

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Isn't it a brilliant idea to let us park our cars on the unfinished fly-over just outside our house?

Loop-the-Loop

Flyovers – today's buzz-word, selling the dream that traffic problems will soon end. That's nice, although hopefully, they'll keep them user-friendly.

These guys can be seriously confusing, with octopus-like arms looping, bending and twisting over themselves.

You can get lost on them, you know. A little like battling an unfriendly maze.

Pretty impressive, the sight of one under construction. You gaze with awe upon the huge arms slowly inching towards one another, and hope they've got their calculations right. A bit disconcerting if the arms didn't meet, and surprised construction crews found themselves sailing past one another.

But just one point – the primary reasons for traffic woes are the users themselves. So, unless road-usage lessons are 'taught' – literally – flyovers may come and go, but the clueless driver will mow on forever.

For example, speed junkies must learn to differentiate between a flyover and a race track, or they'll find themselves dropping like the gentle rain from heaven upon some unfortunate beneath.

Given the numbers planned, the city might soon begin to resemble a fairground filled with roller coasters.

Ordinary roads will seem dull, unexciting.

Incidentally, word's out that there is a nice stretch of road in a certain locality... clean, straight, no potholes.

Something wrong with that image?

Don't worry.

Plans are afoot, and they'll come a-digging real soon.

Ranjitha Ashok



This spectacular painting, 'Sunflower & Space-I', is part of Ravi Gossain's exhibition 'Celebrating Space' that is on at the Lalit Kala Akademi. And SPACE is what our two stories on this page are about.

Are authorities serious about OSR?

(By A Special Correspondent)

Chances are that most citizens of Madras that is Chennai had never heard of the term OSR, unless they were in the building trade, until the other day. That was when a high profile attempt by the Chennai Corporation to take over what it felt was OSR land from a five-star hotel made news – and thousands caught up with the fact that OSR stands for Open Space Reservation.

An article written by Suresh Kuppuswamy in *The Hindu* dated February 17, 2007 defines the OSR specifications in Chennai as follows: "The Open Space Reservation (OSR) norms are mandatory for large plots and are intended for com-

munity and recreational purposes. The OSR norms help maintain a healthy ratio between the built-up area and open spaces in a city and are worked out based on the property extent.

"As per Development Control Rules (DCR) of the CMDA, the OSR is applicable only for plots exceeding 3000 m² (13.5 grounds) in extent. In large plots, where developers propose public roads, the area covered by public roads is excluded from the calculation of

OSR provisions. However, these roads are to be transferred to the local body free of cost (by a gift deed) in order to qualify for the exemptions."

The article goes on to state that wherever a developer cannot provide OSR due to various constraints, he has to make a payment equivalent to the space to be reserved to the Corporation. This is applicable only for plots ranging from 3000 sq. m to 10,000 sq. m. In plots exceeding 10,000 sq. m, land amounting to 10% of the area

has to be compulsorily allotted for OSR purposes. Building associations can maintain this land as a park.

Laudable though such rules are on paper, in reality most developers violate these norms with impunity. OSR has recently come into focus in the Chennai Corporation debates when the Councillors alleged that private institutions had taken over OSR lands and were violating norms. The specific instance of a private hospital maintaining a parking lot for which it was charging parking fees was cited. The Mayor, in his response on December 30, 2007, ordered the Land and Estates Department of the

(Continued on page 7)

Court-ordered committee to monitor ecopark

(By A Staff Reporter)

The Madras High Court ten days ago ordered the formation of a committee to oversee the Adyar Poonga Restoration Plan. This committee will comprise the following members: advocate T.K. Ram Kumar to represent Exnora International; Bharath Jairaj of the Citizen, consumer and civic Action Group (CAG); Sudha Ravi of the Environment Society of Madras; and Ranjith Daniels of CARE Earth. This is the latest step in a long battle over the Adyar Creek between environmentalists on the one side and Government departments on the other.

To recap, the uncontrolled exploitation of the area had been challenged by the CAG in the court during the building of the Ambedkar Memorial, and in 2000 the High Court had directed

the State Government to preserve the wetlands. On December 22, 2003, the State Government handed over 58 acres of the area to the city's Corporation to develop it into an ecopark modelled on Tezomac of Mexico. The budget for creating the park, Rs. 60 crore, was passed in 2005 and a special purpose vehicle (SPV), Adyar Creek Eco Park Limited, was set up to harness and channel the funds for development. An Adyar Creek Trust was set up with the Chief Secretary as the Chairman and the Secretaries of the Highways, Forests, Fisheries, Municipal Administration, Sewerage & Water Supply, and Finance Departments as members. Ironically,

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Court-ordered committee for ecopark

(Continued from page 1)

many of the members of the Trust were those who had appeared for the Government when the CAG had challenged its actions in court while, curiously, the CAG was not made part of the Trust. Environmentalists subsequently suggested the handing over of the entire 350 acres of the Creek for protection and also questioned how only 58 acres of it could be preserved without access to the waters of the estuary which was the lifeline of the area and which would be cut off with the proposed development.

In 2007/08, for the second year running, money was allocated for the development of the Creek, Rs. 100 crore this time. The Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited (TNUIFL) was appointed the coordinating agency, and consultants from Auroville were brought in to advise on developing the Park. The Government requested the court in July 2007 to recognise the TNUIFL as the agency for the development of the Park and that it be allowed to select the consultants responsible for the work. It also requested that the TNUIFL be allowed to reconstruct any building within the Adyar Creek and Estuary. This was challenged by the CAG which also questioned the moves by the TNUIFL to permit the consultant from Auroville to "demonstrate" their plans for development. This, the CAG felt, would mean a built-in bias in favour of the consultant when it came to the final tendering process for the actual execution.

On August 3rd, the Government gave an assurance that it was not contemplating any permanent construction in the area and that the existing building would be developed as an information centre. However, objecting to the proposal, the CAG filed a counter-affidavit stating that the project would adversely affect the estuarine wetland. Instead of adopting sustainable methods to protect eco-sensitive areas, the Government has embarked upon an unsustainable project that will ensure the destruction of the Adyar Creek area, it said. The petitioners, it alleged, had transferred the land to the Adyar Poonga Trust without approaching the High Court. In the meanwhile, a high profile inauguration of the development activity was held on August 1, 2007 and a master plan was unveiled on the same day for public discussion.

