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MADRAS

METAL CUTTING TOOLS

MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

April 16 — 30, 1992

A plea to the C.M.

For a better Madras



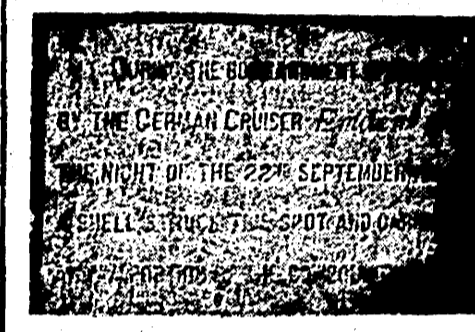
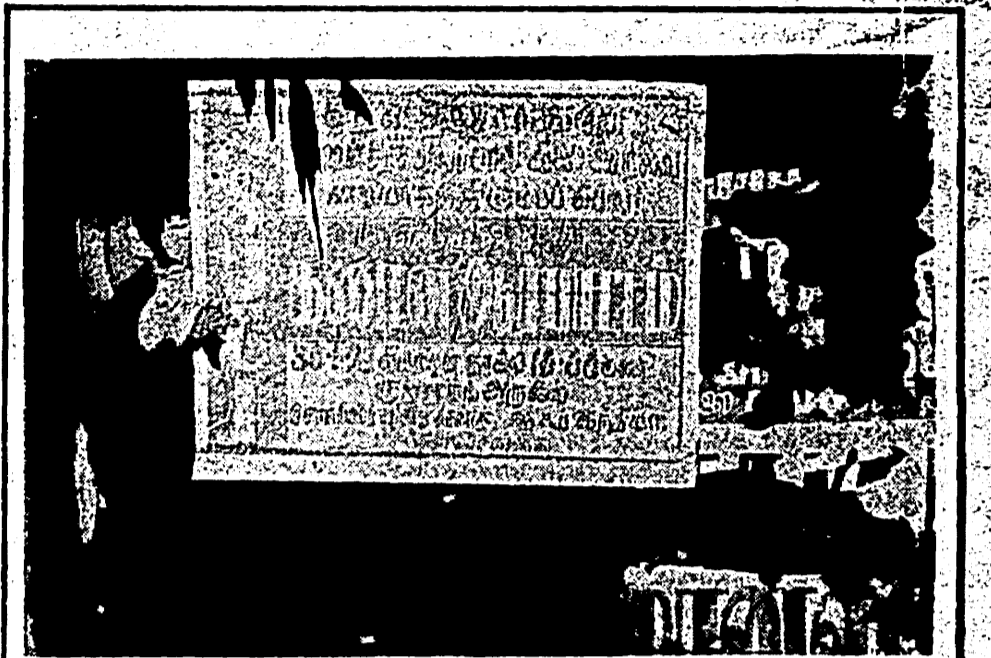
B. Subramaniam, (M.A.), D. Automob., M.Sc., Ph.D. (Marine Ecology), Director, Fisherfolk Organization for Advancement, Secretary, Consumer Protection Council, Nochikuppam, Tamilnadu, still puts in his daily stint at the nets. And when his kin are short of hands, he puts aside the nets and joins them at sea too, just as he has been doing from childhood. (See page 3) (Photographs on both pages by K.N. CHARLI.)

DEAR MADAM, You are a lady of education, reading, culture and taste, for which you were recently honoured by one of the three oldest universities in the country. It was in those circumstances that it occurred to me as curious that your voice was not heard when two members of the Assembly made mention of the obscene posters defacing our state (story elsewhere on this page).

I would have thought that yours would have been the first voice to say "Down with posters and cutouts and hoardings and scrawls on the walls". Not merely of the obscene type, but also of the advertising type as well as of the political type. If Madras, indeed the whole of Tamil Nadu, is to be made cleaner, the first things that must go are these unseemly posters, and hoardings, and cutouts, and wall scrawls. And only you, Madam, and your fellow political leaders, can make that happen. Unless there is a political will to clean Madras and the state it is capital of, nothing is going to happen.

These thoughts struck me while sitting in on a round table conference recently (that story too is elsewhere on this page). There, round that table, were a couple of score people determined to make a better city of ours. They elected convenors of panels to come up with urban improvement projects and ways and means to make them a reality. But a muted note sounded at the meet was that nothing would really come of all this enthusiasm if those absent from the deliberations did not play a major role.

Mudaliar, had time and again suggested that Government General Hospital (Continued on P3)



The picture above is of a commemorative plaque on one of its good days. Normally it is plastered over with posters and NOTHING of what it commemorates can be read. Today's poster is rather small — befitting one of our smaller parties — so "1914...away a portion of the compound wall" can be barely discerned. (Photograph by SUSHEELA NAIR)

When a photographer takes the trouble to clean the plaque up, what's seen is on the left: a memorial to the damage the German cruiser Emden (which gave Tamil a new word!) did to Madras in 1914 when it shelled the city!

To imagine that this plaque is on the High Court's surrounding wall — and can be defaced with impunity by the poster brigade! Will someone act?

The reference was to the political leadership absent on the occasion — but to be met on another occasion, it was promised.

Without the political will playing THE leading role, all the schemes put forth by such conferences are bound to be non-starters. This was hinted at by the Professor from IIT who pointed out that highways in the sky above Anna Salai for buses were not necessary; all that was needed was LANE DISCIPLINE, and Mount Road as it is — without any trees being uprooted — had space and more to handle the present traffic and any increase for many more years to come.

The DISCIPLINE necessary not to make chaos of traffic, not to deface walls and the skyline with posters, hoardings and cutouts, not to use the street as a toilet or a garbage bin, not to put up a shanty or a temple wherever you feel like it, not to have public meetings in the middle of the road, not to have loudspeakers blaring day and night long and not to do so many other things is what this city — and state —

needs. That discipline alone will save us crores in putting up new projects, but that discipline can only come if the political leadership shows the way and allows the law to take its course.

Madam, will you show the way? Will you say no more posters? No more dirtying the roads? No more political meetings in city streets? If you do, there is hope for the projects the city's committed do-gooders plan to draw up. If not, they'll remain so much paper. And Madras — and Tamil Nadu — will continue to remain dirty, chaotic and indisciplined.

With warmest regards,

Yours sincerely,
 THE EDITOR

The View from Fort St George... by R.K.K.

BRINGING BACK DISCIPLINE

For Madras City watchers and those interested in the reputation of some of its famous institutions as well as in the improvement of various facets of life, last fortnight's sittings of the Legislative Assembly, must have been a rewarding experience. Many long-forgotten suggestions by experts in specialised fields were given life, and fresh moves are afoot to bring decency and discipline into the City scene.

A nominal entrance fee is to be collected from visitors to Government hospitals (all over the State), in order to restrict crowds. Health Minister Muthuswamy, sadly admitted that our Government hospitals are dirty. He also narrated how relatives of patients make holes in the wire mesh of the windows in the multi-storeyed block at the Government General Hospital to throw waste materials out, though dust bins are nearby.

That veteran legislator of another age, Sir Arcot Lakshmanaswamy

Teaming to plan a new Madras

(By K. Subalakshmi)

Can you imagine a Madras that is green, clean and healthy? No pot-holes, no stinking garbage, no power cuts, no traffic jams and no nerve-racking traffic noise. Sounds too good to be true? If the United Nations-sponsored Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) gets going, Madras may just become this dream city.

The project, which is the first of its kind in India, is expected to be funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) using local expertise, with the MMDA

functioning as the nodal agency. G. Dattatri, the former Chief Town Planner of the MMDA, is the national consultant for the project.

The project aims at designing and implementing environmental plans to improve the living conditions in the city. It is hoped that the scheme will be integrated with existing plans such as those suggested in the Times of India-MMDA research programme, Madras-2011.

The organisers, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), meanwhile sounded out a cross-section of the people in the city at a Round

Table Conference held at the MMDA Towers recently. Judging by the response to the meeting, the grand scheme appears to have already caught the imagination of several leading citizens.

The participants at the meet — industrialists, architects, educationists, community welfare groups — agreed to pool their expertise for the project. Seven sub-committees were formed, each charged with the task of preparing specific projects — with plans for funding them — in certain identified development areas. The committees and the names of the chairpersons are:

WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION — Dr. B.B. Sundaresan, Member, Tamil Nadu Planning Commission.

AGRICULTURE, FORESTS, FISHERIES, GREENBELT — L. Vasudev, Managing Director, Madras Fertilisers Ltd.

POWER AND INDUSTRY — M.V. Subbiah, Managing Director, E.I.D. Parry Ltd.

HOUSING, SPATIAL PLANNING, URBAN AMENITIES — C.N. Raghavendran, Architect.

TRANSPORT AND TELECOMMUNICATION — Dr. N.V.C. Swamy, Director, IIT Madras.

(Continued on P3)

Two in the eighties

Two entering their eighties, and to whom *The Man from Madras Musings* wishes many more years of good health and a continued will to contribute to national harmony, are the Prince of Arcot, Ghulam Mohammed Abdul Khan, and C Subramaniam, Governor of Maharashtra and one of Tamil Nadu's gifts to the national scene.

The Prince of Arcot has for years kept a low profile. Even when his son, the Nawabzada Mohammed Abdul Ali, was the Sheriff of Madras the family kept out of the limelight. But now the family appears keen to play a major role in ensuring communal harmony in the city — and has consequently become much more visible.

