

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Let's plant those trees
- The humane CEOs
- Looking for takeovers
- Transforming a heritage home
- Motor racing in Madras - II

Vol. XV No. 19

January 16-31, 2006

Rs. 5 per copy  
(Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-)

Doctor, we're sure it's our computer  
that's given us all this virus!

### Gesundheit!

Technically, the month that went by is called The Season – distinguished by trademark cultural and social frenzy.

But, for most, it was really about the sniffle and the sneeze.

Humankind may be pushing boundaries of knowledge steadily, but is still spectacularly trounced by the “viral illness of the upper respiratory tract” – or, rather, the common cold.

Doctors (and they should know) tell us that there are 200 or more varieties of cold viruses. Well, apparently, most of them decided to holiday in Chennai this winter, laughing up their tattered, damp sleeves, dancing merrily from nose to nose.

This ill-intentioned lot is pretty tough to vanquish, but they do weaken when confronted by immune systems built up well through correct diet and exercise.

Nice to know, but hardly the sort of sane advice that will appeal to those in a distinctly holiday mood.

This particular intruder tends to create disharmony, even between the nearest-and-dearest. A child sneezes – and “Don't you dare” go the fond parents, visions of all those best-laid holiday plans going awry. Anyone with a slightly runny nose is watched suspiciously, or even told politely (sometimes not so politely), to “stay home and stop spreading it around.”

Painful.

Perfume yields helplessly to the overwhelming presence of eucalyptus, camphor and menthol.

Incidentally, do you “feed a cold and starve a fever”.... or is it the other way round?

Ranjitha Ashok

## 'Bio-diesel' crops to boost rural economy

(by S.V. Pandit)

Nearly Rs. 1,00,000 crore is our fuel import burden. It will keep increasing in coming years as we have got only limited fossil fuel resources in our country. Even the recent gas source found by Reliance in the Krishna-Godavari basins and by ONGC in Bombay High will be only a small fraction of our annual needs. We will, therefore, have to continue being dependent on OPEC countries for our actual needs of oil.

The sooner we make efforts to produce alternative oil sources in our country the better in these circumstances.

The seeds of *Jatropha curcas* and *Pongamia glabra* plants are found in natural conditions throughout the country, except in the Himalayan region. These plants can be grown easily in any soil condition in our vast rural areas. They are particularly suited to Tamil Nadu.

These plants were little noticed till recently. Now, their oils have been found to be compatible for blending with petroleum diesel. The blend has a low sulphur content, reduces unburnt hydrocarbons and produces less carbon monoxide. The economic survey 2003-04 states that the use of a biodiesel blend of 20% to 25% can reduce the import bill by 20%. If utilised in pure form, the benefit will be enormous. Some auto majors, like Daimler-Chrysler, have made considerable strides in using blends in experimental trial runs. According to them, we could make use of this bio-diesel in our transport vehicles.

Likewise, IOC and HPCL are currently experimenting with usage of such blends. Gujarat has put in service four

buses on trial run with such plant-diesel.

We should urgently take up plantation of such plants on a large scale. The potential area needed for this will not be in conflict with agricultural lands in the countryside.

Jatropha grows upto 12' to 15' height in any soil (even  
(Continued on Page 8 )



Work gets underway on the IT Highway in Chennai. (Picture by V. RAJESH.)

## Chennai the 'Connectivity Gateway of India'

(by Dilip Kumar Shaw)

A new information technology company is launched every third day in Tamil Nadu – a marked departure from times when Tamil Nadu lagged behind States like Karnataka and Maharashtra. Today it is a different scenario; Chennai is one of India's leading IT hubs.

Tamil Nadu's software exports in 2004-05 were Rs. 10,730 crore, making it the second biggest exporter after Karnataka.

The State witnessed a growth of 63.6 per cent in ITES export alone in 2004-05. In 2003-04, the software exports of Tamil Nadu were Rs 7621 crore; there has been a substantial growth of 40 per cent in 2004-05.

“It is Government policy which has enabled Tamil Nadu to emerge as a preferred destination for IT investments,” says K.S. Lakshminarayan, General Manager, ELCOT, the promotional wing of the IT Department.

Already Wipro, Alcatel, Pentafour, L&T, Tata Consultancy Services, Singapore Airlines, Infosys, Satyam and

Citibank have set up their new software facilities in Tamil Nadu. To mark the growing importance of Tamil Nadu in the software industry, NASSCOM has opened its regional office in Chennai.

NASSCOM says, “With better infrastructure and quality human talent, Chennai fares better than Bangalore in attracting new investments from BPO and software firms.”

Another major reason for the State's IT growth has been the emergence of Tier II cities like Coimbatore and Madurai.

By extending the incentives and facilities offered in the IT Policy 2002 to the ITES sector, the State Government has taken an important step in an industry which is expected to grow globally to \$142 billion by 2008, when India is expected to attain exports of \$21-24 billion.

Lakshminarayan says, “Tamil Nadu will strive to achieve 20 per cent share of the market by promotion of Chennai as well as more Tier II cities and Tier III cities as preferred ITES destinations.”

The world's biggest and India's first private submarine Optical Fibre Cable i2i network with a bandwidth of 8.4 tera bytes per second (Tbps) has made Chennai the 'Connectivity Gateway of India'.

The Government is building a 47 km six-lane IT express highway at a cost of Rs. 127.41 crore, which is to be completed this year. The IT highway, the 1000-acre Siruseri Park, and the Mahindra Industrial Park will become the jewels of the Government's IT initiative.

With these initiatives, the Government hopes to create one lakh IT jobs in Tamil Nadu in the next two years.

When asked whether Chennai may face the same problems Bangalore is facing today: of not keeping pace with infrastructure requirements, Lakshminarayan says, “Government is making all the necessary arrangement so as not to make the same mistakes which Bangalore has made.” (Courtesy: *The Word*, the lab journal of the students of the Asian College of Journalism.)

# Oh! for lovelier avenues

Writing of the common trees of the southern highways back in the late 1940s, well known naturalist N. Krishnan commented on how he was hardly surprised that roads are “so barren and unattractive”, because he suspected that to the government or municipal employee who planted them, the general idea of a good roadside tree was “something that would come up of its own accord and look after itself, entailing no work or bother right from the start”. This still holds true, and avenue trees in many Indian cities still continue to be a much-maligned species.

Krishnan felt, “Avenue planting is not a routine job, but a thing that calls for plan and knowledge, initial care and the ability to envisage different trees against the lo-

cal setting.” In their basic qualities, the tree “must be hardy and robust, and needs no attention once it has attained a certain stature. It must suit the soil and rainfall of the place, and appeal to the eye *en-masse*”. The

● by  
**SHOBHA MENON**

“stately presence and character” of the Neem lends it many virtues as an avenue tree. According to him, “In the hottest months, when shade is most welcome, it is in thick leaf, and its clean smelling neighbourhood is said to be health-giving, probably because of the antiseptic properties of its oil, and where it branches low the sweep of its limbs has a decorative qual-

ity. In the evening, the dark reddish tones of its bark turn to black and its fine leaves, silhouetted against the sky, make a delicate pattern”. The Neem still continues to be a popular avenue species.

Swamy Thayammal, a Chennai-based horticulturist and landscape designer, says, “The Millingtonia Avenue in Delhi is a beautiful example of well planned avenue planting. But the trend in urban greening over the last few decades has not been very conducive to indigenous tree varieties. More exotic species like the Gul Mohur (originally from Madagascar), the Samanea Saman or Rain Tree, and the Copper Pod have been introduced in cities. The Gul Mohur, with a lifespan of 15-20 years, needs to be integrated sparsely into avenues of indigenous species like the



A shaded avenue in Chennai. – (Courtesy: Madras, The Gracious City.)