The State Government filed another writ petition before the Court requesting permission to proceed with the work. It stated that the objective of the Poonga Trust was to restore the wetland in the Adyar Estuary area, comprising 58 acres, and to create an ecologically sensitive zone nurturing the flora and fauna peculiar to the locality together with human interface. It also claimed that objections and suggestions received from several stakeholders, including NGOs like Exnora International and CAG, were considered. Interestingly, the Government is still sticking to its plan of restoring only 58 acres and not the entire area, something which environmentalists claim will be unsustainable. The Court, while ordering the formation of the panel, has asked that the members be given full access to the facilities and that the term of the panel be co-terminus with the execution of the project. It has ordered that the panel file a report of the development each year. It now remains to be seen as to how all this transforms into reality.

Our Addresses

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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

New Year greetings on SMS

The Man from Madras Musings has no mobile phone and feels blessed. There are others who have felt differently, in particular MMM's good lady. But MMM only felt reassured on New Year's Eve, when he noticed several among his friends and acquaintances being plagued by New Year greetings, all relayed through SMS. Being a magpie collector of sorts (though others have interpreted this as the height of unemployment) MMM asked about some of the messages and reproduces them below for the benefit of MM's readers.

Here is one that combines business with pleasure:

Wish you a very happy and prosperous 2008. We are playing a concert tomorrow at 9.00 am at XYZ location. We would be happy if you can make it convenient (sic) to attend.

Another of the same variety:

Happy New Year. My daughter is dancing at ABC tomorrow. Please join us.

Then there is this flowery one:

May the miracle of New Year be a source of inspiration and the cause for celebration.

MMM wonders as to what is so miraculous about the New Year. Perhaps it is a miracle that the world makes it to yet another year despite terrorism, disease, war, poverty and pollution!

Then there is this one that can only be defined as going overboard:

WISH
YOU
A
Fantastic January
Lovable February
Marvellous March
Foolish April
Enjoyable May
Successful June
Wonderful July
Independent August
Tastyest (whatever that is)
October
Beautiful November
Happiest and Musical
December
Have a Victorious Year

MMM could not help noticing that September was absent. Perhaps given all the excitement, a Sane September would be best.

This one has New Year in the initial letters, but MMM is still puzzled over what he really means:

New
Enthu

Wishes
You
Everything
Automatic
Results in Success

And there was one of MMM's friends who received an SMS that went:

"Peace, Love n Joy in the New Yr. A Wonderful New Year to U. Hugs, Love and Kisses, Smita."

This came in at the witching hour of midnight and MMM's friend's wife picked up the phone. He, when questioned closely, denied knowledge of any Smita, but wife as not willing to believe such stout denial. New Year was not so happy. The rift within the lute could have carried on well into 2008, had it not finally transpired that it was a casual business acquaintance who sent a bulk sms to everyone. God knows how many more households are cursing the unfortunate Smita!

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

All glass & steel

The Man from Madras Musings learns that while Chennaiites may go gaga over the new styles of construction, all plate glass and steel, outsiders are not so impressed. MMM learns of an overseas director arriving at an IT company and complaining about the dark interiors of the offices and their total dependency on artificial lighting. To let in some fresh air, he tried opening the windows and found that this was something that had never been attempted at ever since the inauguration of the building many years earlier. It finally required an army of carpenters to get the window to open. What a strange thing, says this visitor, that in a country where there is so much of natural light, people try to shut it out. MMM could not help but agree.

Languishing landmarks

Ascribe known to *The Man from Madras Musings* is working on a column that features languishing landmarks of the city. He came to MMM for ideas. Just look around you, said MMM to the visitor. Prac-

tically all the landmarks are languishing!

Even Senate House which was so splendidly renovated is now out of bounds to visitors. As for Bharat Insurance Building, it is without a roof for over three years now.

MMM was recently at the Teachers' College premises in Saidapet and was shocked at the way the buildings were being maintained. If the authorities are working on a case for demolition, they are going about it the right way.

And Victoria Public Hall has crossed one more year without any attention being paid to it.

The scribe departed much satisfied with the info. At least someone has benefited from all this.

A fond farewell

Boarding a night train to Bangalore, *The Man from Madras Musings* was witness to a father seeing off his daughter to that city. The girl, well into her twenties, appeared to be confidence personified, but the poor father was on tenterhooks, plying her with questions in a voice that was loud enough to drown the engine's whistle. With everyone listening in and grinning at the girl's discomfiture, the man finally got off the train after having reminded her to be careful not to let on to anyone that she was travelling alone!

People's car

Even as *The Man from Madras Musings* is banging this article away on his keyboard, late as usual and expecting a phone call from the Chief any moment, he cannot help noticing from the television screen that the much-awaited Rs. 1 lakh car has been unveiled in Delhi and is expected to be available on the roads by September. The only question that MMM has is this – where are the roads? If cars are going to be available at this price, will there not be an explosion in their number? But do we have the roadspace for them?

MMM is all for technological advancements and the making available of luxuries for the common man at affordable prices, but he cannot help wondering if an investment in mass public transportation would not be more worthwhile and beneficial in the long run.

– MMM

A big 'Thank You' to 8 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.12.07 and 15.01.08, 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

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**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Excess fees

It is gratifying that students of Classes X and XII in Chennai Corporation schools are to be provided fruit bread as they put in extra hours of study every evening to prepare for their final examinations. About 11,200 students studying in Class X and 5,500 students in Class XII in Corporation schools would benefit and the Corporation will spend Rs. 50 lakh on bread to be supplied till the end of March 2008.

While this is laudable, the Chennai Corporation should take immediate steps to ensure that the students studying in Corporation schools, all of whom are from the lower income group, will not have to pay fees more than the prescribed level, under one pretext or other, to the school managements.

Nandini Voice For the Deprived, a Chennai-based NGO, extended scholarships to several poor students studying in the Corporation- and Government-owned/aided schools at the beginning of the academic year 2007-08.

While doing so, the NGO came across many cases where students studying in these schools were asked to pay excess fees over what is stipulated by Chennai Corporation.

The fees prescribed by Chennai Corporation are very

reasonable, but several schools demand fees over and above these fees for parent-teachers' association, etc. which make the education unduly expensive for the poor students.

Further, the schools insist that such payments should be made only by cash and not by cheque. Proper receipts were not given in most cases for such fees collected.

The students studying in Corporation schools are so poor that many of them find it extremely difficult even to purchase uniforms and notebooks. In view of the insistence on payment of such excess fees, several poor families would be forced to withdraw their children from the school, thus defeating the objective of the government to provide universal education.

The Corporation should give wide publicity to the prescribed fee structure for the students studying in its schools and should also exhibit the details on the notice board of every school in the city.

If the students and their parents are enabled to know the prescribed fee structure, it would give them the courage to refuse to pay the excess fees when demanded by the school managements.