Both the Prince — who ranks with Cabinet Ministers in the protocol list — and the Nawabzada have begun to give interviews. They have begun to entertain more. And they often now have groups whom they're glad to take round *Amir Mahal*, the family mansion ever since Nawab Mohammed Ali's line were ousted from *Chepauck Palace* by the British in 1855. They now proudly reveal that the Arcot family is the only princely family to continue to receive a purse from government, old treaties being honoured. (Someone the other day mentioned to *The Man from Madras Musings* that the Zamorin of Calicut is similarly honoured, but that's a story for another day.)

At every opportunity, the Prince — now confined to a wheelchair — and his son speak of the need for national harmony. They see themselves as leaders who can soothe the feelings that have been ruffled these past few years in Triplicane. And so they've decided to come out of the shadows.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Amongst the things that the Arcot family has recently done is to walk with one of the Sankaracharyas and to walk for peace in a Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan sponsored walk. And it is the Bhavan that C Subramaniam heads, as its chairman for ever preaching national harmony.

C Subramaniam was recently honoured in Madras when the Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram celebrated its 15th birthday with a 'birthday gift' of C Subramaniam. The 80th birthday gift was a new library and laboratory block named in honour of the statesman who chairs the Bhavan these days and urges it to be a means of creating national harmony.

The inauguration function took place on April 6th — and the significance of that date in juxtaposition with a campus named after Rajaji did not strike anyone till Education Minister Aranganayagam thundered the meaning. It was April 6, 1919, the Minister pointed out, that Gandhiji, who was in Madras at that time, met Rajaji and after the meeting issued his first call for civil disobedience — in protest against the Rowlett Act. It was Madras, Aranganayagam passionately asserted, where the movement to oust the British began, fuelled by Rajaji and Gandhiji. *The Man from Madras Musings* only wishes many more ministers remember all the contributions that Madras has made since 1639 to create the India of today.

No Bench here

A proposal for a Supreme Court Bench in Madras, first made in 1983 by the Government of Tamil Nadu, has at last been turned down. *The Man from Madras Musings* can't help but wonder whether their Lordships might not have listened with greater sympathy if the Tamil Nadu case had been based more on history rather than on political expediency. But then a Government that pulls down a building that was built for the first court in the country to be called a Supreme Court can't expect much sympathy.

If only it had been pointed out that the beginnings of present jurisprudence in India were in Madras, that as early as 1642 a trial as we now know it, for murder, was held in the fledgling town, that in 1661 judicial power became entrenched in Madras and could dispense justice "according to the laws of England" (most still followed today), that a court called the Supreme Court was established in 1678, that several other incarnations of this court followed before, in 1801, a new Supreme Court of Judicature was established

ed with Sir Thomas Strange as the first Chief Justice. This was the progenitor of the Madras High Court, but both in name and antiquity it had enough claim for Madras to base its request for a Bench of the Supreme Court.

To think if *Bentick's Building*, built for Sir Thomas Strange's court, had only been renovated to welcome this Bench, what a historic occasion Madras would have seen! But how many in this city recall history? That's our tragedy.

Commanding wishes

Madam Chief Minister wanted Anna Salai made into a four-lane thoroughfare. No sooner said than done, by CUTTING DOWN whatever few SHADE TREES that were left on the stretch!

Then she wanted that splendid museum piece, the Museum Theatre, to be put back into regular use. And someone got the bright idea to air-condition it, no matter that for decades theatre-goers were content to be seen sweating it out, nay, perspiring, in it. And up there began to come ducting around that splendid semi-circular auditorium and plans were on to pull out a couple of stained-glass windows to lead that ducting into the main auditorium.

Fortunately some conservation-conscious body saw all this getting underway and called up INTACH — and it managed to rush to the spot just in time to prevent the worst being done and suggest better ways to air-condition: one of the country's most historic theatres and one that should be treated with the reverence of a national monument. It couldn't stop the air-conditioning plans — which, however implemented, will ruin the ethos of this theatre out of the gaslight era — but it could at least prevent the worst atrocities.

Why is it that wishes are always taken to be commands in our state and rushed to implementation without consultation with the experts? Are there no experts left in our state? As a further thought, will we ever get the Urban Arts Commission the MMDA keeps promising?

Tradition forgotten

In line with the pulling down of the old Spencer's shell, which could so easily have been the renovated mall for an integrated tower block behind it, and its replacement with a multi-angular block of no character except the appearance of a block of marzipan, is the latest decision of the new owners of this old Madras institution.

What a tradition Spencer's had for cuisine up until about forty or fifty years ago. It might have been 'sahibi' cuisine — but that was a recognised cuisine too. Its mulligatawnys and bread puddings, bread crumbed fish fries, roast chicken (country, not broiler) and 'rice and curry' with 'sweet chutneys, sour pickles and poppads' were treats whether served at the Connera or on the South Indian Railway by belted and turbanned 'boys'. It would have been nice to have revived that with, say, a 'Sahib's Kitchen'; after all, there are still a few 'butlers' and

'kitchen maties' around who could turn out reasonable approximations of the real thing. But what does Spencer's plan to do?

It plans to offer us 'mod-*is*ahib'; what else but Wimpy! That British imitation of a hamburger which derived its name from a comic book

character and became a fast food chain in Britain is the promise that Spencer's now holds forth. Even Spencer's old *sahibs* must be turning in their graves at the thought of this import from their country!

And, incidentally, does fast food really have to be imported?

MMM

...And now the PSV Scripts

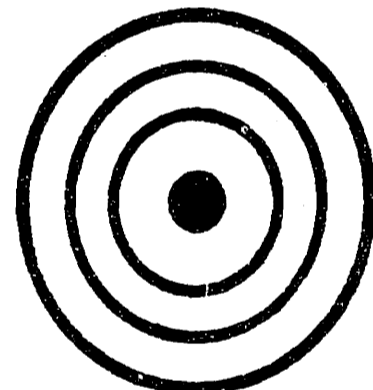
The Government has come to terms with reality, disinvesting its holdings in the 31 profit-making Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs). Their scripts are slated to hit the stock market soon.

These units continue to excite public attention despite all their vicissitudes. The enormous resources that the PSUs have at their disposal, the staggering amount of well-trained manpower, their hidden assets, their clout as Government institutions, giving them an easy access to the international market, not to mention their more-than-ample chances of bagging government contracts are now beginning to get recognised. The net worth of these 31 PSUs comes to a dizzy Rs. 32967.20 crs. Miracles can be wrought if this is used efficiently.

already started up their worth and will continue to do so.

The government plans to approach the primary market directly for future disinvestment and so judgement by the stock market has now become inevitable. If efficiency has to reign within the precincts of these units, a free hand to the manager responsible for its performance becomes imperative. Meddling bureaucrats and interfering politicians will have to keep their hands off. In fact, the government has no alternative to this, in the climate of liberalisation that it has now decreed. The touchstone of success for the PSUs will lie in the price that their scripts command in the long run.

Meanwhile, here are a few recommendations for the coming fortnight:



BULL'S EYE

It would be wrong to assume that this action of listing the PSUs in the stock market would by itself transform them overnight into efficient units. Though this has worked wonders for their sagging image, the more important benefit of this move will be the keen public interest in their performance. This public audit will prove powerful. Things will change — for the better — as these units have long functioned as ill-managed, over-stuffed and under-utilised institutions. Pampered beyond imagination, they have come to a state where nothing short of a complete overhaul is required for their survival.

For the present, the primary purpose has been served in that the government has met its additional capital requirements by disinvesting its holdings to the mutual funds and financial institutions. In the bargain, the PSUs have received a new lease of life. They are not written off as extinct dinosaurs and now they are giving rise to great hopes.

Having reached this far, where do we go from here? The PSUs will have to accept the buck and rise to the occasion by reaching the standards deemed fit for them. After entering the world of investment and speculation, they can no longer turn their face away to avoid public gaze, scrutiny and evaluation. Analysis and investors have

Standard Organics Ltd. (Current Market Price Rs. 95/-): Standard Organics Ltd. is engaged in the manufacture of bulk drugs and formulations. Incorporated in 1976, this company is the flagship of the Standard group, consisting of SOL Pharma and Dexo Laboratories. Despite the sharp rise in manufacturing costs and higher capital expenditure that subdued its bottomline, the first half, Sept. 91, results have been satisfactory. The future is promising, with exports alone estimated at Rs. 30 crs. for the current year. Now the company is proposing an amalgamation with Dexo Laboratories. Together they have plans for much modernisation. The technicals suggest buying at current levels for medium and long-term gains.

S & S Power Switchgear Ltd. (Current Market Price Rs. 210/-): Recent developments, like the decision to permit private sector participation in power generation and rationalisation of power tariffs, will boost the company's products — switch-gear, isolators, sectionalizers and disturbance recorders. It approached the capital market recently with a rights issue to part-finance its growth plans. The company's recent success in the export market also augurs well for its future. Already it has received export orders worth Rs. 9 crs. It is also planning to set up a joint venture in Malaysia to boost exports. The technicals appear hopeful. Fundamental supports a price of Rs. 350/- for 1992-93 results. Buy.

Apollo Hospitals Ltd. (Current Market Price Rs. 62/-): Apollo Hospitals, a Madras-based pioneer in corporate hospitals, has been doing well since its inception. It is now set for an expansion programme at a cost of Rs. 20 cr. This is yet to be finalised, but when it does, the bed facility of the hospital will increase to 500. A modern cancer centre is also to be established. The technicals appear hopeful. Buy for a short-term target of Rs. 100/-.

K. Gopalakrishnan

The PhD from Nochi Kuppam

Thirty-one-year-old B Subramanian has come a long way. From the circumscribed environment of the Nochi Kuppam fishing village that is huddled on the seashore between the lighthouse and the San Thomé Basilica, to a Doctorate in Marine Biology and a three-year contract as a senior

coaching I doubt I would have come this far," Subramanian laughs.

