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MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

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A planner's dreams

For a better, cleaner Madras

(By A Special Correspondent)

“We must make people who live in the city pay a reasonable price for every service they get from the city. We have been busy making people earn enough to become capable of paying for public utilities, but none are willing to pay.” The speaker at a recent seminar on the future of Madras

was G Dattatri, retired Chief Urban Planner who, during the last years of his official career, was able to do more for Colombo than he was for Madras.

As though to make up for lost time, he's been busy ever since with promoting a vision of Madras 2011 — a 20-year-plan which includes 63 separate items that need action to be taken on. That vision sees:

- A city of clean, export-oriented industries like leather, automobile ancillaries, jewellery, garments, computer software, financial services etc;
- A city with a range of housing options, where each person will have 100 litres of water a day instead of the present 78 in the city and 32 in the suburbs and where the consequent sewage will also be evacuated smoothly;
- A city of quick mobility;
- A clean, green city; and
- A city that will be a sought-after destination by tourists.

Can this be achieved in a city where the 4 million urban population in 172 sq km is predicted to grow to 6 million by 2011 and the 1.5 popu-

lation in the rest of the 1000 sq km metropolitan area is expected to grow to 3 million? Dattatri was confident that it could be achieved if a 10-point programme was followed. He listed the following points:

1. Encourage the shift to outside city limits and into the metro limits by making the new areas attractive places to settle in.
2. Make bus and train services complementary, with combined tickets usable by everyone everywhere.
3. Locate industries better — divorced of political considerations.
4. Have inter-connected planning by agencies, who, at present, talk very little to each other.
5. Encourage private sector participation in all the public utilities by allowing it also to offer services.
6. Lay greater stress on cost effectiveness.
7. Seek payment of a fair price for every public service and ensure that it is collected.
8. Ensure proper maintenance of all facilities as an on-going exercise.

(Continued on P2)

Flights not wanted

(By Our Aviation Correspondent)

Is this country serious about opening out the South to the international tourist? Or is Indian tourism going to remain North-oriented?

The questions arise out of the Union Civil Aviation Ministry saying 'No' to two international carriers expanding their services to Madras. British Airways, at present flying London-Dubai-Madras and back twice a week, wanted to fly an additional two flights into Madras via Bombay. Lufthansa which had planned a non-stop Frankfurt-Madras and back flight once a week changed its mind and wanted a Frankfurt-Bombay-Madras and back twice a week. Both airlines were quite prepared to forego passengers on the local sector, Bombay-Madras.

While the Ministry has been refusing these requests on the grounds that Madras was "adequately served" by international airlines, the International Airports Authority of India has been busy wooing international airlines to make use of the best airport in the country. A case of the left hand not knowing what the right was doing? Or is it a total lack of interest in Delhi in promoting the South as a tourist destination, no matter what platitudes are spoken from public platforms?

Local tourism authorities who should be shouting loudest about such treatment are too busy with local tamashas to care whether the tourists are coming or not.



New trees for old

(By The Editor)

Ct Vairavan of 10 Jagadambal Colony, Madras 600 014, is an inveterate writer of letters to Editors. His favourite theme while writing to us is that we only like old buildings and never feature OLD TREES. Well, the only reason for that is that we don't know where the old trees are except for the banyan tree with recent problems in the Theosophical Gardens and another, younger banyan in the Madras Club, which appears to be having a whale of a time putting down roots with the help of a few judicious weights.

Since we have been unable to find the old trees Mr Vairavan wants, we offer him instead this picture by V S RAGHAVAN of a beautiful avenue of NEW TREES. Believe it or not, this is

C P Ramaswami Iyer Road and the new trees, which were planted all over the City some time ago and appeared to vanish in no time, seem to have thrived here alone and brought back shade to at least one road in Madras. Wonder who's been responsible for that? Could it be the citizens of C P Ramaswami Iyer Road? Vairavan should go out and thank them all.

Meanwhile, we only hope that the trees don't fall victim to someone wanting to widen the road or beautify it, or to someone wanting to let in more light for street cricket to continue late, or to someone wanting to separate the mongrel from the pedigreed. Can we hope for the miracle to continue?

BUILDING A MINI-CITY

(By A Staff Reporter)

Commerce in Bombay always thinks big. Evershine Builders had built a 2000-flat township in Malad. Now they are thinking of a CITY! Evershine City on the outskirts of Vasai (New Bombay) is going to have 3000 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-room flats. And they plan to service it with the following:

A phone in every flat with Evershine City's own exchange. Cable channel TV and music in every flat, with four channels for each. Evershine City Express buses at the doorstep of every block to take commuters to the station. Two shopping plazas, one with a 'Budget Supermarket'. A fully-equipped school and an Arts, Science and Commerce co-educational college. A community centre with banks and post office. A club with swimming pool and gymnasium. Places of worship, an amphitheatre, parks and cafeterias. A nursing home with paediatric, maternity and intensive care facilities. And the 'city's' own water supply, transformer and sewage water treatment plant. All run by the City's own maintenance staff

and protected by its own security service. Much of it to be ready by May 1993.

Now why can't Madras think like that? Why can't we start moving outside the city and have the builders provide the kind of infrastructure Bombay is attracting buyers with?

There is, in fact, one city builder who has been thinking on these lines. He's planning his mini-township — a far cry from a 'City' — off the Old Mahabalipuram Road. He may be thinking of only a few hundred apartments, but his plans include a private bus service to the main road, a township higher secondary school, a shopping centre and total infrastructural facilities. It we are going to move people out of the city, that's the only way to build, says the builder wherever he speaks.

The response to such building, however, is not quite as enthusiastic as it is in Bombay. But it will come one day, that you can be certain of, the way the city is growing, he is confident.

THE 21ST CENTURY TOWNSHIP IS TAKING SHAPE

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EVERY FEATURE IS AHEAD OF ITS TIME EXCEPT THE PRICE.

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Phone in every flat with Evershine City's own exchange.

Cable channel TV and music in every flat, with four channels for each.

Evershine City Express buses at the doorstep of every block to take commuters to the station.

Two shopping plazas, one with a 'Budget Supermarket'.

A fully-equipped school and an Arts, Science and Commerce co-educational college.

A community centre with banks and post office.

A club with swimming pool and gymnasium.

Places of worship, an amphitheatre, parks and cafeterias.