N.S. Venkataraman
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A 'transformer' needed

There is an air of euphoria in the wake of the process of liberalisation and globalisation that has been set in motion during the last 15 years. Certainly there has been some change. But its impact on the working of State-run organisations has been minimal. In fact, if we were to analyse dispassionately any work to be got done through these organisations, it will be clear how much more needs to be transformed. This is best shown by a rather commonplace incident.

The residents of a street needed a new transformer, as the power supply was fluctuating and the voltage was very low because of extra load after apartment complexes came up on the street. For years together they requested the Divisional Officers and the Circle Office to mitigate the problem by installing a transformer. In the meantime, power breakdowns and voltage drops occurred frequently at all times of night and day, necessitating the residents to ring up the power breakdown number very often. If the power supply department had any concern about customer satisfaction, it would have analysed the frequency and type of complaints and would have installed a transformer on its own. But this of course was too much to expect from a department accustomed to customers coming to them on bended knees to get as a favour what was due as a matter of course.

Even after repeated requests, there was not even the slightest indication whether and when a transformer would be installed. The residents had no option but to use a contact to approach the highest functionary dealing with electricity, who ordered the installation of a transformer "immediately". It is not good governance if installation of a transformer on any street needs the orders from a functionary at the highest level who should be concerned with policy matters only. Loading such decisions on someone so high in the authority ladder rather than on the one competent to decide on the basis of merit and felt needs, only means the higher ranked officer has less time to do work required of him. Many a time, the lower ranked officer also takes umbrage by interpreting this as having gone behind his back to force a decision on him. The natural reaction in most cases is to go slow and throw as many obstacles as possible.

The "immediate" in the orders passed took almost eight months for the installation of the transformer. The RCC upright poles were un-

loaded about two months after the order. The ground was marked after another four weeks. The poles were fixed two months thereafter. A cable drum was brought two weeks later. The cabling was done three weeks thereafter. The transformer was brought after another three weeks. Activation of the transformer was possible only about eight months after the orders. In any effective organisation everything connected with a job is systematically analysed to see that it is done in the shortest possible time and all the required materials are so procured that they are in position "well in time" or "just in time" for the work to go on without interruption. This, unfortunately, is a casualty in the working of our Government departments.

What I have stated here is only with reference to an electricity transformer, but it reflects a malaise plaguing our entire governmental sector, the more evident signs of it being:

- Decisions not taken promptly at the lowest level these can be taken.
- This forces 'consumers' to approach higher levels.
- This overloads the higher level, who are left with no time to devote to their own work, including periodical unannounced on-the-spot visits to see what the ground situation is.
- When decisions come from a higher level, the lower level implementing the same is peeved and tries to sabotage it, not realising that if the decision had been taken at the right time by that lower level authority, approaching a higher level would have been avoided.
- All this leads to the possibility of unscrupulous elements making some money on the side. A whole lot of contact men/lobbyists have sprung up now and this again is another factor which distances the public from the government.

We need a real "transformer" – one who can change the attitude of public servants who think that the public are their servants!

K.R. Baliga
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**READABILITY
PLEASE**

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **hand written** 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

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 2006-07.

• 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 Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd. All other cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'.

**Subscriptions and
contributions**

• Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), *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 SOUTHERN PRINTERS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMS 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 2006-07 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

A woman of words – and action

When her mother Pattammal passed away, Vai. Mu. Kodainayaki Ammal, (Vai. Mu. Ko.) was just an infant and her mother hardly 20 years old. Kodainayaki was the second daughter of Neervalur Venkatachariyar and Pattammal. As her father was in the Police Department, she was left in the care of her grandmother, Vedavalli Ammal, and aunt, Kanakammal, in Triplicane, Madras.



Vai. Mu. Kodainayaki Ammal.

She was barely 6 years old in 1907 when she was married to nine-year-old Vai. Mu. Parthasarathi of the 'Vaithamanidhi Mudumbai' family, a traditional Vaishnavite family of Triplicane. Vaithamanidhi is the name of the ruling deity of Thirukkoilur, their place of origin.

Though the family had many well-educated males, the women were not sent to school and, therefore, Vai. Mu. Ko. had no formal education. On her own she learned the Tamil alphabet and asked relatives to read out Tamil stories to her.

She met Gandhiji in 1925 in Madras through Ambujammal, daughter of S. Srinivasa Iyengar. When Gandhiji saw all the women who had come to meet him were decked with jewellery and were wearing silk sarees, he remarked, "When Baratmata is in chains, you are in golden chains!" From that day till her death, Kodainayaki Ammal stopped wearing costly jewellery and wore only khadi sarees.

When Ambujammal started the Swadeshi League, Kodainayaki Ammal also joined it and started preaching Gandhian ideals in remote places, along with Salem Kamatchi Ammal, Rukmini Lakshminipathi, Ambujammal and Janammal.

When she was imprisoned when she took part in a procession on February 27, 1932. Even when she was in prison she continued to write and completed *Uthama Seelan*, a novel which was serialised in *Jaganmohini*. She also composed several *kirtanas* both in Tamil and Telugu while in prison and set them to music. When she was released after six months, Margaret Cousins met her and congratulated her.

She started the Mahatmaji Seva Sangam after the assassination of Gandhiji, an association for women between 15 and 75 years of age, and raised money to put up its own building in Triplicane. After Independence, when she was given seven acres of land for her part in the freedom struggle, she donated it all to the Bhoodhan movement of Vinobhaji.

In 1956 she lost her only son Srinivasan. She was devastated by her loss, fell ill in 1959 and the magazine had to stop publication. She was admitted to the TB Hospital in Tambaram and passed away on February 20, 1960.

Even after running a popular magazine single-handedly for 35 years and having written 115 novels and a number of plays, she was not recognised as a writer by male-dominated Tamil society. In fact, she was not admitted to the Writers' Cooperative Sangam, when she applied for membership simply because she was a woman. The excuse was that she was only a writer of "popular fiction, not literature." She never got her due as the first woman editor and first woman novelist in Tamil.

NOTE: Based on Dr. R. Prema's biography of Vai. Mu. Ko. published by the Sahitya Akademi.



K.R.A. Narasiah

Three in a row Wins Tamil literary award again

K.R.A. Narasiah, whose book on the history of Madras City, titled *Madaras-pattinam, Oru Nagarathin Kathai*, was reviewed recently in *Madras Musings*, has every reason to be happy and proud. For he is the only writer who has won an award for three years in succession from the Government of Tamil Nadu's Thamizh Valarchi Kazhagam. In 2004 it was his collection of short stories titled *Sollanaperu* which won the prize. In 2005, it was for his chronicle of maritime trade titled *Kadal Vazhi Vanigam*. *Madaras-pattinam* has been adjudged the best book in the History, Archaeology and Research category for 2006. The award will be presented by the Chief Minister on Tiruvalluvar Tirunel (January 16th).