Now, it seems, the education bug has really got him. No longer content with his own academic prowess, Subramanian is making plans to ensure that the entire fishing community at Nochi Kuppam, all of 300 families with an approximate literacy level of a paltry ten per cent, reaps the benefits of schooling. Starting this month, Subramanian, together with other volunteers, has organised an evening school. Focus will be on English grammar, reading, writing, arithmetic and a novel attempt to promote self-awareness and independence. "We are going to show people how to deal with banks, prepare for job interviews and generally get 'stuck' into society", he explains. If you ask him, "Why do you do it?", he answers angrily, "My community is among the most neglected in India. There is little reservation or positive discrimination in jobs for us. Yet it is fishing communities who often bear the brunt of environmental and natural calamities. They should be drafted into the 'Scheduled Tribes' category. Instead, we are out on a limb. In Orissa and in Andhra Pradesh, fisherfolk enjoy specific reservation. This should be made more universal. And I want to prepare our people for the opportunities when they come."

Subramanian is more comfortable talking about his pet loves and hates than he is discussing himself. His self-

effacing manner comes from a genuine disinterested nature which tends to promote others before himself. He is, however, keen to go abroad, "for a maximum of three to four years", he cautions, so that he can further his post-doctoral studies and see the world.

During the field work for his PhD thesis on the "Seasonal Variants of Hydrobiological Characters of the



Above: Dr B Subramanian (seated, left) with his family; Elder brother Rajasekharan, who egged him on to further studies, is seen standing.

Left: Subramanian and his colleague Sukumar conduct an evening class at Nochi Kuppam

Coastal Water". Subramanian investigated the coastline from Ennore Creek in North Madras to the Kalapakkam coast in the south. During this work he came across a factory in north Madras which poured tonnes of toxic liquid effluents into the sea via pipes which run under a cluster of villages around Chinna Kasi Koi Kuppam. The villagers of these fishing villages

protested that their water supply and their fishing yield would be contaminated. The company authorities claimed the liquid was treated, but, nevertheless, promised jobs in their factory to one member from each family — and hoped life would quieten down. When the same factory started laying pipes under a nearby township peopled by clerks and office workers,

there were protests again. This time the company assured the protesters that the pipes were totally leak-proof; nevertheless, they moved the pipes. "This illustrates", says Subramanian, "how vulnerable uneducated communities are in comparison to others, like the white-collar village, where there is greater literacy, more self-esteem and, therefore, more clout. Education is the only way to change this situation". And that's what Subramanian promises Nochi Kuppam.

In September, Subramanian is getting married to Kolhai, a 21-year-old English Literature graduate. He is coyly pleased about the match, but becomes positively enthusiastic about his wife-to-be's skills. "Her English can help out with the evening classes and a whole host of new activities that we can devise specially for the village", he says proudly.

CRIME NOTEBOOK by Rander Guy

A blacksmith with political ambitions was charged with the brutal murder of his vivacious and voluptuous wife. Why did he kill her?

He suspected that the woman he loved was being unfaithful to him. As a political activist he was often away in the evenings, attending or addressing meetings, or participating in late night deliberations with party colleagues. Left alone — and neglected — the woman regularly went to Tamil movies with her neighbours and friends. But the husband had other images of his wife.

One evening, the woman came to the smithy at a late hour to meet her

husband. Soon, there were shouts, then moans and groans. Later, three eyewitnesses testified on oath in court that they saw the ambitious political worker hit his wife, not once, but three times on the head with an iron bar used in the smithy. According to medical evidence, such a vicious attack would certainly have fractured her skull and caused the woman's death. The accused was sentenced to death by the Sessions Judge in Coimbatore.

An appeal was filed before the Madras High Court, and that noted lawyer, and leader of the legal fraternity

in Madras, R Gandhi appeared for the accused-appellant. The matter came up before a Division Bench, consisting of two judges sitting as the Refined Trial Bench. Under Indian criminal law, any case decided by a District Sessions judge, in which the death sentence is awarded, is *suo moto* (on its own motion, or automatically) sent to the concerned High Court. Whether the accused files an appeal or not, the case is heard and gone into by a Bench of two judges. To help the judges, a lawyer is engaged by the state to appear for the accused. He is chosen out of a panel of lawyers known as the Refined Trial panel. The refined trial system was introduced to make sure that no miscarriage of justice occurred in cases of death sentences.

Gandhi based his arguments on the theory that the murder could not have taken place in the manner described.

To support his case, he requested the learned judges to examine the murder-weapon. The judges asked the court orderly to bring it up to the Bench for a closer inspection. The uniformed servant could not oblige for it was so heavy he could hardly lift it from the floor. Their Lordships acquitted the accused. If the iron tool needed more than one man to lift it, how could the accused lift it and hit his wife not once but three? If he had indeed been able to do it, her skull would have shattered, like an egg-shell!

Here then was an instance where cast-iron evidence crushed a police case.

A NEW MADRAS

(Continued from P1)

EDUCATION, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNICATION — Rev. Sr. Annamma Philip, Principal, Stella Maris College.

TOURISM, SPORT, RECREATION, HERITAGE — M.G. Devasahayam, formerly of the IAS and now an entrepreneur.

There is certainly no lack of expertise in the city. L. Vasudev, for instance, offered the expertise of Madras Fertilisers in areas such as recycling sewage as industrial water, environment friendly building material, the use of bio-fertilisers in the place of chemical fertilisers and setting up green belts under poor soil conditions.

A similar offer of help came from Prof. N.V.C. Swamy, who suggested that Madras could be developed along the lines of

Singapore through computerised planning. And a host of other concerned citizens seemed eager to contribute to the 'Better Madras' project.

Hopefully, the project will take off in a few months' time. Hopefully, too the enthusiasm that prevailed at the meeting will not fizzle out. For grand plans such as these cannot hope to succeed unless every citizen is committed to see it through. It is not enough to just ask industry to stop polluting the air or the Corporation to clear the garbage. It is time the proletariat and its leaders got involved. For a beginning, why don't we all just agree to stop littering the road with rubbish? If we could take care of our colonies and *cheris*, the city will take care of itself.

Bringing back discipline

(Continued from P1)

that the suggestions fell on willing ears, and at least two Ministers were seen nodding down the points made.

Another measure — this time in the educational sector — the Government agreed to be to allow English medium sections in Government high schools and higher secondary schools. More English medium sections are to be allowed in aided schools. The 'windfall' to parents of children and the schools alike is from the next academic year. An evident spin-off could be that the private educational 'industry' might run into a welcome recession!

An equally important decision — though it might not find favour with the parents of nursery school-going children — is that Tamil will be an alternative medium of instruction or a

compulsory language in nursery schools. The Government has also made a major policy shift and accepted the Centre's 'Navodaya' scheme, "since the regional language will be the medium upto standard VIII and English upto standard XI, as in Central schools and Kendriya Vidyalayas."

A 'bitter pill' administered was that no new private school or college — both minority or non-minority — would get government aid hereafter.

Chief Minister Jayalalitha wanted the creation of public opinion to put an end to scurrilous writing. She said in this connection that a magazine had published a picture of a bungalow, claiming that it was hers. "Pure figment of the imagination," she said — just like

OUR READERS WRITE

Being prepared

Madras Musings is compact, elegant, saucy and sarcastically forceful in style and presentation, the subjects covered in your journal are varied and interesting.

I refer to your story 'Will the Stadium be Ready?' (*Madras Musings* Feb 15-29) 'Jaici' has raised genuine doubts about a Nehru Stadium of international standard coming up in time to stage the prestigious Nehru Gold Cup in January 1993. The Tamil Nadu Football Association in 1986 had cried off at the last moment for just the same reason: the want of a modern stadium to stage the tournament. Sport lovers fervently hope this will not be repeated.

If the projected modernisation of the Nehru Stadium is not completed — for any reason, financial crunch, etc. — efforts should be made well in advance to secure the M.A.C. Cricket Stadium, Chepauck, with the help of the State Government, if needed, as the venue for Nehru Gold Cup '93. With barely eight months to go, the prospect of preparing the Nehru Stadium to the expected standard are indeed bleak.

J Kothandaram
Former President
Madras Football Assn
Madras-600 044.

Good wishes

First came across *Madras Musings* in 'Higginbothams' in July '91. Reading it, I found it so interesting that I wrote to the Editor to include me in the mailing list. Soon after, I started receiving a copy of this wonderful paper. Now that *Madras Musings* has completed one year, I am sure it will provide information and entertainment for all its readers for many years to come. I wish it all success.

V R Ramachandran
I.I.T. Campus
Kharagpur 721302.

A thesis of errors

A few days ago, this writer's soul-mate sent him for his reading pleasure a priced publication, a dissertation on Tamil film history — or, rather, a popular aspect of it, music — for which the author had been awarded a Doctorate by a well-known Tamil Nadu university. A pleasure it was not. Instead, it filled him with sadness, for it was full of errors and opinions based on such errors.

The thesis-writer states that the pioneer of cinema in Madras, Raghu-



pathy Venkaiah, who built the first permanent cinema house in Madras — the *Gaiety* — in 1912-13 (and it's still going strong), had also built a movie studio in Bombay. Its name is given as 'East Film Company'.