A nursing home with paediatric, maternity and intensive care facilities.

And the 'city's' own water supply, transformer and sewage water treatment plant.

All run by the City's own maintenance staff and protected by its own security service.

Must be ready by May 1993.

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17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

A homily on good journalism

This column has never published an illustration, but *The Man From Madras Musings* could not resist the accompanying one (alongside). This ad seeking advertising for the *Dinamani*, which appeared in *India Today*, indirectly delivers a little homily on good journalism. Says the copy:

"A newspaper reveals its readers in many ways.

The way it presents front page news stories is one of them.

Witness the two headlines above. A political leader is found dead. One headline speculates suicide, the other states the facts.

Imagine for a moment that *Dinamani* carried this story with the headline on the left. Purely because that's what its readers would enjoy.

What picture would you form about *Dinamani's* readers? Whatever their numbers, would your media plan be interested in them?

Indeed, would those readers, whatever their income, be interested in the product your ad is selling? Unlikely.

Luckily, *Dinamani* is far from being this kind of paper. In fact it's quite the opposite."

So the *Dinamani* is not sensational, sensation-seekers are not those marketing and advertising men and women who read *India Today* and, by implication, those papers which publish such headlines as the one on the left are irresponsible and meant only to grab the attention of the gullible. All very well and good. But how does it react to some stories its stablemate has recently carried.

Did Attorney-General G Ramaswamy take an "unsecured loan" from Stanchart or did he take a "routine overdraft"?

Was the *Dinamani's* own K Kasturi Rangan "asked to go on leave till the end of his contract" as Editor of the paper or was he "summarily dismissed"?

Few papers in India play as much games with the news as the *Indian Express*. Which is what makes its stablemate's advertisement, and the homily contained therein, a subject of some amusement.

The trees stay...

Ten thousand silver oak trees in the Anamallais, near Valparai, will stay — for the time being. The Madras High Court has stayed their felling, taking action on a public interest writ petition after a tender notice had appeared calling for woodmen to fell those 60-year-old trees.

Here is another environmental subject that has two very valid sides to the question. The felling was sought to make room for tea plantation expansion by the Tamilnadu Tea Planting Corporation. And such expansion is necessary if the Government of India's insistence to grow more tea and export even more of it is heeded. On the other hand, the trees being located in the main catchment area of the Parambikulam-Aiyar project area could affect the ecological balance of the area if felled. And a third dimension is contributed to the debate by the allegation that the order to fell is a political decision that will benefit both timber contractors and the politicians they support.

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DINAMANI
READ BY THE WELL-READ.

Almost every such environmental issue in India, *The Man From Madras Musings* has found, poses this three-sided problem. How do you resolve such problems?

Ups and downs

While Vijay Amritraj is one of those being accused of being responsible for the unholly tangle of the Rajan Pillai's Britannia Industries are in — and *The Man From Madras Musings* wonders what the fall-out of all this will be on the Britannia Amritraj Tennis Trust — younger brother Ashok Amritraj is getting all set to make another B-grade winner.

The latest of these action-thrillers is being shot in Bangalore and Mysore and is titled *Tropical Heat*. The \$ 2.5 million film about an American

wife in quest of the insurance on her late departed Maharajah husband follows such successes by the 10-year-old Amritraj Entertainments as *Night Eyes* and *Double Impact*, the latter

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

due for release in India any time now.

The 35-year-old Ashok Amritraj who wants to make several more films in India for the American and Indian markets says his films will not "dwell on India's poverty and squalor..." I want to show the flip side, he insists, and describes that side as "the way our cities are becoming modern, the great relics of the past, the palaces and the like".

Exotica, fight sequences and some undress undoubtedly pay well in the small town theatres of America, anywhere in India and on the international video circuit. So Ashok Entertainments averages five such films a year. But Ashok Amritraj, despite such success, still dreams. Of that elusive superhit that will make him a name to reckon with in the international film world. He's certainly closer to reaching there than Vijay was of reaching the heights in tennis.

In Brief

★ *The Man From Madras Musings* bumped into an official from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the other day and discovered that of all the developing countries, India was the only one that was NOT accepting financial assistance from anyone for refugee care. And India has more than its fair share of refugees. Sri Lankan Tamils in the thousands we know about in Madras, but elsewhere in the country there are Bangladeshis, Afghans, Pakistanis, Nepalese from Bhutan, Tibetans and tribals from Myanmar. Not to mention herds of internal refugees, like those from Jammu and Kashmir and from some of the Northeastern estates.

originally, say some 2500 years or so ago, then *MMM* has no quarrel with his words. But if he — as would appear implied — claims a lot more recent heritage, then a lot of his kin are going to be very put out. Amongst those he mentioned in his first book which provided autobiographical glimpses of his early days in Sri Lanka are the Daniel family. And that Civil Service family — and its daughters who studied in Kodi — would dream of nothing less than a British heritage and not even a Dutch Burgher one. Ondaatje, however, is a commonly accepted Burgher name (certainly it sounds it!)... and that's what Michael the dreamer appeared to have accepted as his lot in that first book of personal recollections. But there've been an Ondaatje or two who've claimed Colombo Chetty heritage. And who are the Colombo Chetties? Some claim to be Sinhalese, some Tamil, some even talk of Kerala and Andhra heritages, but none would vouch for the fact. So what is Michael Ondaatje?

MMM

Planner dreams

(Continued from P1)

9. See that construction is of the highest quality.

10. Earmark areas of conservation and develop them with vision to attract the visitor and commemorate our heritage.

There is going to be Rs. 2000-2500 crores invested in Madras over the next few years, but who knows how it is going to be spent, wondered Dattatri. Could Dattatri's five-point vision and 10-point implementation plan be the basis for the expenditure? Or are the dreamers of a better, cleaner Madras doomed to continue dreaming?

★ Michael Ondaatje, the Sri Lankan born Canadian writer who was a joint winner of the prestigious Booker Prize this year, must have dampened Sri Lankan ardour considerably when he said "we are originally Indians — actually from India". Before India rushes into the race to grab a bit of the reflected glory, it might be well to take a second look at that curious claim. If by it he meant that all Sri Lankans are from India

Conning Cow?