Narasiah, a well-known writer in Tamil who is now a regular contributor to *Madras Musings*, says that his fascination with Madras began with his career in the Merchant Navy. Each time the ship steamed into Madras Harbour, he felt a thrill that he still finds hard to describe. He claims that unlike most histo-

rians who have viewed the city from the land, his look at it is from the sea coast, which is an unusual perspective.

Being the nephew of well-known writer 'Chitti' Sundararajan must have helped, but he says his interest in history really stemmed from a visit to Calcutta in 1956 when he realised that the people there showed a great respect for heritage, something which he feels is sadly lacking in our city. From then on it was a love and passion for history and heritage. Then, when he was appointed by the World Bank for a project in Cambodia, he saw Angkor Wat and was further inspired. He says he can still recollect the fluency with which guides there could point out panels depicting the *Markandeya Puranam* and talk about Tirukkadaaiur where the story is believed to have been enacted.

Involvement in research began in 1991 when the Government appointed him to do a survey on the ports of India. This took him to various libraries and instilled in him a love for research. From there to *Madaras-pattinam* was not exactly a step, for there were many short stories in between.

Work on *Madaras-pattinam* began in 2005, when Narasiah, concerned that there was a plethora of books on Madras in English, but none in Tamil, decided to write one on the history of the city. It took him 18 months to put it together and the research had him travelling within the city to Fort St George, the Archaeological Survey and the Tamil Nadu Archives. He is immensely satisfied with the response that the book has received and says with pride that almost all reviewers have written positively about the book. His work, he says, is not meant so much for the scholars as it is for the lay reader who has an abiding interest in the history of the city.

What next? A history of Madurai, no less. This has Narasiah now climbing rocky outcrops outside the city with a view to seeing inscriptions and edicts and also getting the best views of the city. All this is to immense annoyance of his family, concerned as they are about his safety. But there is no stopping a historian.

Sriram V.

Keep smiling

So you want people to come visit?

Try smiling a bit more.

This isn't advice – it's practically an order, with the full weight of officialdom behind it.

According to a recent newspaper report, we citizens apparently need to overhaul our reaching-out skills, up the friendliness-quotient significantly. 'Concerned' officials are pointing this out, going on record, and demanding a change in attitude.

Bit much, when citizens need a diktat from a government department for something as basic as being friendly.

This is reminiscent of the days when you, while still a toddler, insisted on gazing, tight-lipped, pop-eyed and distinctly hostile at fawning relatives while your then-young parents desperately pleaded with you to "Say 'Hello'."

Now, the dictionary defines a smile as "a facial expression indicating pleasure, favour, or amusement, but sometimes derision or scorn, characterised by an upturning of the corners of the mouth."

What could be clearer?

Officialdom, agreeing with this, obviously expects everyone to ignore the "derision or scorn" bit, and will certainly frown upon any attempt to smirk at the visitors.

All entry-points into the city are being given a talking-to... airport, railway and bus stations, including those services guests normally come in contact with – autos, taxis, and even plain old citizens intent upon their daily chores.

It makes sense.

No point going around Athithi-Devo-Bhava-ing if the first thing to greet an enthusiastic tourist eager to meet the mysterious East is a snarl, snap or plain old indifference.

"Be nice," everyone is being told.

You cannot help thinking that the locals could do with a bit of cheer too, and some protection from service-goofiness...of any kind, at any level.

The 'advisors' need to remember, though, that a smile is not an island, entire of itself. It has to be supported by other factors.

by
RANJITHA ASHOK

Like body language, indicating willingness to help, advise, and being there for someone – especially those first-timers who are invariably overwhelmed by the sheer numbers.

Or re-defining the word 'queue', given our unique interpretation of it. In many other parts of the world, a 'queue' does not mean a 5-lane human wave huddled near a small window... complete with impatient shoving and desperate reaching-over-and-around, even if you are second in line. A visitor, caught in this melee, may feel just a bit crowded.

Even the art of nodding needs attention. Apparently, the way we move our heads to register a 'yes' or 'no' is a source of immense confusion to some hands-across-the-seas.



The airport staff have been instructed to smile, but haven't been told why!

And keep in mind that not everyone is on holiday.

A brilliant smile does not make up for an almost complete lack of relevant information, an ability to think fast, offer suggestions or alternatives...or even something as basic as clean toilets.

Ever had the experience of going into a restaurant and asking the young person solicitously hovering over you to 'explain' a dish...only to have him stare at the menu, then at your face, then back at the menu in baffled ignorance?

The smile is still in place, but the eyes, in sharp contrast, are now round with growing horror at the probability of an unseemly brawl with an increasingly irritated customer.

Hysterically interior-designed malls, hotels and offices are filled with young things nattily dressed in smart uniforms that stress the 'global' image, to make, you assume, every variety feel at home. But work-savvy has to match appearance. If you merely look smart, without actually being so, the customer feels cheated, resentful.

Only someone who has gone around some of these shimmering places, accompanied by equally shimmery, but com-

pletely clueless staff, appreciates the true meaning of 'baffled frustration'.

What do you do with a salesperson who, when told "Same size, but different colour," offers you a different size in the same colour?

Entrepreneurs come in many forms, including those cheerful, direct souls, who, if irritated, are liable to give you (the locals, that is) facts about your ancestry and your face you were hitherto unaware of, the whole process taking just a few minutes filled with brisk, colourful dialogue.

A few lessons in that direction would help, including addressing a certain indigenous habit of shrewdly assessing the naivety of customers, and then proceeding to take them to the cleaners.

In fact, visitors from afar, who come armed with this information about this pleasing little aspect to shopping on our continent, have been known to go into glossy showrooms and bargain briskly with stunned, liveried staff behind gleaming counters.

You also need to choose the moment.

"Can you direct me to the nearest pharmacy?" must be met with the concerned look, the soft, honeyed tone...not a grin, which can only damage any chance of a friendly, cultural exchange.

Too much fake camaraderie can be very irritating, especially for a bedraggled passenger who's just got off a plane after 27 hours of zigzagging across the world, dragging along toddlers and babes-in-arms.

That's the "I don't know you; don't want to; I'll probably never see you again, but do, for my sake, *have a nice day*" syndrome.

Overdone smiling can also have the opposite effect of making people nervous – probably wondering what you're up to.

As in everything, the middle path, people, the middle path.

Now that the authorities have stepped in, you'll probably wake up one day to a city that may sleep every now and then – but never stops smiling.