Tamarind and Neem. Flowering indigenous varieties include the *Cassia* variety (though the trees may not look as beautiful in the non-flowering season as the Gul Mohur). The Maramalli or *Millingtonia* is another fragrant variety suited to non-cyclone prone regions, while the *Thespesia* or Poovarasu is well suited for even coastal regions.”

Says K.S.S.V.V.P Reddy, a senior Forest Officer, “The most beautiful avenues I’ve seen are in Chandigarh, with its intersecting, well-planned roads, and whole streets lined with about 15 different common species. I particularly remember a lovely row of *Terminalia Arjuna* trees and their ‘grove effect’.

Though there are many constraints in avenue planting in cities, beautifully planned avenues need definitely not remain distant dreams. Much research has gone into raising saplings in the Forest Department over the last decade with the concept of biofertilisers. Now seedlings are fortified with VAM (vesicular arbuscular mycorrhiza) phosphobacteria, a living organism that helps tree grow better. For instance, the *Thespesia populnea* flourishes in high salinity regions like the beachside but not in other areas. Of the three kinds of trees – shade-giving, canopy and flowering – the accent is on planting shade-giving trees in city avenues... Neem, Pungam, *Ficus religiosa*, *Bengalensis* in big spaces, Tamarind mostly on highways. *Polyalthia longifolia* is planted generally in campus or hospital avenues to provide good filter for sound and dust. On very wide roads, the Rain Tree, which has a larger canopy, provides excellent shade.” A senior Parks Department official in Chennai adds, “Different species suit different regions across the country, since what is suitable in one climate may not suit another. While species like *Peltophorum*, *Delonix Regia*, *Cassia fistula* and *Tabubia rosea* thrive in a climate like Chennai’s, species like the Jacaranda flourish in a cooler climate, as in Bangalore. Evergreen trees like Tamarind, *Terminalia Arjuna*, and local mango varieties are generally

planted on the southern highways.

But no tree, however stately or picturesque, can equal the Tamarind, felt Krishnan, who lived “almost in the centre of a ten mile avenue of tamarind and knew of no pleasanter road.” He goes on, “How is it that the charming fig, *Ficus retusa*, is so rare along our highways?... There is no roadway, however richly bordered, that will not be the richer by the presence of this fig tree where the traveller may break his journey in its restful shade, and thank God for the beauty of trees.”

Naturalist S. Theodore Baskaran agrees. “Indigenous trees, such as Neem, Punai and Tamarind, should be planted as avenue trees. They need least care and do not fall during our monsoon gales because they belong to this climate. Wherever there is space, slow-growing trees that are close to the hearts of the people of India, like the Banyan and Peepul, need to find a place. Why can’t we have a tree policy, and a definite stand on trees? A tree plan for all new projects like industrial estates and new townships should indicate where to plant, what kind of tree and so on. This can prevent trees being planted below telephone or electric lines that come up overhead later. Why can’t we plan ahead (go for underground power cables wherever possible, for instance) to provide free space for trees?”

Lamenting on the “illogical thinking” of some officers he’d met of the Central Highways Department, “who’d have no trees along the roads because the rainwater from their leaves ruined their surfaces”, Krishnan had dourly commented how “they should object to the rain in the first place.” But more hopefully he spoke of how, “here and there, nearing town or village, there are stretches flanked with shady, well planted trees, the outcome of the long ago enthusiasm of an unusual official or citizen.” Now, more than ever, we need an even greater enthusiasm of many such officials AND citizens to help reintroduce life, colour and beauty through trees alongside and roads.

## Transplanting for a greener tomorrow

(by Sweta Narayanan)

There is only one natural way to beat the sizzling heat in Chennai city – trees and more trees. So, can the city actually boast of good tree cover? “Sadly, no. The city has less green cover, contradictory to the projections by government agencies and the Forest Department,” says Sudhakar, Assistant Director, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar Foundation.

In fact, the total tree cover in the city is only around 40 per cent, with species like Peepul, Rain Tree and Gul Mohur constituting the dominant varieties. South Chennai is ahead of both the north and central parts of the city in terms of abundance of trees.

What measures will help retain the existing green cover and add new cover? “Replanting is one of the methods to preserve trees,” says Sudhakar. Transplantation has to be done with certain factors in mind. A new location has to be selected after considering factors like available sunlight, water, wind and slope.

The size of the pit would depend on the height, girth and age of the tree. The density of the tree and soil mixture would vary according to the class of the tree. Transplanting 25-40-year-old trees assures greater chances of survival than replanting older trees.

Preparation of the tree involves pruning of the secondary branches. Fungicides are pasted around the pruned shoots to prevent drying and growth of fungus. Branches are covered with a wax cloth or plastic to protect them from rain. Before a tree is moved, a pit to a depth of 5 feet is dug with a gap of 2 feet around it.

Great care has to be taken to prevent damage to the taproot. Secondary roots should be pruned to facilitate movement. The root is protected with a layer of gunny bags around it and a round mud base of 2 feet around the tree is retained and wound with rubber tyres to hold the soil tight. The pit dug to transplant the tree is usually filled with 5 kg of neem cake (thick paste) as natural pest control.

Cranes are used to transplant big trees and it is a methodically planned procedure. To prevent damage during shifting, the tree is secured to wires.

Regular watering twice a day for three months from the date of transplantation, watering once in two days for two years and application of vermicompost and neem cake once a month are

part of the post-transplantation schedule. A period of six months is the time required for the tree to get acclimatised to the new surroundings.

The Foundation has transplanted two neem trees and one date palm. However, the palm tree did not survive.

Ilango, Managing Partner, Jeyam Landscape Consultants, has been involved in transplanting trees for the past three years. According to him, species like Neem and Tamarind are difficult to transplant, as survival chances are limited. He has met with considerable success with transplanting Rain trees. “Trees whose roots go very deep into the soil, usually older and bigger trees, do not survive if transplanted,” he adds.

Another word of caution – too much water can kill the newly transplanted tree. Also, the task of transplanting the tree can be carried out only towards night-time, as roads need to be clear of traffic and other hindrances.

D. Vijaya Bhaskaran, Director, Tree Plantation, Chennai District Exnora, blames poor green cover in the city on low public awareness. “People are ignorant about the importance of trees and engage in indiscriminate cutting of trees within their residential premises,” he alleges.

The government, he urges, should ensure easy availability of saplings and make tree planting compulsory, like rainwater harvesting. “Unless something is forced on people, they will not do it,” he adds.

Developmental pressures from various quarters, scarcity of water and harsh weather conditions are responsible for unsatisfactory tree cover in Chennai, according to Ashish K. Shrivatsava, Wildlife Warden. “The Forest Department is providing free saplings to educational institutions and schools. We have also undertaken planting of trees in the 39 km stretch of NH 4 and 30 km stretch of NH 5, where the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is widening roads,” he adds.

The goal enshrined in the forest policy is to achieve 33 per cent tree cover by 2012 and 25 per cent by 2007. At present, it is only 20 per cent. The efforts undertaken to improve the green cover in the city are minuscule compared to the magnitude of the area that needs to be covered. But at least the effort to augment tree cover has begun. (Courtesy: *The Word*, the lab journal of the students of the Asian College of Journalism.)

## A big 'Thank You' to 62 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.9.05 and 15.10.05, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

— Chennai Heritage

**Rs. 50:** Maxim A.Lobo; Raj, Durai R.

**Rs. 100:** Ahmed Nushtaq; Ramanujam, B.R.; Shetty, K.J.M.; Veeraraghavan, K.; Ramamurthi, L.N., Rajagopal, R.; Nagappan, S.V.