Your fellow columnist from *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, is conning you. I read all these essays about the cow twelve years ago — verbatim. Then, it was supposed to be the efforts of a candidate appearing for the I.C.S. exam from West Bengal. I was tempted to believe the tale — because Indians don't have the gift of being able to laugh at themselves. I am delighted to see the story is still going around — maybe twelve years hence it will appear again.

R Gopalakrishnan
Kalakshetra Colony
Madras-600 090.

The Krishnas

This has reference to 'The New & The Old' in *MM* Oct. 1

The building *Krishnas* in Sri Theagaraya Road, T Nagar, was built by P D Swaminatha Mudaliar, who retired as Commissioner of Income-Tax. The bungalow was built between 1936-38. He had three sons by name Gopalakrishnan, Muthukrishnan and Santhanakrishnan. Hence the name of the building. The crest on the building is, I presume, PDS.

K Balaram
24 Vasantha Avenue,
MRC Nagar,
Madras-600 028.

Editor's Note: Mrs Hamsakrishnan of 24 Vaidyarama Street, Madras-600 017,

OUR READERS WRITE

has also written in confirming this, but she states the second son is Navaneetha Krishnan.

Space for voices

Telecasting "Patti Manrams" has caught the fancy of Madras Doordarshan. But I would like to inform the top brass at Sivananda Salai that several intercollegiate debates and oratorical competitions in English are being conducted in Madras regularly, and they are lively, vociferous, interesting and thought-provoking.

While AIR has a whole separate "Youth Programme" featuring debates, and other competitions, why can't Doordarshan telecast them, on perhaps a special slot on Channel-II during the weekends? If it does, we, the "citizens of tomorrow," will have another reason to smile!

That our debating fraternity is really good, is corroborated by the successive successes of my friends in the Law College in international moot court competitions. But our debates seem to be too "small" to find a place in the precious pages of our "big" newspapers. But we believe that *Madras Musings* is TNEREFFID. Will you start a column on our debates?

Sanjay Pinto
Vice-President,
Loyola Debating Society,
Loyola College,
Madras-600 034.

Editor's Note: We certainly are interested in youth in all its aspects, not merely with its debating skills. A regular column, therefore, No — with regrets. But news of "youth", debating or otherwise, certainly YES.

Remembering Ramaswami

I was really pained to see the report (*MM* Oct 1-15) on double international C Ramaswami. The TNCA must institute a national level tournament in the name of this illustrious cricketer.

C K Subramaniam
TNCA Umpire
Madras-600 040

A neighbour's tribute

I read with interest "Remembering Ramaswami" in *MM* Oct. 1. C Ramaswami was well acquainted with my uncle, K Chandrasekaran, both neighbours in sprawling residences on Luz Church Road. My uncle used to talk over the compound wall to Ramaswami and we youngsters hurried to get a glimpse of him. He was a great cricketer and hitter of the ball. His sixes were a treat. He was a tall, well-built and handsome. Sports personalities were more admired than the stars of the Silver Screen in those days. He ought to have played more

international cricket for India than he actually did.

A genial sportsman, it was strange that he should have taken a mysterious walk as his last journey. Though Ramaswami might have chosen to disappear from our midst, he will live for ever in the hearts of his admirers.

B Ramamurthy
8 V Krishnaswami Iyer
Avenue, Madras-600 004.

Onward crusaders!

I appreciate your courage in publishing *Madras Musings*. I also appreciate its get up, presentation and articles in good idiomatic English. Congratulations on championing the voice populi and, in particular, pinpointing many a lapse in the city administration and the deplorable state of affairs that makes you "Weep for Madras".

Yours is a crusade and don't be disappointed when your darion call turns to be a voice in the wilderness. I presume you are an optimist, still striving to reform society, politicians and government — all immune to anything sensible.

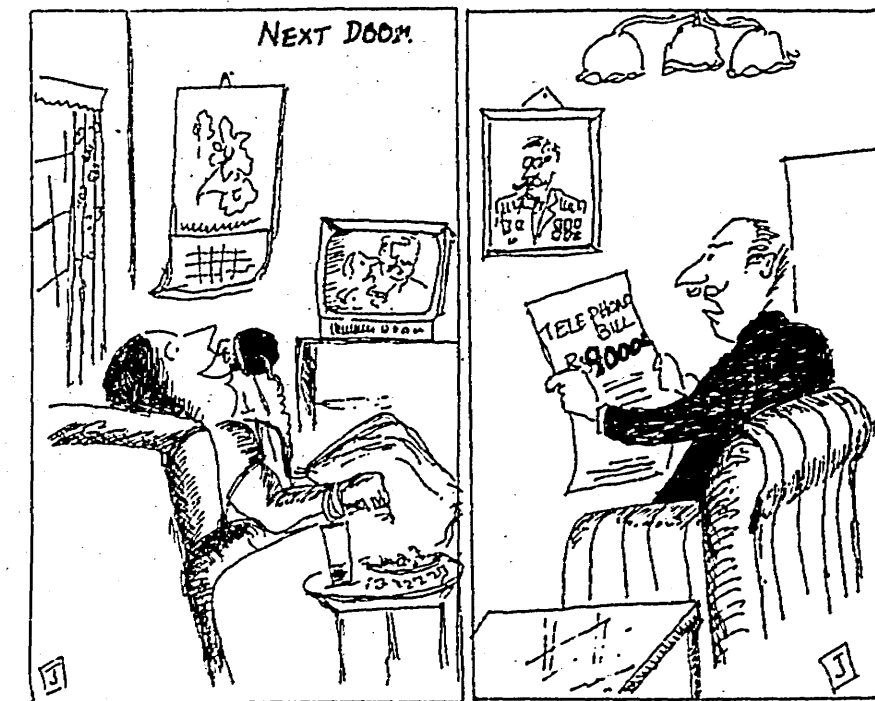
Though I am a pessimist in this matter, I wish you success in your endeavours.

Capt K A John
Editor-In-Chief
Mercury Publicities
356 Loyds Road,
Madras-600 006

I just called to say...

When I solicit the support of family and friends in setting up Pigeons Inc., a communication network that will employ pigeons a la Shakuntala to carry messages back and forth, everyone assumes that from being ethnic-mad I've become just plain mad. And, yes, I'll confess I've been driven up the telephone pole by the vagaries of Madras telephones, and I don't merely refer to the constant stream of wrong numbers, wrong and crossed connections, obscene crank calls, strangled, scary beeps emitting from the benighted instrument in the middle of the night and sudden death (of the phone) for no justifiable reason.

