaching of fertiliser into streams and rivers. Road drainage systems may need to be modified to prevent oil and petrol from contaminating watercourses. New water treatment facilities may be needed in urban areas. Because of its very nature, diffuse pollution will require as many solutions as there are sources of contamination.

These measures will have a profound long-term effect not only on rivers, lakes and streams but also on the seas surrounding the coasts. Cleaner rivers mean that the sea will become even fresher. To further enhance these benefits, the UK is making strenuous efforts to preserve and enhance its wetlands. These are not only vital for wildlife; they also play a vital role in cleansing rivers and seas. It is also implementing policies that will encourage the creation of new wetlands. Where desirable, the UK will even flood agricultural lands to create new wetlands.

(Courtesy: *Global Warning: An overview of the UK and the Environment*, issued by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.)



THOSE WAVES OF DESTRUCTION

(Continued from Page 2)

US scientists state that the tsunami had permanently altered the map of Asia by moving some small islands up to 20 metres. The quake has moved the entire island of Sumatra about 100 ft. to the southwest. There is a dispute among scientists whether there have been shifts or tilt, including in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. According to the scientists of the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), the tsunami has pushed India 12 cm closer to Indonesia. The findings are the result of the analyses of data gathered over a month from the global positioning satellite (GPS), positioned at different locations on the islands. It is accepted that any massive earthquake of more than seven magnitude, if it occurs on separating two land masses, could diminish the distances between them.

The December 26th devastating earthquake may have also permanently accelerated the earth's rotation, shortening the days by a fraction of a second (Richard Gross, a geophysicist in NASA's jet propulsion laboratory, California). It was reported that as a consequence of the quake, the earth may have spun on its axis 3 microseconds, or 3 millionths of a sec-

ond, faster, shortening the day by that much.

The ecological damage to coral reefs, mangroves and coastal forests has been severe. In order of severity, it is the Nicobar Island group, then the Andaman group and finally Tamil Nadu.

Australia is surrounded by 8,000 km of active tectonic plate boundaries capable of generating devastating tsunamis during the next decade as the government prepares to create a national tsunami warning system. One third of the world's earthquakes take place along these boundaries. On December 23rd, three days before the Indian Ocean tsunami, a magnitude of 8.1 quake occurred

several hundred km south of New Zealand and was felt in parts of both countries.

Scientific failure

Tsunami left everyone convinced, rightly or wrongly, of a 'scientific failure'. Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal acknowledged that the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and other science establishments are functioning with systems which are, to put it mildly, outdated.

On December 26th, there was a two-hour window in which the people in the vulnerable areas could have been warned, but were not because of the lack of an early warning system. (Courtesy: *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies*)

(Continued from Page 3)

the fact that more than 15 TMC per day has gone to the sea this season from the Chennai Basin – from the Poondi, Shozhavaram, Puzhal and Chembarambakkam reservoirs. A High Level Committee – of four retired Chief Engineers headed by an IAS officer and engineer, T.S. Vijaya-

raghavan – in mid-2002 submitted recommendations to utilise the monsoon floods and outflows to the sea. One of the policy changes suggested was to change the dependability norm to 25% from 50% (which means that the government should take up a project even if there are rains and floods once in four years). Key recommendations also included the con-

struction of new reservoirs, new check dams, new barrages and interlinking of river basins. The project was expected to save the State at least 100,000 million cubic feet of water and avoid most of the flood havoc, besides regenerating lost aquifers all over the State. "It however continues to gather dust in the Secretariat," laments an expert. Prof. Mohan, however,

feels that "all the water that has been let out is not a waste, since 20-30% of it has definitely ensured a good flushing of the water channels."

All said and done, however, the city's water problem – either too little or too much – can only be saved by a united political will and public participation that will address, with genuine concern, every issue.

Failure to save city from water



Will action be taken?

I greatly appreciate the Trust for Ecology and Eco-Restoration (TREE), represented by T. Murugavel, filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the Tamil Nadu Coastal Zone Management Authority requesting the Madras High Court to direct the respondents to take all measures, including preventive measures, to cease all activities detailed in the article, and obtain an order for restoring the areas affected by sand extraction around the Adyar Estuary and Elliot's Beach (MM, November 16th).

The question is when the orders are passed as prayed for, will they be complied with by the respondents. The Adyar River has been highly polluted by hazardous industries and a report to this effect was given by Anna University's Environment Department and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. A visit to Besant Nagar will show that unauthorised construction has been steadily going on near the Beach, and Corporation officials have not taken any steps to prevent this.

Will the orders passed this time prove more effective?

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Unaware of horror

The city, State and parts of the nation are faced with a

major problem due to the spread of AIDS.

It is believed by many that Chennai is the headquarters of the HIV virus. To combat these evils, the Government has installed condom vending machines at 'strategic' points in the city. But some 'Jamaat' women have objected to this on the grounds that it will spread immorality.

This is difficult to understand because condoms are easily available in medical shops. How can it "encourage antisocial elements to indulge in nefarious activities" if they procured the condom from the vending machines instead of the shops? It is not as though the Government wants to increase condom sales for commercial gain when it takes such steps.

All this only goes to show that in spite of the efforts of Suniti Solomon, several people are unaware of the horror called AIDS.

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Nostalgic name

Regarding reader N. Dhar-meshwaran's query in MM, December 1st, *Burma House* got its name when Dr. (Prof.) R. Venkateswaran built it. He had very pleasant memories of his earlier life and stay in Burma, but he had to leave that country when World War II broke out and he came back to India on foot. When he constructed the house, he named it out of nostalgic memories of a land where he had had a sense of fulfilment. It was a name which, in the future, would hold for him a quiet and happy life.

They wrote as a hobby

The credit for the growth of various categories of magazines and periodicals in Tamil Nadu cannot be hogged by professional journalists alone. There have been several writers who, while having other permanent avocations, pursued the hobby of contributing articles, short stories, novels, dramas, etc. to magazines. I give below an illustrative and not exhaustive list of noted writers who worked in Central Government offices.

Theodore Baskharan, a former Postmaster-General, with expert knowledge of the cine field, heritage, wildlife and social matters, has contributed several articles on them.