The reptile toll traffic takes In Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary

• P. KANNAN
Chennai Snake Park

The Western Ghats of India, one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world, is rich in faunal diversity and has numerous endemic species. Of the 285 species of vertebrates endemic to the Western Ghats, 60 species are reptiles. However, the biodiversity of the Western Ghats has long been under threat due to the expansion of plantations and townships. According to Forman and Alexander in 1998, vehicles on roads have overtaken hunting as the leading direct human cause of vertebrate mortality, often endangering local populations of common and threatened species. Roads cause forest fragmentation and take a heavy toll of reptiles during construction and subsequent use.

Reptiles are cold blooded and

tend to rest on warm roads where they are easily injured or killed by vehicular traffic. Snakes and other reptiles that move from one place to another also get killed by vehicles. Snakes show a unimodal daily activity pattern by moving to basking sites during mid-day. In late spring and early autumn, the snakes are most active during early morning and late evening. During the hottest part of the summer they are nocturnal. Slow-moving reptiles are more vulnerable than most other animals to vehicular traffic. Also, vehicle drivers tend

to be callous and show less concern for reptiles than to other animals confronted on roads. The Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the most popular and oldest wildlife sanctuaries in India. It is situated at the trijunction of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The 321.5 sq. km Sanctuary is bounded on the north by the Bandipur Tiger Reserve of Karnataka, on the west by the

Wyanad Wildlife Sanctuary of Kerala and on the south and east by private cultivated land and coffee and tea plantations in Tamil Nadu.

The sanctuary, with its neighbouring wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and reserve forests, is part of a contiguous forest complex and supports a healthy population of reptiles. Since the Ooty-Mysore highway runs through the sanctuary and also along the Moyar River, vehicle movement is very high all through the year, and particularly during the tourist season.

To study the road-kills on the Ooty-Mysore highway within the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, the highway was scoured on foot during the early hours for road-kills. All the road-kills were examined, identified, photographed and removed from the road to avoid repetition. The snakes and other reptiles were identified.

36 reptile road-kills from eight species and five families were recorded. They included the Indian flapshell turtle (*Lissemys punctata*), Green forest lizard (*Calotes calotes*), Indian garden

lizard (*Calotes versicolor*), Bengal monitor (*Varanus bengalensis*), Common Vine Snake (*Ahaetulla nasuta*), Common kukri (*Oligodon ornensis*), Checkered keelback (*Xenochrophis piscator*), Green keelback (*Macropisthodon plumbicolor*) and Striped keelback (*Amphiesma stolata*). Of them, the Bengal monitor is an endangered species.

The study confirmed the observations made by V. Gokula in 1997 on the impact of vehicular traffic on the reptile population in the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. A detailed study is needed on a long-term basis to quantify the impact and to formulate conservation measures. (Courtesy: *Cobra*, Journal of the Chennai Snake Park.)

• Another in the occasional series on the early feminists of Madras by K.R.A. NARASIAH.

Soon, she was so interested in storytelling that T.C. Pattammal, a tenant in the family house who had studied upto the IV Form, volunteered to write if Vai. Mu. Ko. would dictate to her. Thus was written Vai. Mu. Ko's first Tamil drama *Indra Mohana*.

Parthasarathi supported his wife in this effort and to encourage her took her to watch plays in Tamil performed by Mysore Kuppi Veeranna and Party. During those visits to the theatre, she got to know the women of the family who owned the Noble Press. And it was to this press that she gave the manuscripts of her two plays, *Indra Sena* and *Chandra Lochana*. The former was accepted for publication!

The manuscript had been read through carefully by Vai. Mu. Gopalakrishnamachariyar (a scholar in Sanskrit and Tamil who was associated with the preparation of a Lexicon and who had assisted Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer) and by her husband before being forwarded to the publishers. In 1924, the play came out in printed form and received good reviews even

scholar, began studying the nuances of the Tamil language and caught up with its literature. Soon, she started writing on her own. It was at this time that Vaduvur Duraiswamy Iyengar suggested that she should run a magazine and that since *Jaganmohini* was for sale, she should buy it. This was a monthly run by one Nagaswamy Iyer.

Vai. Mu. Ko. took over the magazine and ran it under the same name from the Vinayaka Chaturthi day of 1925. Noble Press was its printers.

Vaidehi was serialised in the magazine and helped the journal considerably. *Jaganmohini* was known as a monthly novel magazine. In six months the print order became 2,000, an unheard of figure for Tamil magazines in those days. In 1937, she changed the format to include current affairs etc. The magazine had a section called *Vanitha Mandalam* and in the 1940s, Vasumathi Ramaswami, Ranganayaki Ammal, Ambujammal and many other women writers contributed for this section.

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.)

- Who was sentenced to life imprisonment on December 18th for killing the BJP leader Pramod Mahajan?
 - Which two airlines in the Indian skies decided to create a single entity on December 19th?
 - Who are the new Chief Ministers of Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat after the recent elections there?
 - In which city was Benazir Bhutto assassinated on December 27th?
 - Who was named *Time* magazine's 'Person of the Year' for 2007?
 - Name the famous film-maker and producer of the mega classic *Sholay* who passed away recently.
 - Who was chosen as FIFA's 'Player of the Year' ahead of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo?
 - Apart from Sourav Ganguly, who or what reached the landmark figure of 100 Tests on December 26th?
 - On December 20th, who did Queen Elizabeth II, at 81 years, 7 months, and 29 days, surpass to become the longest-lived British monarch?
 - Nine more countries became part of the Schengen Agreement on December 21st to bring the total to 24. Five are the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia. Name the other four.
- * * *
- Where in present-day Mylapore in Chennai was 'Palathope' considered the 'lawyers' enclave'?
 - With which eminent school of Chennai would you associate the name of Subbaraya Iyer, Sister Subbalakshmi Ammal and Mrs. Padmini Chari?
 - In which form did Lord Shiva 'stay' at Mylapore?
 - When did Tamil acquire its present geographical boundaries?
 - Who was the Prime Minister of Madras (now Tamil Nadu) when India became a Republic?
 - To which of the *navagrahas* is the temple at Kanchanoor dedicated?
 - Who is the Chancellor of the Gandhigram Rural University?
 - Which famous Chennai institution's name was suggested by Pandit S. Subramania Sastri, a Sanskrit scholar?
 - What does D.K. stand for in the initials of the Carnatic legend D.K. Pattammal?
 - Where in Chennai would visitors be greeted by the 'Stone of Remembrance' with words from the Book of Ecclesiastics?

January 19-February 5: *Sutra*, triadic expressions in canvas, stone and textile by Lakshmi Srinath (at Forum Art Gallery).

Till January 20: *Celebrating Space*, an exhibition of paintings by Ravi Gossain (at the Lalit Kala Akademi).