Such occurrences I go through with a stiff upper lip, though I do get acute attacks of telephonitis when the phone WILL ring for the Nth time, demanding to know if I am the sewerage board at that precise point in my siesta when



But... Brigadier B was still somewhat nervous. What if in the future the cables got mixed up with some other party whom he didn't know or who wouldn't be as cooperative as Mrs. T? What about Pigeon Inc.? I asked the old warhorse, whereat he hummed and hawed and suggested gently that per-

haps I should see Dr R, the psychiatrist. Was he a pigeon man, I asked eagerly... There is, however, a plus side, to Madras Telephones too. They do oftentimes move in mysterious ways their wonders and miracles to perform. Long dead telephones come sweetly back to

life of their own volition, and dialling the wrong number has been known on occasion to get the right person. And the computer at the billing section has a sense of humour. Our friend Brigadier B got a bill for Rs. 9,00,099. 90 last month and the telephone office man laughed if off gaily as a computer error: "Computer sometimes very funny, Saar. Sorry, Saar."

But Brigadier B was not amused and has now agreed to tentatively look into Pigeons Inc...Any more takers?

All names and facts stated above are the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me Madras Telephones... — P.C.

BY PUSHPA CHARI

The dangers of aquaculture

Aquaculture is the in-industry in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Hindustan Lever's, the Thapar Group, India Tobacco (ITC), the MAC Group and scores of others are planning to make a fortune out of shrimp and catfish farming in the two states. Mani Shankar Aiyar even plans to make a Dubai out of his 'Mylai' with shrimp culture. But there is another side to the picture too. And who is paying attention to that?

A village in the Chidambaram District reports that large shrimp farms nearby have caused it the following problems:

★ Well water has become saline and drinking water, consequently, scarce.

★ Polluted irrigation water is affecting cultivation.

★ Several trees, including tamarinds, have withered.

★ The saline water has caused stomach and skin problems.

★ The shrimp farms have become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Such problems, caused by pollution brought on by aquaculture farms, have been reported from every developing country where aquaculture has become a major industry. Other problems listed by some of these countries include:

★ Degradation of the coastal ecosystem, including any mangrove stands nearby.

★ III-effects on the coastal fish resource, leading to smaller catches by small-scale artisanal fishermen.

★ The degradation of nearby agricultural land.

★ The inability to use aquaculture land for agriculture, if and when fish farming is given up.

These concerns have been met in several of these countries by stringent antipollution laws and prompt punitive action. What is our Pollution Control Board doing to prevent other villages being so blighted by aquaculture?

... & of thermal power unrestricted

One of the city's leading educationists has been asking a few embarrassing questions recently about the promised boom in thermal power generation in Tamil Nadu during the next five years.

Nearly a hundred thermal power stations, each with capacity of 5 to 500 megawatts, are being talked about in the state by private promoters. The educationist picked 25 of the biggest promoters and sent them each a letter asking what the pollution fall-out would be when his plant was operational. There was no reply from any of them.

So he has now addressed the Chief Minister. Her reply is awaited.

Meanwhile, the questions remain. Are we going to suffer for want of power and have a less polluted atmosphere? Or are we going to enjoy unlimited power and atmospheric pollution to our heart's content? Maybe the Chief Minister will come up with an answer to that.

The Recorder

Credit policy: Only a cosmetic change

The busy season credit policy for 1992-93 announced recently does little to either facilitate exports or to cheapen credit in any significant manner. Industry and trade circles have had to settle for token concessions, especially the single percentage point cut, extended on pre-shipment export credit and export credit refinancing. The significance of these developments only relate to the inclination of the Union Finance Ministry to sympathise with the hardships experienced by banks, rather than with the dire need to increase industrial production and exports. As of now, we do not even dare presume that the single percentage point cut in lending rates of banks will be followed by further reduction in the coming months, since this can be only if the level of inflation remains stable at a single digit.

For the time being, however, there are all the symptoms that the 1992-93 busy season will be more active than its predecessor. As the procurement operations are expected to be more brisk in October-March, due to high yield of foodgrains in the Kharif season, and larger credit will be required for building up stocks of cotton, jute and oilseeds, the flow of money must understandably be increased. At the same time, petroleum products, steel, fertilisers and other items that are now costlier will also have increasing cash requirements. Hence, the insistent demand for funds from the cash-

starved industrial sector cannot become any easier. If these needs have to be met, production improved and exports given an impetus, more imaginative designs to deploy banking funds gainfully will need to be worked out.

So the disenchantment of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) causes little surprise, as the token cut will not help Indian exporters in any impressive manner in the fiercely competitive international market. The interest rates on export

• BULL'S EYE

credit need to be brought down to a challenging level, of say 9 per cent, as India is already oppressed with the high rates. Moreover, on the pretext of managing inflation, the inertia in our productive efforts cannot be excused. Only if the very root is nurtured will the cosmetic changes also reap the required benefits. And, further, if the State itself is incapable of sacking unproductive expenditure, then there is little hope that anything worthwhile can be achieved with the recent credit policy.

However the three scrips recommended for the fortnight should offer substantial gains....

AV Thomas Industrial Products Ltd (Current Market Price: Rs. 43.00): This South-based company engaged in the business of solvent extraction of soyabean

has completed six years, since its inception in 1986. It recently embarked on an expansion plan by increasing the processing capacity of its soy plant from 200t/d to 300t/d, for which it came out with a rights issue. For the year ended March 1992 the company reported lower gross profit and net profit due to increase in its expenditure, interest and depreciation charges. By way of diversification it recently launched "Sunbeam" brand sunflower oil that would start contributing towards its profitability in the coming years. The March 1993 results are expected to be good and we have projected the sale and PAT at Rs 70.75 cr and Rs 2.12 cr respectively. This should result in an EPS of Rs 5.57, which supports a price of Rs 80 plus. Buy for substantial gains.