Vaduvor Duraiswamy Iyengar, the famous Tamil novelist, worked in Postal Audit office for some years. The same office boasted of *Makaram* (K.R. Kalyanaram) who wrote humorous articles and anecdotes and reviewed Tamil novels for *The Hindu*, *Raa Baa* or *Banan* (R. Balakrishnan) who wrote short stories, travelogues and reports of interviews with VIPs, and *Rasavathi* (R. Srinivasan), who wrote short stories, novels and dramas and who was the first recipient of the Narayanaswamy Iyer novel prize instituted by *Kalaimagal* for his work *Aadhaara Sruthi*.

Sage TGN (T.G. Narayanaswamy), a fiery orator and penman, contributed several articles to leading magazines. He also has had published books on spiritual matters.

Balju (N. Balasubramaniam) of the same office reported on various matters and wrote short stories to *Kumudam*.

Many may not know that K. Balachander, cine director, earlier worked as an officer in the office of Accountant General, Madras, and at the time wrote several dramas and staged them. Another officer of A.G.'s office was P.V. Ramakrishna, wellknown for his social novels.

Nadodi (M. Venkataram) was noted for his articles and stories studded with humour. He worked in a Government office in Delhi. Hema Anandathirthan, a State Bank officer, wrote stories and novels both in Tamil and Malayalam.

Pushpa Thangadurai (Sri Venugopalan) was wellknown for his social and historical novels. He worked in Indian Overseas Communications office.

I have given the details from memory. I might well have not mentioned some good writers. Perhaps readers could add to the list and also furnish information on freelance writers who worked in State Government offices and in other professions.

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When my wife wrote an article on the house a few years ago in the *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, the Burmese Ambassador, like reader Dharmeshwaran, contacted her to find out more details.

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Alwarpet memories

After reading Ramnarayan's reminiscences of the Alwarpet Cricket Club (MM,

December 1st and 16th) I cannot restrain myself from adding one of my own.

In the 1953 season, I think, I was inducted into the Alwarpet cricket team, while a student at MCC, Tambaram. I think it was the year I was selected for the Madras University team and my induction into the Alwarpet side definitely owed a debt to Mandalam Subramanian, who was the captain of MCC that year. A further debt to the inimitable, indefatigable VAP, midwife, mother, martinet etc. etc. of the Club, who (would you believe it?) had to obtain Principal Dr. Boyd's permission

to let me play for a team other than the College's.

Apart from cricket, what I enjoyed most was the banter and the humour in the pavilion – for Alwarpet/Mylapore has a well deserved reputation for a particular brand of wit.

My departure to the U.K. for further studies (and cricket) broke that much-cherished and well-remembered association with the Alwarpet Cricket Club. Long may it, and VAP, remain on our cricket horizons – and in the 1st Division.

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A PROMISE TO PROTECT THE MARSH

(Continued from Page 1)

December. Usually, rainwater from lakes in Velachery, Madipakkam, Moovarasampettai, Keelkatalai, Kovilambakkam, Pallavaram, Verangan Odai, S. Kolathur, Venagaivasal, Chembakkam, Navalur, Perungudi, Perumbakkam and Thandalam drains into the marsh. This year, the inflow has been more than usual. This has slowed down the draining of floodwaters from the surrounding residential areas to the sea via the Buckingham Canal." He adds, "The Pallikaranai Marsh acts as a buffer storage area between the sea and the inflows from the lakes and rainfall. In this context, it is essential that this marsh remains free from all buildings or any other type of encroachments."

Burning of garbage 24 hours a day in the marsh by the Chennai Corporation, Onyx, Alandur Municipality and other municipalities has led to

pollution of the surrounding atmosphere. Community Environmental Monitoring (CEM), an NGO based in Besant Nagar, recently made studies of air samples in Pallikaranai. Nityanand Jayaraman of CEM reports, "An air sample of burning garbage was taken near the entrance to the Onyx dumping yard and analysed at a United States Environmental Protection Agency-recognised laboratory in California. The air sample was analysed for 69 volatile organic chemicals and 20 sulphur compounds. 15 out of 27 chemicals exceed the health-based standards set by the Region 6 or other regulatory authorities.

"Three out of 27 chemicals are known to cause cancer in humans and/or animals:

a) Butadiene was found 34,782 times higher than the safe levels;

b) Benzene was found 2360 times higher than safe levels; and

c) Chloromethane was found 209 times higher than safe levels."

"Of the 27 chemicals found, 24 chemicals target the central nervous system, 23 chemicals target the respiratory system, 22 chemicals target the eyes, 21 chemicals target the skin, 10 chemicals target the liver, 8 chemicals target the kidneys, 7 chemicals target the blood system, 5 chemicals target the cardiovascular system and the reproductive system, and two chemicals target the gastrointestinal system and the peripheral nervous system," adds Jayaraman.

The alarming results of the study indicate the need to immediately stop garbage burning in the marsh. It is also necessary for Government to cancel sanction for any building activity and ensure the Pallikaranai Marsh is free of all encroachments. In this context, the Save Pallikaranai Marshland Forum (SPMF) and Corporate Ac-

countability Desk (CAD) have jointly protested against the sanctioning of building permits to three major development projects in the area.

V. Srinivasan, Convenor, SPMF, says, "Only executive summaries of a Rapid EIA have been provided, and these summaries do not provide adequate information regarding the environmental impacts arising from these projects. As a result, we are unable to assess the environmental costs of the projects or make an informed decision on the suitability of the projects in the local context. Large development projects such as these three have the potential to substantially damage the environment, particularly in areas such as Perungudi, Thoraipakkam, Velachery, Siruseri and their suburbs."

Around 50 members of SPMF and CEM attended the public hearing called by the Collector at Kanchipuram on

December 15th, and registered their protest against these multi-storeyed projects in the marsh area. The outcome of the public hearing is yet to be known.

SPMF's protests since 2003 have resulted in the construction of a state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant in Perungudi. For the past 15 years, untreated sewage water (32 million litres per day/MLD) was being let out by the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewage Board (CMWSSB) into the Pallikaranai Marsh. The Perungudi Sewage Treatment Plant now has the capacity to treat 54 MLD of sewage water. This plant receives sewage water from all of South Chennai. Official sources state that this plant is the first of its kind in Asia in terms of capacity, size, and state-of-the-art equipment. The plant has started to function partially from October 2005.