January 20 & February 1&2: *Proof* presented by the Madras Players. A mathematical play directed by Mithran Devanesen (at Museum Theatre).

January 20-February 29: *Vasantha Vizha* and *Children's Mela* (at DakshinaChitra).

January 25: *Phèdre* by Jean Racine, translated into Tamil by Daniel Jeyaraj and directed by Astrid Bas.

The play is located in ancient Greece. Phèdre has fallen in love with her stepson Hippolytus. She confesses her guilty passion to Oenone, her nursemaid and advisor. The story of Phèdre will be played out by Indian actors in Tamil. With the assistance of Koumarane Valavane and with six actors, Bas will present extracts from Racine's play interspersed with a reading of texts in English and French from Jean-Christophe Bailly's journal, *Phèdre in India* (at Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m.).

January 21-27: Art exhibition by K.R. Santhana Krishnan (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

January 21-February 10: Group Show – An exhibition of paintings and sculptures by nine artists (at Vinnyasa Art Gallery).

January 23-February 2: *Sparkling Stories*. Olaf Van Cleef presents

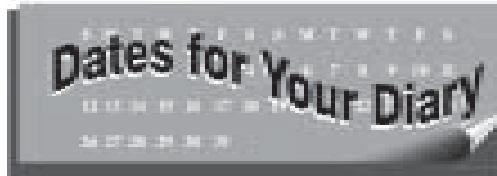


Image from Euripides' *Hippolytos* illustrated by Indrapramit Roy.

water colours studded with Swarovski gems (at Artworld).

January 24-February 5: Drawings & Paintings of K.G. Subramanyan (at Gallery Sumukha).

January 24: Japanese Kagura music concert (at Music Academy, 6.30 p.m.).

January 27: *Nachu Poigai*. Swami, after completing a performance, narrates a three-generation-old story about societal affairs as he removes his make-up. The storywriter is Pugazh. *Nachu Poigai* is a short story from the *Mahabharata* (at Alliance Francaise, 7.30 p.m.).

January 27: *Mangosteen Melodies*, an evening of music from Bing Crosby, Saigal, Aretha Franklin

and M.S. Subbulakshmi (at Museum Theatre, 7.30 p.m.).

From January 28: *Kumamoto Artpolis*, an exhibition on Japanese architecture (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

January 28, 29 & 30: *Tree of Life Festival 2008* – Puppet show on the environment by Brigitte Revelli. Her tales have in common the forest as the main place of action. These tales revolve around a tree and around a question. She uses various techniques of masks, puppets and shadow theatre in her show (at Navbharat Matriculation School, T. Nagar, 12.00 noon on 28th & 30th and at Alliance Francaise, 12.00 noon on 29th).

February 2: *Wine Tasting Workshop* – Wine, how to choose it, how to taste it, how to enjoy it (at AFM Auditorium, 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please sign up for the workshop at the reception).

February 2: Alain Brunet Trio – Alain Brunet is a jazz trumpeter who has played with some of the greatest names in jazz both in France and internationally. In 2000 he came up with a new form of mixed music, Didgeridoo Orchestra. In Chennai, three French jazzmen, Brunet (trumpet/vocal), Luc Fenoli (guitar) and Jean-Louis Dô (drums/electronic drums/sound designer)

will work with two Indian musicians (a *sitar* player and a *tabla* player) to the music written by Brunet for modal instruments and also to the music suggested by the Indian players (at Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m.).

February 5: *The Absent Lover*, presented by Thresh-Preeti Vasudevan. A major new production from Thresh, re-working the passion and mystery of a 5th Century drama by Sanskrit master-poet Kalidasa (at Chinmaya Heritage Centre, 3.00 p.m. for schools, 7.00 p.m. for public).

February 9: Open Studio. Indianostrum Théâtre will offer an experience with dancers and actors and also a discussion on Sophocles' *Antigone* (at Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.).

February 12 & 13: Meeting with Serge Bromberg who has been involved in the preservation, restoration and distribution of classic cinema in all its forms since 1985 (at Alliance Francaise, 6.30 p.m.).

At DakshinaChitra:

Workshop for adults
January 25 & 26: Cherial Painting Workshop.

February 10: Screen Printing Workshop
Workshop for Children.

January 27: Competition based on the various exhibitions at the centre.

February 2: Balloon Sculpting Workshop.

For further details on workshops and to register please contact MCF: 24462435 / 24918943 or Ms. Lakshmi @ 98417 77779.

25 tips to make a difference

– and to help bring down
*Carbon Dioxide emissions and
combat global warming*

- Change your bulbs. Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) – these consume one-quarter of the electricity and last longer.
- Use solar devices to heat water for bathing – such heaters have got better over the years.
- Construct green buildings. Not the colour of the wall, silly. If you are planning to build a house or an office complex, hire an architect who could work out ways to optimise the use of energy. The structure could simply have better insulation to retain heat in winter. Also, avoid huge glass walls so that you don't spend more on air-conditioning during the summer.
- Turn computers off when not in use. They consume as much electricity as three 60 watt bulbs, so avoid the stand-by mode.
- Switch off the lights while sleeping or when office shuts down. You will be surprised by the amount of energy you save.
- Conserve water. Use sprinklers or drip-irrigation devices for watering your lawns or growing crops. The days of wasteful flow of water are over.
- Check your tyres. Maintaining the right degree of pressure in car and motorcycle tyres improves on mileage considerably and saves fuel.
- Buy energy-efficient appliances. Next time you buy an iron, an oven, a refrigerator or even an air-conditioner, opt for models by manufacturers whose USP is energy efficiency. It will cut your electricity bills and India's emission levels.
- Prepare for disaster. Dengue and diarrhoea cases are expected to rise. Ensure that your local hospitals are well-equipped to handle the imminent crisis so that recovery is quick and there is minimum loss of life.
- Buy fuel-efficient cars. Agreed, we are not like the Americans who love guzzlers. But it's time to renew our awareness about fuel efficiency, not just to save energy but to beat the rise in petrol prices as well. For every litre of petrol consumed, about four kg of carbon dioxide gets injected into the atmosphere. Think about it.
- Walk, don't drive. If you have to buy a packet of chips, don't drive to the store next door – take a walk. If you must drive, combine a lot of chores.
- Reduce air travel. If you have the option of getting work done over the phone or e-mail, then go ahead. It would save you money and the world a whole lot of carbon emissions.
- Turn the geyser off after a bath so that water is heated only when you need it. Also, good quality shower heads ensure the flow of water is low but efficient, thereby conserving energy.
- Consume less. No, we are not expecting you to turn a yogi, but there is no need to go to the other extreme either. When you are about to buy something, ask yourself whether you really need it.
- Turn the tap off while soaping your face or shaving. Don't let the water flow unnecessarily. Water is going to be a scarce commodity if you don't learn to conserve it now.
- Recycle. Indians don't need to be told of this – we are the best recyclers. But it's good to be reminded of its virtues, lest we forget.
- Switch to wind power. Okay, we are not expecting you to put a windmill on top of your house. But if you are setting up a factory in an SEZ or living in a small town, you could champion the case for installing windmills for most of the electricity generated for use.
- Shun plastic bags. Although it's an old advice, no one really listens. Carry a reusable tote while shopping. It will help reduce emissions from decaying plastic bags in landfills.
- Use public transport. Don't drive down to the office. Take a metro instead. Also, avail the train when you are travelling to another city. Push the government to improve public transport facilities – it needs goading.
- Save paper. If you want to convey something to your friend, do it over the phone or e-mail. Get off the Indian habit of putting everything on paper. Thousands of trees would be saved.