Nova Electro Magnetics Ltd (Current Market Price: Rs 51.00): Nova Electro Magnetics, an 100 per cent EOU, is operating at 98 per cent capacity and produces video magnetic tapes, video housings and video cassettes. It has a buy-back arrangement for 80 per cent production with one of the largest manufacturers of video cassettes and housings in Southeast Asia and its turnover comes wholly from exports. The company has reported excellent results for the year ended March 1992, with good profit margins. As part of its expansion plans, it has a proposal to expand its video housing unit and tape division. However, the source of finance is yet to be finalized. The future outlook for the company is very promising as the proposed expansion will add to its sales and net profits in the coming years. There is a strong possibility that the company will approach its shareholders for the purpose of this expansion. Fundamentals (Continued on P6)

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Waiting for Narakasura

My friend said: Deepavali this year was a near-traumatic experience for me.

The two nights preceding the eve of the festival, I could not sleep properly. I kept feeling vague misgivings. I was assailed by cloudy dreads, unaccountable fears, even a touch of manic depression. On Deepavali eve, I suddenly realised what was happening to me, and what was happening outside. Namely, the noise of the crackers was absent. A doleful silence hung in the air, and it was the unnatural quiet that was giving me the heebie-jeebies.

Many will remember a story of Sri Ramakrishna in which he tells about a fisherman who had stayed on too late in Calcutta to be able to get back to her village the same night. At the last house she made a sale they gave her a meal and invited her to spend the night and put her in the room where fragrant flowers were kept for the next day's pooja. The woman tossed and turned, the fragrance was too much for her and she could not sleep. Finally, she sneaked out to the backyard where she had left her fish-basket, brought it with her to the room with the flowers, held it close to her, and slept soundly the rest of the night. Over the years, a tremendous number of them, I have grown so used to noise during Deepavali, that it really bothers me if I don't hear it.

I must repeat here, my friend said, ours is a street full of a lot of lively children. Ever since I came to live here, I have known that Deepavali was the big deal of the year for them. So my apprehension was all the greater when there were no audible signs of the festival this year even as we were imminently approaching the climactic moment. I discussed this with some friends, and they had no good explanation except to suggest that the cost of fireworks had gone up considerably over the previous years. A barely feasible explanation, as I had not noticed a sudden sense of economy among firecracker users during previous years.

Deepavali eve. Still no indication that anybody was going to indulge in the customary orgy. As I think I have mentioned it to you several times before, ours is a small street, set in the

heart of one of the oldest parts of Madras, where tradition rules the day. So money not going up in flame, one of the traditions, was all the more striking.

So where was I? Tossing and turning in my uneasy bed, wondering if mythology was going to do a reverse act and bring back to life the asura who was supposed to have been destroyed this day, and in honour of which event we fire crackers. One never knows, anything is possible in these advanced days when women can climb to the top of cutouts and demand a plate of biriyani as payment for coming down. I finally got out of bed at two o'clock in the morning, a very disturbed and pensive man indeed, and sat outside my house, not really expecting anything. The first beautiful noise that rocked the night silence like an earthquake came from immediately to the right of me, and I jumped to my full height before coming to rest again. A little boy, who probably will grow up to be a mafia gangster, god bless him, had managed to sneak out of his house, and seeing a sitting duck in me, had lit the loudest cracker he had. I must admit that once I had stopped quivering like jello, my immediate impulse was to embrace him for restoring my faith in the faithful celebrators of noisy Deepavali, and to say: "My boy, some day you will rise to such a height that they will put up cutouts of you, beside which the ones we see today would seem piddling in size."

I don't have much more to add except to say that from that moment on, it was as if a flood were let loose (wrong simile), and the crackers and the sparklers and the rockets and the flower-pots and the wheels and god knows what else began brightening and resounding from the welkin. As I write I note that most of the merry-makers are — to say the least — the parents of the children, and — to say the most — grandparents, the refrain from them always being: "You boys and girls don't know how to do this, let me show you."

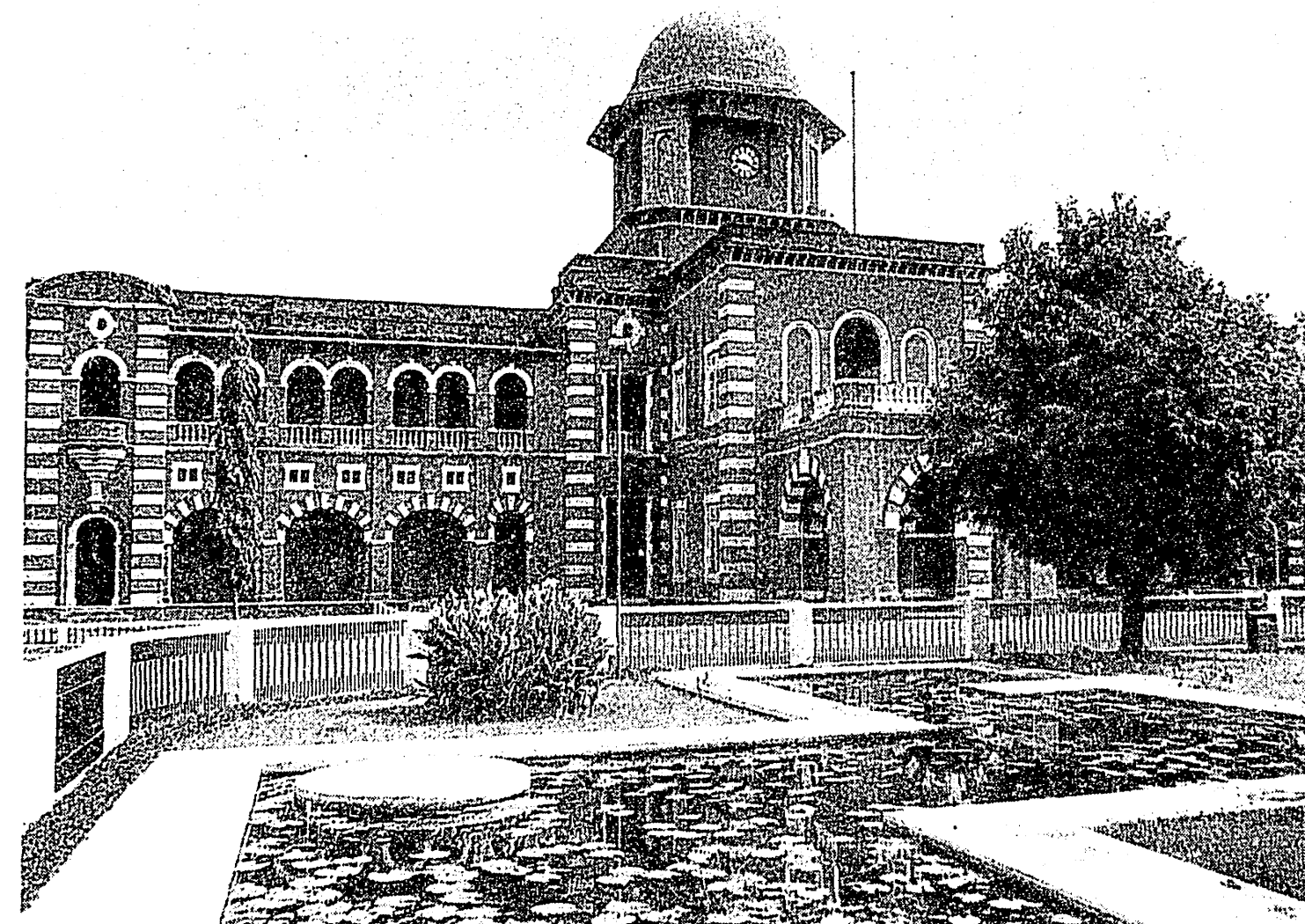
Well, until next Deepavali then.