Now Raghubhai Venkaiah did build a studio, but not in Bombay. It was right here in Madras, in Purasawalkam, right behind Roxy cinema, which he owned (sadly, this once-popular landmark is now closed and languishes in silence). He and his Hollywood-trained son (the first film person from Madras to be trained abroad), the pioneer film-maker Raghubhai Prakash, built the studio, which they named 'The Star of the East Film Studio'. In a brilliant innovative move, Prakash used glass sheets for the ceiling to allow the sunlight in, yet keep out the dust! (Those were the pioneering days when film shooting was done courtesy of the sun god! No electric power was available, nor were there generators around.) That innovation gave the studio the name by which it was better known, 'The Glass Studio'.

The thesis-writer not only makes no mention of these facts, but also fails to mention the name of the founding father of film-making in Madras,

R. Nataraja Mudaliar, the maker of the first film — silent, of course — in South India, *Kecchaka Vadham* (1916). The film finds mention, but the author says he does not know the name of the film-maker! It's like a writer writing a thesis on the Theory of Relativity and stating that he has not heard of Albert Einstein!

The author goes on to discuss the use of songs in Tamil cinema and takes the stance that most songs are heard in irrelevant circumstances. But, sadly, the author, to make this point, cites the example of the song *Sirasalai Enna Seyyumi* (prisons mean nothing to a person who cares not about his or her physical self — that's the theme and meaning of the song) sung by the famed Carnatic musician, stage and screen star and cult figure K. B. Sundarambal. The author states the song was in Gemini S. S. Vasan's memorable movie *Aravayar*, in which K.B.S. plays the legendary saint-poet. The thesis-writer also says that the song was included in *Aravayar* because it was a part of the Indian Freedom Movement song repertoire, not because it had any relevance to the story. Sadly, the truth is quite different.

The popular song was composed by the legendary Carnatic music genius Papanasam Sivan and was sung in *Manimekalai* (1940), in which Sundarambal plays the title role, the lovely daughter of Madhavi and her lover Kovalan (of *Silappadhikaram* fame). A king lusts for her, but she is drawn to Buddhism and refuses to yield. The enraged king puts her in prison where, undaunted, Mekalai sings this song. Very appropriately, of course.

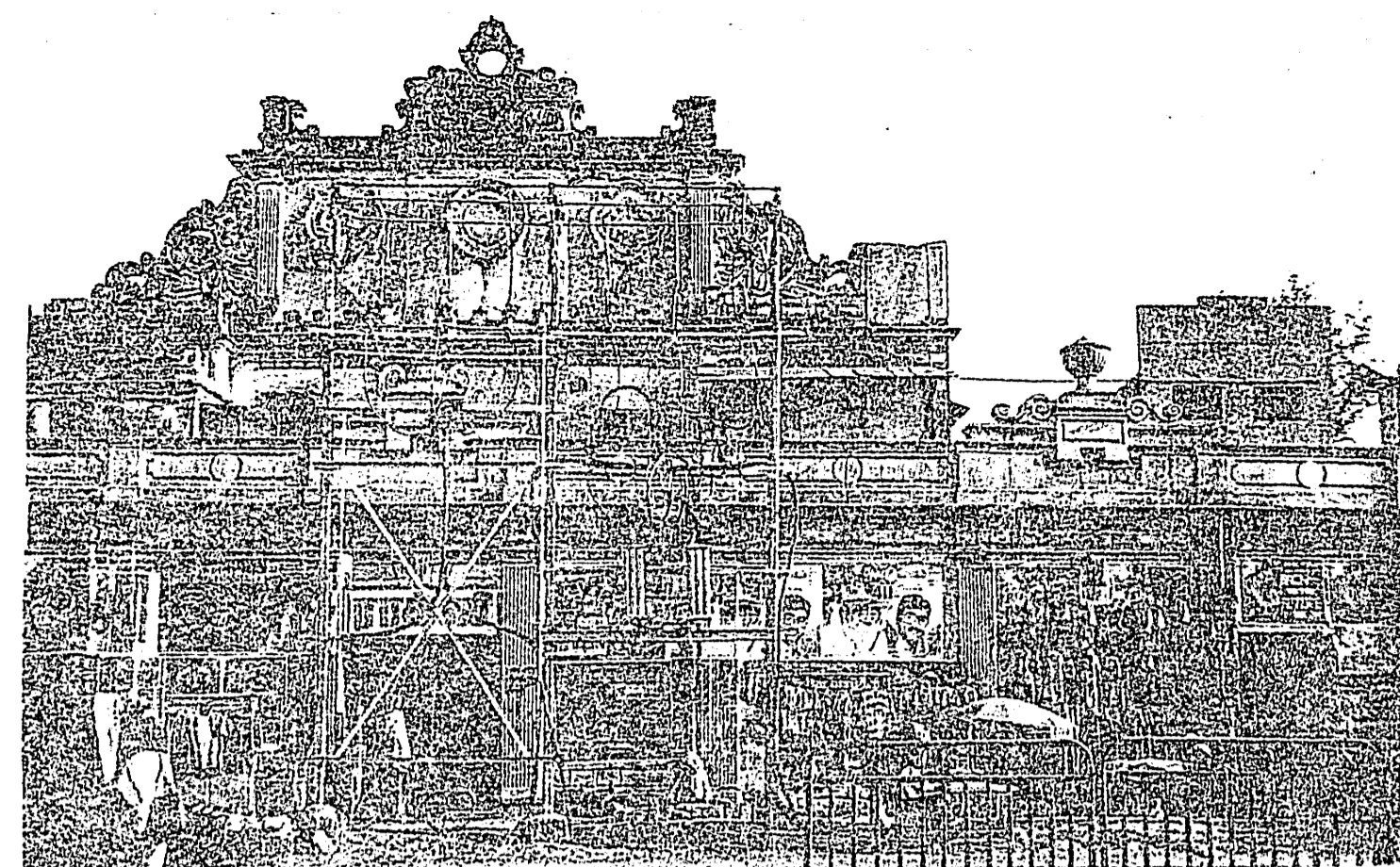
With this just a sampling of the errors, the question arises whether the doctorate was warranted. But that's not this column's business.

My favourite tycoon

The tycoons of Tamil Nadu are up in arms! A lead feature in the prestigious *ET Esquire* has portrayed them as lolling around in their glass and marble mansions and corporate roof top retreats and behaving as though they were competing to play the part of Nero during the last days of the Roman Empire.

The feudal age is alive and well heeled in Madras, the article goes on to note. Millionaires tear up their Indian Airlines tickets as if they were racing stubs. Flunkies are trained to grovel on command. Purse strings are held tight within the family bosom, while professional management types are put on short rations while they learn the company motto: "No perks please, we're Tamilians."

Is this fair, you ask, in the land of the corporate *veshti* where everyone is so low profile you can't make the millionaire out from the messenger boy? You feel sure that the journalist in question must have met an impostor sitting in the MD's seat while the MD himself was eating the humble banana pie in the company canteen along with the workers, as is the custom. Because if there is one thing that distinguishes the Madras tycoon, it is that he is media shy. He never gives press conferences,