**Rs. 101:** Muthukrishnan, S.

**Rs. 150:** Pitchai, (Dr.) R

**Rs. 200:** Viswanathan, Padmini; Money, K.R.

**Rs. 400:** Dinesh, (Dr.)

U.S. (Dharwad);

Padmaja,

(Dr.) T.V.S.; Janakiraman, E.; Ehrlich Laboratory & Diagnostics; Mohan, G.; Rajappa, K.C.; Krishna, K.V.S.; Sridharan, R.K.; Umashankar, R.K.

**Rs. 500:** Asokan, K.

**Rs. 901:** Sarangan, Suresh

**Rs. 903:** Venkatesh, M.R.

**Rs. 1500:** Subramanyam, Indira

## 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

OUR  
READERS  
WRITE



A preventive injection?

Vaccines, triple antigens, hepatitis injections, etc. are all given to prevent children getting diseases. They suffer pain, get fever for a few days, but nobody questions the treatment that has been accepted worldwide. None argues as to why children (the victims) should be given injections, instead of killing or fighting the bacteria and viruses, the real offenders, which cause the diseases. We accept the treatment because we all believe that "prevention is better than cure".

Similarly, when a dog bites a person, an antirabies injection is administered to the victim only, and not to the offender, the dog. People avoid going near dogs, but do not suggest complete eradication of dogs.

We have to look at the dress code issue from this angle and not think and argue that victims are punished and not the offenders (MM, December 16th).

I don't agree that Indian culture believes in diversity with respect to a dress code. It is an accepted custom followed by all that people dress in a particular way for a marriage, to visit a temple or church, to participate in a ceremony or, for that matter, even for social functions where invitation cards often feature statements on dress codes.

Another point missed by all the speakers at the meeting is finding out from the offenders what prompted them to behave in the manner they did. If this exercise had been carried out, I am sure the majority would point to clothes being an instigating factor.

Thus, the choice is left to the girls – wear what you want and suffer teasing, harassment etc., or prevent/avoid such unpleasantness by accepting the dress code as a preventive injection. It all depends, how each girl views the issue.

**Prof. K. Sampath**

3, Karthik Flats  
27, Nalappan Street  
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

**Dress code needed**

I am unable to appreciate the stand taken by those educationists opposing the 'dress code' (MM, December 16th). I am afraid they are doing a disservice to the student community.

It has been stated that the 'victims are punished instead of the offenders'. They become 'victims' because of their provocative clothes which tempt the male. Unfortunately, this is not being realised by the girls. Even what Sri Adi Shankara sang in his *Bhaja Govindam* implies that the breasts and mid-

# Zubin Mehta concert strikes a different note

I had the good fortune to receive an invitation for the Zubin Mehta concert and considered myself extremely fortunate. To say that I was on cloud nine would be a gross understatement – cloud 99 or cloud 999 was more like it. Well, let us see.

The invitation stated, "Please be seated 45 minutes prior to the scheduled show time." Forty-five minutes! Can you believe it? Surely an unprecedented request. The invitation also said, "Gates close at 03:30 pm," the show time being "04:00 pm." (Note the 'zero' before the 'three' and 'four'.) Mercifully the gates didn't close at half past three. A question should arise in your mind – How do you know this since (presumably) you were seated inside the auditorium? Ha! As a true and genuine Indian, I reached the venue at 3.40 pm (note the absence of 'zero' before the 'three') only to find the gates wide, wide open. The musicians and Zubin Mehta hadn't turned up!

And turn up they did! At 4.05 pm the musicians started trooping in one by one onto the stage and began practising ('warming up' to use some athletic jargon) in full view of the audience, since the curtains were raised! The programme commenced at 4.35 pm. When in Rome do as the Romans do. When in India definitely do as the Indians do – especially with regard to timing and punctuality.

N. Murali, president of Music Academy, where the concert was held, gave the customary introductory talk. He mentioned that the 'concert' was actually a rehearsal for another concert later that evening. Were we to understand that we were the 'guinea pigs' and the invitees for the second programme the 'distinguished guests'?

Before the commencement of the concert, I mean the rehearsal, Zubin Mehta spoke a few words and very graciously (how can he be otherwise!?) expressed the hope that there would be minimum 'interruptions' by him. What he meant was that the rehearsal would hopefully turn out to be a concert in the true sense of the word. But, alas! That was not to be, with the maestro stopping the music many times (especially in the second composition) – to correct a musician here, instruct a musician there, have a musician repeat playing his instrument until he became 'perfect', answering the odd query, etc. Rehearsal it really was! Talk of disappointment

– of going from the top of the clouds to the bottom of the ocean. If the programme was indeed a rehearsal, same should have been stated clearly on the invitation so that the invitees could have had the appropriate mindset and expectation.

The rehearsal itself lasted an hour and ten minutes. Thus the audience had to wait patiently (impatiently?) in their seats for 80 minutes (45 minutes due to polite request, 35 minutes due to late-coming) for a programme that lasted 70 minutes! Surely, some kind of a record that deserves a place in the *Guinness*, if not at least a two-line mention in our own *desi Limca Book of Records*.

This was my initial reaction. I have since realised what a stupid idiot I am. Consider the request to be seated 45 minutes before the "scheduled start time," can you imagine the consequences if such a request was not made? As true Indians, we the invitees would leisurely troop in, one by one, even after the concert, I mean rehearsal (I don't know why I keep making this mistake), commences, distracting the great maestro and the musicians. Of course, the invitation could have stated, "Please note that invitees will not be allowed in under any circumstances once the concert begins." But that sounds so rude, doesn't it? So the option was to get us there early.

Regarding the programme being a rehearsal, why must this be mentioned in advance? Is not a rehearsal conducted by Zubin Mehta as good as, as enjoyable as, as fulfilling as a 'full-fledged' concert? In fact it can be argued (and rightly so) that a rehearsal is in fact better than a concert. It gives a rare look at what goes on behind the scenes, how this great conductor trains his musicians – guiding them, instructing them, coaching them, correcting them, answering them and so on. Any person with a lot of money can purchase a ticket to a Zubin Mehta concert in any other city, may be even in another country. But a rehearsal? We, the blessed few, who received an invitation for the earlier programme were indeed a lucky lot.

Regarding punctuality, if a concert by the best conductor in the entire world begins late, does it require any intelligence to realise that it necessarily has to be due to a 100 per cent bona fide reason? So, where is the question of explanation or apology?

B. Gautham

137 Wallajah Road, Chennai 600 002

riffs of women would tempt males.

In many clubs there are dress codes. For our religious functions, there are dress codes like men having to wear *panchakacham* with upper cloth and women nine yards *madisaaru* sarees.

Fifty years ago, teachers used to sport tufts, wear *panchakacham*, closed coats and turban. The same dress code was maintained in Government offices too for the head clerks and superintendents. As for the officers, they used to come in full suit and tie with gleaming boots.

Uniforms are prescribed even for tiny tots in school. Then why not continue the code even in colleges, where women students become more vulnerable?

It is unfortunate that a seemingly innocuous issue has been blown out of proportion. After all, nobody is going to compel them to wear uniforms in their homes and on their outings with their family members. They could outside college

wear what they please. In this context, it is better for all students to accept the dress code with equanimity.

**T.M. Sundararaman**

19, Nallappan Street  
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

**Clearing the toxins**

We fail to consider that Mother Earth, the Universe, is an organism like humans. Just as we have to take measures to cure our ailments, Mother Earth also takes appropriate actions/measures to set right the imbalance created by humans. Even though we consider that every drop of rainwater ought to have been conserved, actually the floods caused by excess rain (MM, December 16th) clear the land of the toxicity built up by the actions of humans. In fact, it would have reduced the toxicity of the land affected by the recent tsunami. These toxins should have been monitored, but this we never do.