S.K.

WHEN REYNOLDS INSPIRED TWO 'CENTAMIL' WRITERS

This writer was recently invited to present a paper on "Crime Writing in Indian Languages" at a Central Government-sponsored Writers' Symposium to be held in the Lakshadweep Islands. His preparation for this has provided much that might interest a wider audience.

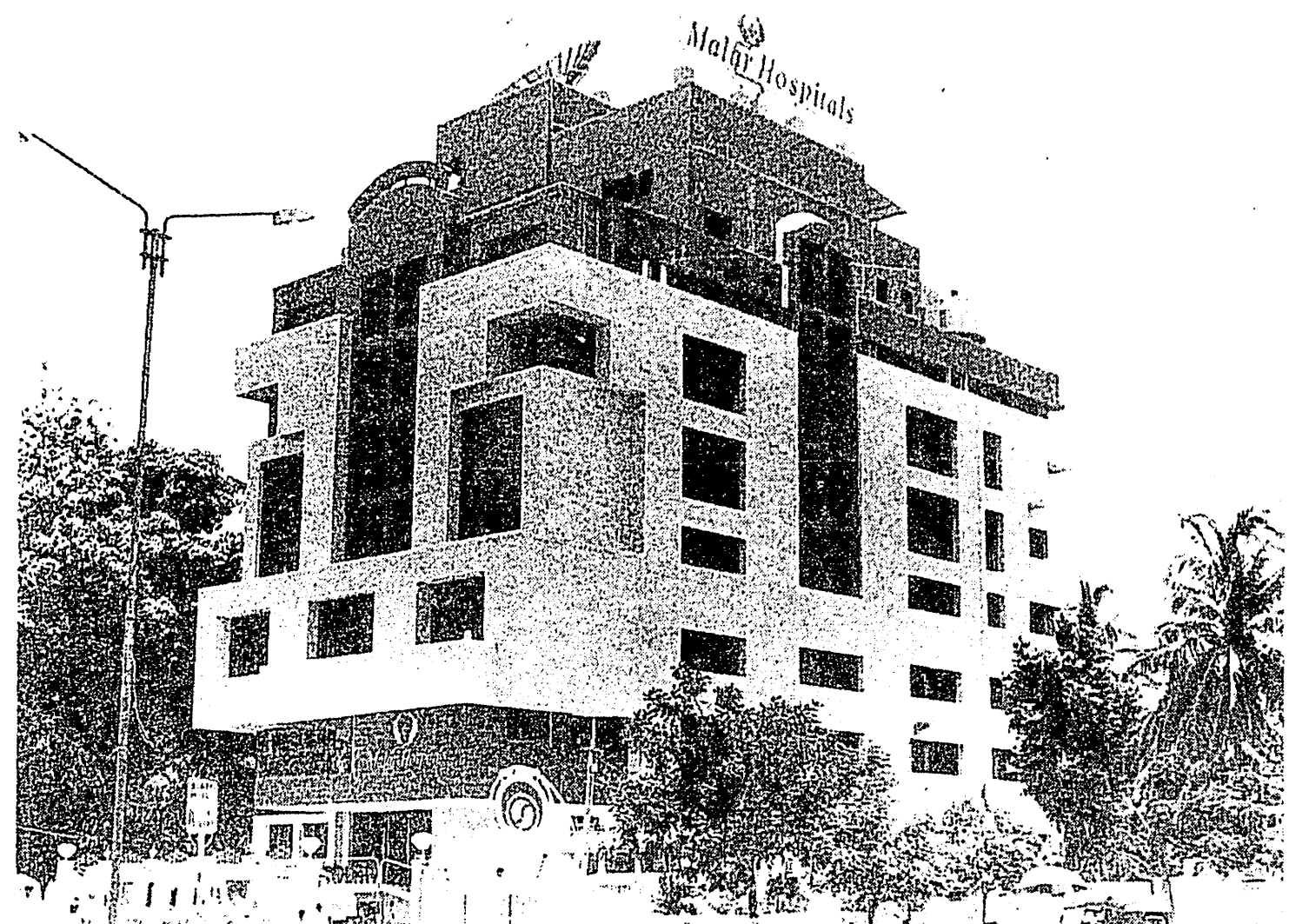
Detective fiction in Tamil, he found, is nearly a hundred years old. Indeed, the first novel on crime detection in Tamil, *Tanavan*, made its bow in 1894. It was written by a Tamil scholar, Pandit S M Natesa Sastry (1859-1906). *Tanavan* was a Detective Inspector of Police (fictional, of course). But why such an uncommon name? *Tanavan*, it appears, is the "Tamilised word", the "Centamil" (that's how "Sentamizh" was spelt in those days), for "Donovan" — Dick Donovan was a real life English police officer whose