(Continued on page 7)

A curate's egg of a season

● **Tamil Nadu had a curate's egg of a season in the Ranji Trophy championship in 2007-08. In the end, it found itself nowhere near the leaders. Nevertheless, much talent was on view and the team did have its high points. BHASKERAN THOMAS, continuing his reviews (MM, December 1st) of Tamil Nadu's performance during the season writes:**

Tamil Nadu's batting find of the season, Abhinav Mukund, has the unique record of starting his Ranji Trophy campaign with a century followed by a duck. His next innings was a stroke-filled hundred. When he began with a blob in his third game against Himachal Pradesh, there were expectations that he would follow it up with a three figure knock. That was not to be; he fell for an invaluable 96 in the second innings.

Thanks to this knock from Mukund and his significant partnership with another Ranji debutant, Selvam Suresh Kumar (66 n.o.), the team tasted success against Himachal Pradesh. Suresh also came up with a match-winning bowling spell.

The Mukund-Suresh Kumar

partnership set a tough target for the visitors to reach. This came after a see-saw battle for the first innings lead. The low-scoring first innings was built with the help of skipper Subramaniam Badrinath's 111 and his partnerships with the talented opener M. Vijay (32) and K. Vasudevadas (39).

Tamil Nadu folded up for 234 after being 147 for three at one stage. The seasonal rains that preceded the game probably made the wicket a little difficult to bat on. Led by young pacesman Vijayakumar Yo Mahesh (four for 40), the visitors fell short of the hosts' total by 11 runs.

Despite losing Vijay cheaply, Tamil Nadu built up a sizeable total of 296 for six declared, thanks to Mukund's sheet-anchor knock and good partnerships with Badrinath and Suresh Kumar. The target was too much for Himachal.

In earlier matches, Tamil Nadu fared well against Karnataka and Saurashtra. After a crushing defeat against Mum-

bai, Tamil Nadu did well against Karnataka, a superb century (108) on debut (in Ranji Trophy) from young Abhinav Mukund and his 139-run third wicket partnership with his captain Badrinath (143), laying the foundation for a big first innings score.

But it was the all-round performance of left-arm spinner R. Ramkumar who scored 65 and bagged four wickets that helped the home team gain a first innings lead. It was he and the persevering P. Amarnath, who claimed 5 for 75, who dismissed Karnataka for 221.

M. Vijay (47), Badrinath



Abhinav Mukund



S. Badrinath

wicket partnership between Mukund and Vijay. Vijay's superb 230 not out that included seven sixes and 22 fours and lasted 632 minutes, clearly marked him out as a possible for the opener's slot in the Indian Test lineup. The national selectors would do well to study this young player's technique and

Trophy Super League. Perhaps an injury to fast bowler Yo Mahesh prevented skipper Badrinath from enforcing the follow-on against a struggling Karnataka.

Be that as it may, Tamil Nadu emerged with vastly improved performances against the above-mentioned sides after sliding to defeat against Mumbai. No doubt Karnataka were handicapped as national duties beckoned skipper Anil Kumble and star batsman Rahul Dravid. Tamil Nadu too did not have Dinesh Karthik in their ranks for the same reason.

The advantage of playing at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium was a major factor for Tamil Nadu's gaining six points from the two matches. This has helped the team's chances considerably of not facing relegation to the Plate Division.

Thanks largely to the zeal and enthusiasm of coach and State selection chief W.V. Raman, a young Tamil Nadu side has gelled into a good all-round combination with the potential to do much better next year.

Mukund's 120 clearly showed that his hundred against Karnataka was not a fluke. This Under-19 lad showed splendid consistency while playing in Sri Lanka for the age group team and has continued to demonstrate it at the higher domestic level. Mukund is another possibility for the national team; he has proved his quality and standard right from his Under-13 days. He has a fearless approach while going for his shots.

Vasudevadas, who came good at last, scoring an unbeaten 103 off a mere 114 balls, showed his class as a left-handed strokemaker. It's heartening that he's also developing into a useful leg-spinner.

Amongst the players Tamil Nadu faced, there were several promising young ones. Saurashtra had to depend on its international class batsman Cheteshwar Pujara, who's been consistently making big scores for his State team and India Under-19. Another Under-19 player from the State is the promising batsman Ravindra Jadeja. — (Courtesy: Straightbat)

● Tamil Nadu Ranji Trophy review

(46) and an unbeaten 50 from Srinivasan in the second innings helped Tamil Nadu to get into an unassailable position. Karnataka responded by scoring 170 for three wickets in their second outing to easily draw the match.

Tamil Nadu reached a rapid score of 531 for two wickets against Saurashtra, thanks largely to an epic 256-run first

find him a place in the India 'A' side to start with. He is such a graceful player and appears to have plenty of time while playing his shots.

While rain deprived Tamil Nadu of garnering full points against Saurashtra, it should have gone for the kill against Karnataka and won an outright victory. This would have helped boost its points tally in the Ranji

Are they serious about OSR?

(Continued from page 1)

Corporation to prepare a report on the status of OSR lands. The Corporation identified 13 specific locations where there had been violations. The recent attempt at demolition and take-over appears to be the direct result of all this.

As largely characteristic of the civic body's activities, this too was a knee-jerk reaction and was botched from the start. The Corporation waited for years after the hotel became

fully functional and then decided to stake its claim. The demolition of what the Corporation claimed to be illegal structures occupying OSR was begun on a Sunday. The next day the hotel approached the courts and obtained a stay on the demolition and there matters rest now.

The media reporting on the demolition and the subsequent court case have rightly questioned the Corporation as to waiting for such a long time be-

fore taking any action. Why are such projects not held up at foundation level itself in case they are violating norms, is the question most people are asking. According to the Corporation, several reminders had been sent to the hotel which did not part with the land but, on the other hand, went on with the construction of parking sheds, generator room and several other amenities on the space in question. The Corporation has claimed that it had

no choice other than to take over the area.