**S.N. Mahalingam**

64A, Kalamegam St Extn.  
Kamarajapuram, Chennai 600 073.

**Streetside parking**

Re. 'Parking woes' (MM, December 16th), like true charity, this starts at home. It will be revealing to find out how many vehicle owners have adequate and unencumbered parking facilities in their residences. In Bangalore, I find many cars and vans parked along the streets, near or opposite the owners' residences. This leads to congestion on roads. It's the same in Chennai, I feel.

**N. Dharmeswaran**

14, 10th Cross  
Maruthi Extension  
Vyalikaval, Bangalore 560 003

**A slipped 'i'**

In MM, December 16th, reader M.R. Pillai has called the waterfall Kumbakkara. It is actually Kumbakkara and it is situated near Periyakulam, right below the hillock of Kodaikanal.

**N. Elango**

1B, Anna Road  
Dhanalaxmi Nagar Extension  
Nerkundram, Chennai 600 107

## • V. Jagannathan meets two business leaders

# The humane CEO

It was one of those hot Chennai evenings. Two students of IIT-Madras who were walking towards an ice cream parlour at Adyar junction saw a naked gypsy toddler falling down. Though the gypsy group was nearby, it was one of the students who rushed forward to lift and calm the crying baby, unmindful of its running nose and dirty body.

That student with tons of compassion was B. Suresh Kamath (46), now Chairman and Managing Director, Laser Soft Infosystems Limited, a Chennai-based banking software company.

"It is the spontaneous reaction to a situation that shows the true colour of a person," says Madhavan, who was the other student and who now works in Dubai.

CEOs come in various hues. "Somebody like Kamath – a humane CEO – is rare," says former Managing Director of the State Bank of India, P. N. Venkatachalam.

Today, Kamath's Laser Soft (turnover Rs.20 crore) is an acclaimed equal opportunity employer. Out of its 500 employees, close to 100 are physically challenged – and this is a fact now nationally recognised.

On his wedding anniversary last year, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kamath received two prestigious awards. The National Award for Welfare of Persons with Disabilities 2005 given by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment was presented to him by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The Helen Keller Award, from the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, was the second award. Earlier last year, the Government of Tamil Nadu chose Laser Soft as the Best Private Employer.

"One of the main reasons for starting this company was to help the underprivileged," states Kamath. And he sticks to that goal. For instance, an MNC willing to invest in Laser Soft, withdrew its offer when Kamath refused to change the company's humane recruitment policy.

Born in a large family in Mysore, Kamath is the eldest of five children – 3 boys and 2 girls. Their father Krishna was a clerk with Mangalore Ganesh Beedi; he also sold LIC policies to feed his family.

Kamath imbibed the two

important human qualities – humility and compassion – at home, particularly from his mother Geetha, and at school. Fondly remembering two school teachers, he recalls, "It was Rengasamy Iyengar and A.S. Lakshmana Rao who influenced me during my formative years. The religious discourses at Shivananda Dandalaya in Mysore taught me the importance of human values and simple living, at an early age."

Young Kamath soon realised that education was the gateway for a comfortable life and began concentrating on his studies. A bright student, he nurtured a desire to become a doctor so that he could treat his grandmother. Though he scored around 87 per cent in the pre-university course and ranked 28<sup>th</sup> in the entrance exams, low marks in chemistry (67 per cent) dashed his medical dreams.

A dejected Kamath joined BE-Electronics and Communications at the National Institute of Engineering, Mysore. Scholarships and college library books made college life a smooth passage. He also took care of his brothers' and sisters' education and became their banker. "We used to deposit with bank what little pocket money we got. Sewing together a few pages from our notebooks, he issued us the *Bank of Kamath* passbooks," recalls sister Nayana Vinod.

So what did they do with their money? "You see, he loved our grandmother very much. The money went for her medicines, while we had our passbooks updated," she laughs.

The engineering gold medalist next decided to forego a Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited's job in favour of studying for an M.Tech in Computer Science at IIT-Madras. Thanks to the Rs.400 stipend he received from the IIT, he was financially independent and also able to send Rs. 200 to his family.

While at IIT, he decided on his career path – taking a local job initially and then starting a company to help the physically challenged people, instead of following that dream of most IIT-ians, going to the US.

Kamath had another reason for his decision. "I will come and stay with you in Chennai once you get a job," his grandmother had told him. And he wanted to



Suresh Krishna.

## Scanning the globe for takeovers

Suresh Krishna of the \$3-billion TVS group spends much of his time nowadays contemplating markets beyond India's shores – not only for fasteners, but also for forgings and their manufacture. Recently, the Rs. 1,037 crore turnover Sundaram Fasteners announced its intention to acquire Peiner Umformtechnik GmbH of Germany, which manufactures large-diameter cold-formed and hot-

fulfil her wish.

Passing out in 1982, he got an offer letter from Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). But his jubilation was short lived. When he called up home to break the news, he was in for a rude shock. His grandmother had died that very day.

After a year with TCS, he joined Genie Computers, a computer-assembling company. Growing up with the company, he became its executive director in three years. When the company was sold, Kamath decided to start Laser Soft.

With great hopes in heart but with a very light purse – he had just Rs.200 at the time – he floated the company.

Before that, he had to convince one important person. That was Gayathri, a B.Sc. graduate whom his parents had finalised as his future wife. A girl's parents tend to marry their daughter to the boy's job rather than to the boy. And here Kamath had quit his Rs. 4,500 job, seeking a dream.

"The way he detailed his plans to me showed his sincerity and I sensed he would succeed," recalls Gayathri. They were married on December 3, 1986.

(Continued on Page 8)

forged bolts and nuts for large trucks, windmills, heavy industrial and construction equipment.

The German company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Textron Deutschland Beteiligungs GmbH, which is part of the \$1.9-billion revenue Textron Fastening Systems Inc. Textron Fastening Systems is a 100-per cent subsidiary of the \$10-billion American conglomerate, Textron Inc.

Sitting behind his paperless table Krishna explains the recent announcement, "Everybody knew that we were on the look-out for good buys and this came to us."

Peiner is Krishna's second acquisition in Europe. In 2003,

Sundaram Fasteners acquired the precision forging business of Dana Spicer Europe Ltd., UK, now known as Cramlington Precision Forge Limited, for Rs. 11.6 crore.

For Krishna, a soft-spoken literature graduate, making acquisitions – whether companies or just their plants – seems to come naturally. In 1992, he brought to India the radiator cap line of General Motors and, in 1999, acquired Autolec Systems.

Today, this nuts and bolts company is among those with the highest turnover in the TVS group – ahead of several listed companies with more popularly known products.

Krishna is following a mix of acquisitions – organic expansion as well as greenfield projects within India and overseas – to achieve his target of moving from being one of the top 10 automobile fastener manufacturers in the world to one of the top three.

However, Krishna does not want to fix any target date. "I don't believe in any time-frames and targets as they could result in costly and irreversible mistakes. Since nearly 50 per cent of Sundaram Fasteners is held by the public at large, money should not be put at risk."

According to Sampathkumar Moorthy, President, Operations, "The process towards the goal is what you are seeing in our acquisitions, overseas presence, domestic expansion and joint ventures."

Krishna's attitude to takeovers is simple – to acquire customers. But the strategies for different regions differ. For developed markets, Sundaram Fasteners follows one of the following: (a) supply from India, taking advantage of the arbitrage on labour and other costs; (b) have a presence close to the overseas customer; and (c) bring home the entire production line from an overseas com-

pany to cater to that market when it is uneconomical to acquire and operate or set up base overseas. This enables the company to acquire a ready customer base along with the production capacity.