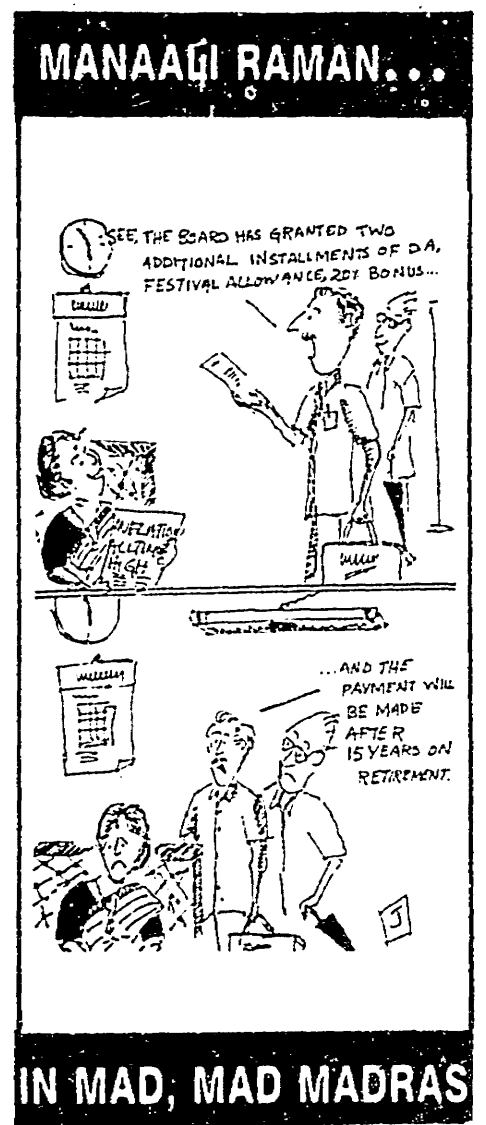
That handsome Indo-Saracenic building into which the Engineering College moved in 1920 may not be particularly well-maintained. Nevertheless, it's a far more beautiful building than anything else on the 80-hectare Guindy campus where a rash of new buildings, including Anna University's offices, have come up, all in a variety of PWD architectural styles but none anywhere near this in concept, style or handsomeness. It's a sad commentary that the Engineering College which together with the College of Architecture are part of Anna University have not been able to team together to develop a distinctive architectural style for the campus that would marry well with the dominant building there. ... & THE NEW

The College, incidentally, grew out of the Government Survey School, which was founded in 1894, the oldest technical school outside Western Europe. Quite a contrast to it is the multi-level block in a multitude of colours that is Malar Hospital, down the road from Engineering College, near the Adyar Bridge. Looking more like a hotel than a hospital, it does maintain five-star hotel standards within... and those, it is reported, are in keeping with all its high-tech equipment, symbol of that, no doubt, being the huge dish antenna which dominates the skyline and gives Madras buildings these days a reverse dome!

(Photographs: The Old: SUSHHEELA NAIR; The New: V S RAGHAVAN)



S.K.



IN MAD, MAD MADRAS

adventures made popular fare in the newspapers and magazines of the day. In *Tanavan*, the narration is in the first person and the cases include murders, robberies, poisonings and other intriguing crimes. Natesa Sastry

innocent full page ads of a famed city watch company! Many thought that the novels were vulgar, even obscene, and a London wit called G W M Reynolds, Grand Wrecker of Morality Reynolds! He ran his own magazine, *London*

BY
RANDOR GUY

was greatly influenced by that famed creator of those more famous chronicles of the British Royal libido, G W M Reynolds. His *Mysteries of the Court of London* was a florid, multi-volume tale of a British king's bedroom exploits. It was banned in India, but copies were freely available, printed in Madras and sold within covers on which were

Weekly Miscellany, which was read avidly by Natesa Sastry.

However, the writer who firmly established the crime novel in Tamil and made an art form out of it was Arani Kuppasami Mudaliar (1867-1925). *Ananda Bhodini*, a popular magazine of an earlier Madras, serialised from its very first issue in

1915 Mudaliar's first novel, *Ratnapuri Rahasyam*. However, the serial was not signed. Mudaliar wrote anonymously until 1917, when his name was made known to the public. And, at once, he became famous, for the serials had already won readers' hearts.

Mudaliar attended the *Ananda Bhodini* office in George Town daily, sat at an allotted desk and wrote continuously till the sun went down. To keep his spirits up, the publishers kept a full bottle beside the stack of papers on the desk! AKM wrote very well and told a highly complicated tale without confusing the reader. He too was inspired by Reynolds, but the greater inspiration (other than from the bottled) was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Indeed, many of Mudaliar's novels were translations of Holmesian tales with the names of persons and places suitably changed.

Ring Road Vaazhga!

Ring Road is on my daily beat. Every day a car load of thanks goes up to the Maker for creating that ring of asphalt round the city, enabling a person to reach Ashok Nagar from Anna Nagar without having to traverse the horror that is Nelson Manikam traffic. Actually, the Ring Road is unique; it is not just a road but a tribute to the ingenuity of Madrasis.

Take the lanes for instance. Ring road has five lanes! The pedestrian

spill on to the two-wheeler lane and, naturally, with so many potential customers about, this lane becomes the hub of economic activity. It serves as premises for under-the-tree tailoring,

to contend with and move on, says the Maker.

The central lane is cattle lane. Intelligence reports have it that the Highways Engineering Department was infiltrated by the SPCA when the Ring Road was planned. That explains the meadow-sized road dividers. It is indeed a pleasant sight to see buffaloes grazing on the green (thanks to recent rains) as trucks roar past on either side and cows and bulls with *nirvana*-like disposition chew their cud on the dividers near Ashok Pillar (see picture). Lately, however, the authorities seem to have woken up to the fact that the road dividers could be narrower and the old 'cattle lane' is being dug up to be replaced by Mount Road style fencing. Where will the cattle then go?

• BY HIRAMALINI SESHADRI

lane, the two-wheeler lane, the left-left lane, the fast-right lane and the cattle lane. Wait a minute! Did I say pedestrian lane? I'm sorry! That was taken over some months ago by the HUTCO (National Pavement Hutment Corporation). Take note, HUDCO, you have competition here on Ring Road!