• Several male musicians — and one woman

They nurtured an Aradhana now 100 years old

Tyagaraja passed away on January 6, 1847. Six days prior to death, he had had a vision of Rama seated on a hill, when the Lord informed him that his days on earth were nearing an end. The composer then embraced *sanyasa* and repaired to the banks of the river Kaveri, where he instructed his disciples as to the manner of the burial of his mortal remains, even going to the extent of advising them as to the quantity of salt to be put into the pit. On the appointed day, he attained *samadhi*.

Guru in his own village. The *brindavanam* was forgotten and was soon covered with wild growth. In 1903, Tyagaraja's disciples, Umayalpuram Krishana and Sundara Bhagavata, on hearing of the pitiable condition of the Guru's *samadhi*, came to Tiruvayyaru, identified the spot with difficulty and renovated it. They also put a stone inscription at the rear of the *samadhi* to mark its renovation.

Among Tyagaraja's disciples, three schools, namely the Wallajahpet, Tillaiasthanam and Umayalpuram schools, became famous. The Tillaiasthanam *parampara* came from Rama Iyengar who was one of the earliest to compile a set of songs of his Guru. Tillaiasthanam Rama Iyengar had the brothers Tillaiasthanam Narasimha Bhagavata and Panju Bhagavata as his disciples. The elder was a Harikatha exponent who lived in Kumbakonam and the younger was a musician who lived in Tillaiasthanam. In 1905, Narasimha Bhagavata met several musicians, while on a trip to Madras at the Tondaimandalam High School on Mint Street. Bhagavata suggested that since the musicians were all surviving largely due to the music of Tyagaraja, it was essential that they expressed their gratitude by performing his Aradhana in a fitting manner at Tiruvayyaru each year. The gathering agreed and in 1906, a five-day music festival was held at Tiruvayyaru to accommodate everyone. The festival began four days before the Aradhana day and culminated on that day. It was agreed that this would be the pattern in the years to follow. Tillaiasthanam

In 1855, Panchapakesiah passed away and his wife, Guruvamma, shifted with the idols that Tyagaraja had worshipped to her maternal home in Thanjavur. The idols remain with that family till date. The disciples then stopped coming to Tiruvayyaru and each observed the death anniversary of the



The Saint's *samadhi* c.1903

Narasimha Bhagavata and his brother Panju Bhagavata were considered to be the *de facto* leaders of the celebrations and by virtue of being direct descendants of Tyagaraja's musical lineage were given rights to perform the *abhishekam* to the *samadhi* on Aradhana day. The musicians also laid down a couple of other rules. The first was that women would under no circumstance be allowed to perform at the *samadhi*. The second was that nagaswara artistes were to be kept away from the *samadhi*. The second group, which comprised several great artistes, expressed its unhappiness and to placate them, a procession with Tyagaraja's portrait in a floral palanquin was organised on the night following the Aradhana when nagaswaram artistes could offer their homage. This arrangement was to continue till 1940.



The Tyagaraja shrine in Tiruvayyaru.

By 1908, the Aradhana had become a popular festival in the area. However, by 1910, differences over the finances of the festival cropped up between the two brothers leading to a split. Narasimha Bhagavata, the elder's faction came to be called the 'Periya Katchi' or the elder's faction. Panju Bhagavata's faction was termed the 'Chinna Katchi'. Parallel festivals were observed for a few years, at least till the death of Narasimha Bhagavata in 1911 or thereabouts.

With his death, both groups decided to observe the Aradhana at Tiruvayyaru itself and on the same days. Tension ran high. But on the day of the Aradhana, by a certain unwritten accord, the Chinna Katchi was allowed to do the *abhishekam* to the *samadhi* first and then the Periya Katchi would do the worship.

Several musicians were greatly distressed by the rift and the parallel celebrations. Chief among them was Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavata. He brokered a peace meeting between the two rival groups and proposed that they unite. However, differences of opinion arose as to who ought to have the rights to worship at the *samadhi* and the two Katchis declined to unite. Muthiah Bhagavata took an oath to stay away from the Aradhana as long as there was no unity.



The statue of Saint Tyagaraja in Tiruvayyaru.

On January 17, 1914, the Chinna Katchi transformed itself into a registered body named the Tyagaraja Parabrahma Vaibhava Prakasa Sabha. Being an organised body now, it received great support and began to collect a lot of money, resulting in grand celebrations during the Aradhana. It also religiously published statements of accounts and gave them to all those who had contributed. The Periya Katchi on the other hand depended largely on Malaikottai Govindasami Pillai for its financial well being and he too rose to the occasion for some years.

With the death of many of the leaders of the two Katchis, Soolamangalam Vaidyanatha Bhagavata and Malaikottai Govindasami Pillai emerged as the kingpins of the respective factions by 1920. Both were high handed in their dealings and antagonised many. Yet such were their personalities that funds continued to pour in leading to bigger and grander celebrations. But in 1923 a third front was formed, namely the Sri Tyagaraja Parabrahma Bhakta Gana Sabha

and it observed a separate *utsavam*. This effort was not successful and by the next year the effort was given up. It was at this juncture that Bangalore Nagarathammal (BNR) arrived on the scene.

BNR, on arrival in Tiruvayyaru, initially won the support of the Periya Katchi which comprised several of her friends. Through them she learnt that the land on which the *samadhi* stood was owned by Raja Ramannaji Soorvey and began negotiating its purchase. There were legal objections to the sale of land allotted for public use, but BNR overcame this through an exchange of land with the seller. The two Katchis watched all this with misgivings.

Moving quickly, BNR used her funds to have a granite statue of Tyagaraja installed in front of the *brindavanam*. The Chinna Katchi members did not like this. The debate has continued till date, for the statue hides the *brindavanam* from view. But nothing could be done as BNR now owned the land.

The foundation stone for building a temple above the *samadhi* was laid by BNR on October 27, 1921, and work soon began. The Aradhanas of the two Katchis continued in the intervening years with one change. The Periya Katchi now began its festival on the day of the Aradhana and continued the same for five days. The Chinna Katchi began its festival four days prior to the Aradhana and concluded on Aradhana day. This way, the people of Tiruvayyaru were assured of feasts for nine days at a stretch and also of as many days of music.

The temple was completed in 1925 and the *kumbhabhishekam* was performed on January 7th. That year, when the Chinna Katchi's festival was into its third day, BNR went up to the Police in Tiruvayyaru, warned that unless the factions united in their worship, there could be a law and order problem in the town. Eventually, the police conducted the worship.