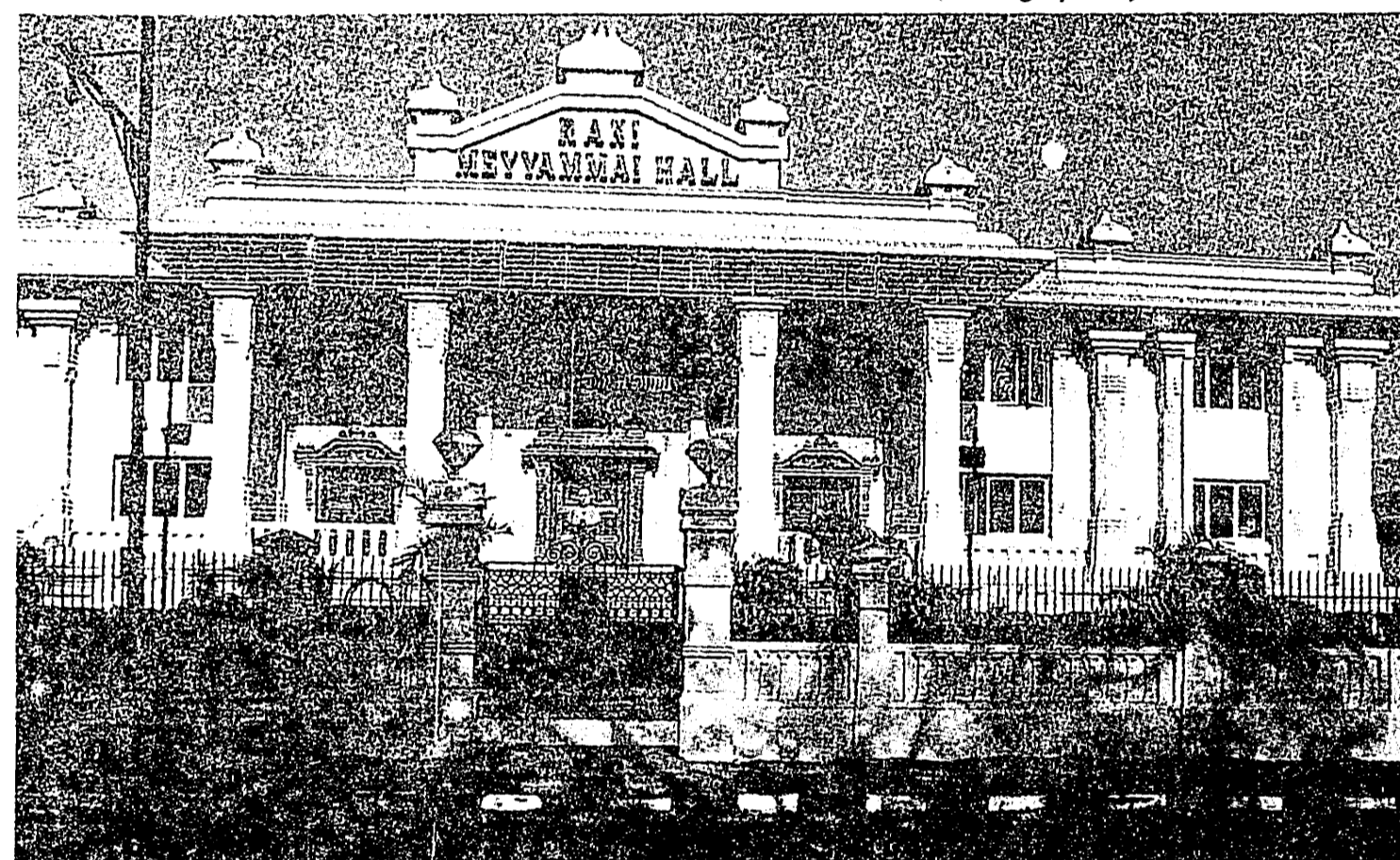


The derelict Roxy Theatre in Purasawalkam was in its heyday one of the country's finest. Certainly cine-pioneer Raghubhai Venkaiah made it one of the most ornate when it was built about 75 years ago. It's a facade that still stands out on Purasawalkam High Road; who'll ensure that it remains a landmark there?

What's new this fortnight is another bit of ornateness — a revival of bits and pieces of Tamil temple and Chettiar architecture in the Rani ... & THE NEW

Meyyammai Hall and its neighbouring Rajah Muthiah Hall on Marshall's Road. Both belong to the Willingdon Charitable Trust, whose roots go back to 1924. The foundation stone for the halls was laid by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1973, but work on the buildings got underway only in 1989 when the cost of about Rs. 4 crores became available. Much of the sculpture has been done by the famed Ganapathy Shapathi and his pupils, which accounts for the superior quality of the workmanship.

Each multipurpose hall can seat 1500 persons and both are linked by a Vijaya Ganapathi Temple. The whole complex, with air-conditioned rooms, dormitories, dining halls, kitchens and storerooms is in an area of 50 grounds. (Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR)



attends parties at 5-Star hotels or airs his views on the budget, except under duress.

Normally they are in disguise, wearing white upon white khadi if the dress is ethnic, half sleeves and dark grey pants if it's Western, with photo chromatic glasses, day or night. They have perfected the art of dodging in and out of airports and into their waiting Ambassador cars, again white, or

membership is as closely guarded by a few first families as the more notorious gangs of Little Italy in New York.

Therein lies the problem. Unlike his betel stained counterpart who knows how to buttonhole a hack and fill him up with booze, the South Indian tycoon is frightened of the Press. It conjures the image of the corporate 'Head of the Family', whose portrait is most often framed and garlanded in a prominent

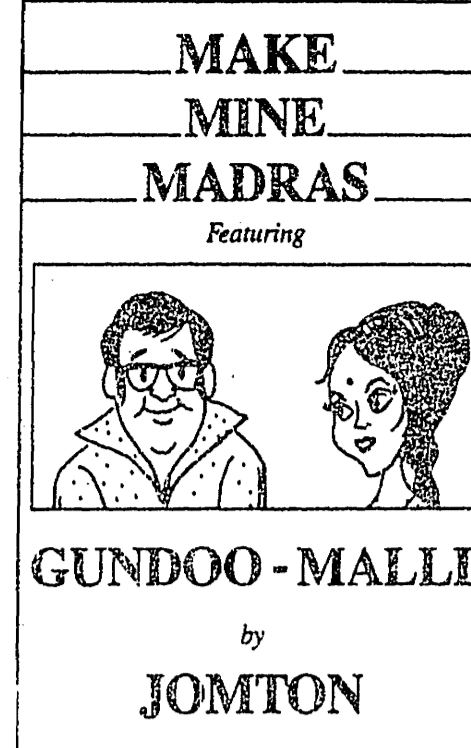
corner of the room, or the Jesuit Father Principal who used to preside over the boarding school that the baby tycoon attended from the age of five. He regresses into a child state and becomes totally inarticulate.

Which is a pity. For the South Indian tycoon is better educated (Lovedale/Doon; IIT/IIM; Harvard/Columbia), better read, he can quote both Shakespeare and Alvin Toffler, more religious, and more polite than his North Indian counterpart. He rarely smokes or drinks, though the Iyengar soda, like the McDowell's variety, is the

stuff of legends. Is a vegetarian most of the time and monogamous. He generally marries his maternal uncle's daughter, but anyone with a skin a shade two or three degrees lighter is also acceptable, as the South Indian laws of eugenics emphasise the desirability of fair offspring — and has, on an average, three children, two girls and a boy. If he has a mistress, he keeps her out of sight in a bungalow referred to, as *chinnai vedu* or in an apartment in London. The merchant classes prefer Brahmin girls of breeding, the Brahmins prefer dancers and musicians. Every tycoon has a special passion, cricket being the most acceptable one. Once a year, they make a trip to Tirupati where they unburden themselves either of their hair, or their money. Or they undertake the much more arduous pilgrimage to Sabarimalai.



It will be debated for a long time who the ultimate victor was, the management or the union. However, if the years of distrust and bitterness can be buried once and for all, Binny just might be able to recapture some of its past glory.



HEY! GUNDUO, NOW THAT A.C RESTAURANTS WON'T CHARGE US EXTRA, WHY DON'T WE EAT REGULARLY IN A.C RESTAURANTS THIS SUMMER?



GOOD IDEA! BUT WHY DON'T YOU BECOME A WORKING WOMAN AND FOOT THE BILL? YOU WOMEN HAVE GOT SEVERAL TAX CONCESSIONS!



Hmm!... MAY BE, BUT THEN I'LL HAVE TO CHANGE AND WASH THESE CLOTHES DAILY. AREN'T DETERGENTS MORE COSTLY??...



Is Binny now on track?

It looks as though the long drawn-out imbroglio over the opening of Binny Mills has been finally resolved. The trouble began over the management's insistence on shifting the process house to Bhuvanagiri and the union's resistance to this move. The mill in Madras has been closed for more than a year over this issue. A comprehensive settlement has now been reached between the management and the CITU-led unions. The mill is reopening on Tamil New Year's Day. According to the accord, B&C Mills will resume

MALCO has kept itself going, hoping to get reliefs and concessions from the state government. It requires massive concessions in power tariff and a rehabilitation package of around Rs. 30 crores.

During the recent Assembly session, the Chief Minister promised to view MALCO's case favourably. It is expected to reopen in about three months. But can the state government continue to subsidise the company's power costs for ever?

Shedding sluggishness

Ever since the giant RPG group brought over the city-based Spencer's, everyone's wondered what they meant to do with the company whose strengths were in trading and the real estate properties it owned. The old Spencer building has been pulled down and a massive complex has come up in its place. Now its Calcutta-based Chairman, Sanjiv Goenka, has announced some exciting plans for the company whose origins go back to the 19th Century. He has signed up a franchise agreement with 'Wimpy's of London. And the defined strategic areas will be in liquor, retailing and franchising. Spencer's has tied up for manufacturing with three distilleries and a brewery, in Nagpur, Hyderabad, Indore and Bhubaneswar. And in retailing the first Spencer's Super Store was opened in Bangalore last December. Spencer's is finally shedding its sluggish image.

Bank alliances

Many private sector banks have been in the limelight recently. With liberal winds blowing in the banking sector strongly, these banks have attracted attention from various predators on the prowl. One such local bank, The Bank of Madura, promoted by the legendary Karumuthu Thiagarajan Chettiar has decided to do something about its share prices getting overheated because of rumours of imminent takeovers. BOM has entered into a strategic alliance with the Bombay-based Kotak Mahindra, who have invested in the equity in a small way. Will this be a forerunner to many such alliances?

Living in hope

The other company whose fortune this column has been tracking is MALCO, the beleaguered aluminium manufacturer. It downed shutters recently.

The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction issued a notice last year to wind up the company. But

Chitra Theatre stopped the lot for Ray

My memories of childhood are filled with experiencing great Art and meeting eminent artists. My father, K. Viswanathan, and mother, Alamelu, were two of the greatest patrons of the Arts in their time. It was patronage of an extraordinary kind; theirs was the true love of Art for Art's sake and not for publicity or profit.

When Gangubhai Hangal, the great Hindustani vocalist took Madras by storm for the first time, she and her entire family were our house guests for a month! My sister Charumathi sang her first song when she was three, perched on the knees of Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan. I was all of eight when I danced for the maestro Pannalal Ghosh. Talat Mahmood sang for us in our drawing room, playing my mother's harmonium! There

were so many such experiences in our childhood, but one I particularly recall today has been brought to mind by the Oscar awarded Satyajit Ray for his lifetime achievements.

I think it was the Bengal Association which had first arranged a screening of *Pather Panchali* in Madras and my mother went to see it. She got my father interested in seeing a second screening which the Association subsequently arranged. As the children of a film exhibitor, we were well tuned to see, enjoy, appreciate and review films. So we too were taken to see *Pather Panchali*. I remember what a heart-rending experience it was.