"We manufacture the large-sized products overseas, closer to the markets and back-end the small items to India, if it is economical. This way, we keep freight costs low," says Moorthy.

The company follows the General Motors radiator cap strategy with sintered valve guides and valve seats at its Sundaram Bleistahl plant – a 76:24 joint venture in Hosur.

For the eastern markets, the game plan is different, since

supplying to them from India is far tougher, costs, particularly labour, being fairly similar. Therefore, the company established a manufacturing base in China through Sundaram Fasteners (Zhejiang), with an initial investment of \$5 million. Today, the company does business worth around Rs.1 crore catering to the European market.

On the domestic front, the company spent around Rs.85 crore last year for capacity expansion.

The next acquisition will probably be in the US – the world's largest automobile market – as the opportunities there abound. For instance, Textron is in the process of restructuring its 19-location fastener business.

Says Timothy G Weir, Textron's director of communications, "In September this year, Textron announced its plans to thoroughly evaluate a range of strategic alternatives for Textron Fastening Systems. The alternatives include selling part of the business or possibly the entire business. However, it has not yet decided whether to sell Textron Fastening Systems."

Acquiring a company may be easy, but the problem happens at the time of integration. Sundaram Fasteners, however, hasn't faced serious integration issues whether in the case of Autolec in India or Cramlington Precision Forge in the UK. The one important task that needs attention, according to Krishna, is consolidating the gains. "We need to consolidate, as it will be difficult to manage without it."

What is noteworthy amongst all these things is the company's motto. For the staff, it is 'Think Customer'. Interestingly, a belief their boss shares – acquiring customers through takeovers. (Courtesy: www.domainb.com)

## • Transforming a heritage home...

# For the sake of Art

A rush of old memories took over as I listened to Advocate General N.R. Chandran declare open the art centre at Sri Parvati on Eldam's Road recently. Not only was the 70-year-old house a part of my boyhood, but its owner, a distant relative who was a big hit with the younger generation with his jokes and amateur magic tricks, was part of my boyhood.

Sri Parvati was built by grand-uncle P.S. Venkataraman, a

• by  
V. RAMNARAYAN

well-known building contractor, well into the 1960s, with several homes to his credit in the Alwarpet-Mylapore area. Venkata's son Dr. P.V. Sundaram, a world-renowned research scientist in molecular biology, and his wife Ratna, who taught English at Loyola College, both died last year and Sundaram's sister Lakshmi Venkataraman, an art critic, is the present owner of the property. Lakshmi turned down several huge offers to make over the vast property to apartment

complex developers, and, instead, refurbished the house with the old style intact, with the help of architect M.S. Venkateswaran. She now offers the premises on rent for chamber concerts, art exhibitions and other cultural activities. The art gallery upstairs is airconditioned and beautifully appointed. On December 14th, Alliance Francaise director Jean Pascal Elbaz declared open Sri Parvati's first art exhibition, featuring the works of the 'Madras Veterans'.

The hall on the ground floor is meant for music, but can accommodate only some 50 people. The vocal concert on the opening day was by Vijay Siva, accompanied by R.K. Sriram Kumar (violin) and Manoj Siva (*mridangam*). Appropriately, the noted dancer and dance teacher, C.V. Chandrasekhar, a friend of Dr. Sundaram, spoke at the inauguration, recalling his warm memories of the place and the people who had lived in it or visited it. For Sarada Nataraj, who is helping Lakshmi with the project, and the family, Sri Parvati and Sri Sundar, the other old house that stood in the same



Sri Parvati on Eldam's Road — a heritage home transformed to showcase the Arts.

compound until the 1990s, were part of our childhood, a vast playground that stretched to the backyard of our house *Suprabha* on Murray's Gate Road. *Suprabha* was shared by my father Venkataraman and his elder brother Sundaresan. There were no compound walls separating the three houses.

Granduncle Venkata, a tall, towering man, was an all-round sportsman, and formed a highly successful tennis doubles partnership with his elder brother P.S. Balakrishna Iyer. His

younger brother and next door neighbour was P.S. Ramachandran, an opening bowler who once took all ten wickets in a league match innings for Mylapore Recreation Club against Triplicane Club. He played in the inaugural Ranji Trophy match in 1934 and also bowled an impressive spell for Madras against the D.B. Jardine-led MCC team touring India. Venkata and 'Pattu', as Ramachandran was called, were the sons of Justice P.R. Sundara Iyer, famous, among other things, for his

decisive support that ensured that the mathematics genius Srinivasa Ramanujan was given a scholarship to study in England.

Granduncle Venkata was very popular with us children, who played all manner of games in the compound and in the house. He was the umpire whose word was final in all disputes and his interpretation of the ground rules specific to the venue were accepted by all of us without demur. Games like cricket were usually male-dominated, but the girls were free to join in most of the other games. Many of the group went on to play first class cricket. Brothers P.R. Sundaram, Venkatachalam and Viswanathan were medium pace bowlers, while brothers Narayanan and Ramachandran were allrounders. My brother Sivaramakrishnan was a left-handed batsman and I an offspinner.

Back in the 1950s and 1960s, Sri Parvati and the other two houses constantly rang with the noise of children playing in the compound, while there was hardly any street noise. Today, the situation is just the opposite, with few children playing in the compound and the traffic noise of high decibel. The only music in the past came from the radio or a young family member training under a *paattu vadyar* to be an amateur singer, unless you included wedding concerts under huge pandals within the compound. The art objects were mainly old Ravi Varma and other pictures of gods and goddesses. It is heartening to see that a member of a family with a largely legal, journalistic and business background (Sundara Iyer's eldest son P.S. Swaminatha Iyer owned Soundarya Nursery) is making such an important contribution to the promotion of art while retaining the old-world ambience of her ancestral home.

— A Special Correspondent

## • Government-NGO-Corporate partnerships

# A model for restoration

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum (the erstwhile Victoria and Albert Museum), Mumbai's oldest museum and one of the grandest examples of Renaissance Revival architecture in the city, which has been painstakingly restored and revitalised by INTACH, recently received the 'Award of Excellence' in the 2005 UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation programme.

The project not only encompassed the restoration of the building and collection but also offered a holistic approach to ensure that the highest standards of management would guide the museum's development as a dynamic cultural institution of the city. The project also sought to enhance the museum's role as a serious educational institution of the city, dedicated to its history, culture and development.

The project began in 1996 when INTACH approached the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) with a proposal to restore the museum, which was in a derelict condition, and to establish an art conservation laboratory that could serve Mumbai's museums and connoisseurs. Years of negotiations and attempts to find a sponsor who would have the courage to take on such a challenging project finally yielded results. In 2003, the Jannalal Bajaj Foundation gave an initial grant of Rs.1.5 crore for the restoration of the building. In February 2003, the BMC took a historic decision and an agreement was concluded and signed by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and the Jannalal Bajaj Foundation to restore and revitalise the 133-year-old Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum.

In 2004, the Bajaj Foundation enhanced the initial grant to Rs.2 crore for the restoration and revitalisation of the Museum, and offered another Rs.3 crore to establish a new art centre in the Museum grounds. Two galleries in the museum will be named after the Bajaj founders. The Municipal Corporation agreed to match the Bajaj grant and has given an initial corpus of Rs.5 crore to the Museum.

A management trust was formed in 2003 of which the Mayor is the Chairman, the Municipal Commissioner is the Co-Chairman and INTACH's Mumbai Convener, Tasneem Mehta, is the Managing Trustee. The other Trustees include Rahul Bajaj, Niraj Bajaj and Minal Bajaj, representing the donors. Several important corporators and experts like Dr. Jyotindra Jain, Dean of the School of Art and Aesthetics

at JNU, Delhi, Shyam Benegal, well-known film-maker, Pheroza Godrej, city historian, Dr. Gorakshakar, former Director of the Prince of Wales Museum, Pradip Shah, financial expert, and Rajan Jayakar, legal expert, are on the Board of Trustees.