If BNR had quarrelled with the Chinna Katchi thus far, the time had come for a break with the Periya Katchi as well. In 1927, BNR came to the musical homage observed by the Periya Katchi and prepared to sing. However, the accompanists put down their instruments on the grounds that women were not allowed in the *samadhi*. An enraged BNR stormed out and decided to hold her own festival. The Bangalore Nagarathammal Katchi came in as a powerful third front and began holding its festival behind the *samadhi* on the same days as the Periya Katchi. Women and young artistes were encouraged to par-

Her Lord was Tyagaraja



Bangalore Nagarathammal.

Bangalore Nagarathammal (BNR) was born on November 3, 1878, to Subha Row, a vakil of Mysore, and Puttulakshmi, a devadasi of the same town. The parents separated soon after BNR's birth leaving the mother and child in dire straits. Giribhatta Thimmayya Sastry, a Sanskrit scholar in the Mysore court became Puttulakshmi's patron. He taught the young BNR Sanskrit and, soon, her proficiency was such that the Giribhatta became jealous and threw the mother and daughter out. BNR was nine.

Puttulakshmi, desperate but not down and out, took an oath that she would not set foot in Mysore till her daughter became famous enough for the Maharajah to invite her himself. Seeking a suitable music teacher for her child, Puttulakshmi took the girl all the way to Kanchipuram to meet Dhana Koti Ammal. But the old teacher was dying and recommended that they proceed to Srirangam. Not having any funds, the mother-daughter duo went to Bangalore where they were sheltered by Puttulakshmi's brother Venkatasamappa. The well-known violinist Muniswamappa was engaged to teach music to Nagarathnam. She was also taught

dance and six languages, English, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi and Sanskrit. The girl went on to learn from Bidaram Krishnappa, the well-known vocalist of Mysore, and through him entered the direct lineage of Tyagaraja, for Krishnappa had learnt from Veena Seshanna, who was a disciple of Mysore Sadasiva Rao who in turn had learnt music from Wallajahpet Vekatararamana Bhagavata. Puttulakshmi died when BNR was 14.

In 1893, BNR was invited to perform at Veena Seshanna's house and the concert was such a success that the palace heard about it and invited her to perform for the Maharajah Chamarajendra Wodeyar at Mysore when the princess Jayalakshammami came of age. BNR,

fulfilling her mother's vow, set foot in Mysore for the first time at the invitation of the palace. Much to his discomfiture, Giribhatta Thimmayya Sastry had to attend the concert, which culminated in BNR becoming a palace artiste.

In 1903, BNR became a recording sensation as well, for following the footsteps of Calcutta Gauhar Jan, she began recording for the Gramophone Company of India.

This made her known all over South India. In 1905, she, at the invitation of her patron C.S. Rajarathna Mudaliar, moved to Madras where she took up residence at 10, Srinivasa Iyer Street, George Town. Investing wisely and well, she soon became very rich and the first woman artiste to pay income tax. A keen observer of social trends, BNR saw that 'sadir', or dance, was coming under a cloud and gave it up. She became a performer of Harikatha and Carnatic music instead. Her fame spread far and wide. Between 1905 and 1934 she gave 1235 performances covering 116 towns.

BNR sponsored a book by Muddu Palani, an 18th century concubine of the Maratha king of Tanjore, Pratapasimha. It was a highly erotic work called *Radhika Santwanamu*. But

BNR decided to publish it to prove that devadasis like Muddu Palani had been great Sanskrit scholars. The book, published by Vavilla Ramaswami Sastrulu and Sons in 1911, came in for a blistering attack for obscenity from Kandukuri Veeresalingam, the reformist. The Commissioner of Police, Cunningham, ordered copies of the book to be seized, thereby making it an all time hit. The book was banned by law and this was lifted only in 1947.

BNR meanwhile continued her trailblazing career of success. Her childlessness, however, cast a shadow on her life. She decided to adopt a girl who, in 1921, was suspected to have, at the instance of her real parents, attempted to poison BNR. Fortunately, BNR avoided the poisoned glass of milk and disowned the girl. That very same year, she received a portrait of Tyagaraja which she began to worship and one night she had a vision of the bard in her dream. It appeared to her that he had saved her from the poisoning. It was at this time that she heard about the pathetic condition of the Tyagaraja *samadhi*. She left for Tiruvayyaru at once.

— S.V.

participate in this festival and soon it became a great success, eclipsing the other two festivals. BNR put in her own funds into the events, finally selling her home in Madras for the purpose and relocating permanently to Tiruvayyaru in 1930.

Pumping in more funds, by 1938 BNR bought all the land surrounding the *samadhi* and named it *Tyagarajashramam*. Several local leaders began involving themselves in her celebrations. The Periya Katchi began seriously debating on a merger. The sentiment was the same in the Chinna Katchi. In 1939, S.Y. Krishnaswami, ICS, was posted as Special Officer, Cauvery Delta Region, and he began campaigning for a unified Aradhana. A meeting was convened in Madras in the first week of January 1940. It was decided by all the Katchis that a new Trust would be formed which would conduct the Aradhana.

The Tyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha came into existence in January 1940 and conducted the Aradhana that year. Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavata, on coming to know of the unification came to attend the Aradhana. BNR stunned everyone by climbing on to stage and sitting next to Soolamangalam Vaidyanatha Bhagavata. There was great applause when he con-

ducted his Harikatha with her by his side. That year's Aradhana was a grand success. Women were allowed to perform. T.N. Rajarathinam Pillai led a protest against the policy of not allowing nagaswara artistes on stage and this condition was waived. The days of orthodoxy were gradually vanishing.

In 1941, group rendition of the Pancharatnams was introduced for the first time, prior to which Palladam Sanjeeva Rao rendered *Cetulara* in raga Bhairavi. This tradition has been maintained ever since and even now flautists render that song before the others begin the Pancharatnams.

BNR made Tiruvayyaru her home and spent her days in silent communion with her Lord, Tyagaraja. The locals revered her as a saint. On January 3, 1949, BNR made her will, bequeathing all her worldly possessions, including jewellery, towards the upkeep of the *samadhi*. The Vidya Sundari Bangalore Nagarathammal Trust became the owner of the *samadhi* and its adjoining lands. In her will, BNR stipulated that none 'should try and debar woman artistes and singers including devadasis from performing' at the *samadhi*.