The hotel has claimed that no notice was ever given and that the attempts by the Corporation amounted to forcible entry into the premises. It has also claimed that its staff and guests were denied access during the demolition and has asked for compensation for the damage incurred during demolition. According to the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), which controls such buildings and land they occupy, the hotel is in violation of norms and had paid Rs. 34 lakh for regularisation in the 1990s. This was, however, not taken to its logical conclusion, as the regularisation scheme itself was challenged in court and later set aside.

All this simply points to a plethora of rules being available, but their implementation being most ineffective. Certainly, allowing a building to come up in violation of norms and then trying to demolish parts of it, leading to legal tangles, is a most ineffective method and is a costly and wasteful exercise. Why can the rules not be followed from the development stage itself?

25 TIPS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

(Continued from page 6)

21. Rationalise price of electricity. With electricity being supplied for free in many states in rural areas, no one really bothers to install energy-efficient pumpsets. Or to put off the switches when not using them. Energy shortage is going to be the norm in the age of global warming. So, haul up politicians for indulging in populism and educate villagers on the virtues of paid power.

22. Grow more trees. Remember the slogan by Sanjay Gandhi during the Emer-

gency? Each one, Plant one. Okay, so it may not be PC but the sentiment was correct. Trees are the best sinks for carbon dioxide. If every human being planted one, we would have six billion trees growing. That could take away thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

23. Switch to biofuels. Start looking seriously at cars that run on alternative fuels. A whole range from biodiesel to ethanol is being readied. Be among the first to drive one of them.

24. Demand clean tech. Just as in HIV/AIDS, for which nations agreed to drop prices of drugs to suit every pocket, get the government to persist on developed countries to sell clean technology to India cheap so that we can cut down on our emissions without paying a heavy price for research and development.

25. Let others know. You may be conserving the natural resources, but if your neighbour isn't, you are still a goner. Educate others. — (Courtesy: India Today.)

Overwhelmed by the stamp themes

The X International Philatelic Exhibition, held in Madras recently, proved a great attraction to the city's population. For philatelists there were counters and trading booths that appeared to be doing brisk business. But for the general public the theme – and there seemed to be an overwhelming number of them – displays were the attraction.

Among the displays, there was a special section devoted to stamps relating to Madras and Tamil Nadu. *Senate House* has been featured twice, once in 1957 during the University Centenary and again in 2007 when the sesquicentennial was celebrated. The High Court of Madras had a stamp released in its honour in 1962 during its centenary. Among the colleges of city, Madras Medical College, the College of Engineering, Guindy, and Madras Christian College had stamps on them displayed. There was a rather intriguing "loin cloth" series which featured, among others, Tiruvalluvar, though he was depicted fully robed. The

contribution of Madras to the Indian Army was commemorated in 1980 with a stamp on the Madras Sappers.

Among the political figures of the city were stamps on S. Sathyamurthy, C. Rajagopalachari (depicting him as Governor-General), Annadurai, K. Kamaraj, TTK, MGR and Murasoli Maran. The scientists of the city featuring in stamps included Sir C.V. Raman and S. Ramanujan. The film section had Sivaji Ganesan, Gemini Ganesan, Ghantasala, A.V. Meyyappan, L.V. Prasad, S.S. Vasam and K. Subrahmanyam. Arts personalities included M.S. Subbulakshmi, Rukmini Devi Arundale, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar and Musiri Subramania Iyer. The philosophers of the city commemorated in stamps included Annie Besant, S. Radhakrishnan and J. Krishnamurthy. The mercantile section included A.M.M. Murugappa Chettiar. Strangely, there was no section related to sports personalities of the city. Perhaps



A picture postcard that was available at INPEX. (Courtesy: Postmaster General, Central Region, Tiruchirappalli.)

there are not many stamps relating to this field.

An interesting picture postcard released on the occasion featured stamps on buildings and institutions of Madras and environs – the High Court, the College of Engineering, Guindy, the GPO, the Connemara Public Library, St Andrew's Church and the Shore Temple.

Even though I've been a stamp collector of sorts for some years, I caught up here with much that I was not aware of – Tamil Nadu organises TANAPEX, a philatelic exhibition every year – and the Postal Department, which supports this display, encourages philately among the public. The Post Office holds the view that philately is not only for those who aim to make a killing by collecting the Penny Black or some other equally rare stamp. It is meant to widen general knowledge and the detailed sleeve notes to some of the thematic displays, all put together by amateur philatelists, were testi-

mony to this. There were displays on birds featured in stamps accompanied by detailed descriptions of the winged creatures that would have done a Salim Ali proud.

The Postal Department has also an account facility to encourage philately. Those interested pay a deposit amount, which works like a credit balance and new stamps, first day covers and special cancellations are sent to the account-holder whenever such releases take place. This is accompanied every time with a statement of account indicating the balance amount available and this can be "topped up" by those wanting to continue with the service. Such home deliveries obviate the necessity of having to watch out for news items on stamp releases and then having to go to the post office to buy them. This little-known service has been in operation for some years. At INPEX-X, the Department had

special gifts for those signing up for this account.

Overall, it was quite an educational experience – but a pleasant one – going around the displays. Perhaps Madras Week this year ought to have an exclusive exhibition of stamps relating to men, women and institutions of Madras.

– A Staff Reporter

Do you want to lead a Heritage Walk?

Do you want to lead a heritage walk? If you are interested in history and the stories of Old Madras and would like to lead those similarly interested on a 2-3-hour heritage walk through a particular stretch of the city, drop in at our Training Programme at the Metropolitan Accord in T'Nagar at 9 a.m. on Sunday, January 27th.

For further details, contact Ms. SUSHILA NATARAJ 98840 72433.

Sport on page 7

Answers to Quiz

1. Pravin Mahajan; 2. Kingfisher and Deccan; 3. BJP's Prem Kumar Dhumal and Narendra Modi; 4. Rawalpindi; 5. Russian President Vladimir Putin; 6. G.P. Sippy; 7. Brazil's Kaka; 8. The Melbourne Cricket Ground; 9. Queen Victoria; 10. Malta Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

* * *

11. Vedanta Desikar Street or Desigar Swami Street; 12. Vidya Mandir; 13. Velleswarar; 14. November 1, 1956; 15. P.S. Kumaraswamy Raja; 16. Shukran or Venus; 17. The Vice-President of India, Mohammad Hamid Ansari; 18. Kalakshetra; 19. Damal Krishnaswamy; 20. Madras War Cemetery.

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