The Museum project is a pioneering example of a partnership between the government, a corporate and an NGO. It suggests the way forward for many of the moribund government-run cultural institutions of our country. It reflects a true partnership between government and society.

The restoration and revitalisation programme includes the establishment of a new Special Exhibitions Gallery, which will showcase visiting exhibitions and focus on the development of the industrial arts in India. An INTACH Conservation Laboratory and Documentation Centre have also been established. About 40% of the objects in the Museum have been cleaned and restored. The valuable glass negative collection has been achieved. The entire museum collection has been photo-documented and computerised. The restoration of the building has been completed and work on the display is nearing completion.

The second phase of the project envisages setting up a children's interactive centre in the rear cottage. A new building will house a state-of-the-art exhibitions gallery. A cafe, museum shop and performance space are also being planned.

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum collection represents the spirit and ethos of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in the Bombay Presidency. The initial collection of the Museum was put together in 1855, but it took 17 years for the beautiful Palladian building to be built as the museum was constantly bedevilled by lack of funds. 2005 will mark the 150<sup>th</sup> year of the collection.

The Museum is the finest architectural example in the city of a Palladian style building with an ornate Victorian interior that is extensively gilded in gold. Minton tiles, decorated wood and ironwork and delicately etched glass windowpanes create a spectacular palatial effect. The restoration and revitalisation project has revived this Museum and given back to the city a long-forgotten jewel and a museum specially dedicated to its history and development – an extraordinary city museum.

## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

1. Who is the new president of the BJP?
2. According to *Forbes Asia's* list of 40 richest Indians, who comes second after Lakshmi Niwas Mittal?
3. Which Thackeray resigned from the Shiv Sena leading to a 'crisis' in the party?
4. Name the former Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker, many-times MP from Lakshwadeep and the Union Energy Minister, who passed away recently.
5. Who are *Time* magazine's 'Persons of the Year'?
6. On the above theme, whom did children vote in as 'Time for Kids' person of the year?
7. Who won his second straight FIFA World Player of the Year award recently?
8. Who regained the Champions Trophy in men's hockey in Chennai recently?
9. What did the Pawan Kumar Bansal Committee go into?
10. Name India's latest big satellite. It was launched from Kourou recently.
- \* \* \*
11. Where is a scientific landfill project being planned in Chennai, under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, at a cost of Rs. 400 crore?
12. Who won the 'Sangita Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi Award' that was instituted by *The Hindu* recently?
13. What distinction does the hamlet of Devanampattinam have in the State?
14. Where in Chennai is there a Protestant church that is celebrating its 325th year? It is the first Protestant church built by the British in Asia.
15. Why was the Arignar Anna School in M.G.R. Nagar in Chennai in the news on December 18th?
16. Name the imposing mansion on Poonamallee High Road, opposite Pachaiyappa's College, that was demolished recently.
17. If it's Vasu for *Chandramukhi* and Ravikumar for *Padayappa*, who was it for *Baba*?
18. Where in Tamil Nadu did the e-mail threatening attacks on Parliament and the U.S. Consulate in Chennai originate?
19. When is 'Actor's Day' in the State?
20. Which popular city eye hospital has designed the world's smallest needle?

(Answers on page 8)

# The men and their machines

(by A Special Correspondent)

(Continued from  
last fortnight)

Some of the stalwarts responsible for building the Madras Motor Sports Club include K.V. Srinivasan, one of the founders of the Club and the Trust; M.A. Chidambaram, whose vision created the Club; the Rajkumar of Pithapuram, the first Indian president; V. Chidambaram, chairman-races for many years; M. Nilakantan, who was instrumental in bringing discipline into the events; R. D'Souza, who provided inspiring leadership; Suresh Patel, who put rules into place; and Minoo Belgamwala who, during his 18 years at the helm, ensured the Club remained active.

Others responsible for the Club's success included R.P. Bhimani, N.D. Patel, Col S.S. Choudhary, K. Bhaskara, Roshan Ali Currimbhoy, Dr. Saboo, Babu Mathen, Ranganatha Rao, Ravi Mammen, R. Dayanidhi, S. Karivardhan, B.V. Ranganath, Freddie Webb, John Webb and Gopinath Shiva. Govind Swaminathan, A.C. Muthana and S.S. Sivaprakasa guided the Club on legal matters while D.S.S. Jayatillake and Gamini Jayasurya helped develop interaction between the racing fraternity in India and Sri Lanka.

The old racing fraternity in Madras consisted of Genji Verugis in his MG-TC, Ranganath Rao in his Citroen Special, Babu Mathen in a SIAC Special, Mike Satow and Kinny Lal from Calcutta, K. Rajagopal and K. Sundaram from Coimbatore, N. Soundararajan from Dindigul, the Maharajah of Gondal, P.S. Hariharan and Haji Sattar Sai in their Triumph Jaguar 150s, Kumar Siddanna in his MG Twin, A.D. Jayaram, Loganathan in a Buck Fiat, Freddie Webb in a Jaguar Mark V, John Webb in a 1952 Chevy, Palaniappa Chettiar from Salem in his Cadillac Automatic, and Damodaran. The leading two-wheeler competitors were Sheriff Dyan, Bullet Bhasky, P.D. Sathy and Bose, all from Madras, Tyrewala from Bombay and Krishnaswamy from Coimbatore.

As the old guard moved out, the void was filled by drivers from Ceylon - Mike Rauf, David Pieris, Priya Muna-

singhe, Shanti Gunaratne, Rally Dean, Zacky Dean, U.D. Jindasa, Fricky Khan, Chandra D'Costa and Raja Sinnathorai. Daljit Chaggar was the lone Kenyan. Other Indians who made an impression included Bhaskar Rao, Ashok Krishnan, the Hebbbar brothers, Farhad Cariappa, Aspi Bathena, Rajendra and Rajkumar.

The cars spectators usually saw at the starting grid in the early years included a Buck Fiat, Chevrolet Studebaker, Cadillac, Standard 10, Fiat, MG, Mercedes 300 SL coupe, Ferrari V-12, MG Twin Cam, Jaguar Mark V and VII, Fiat

Spyder, Triumph TR-3, Austin Healey and a modified Jaguar. In the early 1980s, two-wheelers included a Luna, TVS-50, Lambretta, BSA Falcon, Kinetic Spark, Ind-Suzuki, Hero Honda, Yezdi Roadking, Ideal Jawa and Rajdoot Yamaha.

Since handicap racing had its own problem, it was decided to encourage the building of a Formula India car. The first indigenous racing car, the 'Qumari Special', was a two-seater developed around an Ambassador engine by Kinny Lal and Suresh Kumar from Calcutta. Adi Malgam developed a frame around which Vicky Chandok developed the first indigenous racing car in Madras using a Herald engine. Suresh Naik, Nazir Hussain, Mohinder Lalwani, Malgam (all from Bombay), A.D. Jayaraman and Karivardhan were the pioneers in the construction of indigenous racing cars who turned motor sport around in India and gave it stature.