BNR died on May 19, 1952. Her body was taken in procession

to the Tyagaraja *samadhi* and buried close by. A statue was later put up in her honour on that spot and covered by a *mandapam*. The statue faces the Tyagaraja *samadhi*. It is in front of this *mandapam* that musicians now perform during the Aradhana. The Tyagaraja *samadhi* was later electrified by Kolar Rajammal, yet another devadasi from Karnataka.

The Aradhana today has become an international event. But all this was possible due to the dedication of several musicians and one woman — Nagarathammal. However, even while

the celebrations became united, worship did not. As a result, Tyagaraja has three *abhishekams* even now on the day of the Aradhana. The first is by the survivors of the erstwhile Chinna Katchi and the descendants of Rajagopala Bhagavata. They have had to go to court time and again to protect their rights. The second is by the Bangalore Nagarathammal Trust. The last is by the Tyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha during which the Pancharatnams are rendered. This is what we see on TV year after year. — (Courtesy: R.T. Chari and R.V. Gopalan, Trustees, Ramu Endowments.)

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No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

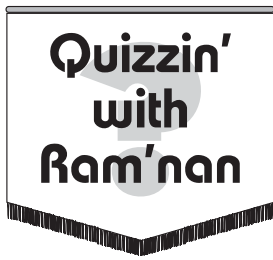
As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **handwritten** letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

THE EDITOR



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

1. Who are the new Davis Cup champions?
2. What distinction did the Iranian film *Jazireh Ahani* achieve in India recently?
3. The 50th Mahaparinarvan Divas of which celebrity, who received the Bharat Ratna, was observed on December 6th?
4. How did Frenchwoman Isabelle Dinoire achieve medical history recently?
5. Name the new leader of Britain's Conservative Party.
6. What does the new Red Cross symbol look like?
7. What happened to Indian Airlines on December 7th?
8. Which actress recently became a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF India?
9. What two world cricketing feats, one in Tests and the other in ODIs, were set on December 10th?
10. Which European island is the new Miss World from?

* * *

11. Of which Chennai-headquartered cyber major is Lakshmi Narayanan the President and CEO?
12. What is the claim to fame of the Havilland Dove aircraft VT-CTG called *Hanuman*?
13. Who was the Chief Minister of Madras when India became a Republic?
14. Gerhard K.J. Fischer, the former German Consul, was greatly instrumental in setting up which prestigious place of learning in Chennai?
15. In possibly a first in these parts, which mobile operator is offering 'mobisodes' of which popular playwright for downloads?
16. How many new judges were recently appointed together to the Madras High Court to meet the considerable shortfall that there had been for some time?
17. Where in Tamil Nadu is BMW setting up its car assembly plant with an investment of \$180 million in five years?
18. Who was the captain of the Indian team when Narendra Hirwani scalped a world-record 16 Test wickets on debut at Chepauk?
19. What is the name of the rare type of conch found in our State, whose opening swirls in the opposite direction to that of the common conch?
20. One on the small screen. Who reprised the role of Sindhu in the TV serial to K. Balachander's acclaimed *Sindhu Bhairavi* which had seen Suhasini getting the National award for playing Sindhu?

(Answers on page 9)

52 years of motor racing

If Sholavaram and, to some extent, laying the race track at Irungatukottai were the high points for the Madras Motor Sports Club in the past five decades, attracting corporate sponsors and taking the sport to the grassroots are the formidable challenges it faces today.

In 1952, while a 1948 MG - TC (a racy-looking British sports car) was being cleared in Madras Harbour, discussions on motor racing and rallying took place between its owner and R. D'Souza. This is what led to the formation of a motor sports club, the Madras Motor Sports Club, that's first finished celebrating 50 years of existence.

A year after that discussion, two MG - TCs chased each other from *Chesney Hall* to the parking lot of Catholic Centre. The two drivers, an Englishman, Rex Strong, and an Indian, K. Varugis, felt that racing would be more fun if organised off the roads. Strong had been a member of the Calcutta Motor Sports Club and the MG Club and he and Varugis began scouting for fellow-motor racing enthusiasts.

One evening, sometime later, a small gathering of motorists arranged a motor scavenger hunt - the objective was to get together and pass a formal resolution for the formation of the MMSC. M.A. Chidambaram, then chairman of Automobile Association of Southern India, felt that the AASI should concentrate on motoring activity and a separate organisation formed to help develop the sport of motor-racing. The MMSC was the offshoot. The AASI offered all help in setting it up in 1953.

It was registered under the Societies Act in 1954. The first office-bearers of the Club were G.M. Donner at the helm, K.V. Srinivasan, Varugis, the Rajkumar of Pithapuram, Raja D.V. Appa Rao, J.H. Dye, P. Mathen, K.A. Silick and Strong. In all, there were about 40 founding members. Five early members of the MMSC, the 'Panch Pandavas', who played an active role, were Gopal Madhavan, Indu Chandok, Jayendra Patel, Anil Bhatia and C. Prabhakar. In 1955, the first race committee was formed, with Chidambaram as the first chairman. The other members of the committee were Govind Swaminathan, B.I. Chandok, F.V. Arul (then IG of Police) and A. Sivasailam.

An abandoned World War II air strip in Sholavaram about 30 km from Madras, was se-

lected for the Club's first race track. It comprised the south and west wings of an L-shaped area. A tight left after the start and a fast right after two U-turns completed the two-mile circuit. There were two chicanes, one on each side of the straights. Once, on a practice day, a car missed the right hand turn and nearly ran into a crowd at a corner. It was immediately decided to shift the public stands further south and away from the run-off area. The pits and paddocks were located on the western side of the track that had several potholes. This track was used for all races for some years thereafter.

The Sholavaram land belonged to the Military Estate Officer and the track to the Indian Air Force. Sometimes, new Army tanks were tested on

• by A Special Correspondent

southern section of the track. Its surface soon got destroyed and MMSC was forced to use the east-west straight. To make races interesting, the Club used a portion of the northern runway. The track was now shaped like a T. The stands were located on the southern side, giving spectators an excellent view. On the northern side were the time-keepers and lap-recorders - 50 each. The medical centre and pits were located on the northeastern side of the track and the approach was by a narrow road that led to the Sholavaram dak bungalow. The southern runway had enough space for a car park, police outpost and ticket booths.

The track was at times used to store wheat when no space was available in government godowns. The wheat was stacked right in the middle of the T-track. The track was so wide that there were many crashes at the U-turns. The problem was discussed with the Royal Automobile Club, London, and the MMSC was advised that the track width should not be more than 35 ft.