Chitra Theatre at that time was in great commercial demand. For a number of film

personalities, including Shivaji Ganesan and MGR, a release in Chitra was lucky and ensured a 100-day run. Blocking all other bookings for a week, my father released *Pather Panchali* here at his own risk, so that the people of Madras could experience this great film and a director whose work bore the hallmark of greatness. Such was father's vision that he did not need to wait until a great artiste was first recognised abroad before he acquired credit in his own country. By thus paying his personal tribute to Ray, father was ahead of Oxford and the Oscar, and gained a special place in the hearts of those who saw *Pather Panchali* in Madras long before it made Ray internationally renowned.

— Lakshmi Viswanathan

Hubby's training programme

Darling, you look completely refreshed and rejuvenated. I said, looking at hubby who was just back from a weeklong training programme.

Ah, see, even you could notice it, a brief stay away from home does wonders to a person, don't you agree?

I did not bother to reply, but said instead, Why don't they include the wives also when they send you people for training? It would be a good change for the ladies as well.

Oh, you do, do you? Don't be foolish, he guffawed. What will the company gain by spending such enormous amounts on you?

I did not like the way he dismissed my idea as a joke.

What's so funny about my idea? By the way, what was your training package all about? I asked.

Well, that's better. I appreciate your curiosity. The subject was, How to Improve HR in Your Organisation.

What's that? I've heard of HRD, but what does just HR mean?

I knew you wouldn't know, he said with an air of superiority.

HR means Human Relations, he enlightened me.

Why only in an organisation? Why not at home as well? I suggested.

There you go again. That's why I don't discuss these things with you. You try to relate everything to the Home Environment.

What's wrong in doing so? Like Charity, HR also begins at home. Unless you practise HR at home, you can't do so in your office environment, remarked.

Yes, Dad, what Mummy says is true, piped in our son who was studying in the next room.

The poor man did not expect the fellow to take my side.

When Mummy had fever, you went away to your club, but when you were coughing away to glory, Mummy cancelled her kitty party to stay with you, observed the boy as though to substantiate his statement.

I could notice hubby's face turning red. He appeared lost for words. But not one to give up he said, Ah, that reminds me. The whole of last week I was not troubled by my cough at all. What could be the reason, I wonder? he tried to change the subject.

I was amazed and relieved at what he said. The poor dear had been suffering from a stubborn cough for some days.

Suddenly an idea struck me. What was the food like in that remote place of training? I asked.

Well, he chuckled, the food was all right, but I missed my favourite cool drinks and ice creams. They were not a part of the menu.

Ah, now I know the reason and I can assure you that your cough will not recur, I said confidently.

How do you know for sure, dear? Hubby asked with a puzzled look.

Sheer commonsense, my dear husband, I said. Next time you should be sent for a training course in 'Commonsense', I taunted.

Hubby continued to look puzzled.

N. Meera Raghavendra Rao

MANAALI RAMAN...



"Rs. 5 per square metre for sweeping, piece-rate for washing vessels and clothes... But above all, I expect to be treated like a member of the household! Do you agree?"

IN MAD, MAD MADRAS

The mother of all art galleries

I am convinced that the SARALA ART CENTRE, on Commander-in-Chief Road, is the "mother of all art galleries", to slightly modify Saddam Hussein's phrase! I have been there several times and have yet to see an artefact or painting that is ugly or exorbitantly priced. Spread over a hall, a smaller room and a courtyard (all on the first floor) are splendid terracotta figurines, bronzes, metalware, paintings and what-have-you. The articles are personally chosen and handpicked by Mr Daruwala, while his wife manages the gallery and is most helpful and courteous to all visitors. What more can you ask of an art gallery?

some 20-odd dresses — mainly Salwar-kameezes. Around THE DESIGNER and in the garden, there are some terracotta figurines. But these are more conventional and include Ganesas, houses and urns. In all this, I liked the mirror on the landing the best — it was so flattering. Unfortunately, it was not for sale.

Waiting for Gurjari

GURJARI, the ever-popular Gujarat handicrafts emporium, has wound up shop after two months' residence at the Vimonisha art gallery. Already a permanent presence in major

Other items included Gujarati furniture, inlaid boxes, bags and purses etc. All at half or a third of the prices we have to pay for the same products in the more trendy boutiques in town. Which is why waiting for GURJARI might be worthwhile.

Pricey Habitat

In the same complex as Vimonisha is this very fashionable shop called HABITAT. This gallery provides virtually everything you need for an elegant, furnished house. The catch, unfortunately, is that most of the items are simply out of

The gallery view

Recently, I visited THE GALLERY (situated in Nungambakkam), which is also located on the first floor of the main building. Regularly, exhibits of paintings by well-known artists are held in the main hall. The anteroom is crammed with paintings for sale, while the courtyard houses some rather strange-looking terracotta work, including something that resembles Van Gogh's boots!

Downstairs, in a small room, is THE ACCESSORY, which looks like someone's opened granny's old trunk and exhibited all the contents — a lot of brassware and textiles. However, the prices are certainly not what granny paid — they are way out of reach.

Just outside the door is THE DESIGNER — which comprises

cities like Bombay, New Delhi, Ahmedabad and Bangalore, GURJARI hopes to launch itself in Madras in a big way before long. The problem, it appears, is that of finding a permanent location for its products in this city.

On sale during its stay in Madras were exquisite mirror-work, quilted and Kantha-embroidered cushion covers and table-cloths. There were also some dazzling bed-spreads in distinctive bright colours — orange and black, maroons, greens and yellow. All these are guaranteed to produce that ethnic look in home decor which is so popular today.

GURJARI also had fabric by the yard, apart from ready-made salwar-kameezes, bandini sarees, blouse pieces and dupattas.

FOODS & FADS

reach (in economic terms) for most people.

HABITAT presents an eclectic mix of wood carvings, bronzes, icons, brassware, Thanjavur paintings, Jaipur blue pottery and furnishings — all very very pricey. The display is good, the rooms are large and the surroundings are plush. But, with a little perseverance, you can easily pick up similar items in several other places (admittedly less classy) at less than half the price.

Branded rugs

In the same category is SHYAM AHUJA, next door. This shop is strictly for those who yearn for name-brands. It specialises in rugs and carpets in several

discreet, pastel shades — the kind favoured by certain northern European interior decorators. However, I wonder how these products will bear up with the heat and dust of the Indian weather!

Soup with exotica

A few days ago, I discovered yet another bit of exotica in the Panagal Park market: WATER-CRESS or Paruppu keerai. In the West, where it is very popular, it is used in salads or as garnish for salad dressing. My favourite recipe, however, is WATER-CRESS SOUP.

Fry one cup chopped onion in six tablespoons butter. Add one bunch watercress (washed and chopped into small pieces), four medium potatoes (peeled and quartered), two cups chicken broth and two cups water.

When the potatoes are tender, remove from fire and run the mashed mixture through a sieve. Add one cup heavy cream and season to taste. Serve hot.

Inconsistencies

After I wrote in these columns favourably about CHEF SUZANNE, some of my friends complained to me about the quality of meat served to them when they visited it. I can only state that I base my judgements solely on the quality of food served in a restaurant when I visit it. It is unfortunate that most places in Madras are not consistent in terms of quality.

V.K.

The versatile coconut can be used in a variety of ways. Rice cooked gently in coconut milk makes a different yet delicious Coconut Rice. Serve with Pulli Kodayal, a fragrant spicy kozhambu. Flaky Sora Puttu can also be served on the side. Finish the meal with Besan Coconut Fudge. Not quite Mysore Pak, not quite Coconut Burfi, yet mouthwateringly crumbly.

1 teaspoon bengal gram dhal
1 teaspoon asafoetida powder
A few curry leaves

Method

Crush the grated coconut in a blender adding warm water. Pour the crushed mixture into a sieve and squeeze out the milk to make two cups of coconut milk.

Wash the rice. Add the coconut milk and salt and cook covered on a low fire.

When almost done, keep a griddle under the pan till rice is done and separate. Set aside.

Heat the two tablespoons of ghee and fry the cashew nuts till golden.

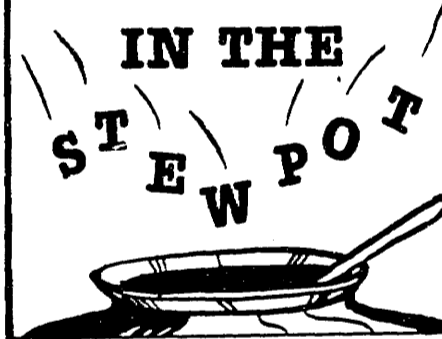
To temper, heat ghee and add all the ingredients. When the mustard seeds pop, add it to the coconut rice. Garnish with fried cashew nuts.

COCONUT RICE

1 cup basmati rice
1 coconut, grated
Salt to taste
2 lbs halved cashew nuts
2 lbs ghee

FOR TEMPERING

1 lbs ghee
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1 teaspoon black gram dhal



PULLI KODAYAL

250 grams ash gourd, chopped into ½ inch pieces

Lemon size tamarind
½ lbs powdered jaggery
1 or 2 green chillies, slit sideways
1 small bunch coriander leaves chopped fine, for garnishing

SALT TO TASTE

GROUND MASALA

½ coconut, grated and roasted dry
½ teaspoon fenugreek seeds

1 teaspoon sesame (til) seeds
1 lbs bengal gram dhal (Channa)
1 lbs coriander seeds (dhaniya)

½ teaspoon asafoetida powder
6 red chillies

FOR TEMPERING

2 teaspoons oil
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1 teaspoon black gram dhal
1 red chilli halved

Method

Boil the ash gourd in a pan, adding slit green chillies, salt and sufficient water.

Add the ground masala and bring to the boil. Add the powdered jaggery and simmer till well blended.