Several automobile ancillary units, such as India Radiators, Brakes India, Rane, Gabriel Shock Absorbers, Union Motors and Wheels India, donated components which helped to reduce the cost of the car. The companies used the track to test their components. Pragmatically, while racing enthusiasts in Bombay and Coimbatore built cars with made-in-Bombay Fiat engines, Calcutta experimented with made-in-Calcutta Ambassador engines while Madras and Bangalore relied on the made-in-Madras Herald. From the Formula

## Dim future without government support

In the 1950s and early 1960s, motor sport enthusiasts started racing with the cars they had. Those who had sports cars found an opportunity to race once a year. Once the *Standard Heralds*, *Fiats* and *Ambassadors* came in, the cars were classified. There would often be rallies between Madras and Bangalore. The Karnataka Motor Sports Club was active; the Yelahanka air field and the Agaram army training ground were the venues in Bangalore. *Raymonds* was one of the early sponsors in the early 1970s.

"It was only in the 1980s that spectators got something to see something flashier than the usual *Fiats* and *Ambassadors*. Even then, nobody explored the commercial aspects of the sport," says Kamlesh Patel, vice president, MMSC, and Suresh Patel's son who has been associated with mo-

"Governments elsewhere look at it as a tourist proposition. People talk about Malaysia after the country began hosting the Formula-1. India is home to several multinationals who would like to advertise. But we have not been able to capture the interest of even our car manufacturers. Except the TVS Group and Tatas, who are sponsoring Narain Karthikeyan, motor sport in India has not seen big money," adds Thomas.

Both Thomas and Patel agree that it is a chicken-and-egg situation. "To professionalise the sport, we need to raise resources and that can happen only if we scale up operations," says Patel. The real challenge, they say, lies in developing motor sport at the grassroots level, pushing go-karting to a higher plane, make the sport attractive for newcomers, and to bring larger crowds to the race track. "In the West, for example, there is a whole ambience created around the race track, with amusement parks, hotels, tourist spots etc. All that requires enormous amounts of money," Thomas points out.

tor racing in Madras for 35 years.

"Sholavaram was a once-in-a-year event. Today, people are not willing to travel that far. Also, television has invaded most homes and there are other forms of entertainment," says Ajit Thomas, president, MMSC. Adds T.T. Raghunathan, past chairman of the All India Motor Race Meet committee and who has been on the MMSC committee for many years, "The time-speed-distance formula was what made the South Indian rally popular. To conduct a speed event on closed roads in India is virtually impossible."

Asked what MMSC's high points were over the past 50 years, Thomas and Patel listed a few: taking the initiative to conduct motor sport in an organised manner; conduct of the premier South India rally every year from 1958 to 2000; producing the Sholavaram magic; and getting the world-class track built at Irungattokkottai.

"However, we seem to be stuck in a groove and are unable to scale up. Look at Bahrain, Brazil and China who are running Formula-1 races today. We have never worked to better our events. Lack of funding is a major constraint; even now, we struggle to make profits," says Patel.

"If you look at the success stories of China, Malaysia, Bahrain and Turkey, you will see 100 per cent government commitment; without such support, you cannot have motor sport, which needs about Rs 1,200 crore to be spent annually. I don't see that happening in India," says Raghunathan, adding, "Motor sport is sponsorship-driven. Unless the stakeholders see motor sport as an avenue for promoting their products, the sport will face stagnation. It is an expensive sport. For an individual, the entry barrier is cost."

Raghunathan feels that MMSC has meted out step-motherly treatment to the two-wheeler industry. "The TVS Racer Bikes Scheme has given about 600 youngsters from all walks of life the opportunity to race. The top 20 racers in the past few years have come from this scheme. For Rs. 500 or so, any child can apply to join; TVS provides nearly 40 bikes, MRF the tyres and MMSC the instruction. Two-wheelers bring in the crowds. Isn't it strange then why this segment is not being promoted? Unfortunately, the MMSC doesn't seem interested."

A Special  
Correspondent

Ford, Chandok, Karivardhan, Vijay Mallya and Akbar Ebrahim went on to develop the F-2000. Ebrahim trained at the Sholavaram track before racing in Formula-3 races in the UK. It was only later that Narain Karthikeyan and Karun

Chandok entered the scene. Karivardhan developed the real Indian racing car engine but it was not a single-make car. His death in an air crash was a sad day in Indian motor racing.

(Concluded)



With floods come the danger of electrocution as the rising waters come into contact with live wires. Illegal tapping into the grid by many Indians who cannot afford to buy electricity adds to the potential hazard. Photograph: Donovan Wyle.



A bridge becomes just another waterway as the monsoon floods turn Basirhat on the India-Bangladesh border into a vast lake. Photograph: Donovan Wyle.

# Cities minus Carbon?

(by A Special Correspondent)

The majority of the world's scientists agree that the Earth's climate is changing because of manufactured greenhouse gases. The result will be a substantially altered climate.

The Earth's climate is changing. Computer simulation models show that the global temperature (its mean average) is likely to rise anywhere be-

tween 1.5° C and 5.9° C by 2100. This estimate has a wide range because scientists are uncertain about how the climate will respond to increased concentrations of greenhouse gases. Also, we don't know how emissions of greenhouse gases will change in the coming decades; how much we emit depends on our choices as a global society.

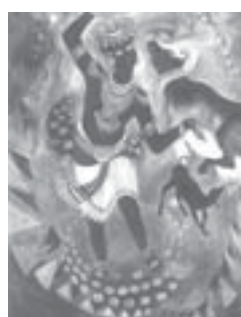
One major effect of climate change will be the continuing rise in sea levels. Global rainfall is likely to increase by about two per cent per degree of warming, although some regions will become drier. Changing rainfall patterns are likely to increase soil erosion and subsidence, and profoundly affect water availability and quality. Drier soils will change the type and yield of crops, increasing the risk of famine in some areas.

Extreme storms and flooding will also become a serious threat. Health is likely to be affected directly (summer heat stress) and indirectly (food poisoning). Infectious diseases such as malaria are also expected to spread.

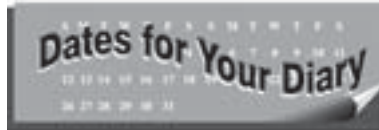
The exhibition, Zero Carbon City, organised by the British Council in partnership with the Tamil Nadu Science and Technology Centre, pictures real examples of our changing climate and the effects can be clearly viewed in many countries with images of extreme weather events: trends in arctic ice cup thickness; observed glacier retreats; poor urban air quality; environmental refugees; lack of available water; and impacts on biodiversity. The exhibition also looks at energy efficiency; renewable energy; fuel cell technology; combined heat and power plants; effective public transport systems, carbon capture and storage; carbon offsetting; and emissions trading. Finally, it looks at people: the faces and voices that are making a difference to our changing climate.

What makes this exhibition special is that ten of the world's top photographers from Magnum Photographic Agency were commissioned to capture images from ten diverse countries around the world to illustrate the impact of climate change. These photographers were also asked to chronicle the range of solutions to reduce carbon emissions in communities from the north, south, east and west of the globe. This has produced some inspiring images, which detail the resourceful ways in which these communities have adapted. — (Courtesy: *Connecting*, the journal of the British Council.)

**Note:** Log on to <http://staging.web2.britishcouncil.org/cms/zerocarbon.city.htm> for an online viewing of the exhibition or visit the Periyar Science and Technology Centre between January 18<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup>.



A Keshav painting.



**Till January 21:** Allan Parker's *The Mela Pictures*. (At Forum Art Gallery.)

**Till January 25:** *The Magic Lantern Pongal Festival 2006*: A fortnight of contemporary work in dance, music, and theatre showcasing traditional theatre by Purusai Kannappa Thambiran, Theru-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 Vidya-shram, and Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium.)

**Till January 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.)

**Till January 31:** *Zero Carbon City*. Exhibition organised by the British Council (at Periyar Science and Technology Centre).

**January 21,22,28,29:** *Chapter 2* by Evam Productions in English. (At Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium.)