The first regular motor sports event on this track was held in August-September 1953. There were only two classes of cars - six MG - TCs and other stock cars. The events included 'standing starts', 'flying starts' over a distance of a mile, and some parking tests. Donner, in his Mark 7 Jaguar, averaged 84 miles an hour over the measured mile. The first race meeting was held on October 25, 1953. There was a five-lap race

for motorcycles (handicap), a five-lap race for sports cars, a three-lap relay for motorcycle teams, a four-lap handicap relay for cars, and a driving test. John Dye, who clocked 72 miles an hour on a Triumph Twin, was the fastest man of the meet.

The first rally was organised in 1954 during the presidency of the Rajkumar of Pithapuram. It was a 'time and distance' rally to Mahabalipuram and back, covering a distance of about 100 miles with disclosed check points. There were 100 participants. B.I. Chandok won in his Triumph Mayflower with Captain Patankar of the Merchant Navy as his navigator. This rally was followed by several others - to the Poondi Reservoir, and other places of interest. A few

years later, a longer rally, to Pondicherry, was introduced.

Encouraged by the public response, and assured of sponsorship by Burmah Shell, Caltex and Castrol, the first Day-Night Rally was conducted in 1956. The Madras-Bangalore-Mysore-Ooty-Coimbatore-Dindigul-Trichy-Villupuram-Madras route covered a distance of about 800 miles. Forty-two cars participated and the most prominent entry was General Thimmayya in his Mercedes (Govind Swaminathan was his co-driver and 'Nosy' Muthanna the navigator). After a few years of this rally, which always started from Union Company, Mount Road, the route was changed by new teams. One experiment was to begin from Madras, Bangalore and Coimbatore simultaneously with a free run to Trichy; the rally would finish in Bangalore or Madras.

Good timing equipment was not available in those days. The Railway-Lever pocket watches were the only timing devices available and the marshals had to listen to All India Radio time pips to set their watches. The marshals would also ring up the rally headquarters an hour before the expected time of arrival of the first vehicle and set their watches accordingly. It was only later that the Club got Omega Seamasters and complaints regarding the timing were reduced.

In February 1957, competitors from Bangalore and Ceylon raced for the first time with

• A two-part feature

members from the MMSC and thrilled the spectators with their excellent performance. Zacky Dean from Colombo, who had competed in the prestigious Isle of Man Tourist Trophy race, was the main attraction and lived up to his billing with some brilliant riding. The Junior Open Championship event, over 14 miles for motorcycles up to 350 cc, saw a hard-fought race between Dean and Madras rider Hari Rao. Rao took a good lead and maintained it for six laps but towards the end Dean's experience showed and he won by a narrow margin.

Raja Sinnathorai, another young motorcyclist from Ceylon and the youngest competitor in the meet, had to get special permission to compete. It was his first attempt at racing. He, however, made a great impact on the spectators and won his event comfortably in spite of starting 80 seconds later than the first rider. Two other riders who caught the public eye were from Bangalore - K.S. Vijayapai on his BSA who came first in the Senior Open category for motorcycles upto 500 cc (14 miles), beating V.K. Gupta and Dean, and P.S. Hariharan in his Jaguar XK-120.

As the races in Sholavaram were generally held in December-January, the Ceylon team found it difficult to make it because the ferry service was closed from November to the second week of January. So, the MMSC decided to shift what it called the annual All India Race Meet to the first Sunday in February. Crowds of over 30,000 would throng to watch man and machine fight for supremacy. The Sholavaram racing weekends (two consecutive Sundays) used to be the biggest racing show in India, with racing drivers and riders coming from across the country; it even became part of the international racing calendar. The Sholavaram success story helped the sport grow in stature from year to year, with drivers from Sri Lanka, Britain and Europe regulars.

Meanwhile, while the IAF was happy to lease the track to the MMSC, the Military Estate Officer was not. The track was also in a state of disrepair and the villagers were encroaching on the land and breaking up the runway. There were no funds even for a watchman. The Club had no choice but to consider making alternate arrangements.

A decision was taken to buy 300 acres of land and a 'search committee' finally zeroed in on the present site at Irungatukottai, Sriperumbudur, 40 km from Chennai. The Club decided to form a Trust to hold its

(Continued on Page 10)

The Mylapore Festival...

January 5-8: The annual Sundaram Finance-Mylapore Festival will keep its date with Mylapore, with more than ten different events at ten different venues in the heritage zone around the Sri Kapaleeswarar Temple. The highlights will be:

MAIN STAGE SHOWS in the Rasi showroom quadrangle:

5th and 6th after 7 pm: Folk performances. Some 20 artistes will perform; **5th evening:** 40 violinists of the CARVA Academy will perform; **6th evening:** Giant puppets drama by Seethalakshmi; **7th evening:** A 90-minutes Hindu mythological drama; **8th evening:** Tamil street theatre by Chennai Kalai Kuzhu; **8th:** A two-hour-long concert of vintage Tamil film songs – the hits of T.M. Soundararajan; **7th and 8th evenings:** Stilt dancers.

ARTS STREET: The Fine Arts students of Stella Maris College will 'take over' Pitchupillai Street (next to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) and convert it into an Arts Street. They will create colourful pots and bookmarks and paint on canvas, demonstrate the tie-and-dye print methods... and lots more.

FOOD STREET: Caterer 'Subham' Ganesan will offer the best traditional dishes on Sundaeswar Street. Kerala food will be the special menu.

CRAFTS CORNER: A 12-woman self-help group from suburban Chennai promoted by the Tamil Nadu Government will sell crafts and utility items on Sundaeswar Street.

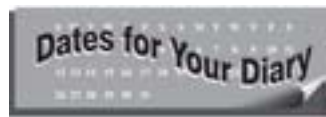
TALKS, QUIZ, CREATIVE DISPLAYS at the Lady Sivaswamy Girls School Hall; **7th, 6.30 pm:** V. Sriram on 'The History of The Music Academy 1927-1962'; **8th, 6.30 pm:** Randor Guy will present an illustrated talk on 'The Legal Eagles of Mylapore'; **8th, 1.30 pm:** the Tamil Nadu Quiz, open to teams of two (finals at 3 pm); and Artist Surendranath and his Sumukhi Foundation will co-ordinate with twelve families who created some great kolus last Navaratri, to repeat the artistic models for an exhibition (evenings).