Heat oil and add all ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds pop, add to the kozhambu. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves.

fried in oil and ground to a fine paste adding tamarind and coconut

BESAN COCONUT FUDGE

1 cup besan (gram flour)
1 cup coconut, grated
1 cup ghee
1 cup milk
3 cups sugar

Method

Mix all the ingredients. Cook stirring continuously till halwa consistency.

Transfer to a greased plate. Flatten evenly with a spatula. Cut into pieces when warm. Store in a container when cooled completely.

Chandra Padmanabhan

SORA PUTTU (Shark Puttu)

½ kg pal sora (shark)
2 medium-sized onions, chopped fine
6 green chillies, chopped fine
6 cloves of garlic, chopped fine
1½ inch piece ginger, chopped fine
½ teaspoon turmeric powder

Small bunch coriander leaves chopped fine
4 to 5 lbs oil
A few curry leaves
Salt to taste

Method

Clean and boil sora with sufficient water, turmeric powder and salt, till done. Cool. Remove skin and bones and flake the fish.

Heat oil. Fry the curry leaves. Add the chopped onions, chillies, garlic and ginger. Fry for 2-3 minutes.

Add the sora and chopped coriander leaves. Fry about 5-7 minutes, till dry.

Neela Prabhakar

Quizzin' with Navin

(Quizmaster NAVIN JAYAKUMAR'S questions are all from the fortnight March 16 - 31)

1. With the government trying to restrict the issue of rice in the PDS to the economically weaker sections, what percentage of card-holders in Madras accepted their income (monthly) to be below Rs. 1000?

2. What was the question in the S. Africa referendum in which the whites voted decisively to end Apartheid?

3. In which other sport has S. African cricketer Jonty Rhodes represented his country?

4. How many prisons in Tamil Nadu are equipped with security alarms?

5. In an enchanting scene, a sweet-seller leads a quaint procession of a boy, a girl and a dog, all reflected in the still waters of a pool. Name this film classic.

6. What is the new brand of mineral water launched by the Shiram group of companies, Madras?

7. India's second indigenously built submarine was recently launched from Mazagon Docks. What is its name?

8. Name the official organ of the AIADMK which is brought out by Jaya Publications (and which was in the news recently)?

9. Which new raga was composed by sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan in praise of Lord Aiyappa?

10. Polampatti, near Coimbatore, is the site of a new national centre for ornithology and natural history. After whom is it named?

11. N. Parthasarathy, the snake man, set yet another world record by sitting in a 'Samson's chair' position for 9 hours and 25 minutes at the VOC Park, Coimbatore. What is this unusual position?

12. What unique light bulbs will soon be brought out by Hyderabad Lamps Ltd.?

13. What novel programme did the Karnataka Farmers' Association launch to put their anti-farmer government to shame?

14. According to the figures, High Courts in the country seem to be vying with each other in amassing arrears of cases. Which courts are at the top and bottom of the list?

15. In a historic ruling in the TN Assembly, the Speaker described as 'fraud' the records of the proceedings of the House on March 25, 1989. What happened on that day?

16. Who was presented with the 'Woman of the Year' award by the International Women's Association of Madras?

17. TELCO launched its new, indigenously-built diesel-run estate car in Madras. Its name?

18. Which world-famous daily suspended publication on March 14th, following financial and political problems?

19. Which 'Colonel' retired from cricket recently?

20. Which world-famous humour magazine founded in 1841 will close within a month due to poor sales and heavy losses?

(Answers on Page 8)

THE VIEW FROM THE WINGS

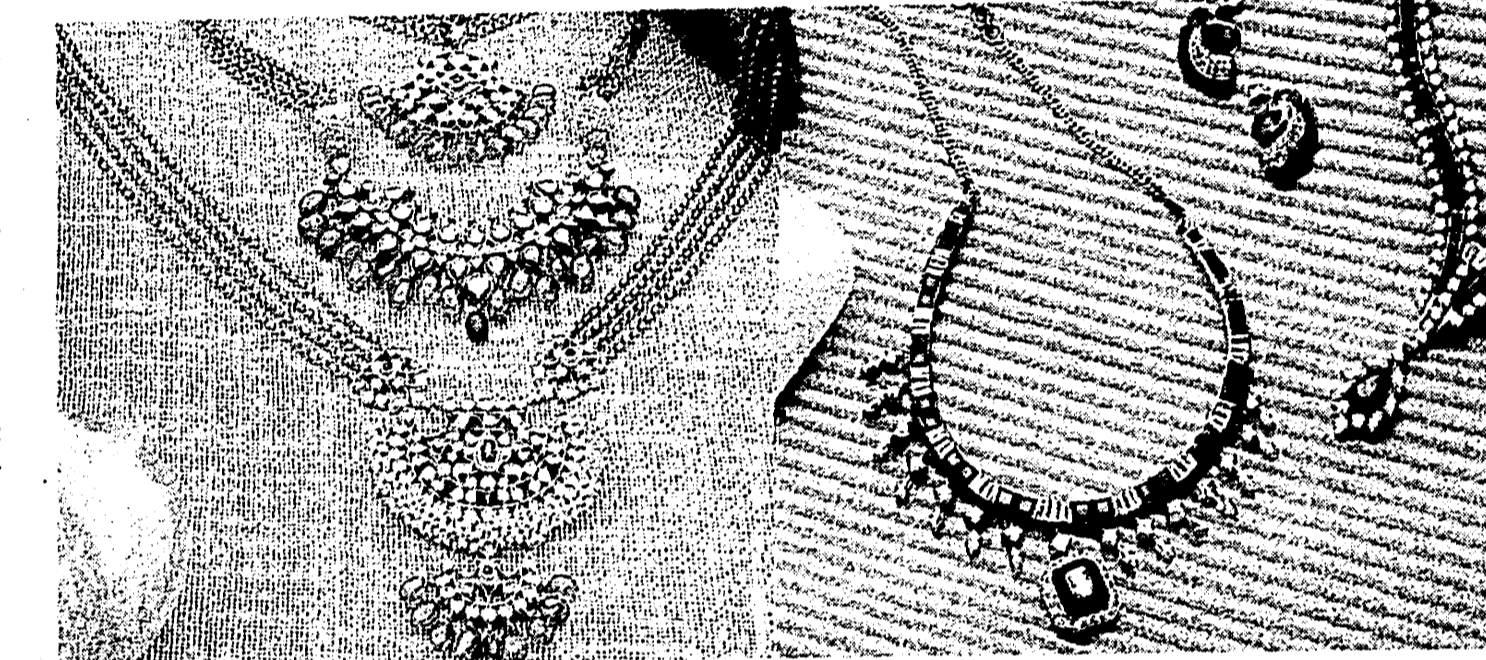
Eulogies to the deities

There have been Bharatha Natyam festivals galore in Madras this past month. The most sophisticated was the Kalamandir festival organised by Enfield chairman S Viswanathan and his wife Gomathi. The festival raised high expectations and met them.

The concept was thematic. Each dancer was given the name of a deity and asked to perform dances eulogising the particular deity. Meticulous planning went into the festival organisation, particularly in the presentation. V V Ramani, who did the stage decor, thought of symbols to represent each deity and won applause in most instances with his collages, but he failed in the depiction of Anantasayana, the reclining Vishnu.

Kalamandir also had rules and regulations for audience conduct. Dos and Donts were neatly printed and handed out. Participating dancers were asked to compete presentations by other dancers, thus bringing about a unity to the entire festival.

As for performances, the one which captured my heart was by Shobha Natarajan. There was an unmatched passion that enlivened her dance. Her



Exquisite jewellery...shadowed pages from the past



Toys that tell a story...at the British Council

communication techniques were first rate. I missed Srilatha Viswanathan's performance, but was told her presentation of the Devi theme was very good. Hers was new choreography, done specially for the festival; many others, however recycled old themes.

Mesmerising Japanese

Shankarabharanam held another festival, with Meenakshi Chittaranjan (nee Sabhanayakam) presenting an

evening of honest dancing, unfudged, unforced and assured. In this festival, a Japanese student of the Dhananjayans, Tomiko Furomoto, shone brightly. She created plenty of time and space for a beautiful and controlled Swarajathi in the Raga Huseni. This is a celebrated Swarajathi performed countless times by every dancer. But Tomiko surprised me with her convincing presentation of a woman wondering what mesmerism must have been

done by another woman to make her lover ignore her.

French homage

A Bharath Kalachar, French students of the late Muthuswamy Pillai presented a dance tribute to their Guru. Leading disciple Elizabeth Petit broke down while making the introductory speech. Dr Padma Subramaniam, T S Parthasarathy and Venkatakrishnan spoke about their associations with Muthuswamy Pillai.

Stories the toys tell

The British Council is hosting, from April 21 to 26, an exhibition of Indian toys prepared by the Crafts Council of India. The show has actually been readied for presentation in Birmingham, U.K., at a later date.

The exhibition weaves together the simple, delightful stories narrated to children all over the country. And a child in the audience can see the action unfold through the animated forms and figures of the craft toys. A collection of rattles, mobiles, unusual kites and toys, for instance, tells the story of 'Kumar and His Lost Kite'. While searching for his kite, Kumar goes through a village and then a forest, meeting people and listening to their stories until he finds his kite on a tree. A unique presentation of a type Madras has not seen before. Take your kids for the show.

Dates for your diary

On till the 17th: An exhibition and sale at the Vimonisha Art Gallery of the choicest masterpieces from the Art Karat Royal Collection of semi-precious jewellery designed by Asha Kamal Modi. The collection is a fine blend of the refined artistry of our royal traditions and the fashion flair of our times.