**January 21-Feb. 3:** Exhibition of paintings by Sri Lankan artist Raja Segar. (At Lakshna.)

**January 22:** *Vintage Classical Cars Rally/Display* organised by the Madras Heritage Motoring Club. (At DakshinaChitra, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.)

**January 25:** *Buzz @ the Courtyard: "Satisfaction Doubled"* by Galeej Gurus celebrating the music of The Rolling Stones & Coldplay (at the British Council, 8.15 p.m.)

**January 27:** *Duo Bertrand and Cie* a group of six musicians who give you an opportunity to discover the quality and diversity of a different kind of music originating from tradition — the music of Vendee, Brittany. (At IIT Campus.)

**January 29:** *Oru Visaaranai* by Pareeksha, a Tamil adaptation of J.B. Priestley's popular play, *An Inspector Calls*, the brilliant and haunting thriller which has had audiences on the edge of their seats all over the world. (At Alliance Francaise, 3 p.m and 6.30 p.m.)

**February 4:** Bharata Natyam performance by Nancy Boisset, from France, who has been studying the dance form in Paris and Madras since 1997. (At Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.)

**Till February 16:** *Krishna Leela*, an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Keshav, who began his career as a freelance cartoonist for *Ananda Vikatan* in 1983, before joining *The Hindu* as a cartoonist in 1987. (At Ashvita.)

## 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

## CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. ROAD, ALWARPET, CHENNAI 600 018.

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

● I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS, as subscription to *Madras Musings* for the year 2005-06.

● As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai Heritage an additional Rs ..... (Rupees .....)

Please keep/put me on your mailing list.

Name : .....

Address: .....

**Note:** Overseas postage Rs. 550/year extra. Cheques for overseas postage alone payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd.. All other cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'.

## 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: .....

# The Humane CEO

(Continued from Page 4)

Kamath chose his product space in the healthcare and banking domains. He made two cold calls – one to Dr. Pratap Reddy, Apollo Hospitals, and the other to the State Bank of India's (SBI) chief general manager.

Dr. Reddy directed him to his daughter Sangeetha Reddy, who promised to buy the product provided it suited their requirements. The SBI official put him on to his colleague to sort out the problems at their extension counter at Madras Fertilizers Limited.

As both fields were new to him and his small team, the mornings were spent at the Apollo Hospitals learning operations, like inventory management, laboratory services and out-patient services, and the afternoons at SBI's extension counter for some time. He watched the work flow and learnt from the staff the logic behind each activity.

Laser Soft first automated the out-patient department at

the Apollo Hospitals and followed it up with other wings. The SBI assignment was more challenging. Not having a computer, Kamath and his team spent the night at the bank to write the software. "Those were the days when a PC cost an ear and a nose," he recalls.

His success in Manali won Laser Soft more orders from SBI. By this time, Laser Soft had developed 52 banking software products, giving Kamath the confidence to focus solely on the banking software domain.

The company implemented its core banking solution, *Laser Panacea*, at Corporation Bank and Andhra Bank. Besides these, products like *ProFunds* – a cash management software – and *e Circular* got a good response from private and government banks.

But Laser Soft's growth had started to stagnate. According to Kamath, some nationalised banks started putting restrictive tender conditions – the software vendor should have a turnover of Rs.500 crore –

keeping out pure product companies.

"Even big IT companies will not qualify if their product revenues alone are taken into account. Further, given our low pricing it is difficult to meet the turnover norms," he regrets.

Nevertheless, he has charted a growth path for the company that includes exports to West Asia and other overseas markets. He is also planning to sell the intellectual property rights for some of his products. Meanwhile, helping the disabled with work at Laser Soft remains a commitment.

## Unsolved mystery of migration

Scientists at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, have established that the early human had 'first' migrated out of Africa taking the 'south route' via India to reach the Andamans, some 70,000 years ago. Director CCMB, Dr. Lalji Singh explains that the Andaman 'Negrito' and the Nicobar 'Mongloid' are two distinct tribes, the former sharing physical features with African pygmies and other Asian Negrito people, and the

latter who share physical features and spoken language with the Chinese, Malays and Burmese. Interestingly, the DNA sequences of the Onge and the Great Andamanese did not match with any of the populations, including 6500 samples covering the entire subcontinent. These tribal studies have stimulated a wide range of speculation, as they may well hold the key to the mystery of our own origins! (Courtesy: INTACH Virasat).

## 'Bio-diesel' crops for rural boost

(Continued from Page 1)

sandy to sandy loam). It branches out, carrying fruit that yield the diesel. It does not have thick foliage and will not create shade for agricultural crops adjoining the bunds. This will not therefore be unwelcome to the owners on either side of the bund. Till the late 1920s and early 1930s it was the oil used for lamps in the countryside till kerosene invaded its territory. Now, the use of kerosene must be minimised to reduce the import cost and so we need to reverse the practice.

*Pongamia glabra*, known as *Honge* in Tamil Nadu, needs somewhat loamy soil. It is seen along nullah bunds and wastelands with sandy loam soil. It grows upto 20' to 25' and branches out to bear fruit. It also does not have foliage and so does not cause shade to agricultural crop adjoining the bunds, so farmers would will-

ingly grow them for seeds to produce plant diesel.

So growing them in the countryside along field bunds, wastelands, degraded forest and revenue areas, roadsides and canal banks throughout rural areas, all the States can give an enormous boost to this plant diesel production.

Besides growing the plants, the work involved prior to obtaining the final product is col-

lecting the seeds, feeding them to oil mills and pooling the oil so obtained to marketplaces for final use as bio-diesel. The residual cake after oil extraction is a useful organic manure.

All these operations and use of the manure by the rural people will be a big boost to the rural economy and will help the country as a whole in reducing its import burden. (Courtesy: *Plant Hortitech.*)

### OUR ADDRESSES

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: Chennai Heritage, 260-A, TTK Road, Chennai 600 018.

For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: MADRAS MUSINGS, C/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

On editorial matters: The Editor, MADRAS MUSINGS, C/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

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

## Answers to Quiz

1. Rajnath Singh; 2. Azim Premji of Wipro; 3. Raj Thackeray; 4. P.M. Sayeed; 5. The Gates, Bill and Melinda, and singer Bono; 6. J.K. Rowling; 7. Ronaldinho; 8. Australia; 9. The 'cash-for-questions' scam; 10. INSAT-4A.

\* \* \*

11. Kodungaiyur and Perungudi; 12. Violinist M. Chandrasekha-

ran, the 2005 Sangita Kalanidhi; 13. It's the biggest fishing hamlet; 14. In Fort St. George. The church is the St. Mary's Church; 15. 42 people were trampled to death while awaiting flood relief; 16. *Kushaldoss Gardens*; 17. Suresh Krishna; 18. Palayamkottai; 19. October 1st; 20. Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital.

Sport on Page 6

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

  
Amalgamations Group

  
Ashok Leyland

  
Brakes India Limited

  
Go Placidly

  
F.L. Smidth Limited

  
KASTURI & SONS LTD.

  
LARSEN & TOUBRO LIMITED  
Engineering Construction & Contracts Division

LOKAVANI  
HALLMARK PRESS  
PVT. LTD.

  
MURUGAPPA  
GROUP

  
NIPPO  
BATTERIES FORCHES

  
Rane  
Rane Group

  
SAINT-GOBAIN  
The future of glass. Since 1665.

  
SANMAR

  
SUNDARAM FINANCE  
Enduring values. New age thinking.

  
Sundram Fasteners  
Limited

  
TAJ  
Hotels, Resorts  
and Palaces

  
TATA  
CONSULTANCY  
SERVICES

  
TVS  
MOTOR COMPANY

  
UCAL  
AUTO  
PRIVATE LIMITED

Since 1856,  
patently leaders  
— A WELLWISHER