KOLAM CONTESTS: **7th and 8th** from 3.30 pm onwards on North Mada Street. And a *Kolam* Contest for schoolchildren. On both days: open to just 50.

HERITAGE TOURS: Two Heritage Tours in cyclerickshaws, through the Mylapore-San

Thomé areas. **7th** only for children, **8th** open to all. Starts at 7 a.m. at Luz Church. (Fees Rs.50).

PARK KUTCHERIES and PHOTO EXHIBITION: Carnatic music concerts will be held in the Nageswara Rao Park every morning, 6 a.m. onwards. Also in the park will be a photographic exhibition brought to you by the Alliance Francaise titled *Indian Wisdom*, featuring a dozen



... & other events

Till January 1: Exhibition of I.E. Raja works. (At Apparao Galleries).

January 5-14: *Indian Wisdom*, a photographic exhibition by Olivier Follmi.

In the context of the Mylapore Festival, take a walk in the park and discover an exhibition of 57 large photos, which focus on India's living heritage. Olivier Follmi travelled for several months in Indian villages to experience the true Indian spirit and captured so many images that evoke the depth and richness of India's culture. (At Nageswara Rao Park.)



An Olivier Follmi photograph.

January 6 and 7: *Inhabit* by Preethi Athreya, a 45-minute dance performance, with three solos built around the idea of the body as enigma.

Trained in Bharata Natyam by the Dhananjayans, Preethi has been working with choreographer Padmini Chettur. (Alliance Francaise, 7.30 p.m.)

January 6-16: *Chennai Book Fair*. (At Quaid-e-Milleth Govt. College for Women).

January 7 and 8: *Annual Dog Show*. (At the University Union Grounds.)

January 7-21: *The Mela Pictures*: An exhibition of the work of Allan Parker. (At Forum Art Gallery).

January 9-25: *The Magic Lantern Pongal Festival 2006*:

A fortnight of contemporary work in dance, music, and the-

photos of 4'x5½' size each (see below). Classical dance concerts on all four evenings.

TAMIL BOOKS SALE: Alongside the temple tank (eastern side), some 3000 titles from 12 companies will be on sale.

FRINGE EVENTS: The 'Namma Mylapore' group, a NGO which works on local issues, hopes to have a special event on the banks of the temple tank which is 3/4ths full with water! An art contest and a talk on temple tanks and water harvesting are planned.

For details contact 2499 4599 / 2499 3767 / Log on to www.mylaporefestival.com

atre showcasing traditional theatre by Purusai Kannappa Thambiran, Theru-k-koothu Mandram and Margi Kathakali Group; Tamil folk music by Gunasekaran and Funky Bodhi; Thanjavur Drums; contemporary dance film by V. Viswanadhan showcasing Padmini Chettur's choreography; popular theatre by Chennai Kalai Kuzhu; Koothu-pattarai's new production; contemporary theatre by Maya Rao; Adishakti Theatre Company, etc. (At Alliance Francaise, Chettinad Vidyashram, and Sivagami Pettachi Auditorium.)

January 10-17: *Japanese Handcrafted Form*. (At Lalit Kala Akademi).

January 11: *Buzz @ the Courtyard: Spoken Word* by Zena Edwards from the UK. (At the British Council, 7 p.m.)

January 16-28: *Kite and Klik*, an exhibition of aerial photographs by Nicolas Chorier. His kite aerial photography is simple, non-intrusive, precise, cost-effective and environment-friendly. The kite is made up of a single nylon flat surface, hexagonal or triangular in shape, stretched over a light armature of glass fibre and used as a "hook" in the sky. The camera is mounted on a small cradle and is attached to the string, approximately 30 metres below the kite. Radio-remoted, this camera can be aimed in all directions and a mini video camera helps in the framing of the image. (At the Alliance Francaise.)

Answers to Quiz

1. Croatia; 2. It won the 'Golden Peacock' at the International Film Festival of India; 3. B.R. Ambedkar; 4. She became the first human to receive a facial transplant; 5. David Cameron; 6. A hollowed-out red crystal on a white background; 7. It decided to become 'Indian' and also sport a new sun logo on its tail fin; 8. Sharmila Tagore; 9. Sachin Tendulkar became the highest century-getter in Tests and New Zealand overhauled Australia's 331 successfully to set the mark for the highest run-chase; 10. Iceland.

11. Cognizant Technology Solutions; 12. It was the Madras Government's first aircraft in 1948; 13. P.S. Kumaraswamy Raja; 14. IIT, Madras; 15. Hutch is offering the works of 'Crazy' Mohan; 16. Seventeen; 17. Mahindra City near Maraimalainagar; 18. Ravi Shastri; 19. Valampuri; 20. Anuradha Suresh Krishnamurthy, daughter of the late 'Sangita Kalanidhi' K.V. Narayanaswamy.

Subscriptions and contributions

● As readers are already aware — and hundreds have responded positively — we have no other alternative but to price *Madras Musings*. From April 16th (Volume XIV, No.1), *Madras Musings* has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to 'Chennai Heritage' and send it, together with the COUPON BELOW, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 260-A, TTK ROAD, CHENNAI 600 018 or C/O LOKAVANI-HALL MARK PRESS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and *Madras Musings* to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep *Madras Musings* going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on on-going projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 2004-5 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

We look forward to all readers of *Madras Musings*, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions. We are indeed sorry we can no longer remain a free mailer.

— The Editor

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Senate House Conservation Fund

● The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory by December 2005 and maintaining it thereafter in the same condition. Cheques should be made out to the Senate House Conservation Account and sent to the Registrar, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005. Contributions are eligible for benefits under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Dear Registrar,

I am pleased to enclose a cheque for Rs. as my contribution to the restoration and maintenance of *Senate House*. Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Name:

Address:

I am an alumnus/alumna/heritage lover and wish the project all success. My college was

Date: Signature:

Mahabharata wins Spanish Award

The Mahabharata: A Child's View, published by Tara of Chennai and in Spanish by Ediciones Siruela, has been selected as one of the best children's books of 2004 by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. This marks *The Mahabharata's* third award. In November 2000 it was chosen as Book of the Month by the German Society of Youth Literature and Media, and in 2004 it was selected by a jury of schoolchildren to receive the Elsa Morante Award in Italy.