On till the 18th: Project L.O.N.D.O.N. 1 an exhibition of photographs by Ashim Ghosh at the British Council. "L.O.N.D.O.N. London!" is a childhood game. When this name is called out, the children freeze wherever they are. This is the basic theme and philosophy of the project. To capture human images of spontaneous occurrence, following a policy of non-interference. With the subject not being aware of me as a person with a camera, or as a photographer," says Ashim Ghosh.

April 17-27: Ramesh Rao is from Udupi and Bhasker Rao is from Bangalore and their show will be at The Gallery. The Rao brothers are known for depicting the lives of ordinary people. Though their themes are somewhat similar, their styles differ greatly.

May 18-22: A workshop on Calligraphy, to be conducted by a French artist, at the Alliance Francaise in collaboration with the Lalit Kala Akademi, Madras.

V.R. Devika

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The Babus of Madras cricket

A recent article in *Madras Musings*, 'Madras Remembered', made reference to the special relationship that the Telugus have had with Madras city. Several relationships were mentioned, but not the immense contribution that they made to sport, especially cricket, in the city. That is a contribution that should be remembered.

At the top of them all stands the towering figure of M V Buchi Babu Naidu. Acknowledged as the father of Madras cricket, he was also the leader and trendsetter in such equestrian sports as riding and polo.

Mothavarapu Venkataswamy Naidu, grandfather of Buchi Babu,

young European residents in Madras, so that they could learn riding and other sport. It was this move that enabled the boys to acquire proficiency in games, Buchi Babu, the most talented of them, leading the way. Incidentally, as Venkataswamy Naidu had no son and only two daughters, he adopted Buchi Babu as his son and conferred special favours on him.

Buchi Babu's services to Madras cricket are immeasurable. Backed by his stature, and with the Madras United Club, of which he was a founder-member, as the focal point, he harnessed the unquestionable cricket talent of the Indians in the city and built

his successful efforts in drawing the Europeans out of their cloister.

Apart from C Ramaswami, Bobjee and J G Ramaswami, other prominent Telugus in Madras tennis were N Krishnaswamy, who also ran a sports goods shop in Mount Road, S Vishnumohan, a cousin of Bobjee, M V G Appa Rao, T A Rama Rao, N Narayana Rao and the Yuvaraja of Pithapuram. Rama Rao, who had family connections with T Prakasam, was involved in shaping the careers of the Amritraj brothers.

Some of the Telugu elite were also involved in Madras racing in a big way. The Raja of Pithapuram, who had his residence in Teynampet, was one, while the Raja of Parlakimedi and the Raja of Bobbili were others. Cups named after the three of them were important events in the Madras racing calendar.

S K Gurunathan, sports editor of *The Hindu*, and the daily's first cricket correspondent, who was also the first staff man to cover a 'Test' series for the paper, was another Andhra. He was a Mulukunadu Brahmin and claimed some distant connections to the bard of Thiruvaiyyaru, Thyagaraja. He was a much respected cricket writer. The Maharajkumar of Vizianagaram, another prominent Andhra, urged me to adopt him as a model when I took over from S K G. His knowledge of cricket, his temperate views and constructive criticism were what 'Vizzy' cited. A lasting contribution of S K G was the founding of the *Indian Cricket* annual, which he nurtured and developed as the Indian equivalent of Wisden.

Incidentally, the brightest plume in the Andhra cap was C K Nayudu, who was connected to the family of Buchi Babu through his brother CS's marriage. C K stayed in *Luz House* during his visits to Madras. C K is certainly still the tallest of Indian cricketers, despite the Merchants, Gavaskars, Tendulkars and the first Indian 'Test' captain.

up their skill to challenge the Madras Cricket Club and the Europeans; not only did he force the latter to recognise the stature of the Indians as equals, but he was also the inspiration for the Presidency match (Indians versus the Europeans), which, for more than two decades, was the principal cricket contest in Madras.

Apart from his major contribution, building up cricket, Buchi Babu was a leading member of the Madras Gymkhana Club and, from there, extended his influence to spread golf, riding and polo.

Another aspect of Buchi Babu's influence was that, as a resident of Mylapore, he brought in a whiff of fresh air into a stodgy intellectual community of lawyers and judges and drew the young men of their families into sport.

Buchi Babu's three sons, Venkatramanujulu, alias Bhatt, Baliah and C Ramaswami carried forward his traditions. They were the most popular cricketers in the city before the days of Gopalan and Ram Singh; all three captained Madras in the Ranji Trophy championship, Bhatt being the first Indian to lead the team. C Ramaswami played with distinction for India in the 1936 'Tests' against England, when he was 40 years young; besides, he was a Davis Cupper in tennis. He and Gopalan were the only two double internationals in India. Later, M Venkataswami, alias Bobjee, and M V Prakash, both sons of Bhatt, distinguished themselves, Bobjee at cricket and tennis, and Prakash in equestrian events.

There were other Telugus, contemporaries of Buchi Babu, who shone at cricket: B S Ramulu Naidu, B Subramaniam (the right hand, so to say, of Buchi Babu, who commanded immense influence after the death of his mentor) and T Vasu Naidu come readily to mind. Just as Buchi Babu paved the way for European and Indian cricketers to mix, another member of his sprawling family, J G Ramaswami, whom I remember as a respected tennis referee, was responsible for the development of tennis in the city through

• by P N SUNDARESAN

made two fateful decisions in his life which had a far-reaching influence on Madras social life. The youngest of eight children, intelligent, studious and ambitious to chalk out a career for himself, he ran away from the comfortable yet stifling life of Nellore, escaping to Madras with his wife, without even informing his parents. After some early hard knocks, he got into Parry and Co. as a petty clerk, but by dint of hard work and by utilising his skills he earned the full confidence of his bosses and became the Parry *dubash*, an important link job between the company and trade outside. As he established himself in his profession, Venkataswamy Naidu became affluent and, wise man that he was, he invested in purchasing bungalows, in Luz Church Road in Mylapore and in nearby places, as well as a large number of petty dwellings and bazaars in Triplicane.

The second important decision that Venkataswamy made was in England, where his company had sent him for a six-month holiday as a reward for his service. Apart from valuable acquisitions, he brought back with him to Madras two well-equipped English nurses to train his grandsons, Buchi Babu Naidu and his four younger brothers, and to introduce them to

Quiz Answers

1. 15%. 2. Do you support the continuation of the process which the state president began on Feb. 2, 1992, and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiation?. 3. Hockey. 4. As the CM recently discovered, NONE! 5. *Pather Panchali*. 6. Deep Spring. 7. INS *Shankul*. 8. *Namadhu MGR*. 9. Raga Sabarimala. 10. Salim Ali. 11. An unsupported sitting position with only back against wall (static wall press-sit). 12. Bulbs to last 100 years with normal daily use of 4 hours. 13. "Laughing the Government out" in front of Vidhana Soudha — lakhs of farmers engaged in chorus laughing! 14. Bombay-1.7 lakh; Sikkim-72. 15. The then leader of the Opposition Ms Jayalalitha was assaulted. 16. Smt M S Subbulakshmi. 17. Tala Sierra. 18. *Pravda*. 19. Dilip Vengsarkar. 20. *Punch*.

Carrom to celebrate a revival

The Southern India Journalists' Federation has at long last been resurrected. Dormant for various reasons for decades, the SIJF has returned to life with a bang, as it were, thanks mainly to the endeavours of its general secretary, M Shanmughavel, Editor of *Makkal Kural* and *News Today*.

At the SIJF's recent general body meeting, held in its own premises after some decades, Shanmughavel invited all journalists to return to the premier institution of its kind in South India. His call had a wonderful response. As a celebratory gesture, the reborn SIJF, under Shanmughavel's supervision, launched an annual prize money carrom tournament to perpetuate the memory of his friend, philosopher, guide and partner in journalism, T R Ramaswamy, who was for more than one term president not only of the SIJF but also of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists.

Carrom was chosen because TRR, as Ramaswamy came to be known through his writings as founder-editor of *News Today*, was an addict of the coin game. While others enjoyed their table tennis, chess and cards in the spacious SIJF hall, TRR spent most of his leisure hours at the carrom board in a corner, outplaying all those who preferred to keep him company. Fittingly enough, the first TRR Memorial Tournament, held in the first week of April, was inaugurated by Mrs Kausalya Jawahar, TRR's daughter-in-law. Conducted under the auspices of the Tamil Nadu Carrom Association, it attracted all the topnotchers of South India, headed by the world's top duo of Maria Irudayam and S Arokiaraj.

The inaugural tournament was a resounding success, and for this the SIJF owes a debt of gratitude to the TNCA and its office-bearers, headed by secretary Bangara Babu and chief referee Sunderarajan, for their expert advice and assistance. Bangara Babu is the maker not only of Indian carrom, but also of world carrom, for the coin game gaining international status is entirely due to him.

Indian sport has indeed not known a more hard-working or dedicated official than Bangara Babu. Wonderful to relate, even at the height of his fame, Babu, who is shortly leaving for London to attend the annual meeting of the International Carrom Federation, has not forgotten the lone source of encouragement he and his assistant, S Ramakrishnan, got in the days when they were trying to make carrom popular. Speaking at the TRR tournament inauguration, Babu recalled that "in our early days, *The Mail* alone published carrom news, not the other dailies. Those followed suit decades later". *The Mail's* sports editor of the time was in the gathering, and was heard to remark that Babu was one of those exceptions who had a retentive and grateful memory.

AJAX



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Madras Musings thanks all its readers who replied to the questionnaire and hopes to produce a better issue with the help of the feedback received.

Publisher



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