Written and illustrated by the then eleven-year-old Samhita Arni, Samhita's version of the ancient Indian epic is infused with her own contemporary perspective that is at once child-like and profound. Nine years after its first printing, readers worldwide remain enchanted by Samhita's *Mahabharata* which has sold rights in seven languages – English, German, Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Catalan – and continues to garner international recognition.

Traffic improvements ahead?

(Continued from Page 1)

tions include dynamic traffic control systems that respond to changing traffic conditions across different jurisdictions and types of roads by routing drivers around delays wherever possible. And rapid detection and response to traffic incidents will reduce congestion on expressways.

ITS implementation in India is in its infancy; however, there is tremendous potential for adopting/adapting, beneficially, certain of its components. And ATMS has much relevance and applicability to traffic control and management in urban areas. Says Dr. R. Sivanandan, Transportation Engineering Division, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT, Madras, "The various elements of ITS that have already been implemented in India include use of (a) CCTVs, (b) vehicle detection and classifier, (c) advanced toll collection systems, (d) Variable Message Signs, (e) use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for monitoring vehicle fleet, etc. The Jaipur-Kishangarh Toll road includes most of these elements."

"Some elements of ATMS that will be useful in Chennai are synchronisation of a series of signals along a road corridor, and area/corridor traffic control systems that would help reduce delays and improve speeds. In addition, advanced traveller information systems, such as Variable Message Signs (VMS), can be advantageously employed to inform travellers of incidents ahead, alternate routes, etc."

Dr. Ananatha Rajan, a former Professor at Anna University and an expert on Urban

Systems Development, says, "ITS itself is a very vast area that offers many traffic management solutions. Electronic Road Pricing is one application that can be utilised, say, in an area like highly congested Pondy Bazaar. In this system, approaching roads could be provided with an overhead camera and every vehicle has a prepaid magnetic card that is charged every time it enters the area. The principle here is that each vehicle that contributes to the congestion pays for it. This amount can thereafter be utilised for traffic management itself. For instance, a traffic jam at Anna Salai can be indicated to road users at Teynampet itself so that they can take a diversion. For a fast developing metro like Chennai, the positive outcomes of implementation of ATMS (that will cost only around a few crore rupees) is definitely well worth the price."

K. C. Mahali, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), says,

"The volume of city traffic is a direct impact of liberalisation and globalisation. The truth is that the pace of the city's development and increase of traffic have simply overtaken the pace of our planning! The carrying capacity of most roads has far exceeded (22 lakh vehicles in the city, with 18 lakh two-wheelers, and 600 vehicles being added each day). Currently the planning process is going on apace. Area Traffic Control (ATC) applications that involve a cost of Rs.5-10 crore are being tested in the city with the help of experts. We'll proceed with implementation after the results are out in 3-4 months. The VMS application is already a part of our plans, and will take about six months to a year to implement."

"I'm very optimistic that, within a year, the situation will improve very significantly. We're also increasing the stress on enforcement of traffic rules. On an average, the Traffic Police Department books around 2000 cases every day and collects a fine amount of about

Rs.1,50,000." But why then has not there been much effect? Says Mahali, "Enforcement is only one aspect. The most important solution is to change the people's attitude to Traffic Management. There is a need to have concern about fellow citizens, and understand that everyone wants to reach his destination. Road users must change their mindsets for their own sakes."

What does the efficient functioning of the ATMS itself entail amid the current traffic chaos? Says Dr. Sivanandan, "Definitely, some orderliness in traffic flow is necessary. Synchronisation of signals, for instance, will be more effective if traffic platoons move at a uniform speed for which the progression is designed." Which simply means the beginning of another vicious cycle, if road users are not coordinated in the right way by Traffic Managers. "The following elements can be considered for Chennai immediately: CCTVs (cameras are already being used by City Traffic Police at some intersections), advanced vehicle detection and classifiers, and Variable Message Signs. Further steps can include corridor/

area traffic control and possibly a Control Centre. Traffic Planners in Chennai could also ensure that every major new road that is being planned must incorporate (or make provisions for) appropriate ITS elements."

On the hurdles of implementation of ATMS amidst an indisciplined road-user group, Dr. Anantha Rajan feels, "There will definitely be initial resistance, but this can be surmounted with education and the promise of a better future for all road-users. There has to be an end to lane indiscipline at some point. Educate through the media repeatedly in a transparent way, showing the public the benefits of the change – what to do, the effects of disciplined road use, how travel times reduce, how accident rates come down etc. Organise meetings with diverse stakeholders in traffic management, automobile manufacturers, for instance, on effective participation to make roads safe and driving pleasant. And then enforce very strictly the rules laid down. Educating the public to be effective in participation is the key. Only then can there be change."

Shobha Menon

52 YEARS OF MOTOR RACING

(Continued from Page 8)

properties; the trust deed was drafted and the Club's land was given to the Trust on a 99-year lease. Since it was agricultural land, the Club had to seek the permission of 100-odd farmers. The Indian Bank sanctioned a loan of Rs. 10 lakh to get the work started. When Suresh Patel and Gopal Madhavan started laying out the new track, they realised that 200 acres was enough and so, 100 acres were sold to the members.

The proceeds were used to clear the loan.

With McDowell and MRF leading the way with Rs. 50 lakh and Rs. 40 lakh respectively, work on the new track began. The foundation stone was laid by Jackie Stewart. Gherzi Eastern were the architectural consultants and ECC, a unit of Larsen & Toubro, the builders. Madhavan supervised the design and construction and ensured that they conformed to international standards. The track, 3.7 km long

and 11 m wide, was approved by FISA and FIM.

The first meet at Irungattukottai was the 33rd All India Motor Race meet in 1990. When McDowell's stepped into motor racing in a big way, Vijay Mallya, a keen racer, was the first to race a Formula-1 car at Sholavaram in the Open Class. The annual racing event became the McDowell Grand Prix. Mallya not only spent money on running the event but also chipped in with a team of five cars. The rivalry between

MRF and McDowell added more thrill to racing. In 1994, JK Tyres entered the racing arena and the fierce competition between JK and MRF ensured one of the best eras in Indian racing. Unfortunately, Sriperumbudur never attracted the kind of crowds that Sholavaram did. One reason was that Sholavaram had a T-shaped track which afforded spectators a view of the entire circuit.

(To be concluded)

Sport on Page 8

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