The one snag is that those who live on the road end up pushing out those who walk on it. Pedestrians therefore

cobbler-ing etc. It also serves as a convenient parking lot for trucks with "engine trouble", pushcarts, *jaana-vaasam* buggies, topless, ancient driving schools cars etc. Finally, the left-left carriageway becomes the two-wheeler lane where cyclists, scooterists, auto-rickshaws and L-board drivers jostle for space. The fast-right lane is undisputed truck lane. Car drivers? Learn to thank God that there is no oncoming traffic

IN THE DAYS OF THE TRAM

Even as Manchester in the U K brings back trams, albeit sleek modern ones, and other European and American cities are thinking of following suit, Calcutta is phasing out its museum pieces, which, nevertheless, were a vital lifeline for commuters. Madras closed down earlier its earliest road transport service — not waiting, like Calcutta, for a Metro. An old-timer, here, remembers the Madras tram and, quoting from the news reports on the returning trams — "...now that cars get in the way of everything else, the tram is making a comeback as a way of inducing motorists to leave their cars at home" — wonders whether we will get trams back in Madras.

Madras first got its trams in 1895, six years before any other Indian city — or, for that matter, London — and only ten years after they were introduced in America. There were 17 miles of tramway in the city, and at the service's peak 116 tramcars traversed 7500 miles, carrying 175,000 persons every day. Madras Electric Tramways' main shed was where Periyar Thidal now is. Organised bus transport came to the city only in 1937, though beginnings had been made by Simpson's in 1910.

— THE EDITOR

A friend of mine, who knew well the social circle in the city, recalls the late V Krishnaswami Iyer, that leading lawyer, judge and executive councillor, using the tram to get to the High Court, paying just half an anna, equivalent to the current six paise, when he started his law career in Mylapore in the late 19th Century! So must have hundreds of other commuters from Mylapore wanting to reach Parry's Corner.

The story was related when we were discussing a news item last month, which read "Trams return to Manchester next month, after an absence of more than 40 years. It is the first tramway in Britain since before the Second World War.... Two towns

in France have brought back the tram and one in the U.S.... In Britain, another tramway is under construction in Sheffield and some 40 other urban areas are also working on plans."

I remember well the Madras tram service, run by a British firm till it terminated it in 1953. It was as a sub-editor on the night shift that I watched, rather sadly, from the eastern verandah of the Express buildings in the Old Club Compound, the last of the trams rattling along to go to its shed — never to return.

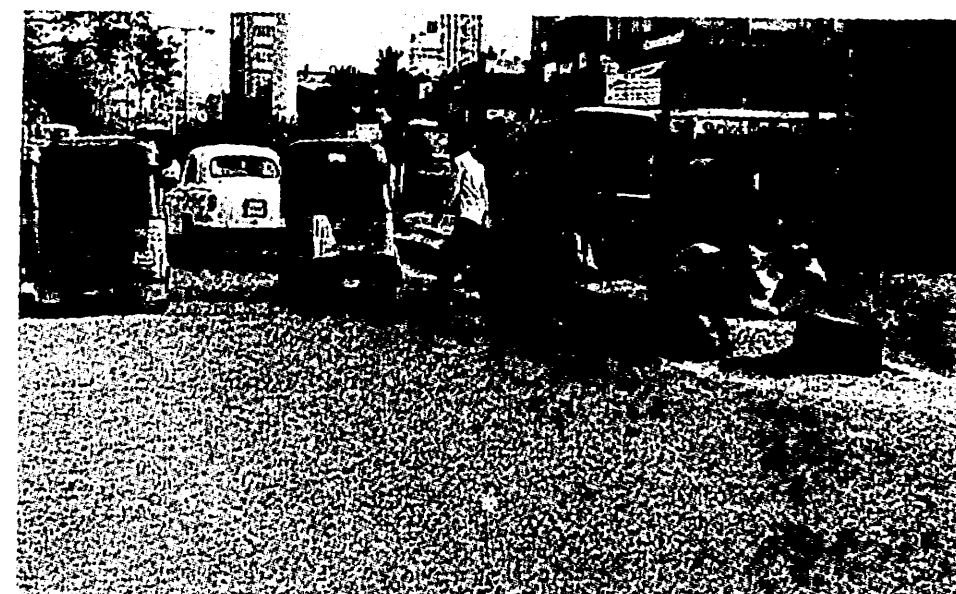
The company had withdrawn the service because of labour problems. A

• by
P N SUNDARESAN

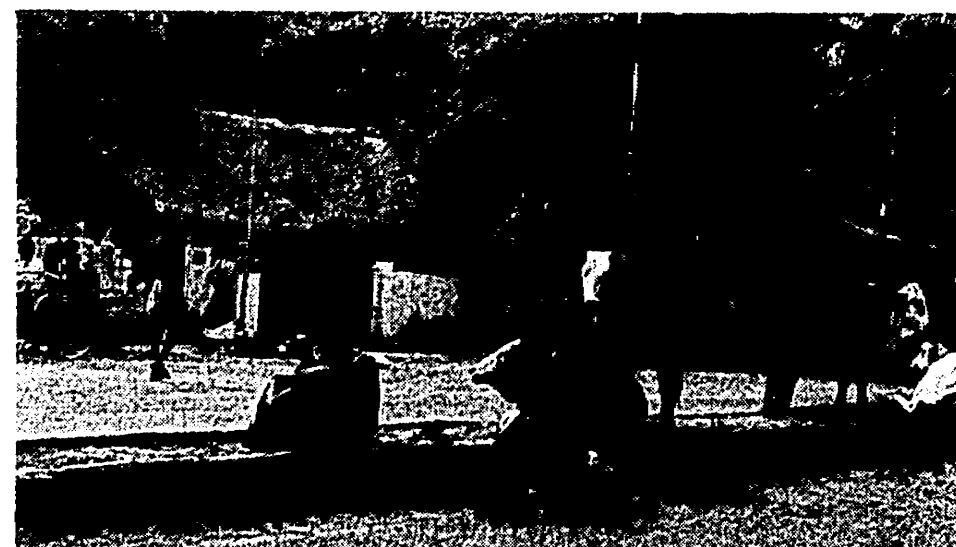
similar attempt to terminate the tram service in Calcutta about the same time was resisted vehemently by the citizens, as they were not prepared to lose a cheap and efficient mode of travel. But time has had to take its toll even there.

The termination of the service in Madras was a real blow to the middle and lower classes, as travelling by bus in the Thirties cost half an anna from Mylapore to Royapettah Hospital, one anna to Mount Road, one and half annas to Central Station and a quarter anna more to Parry's Corner, but tram was so much cheaper! Besides, there were concessions offered by the tramways for holiday service — if my memory is right, two annas for travel by all routes.

Not only was the tram service cheap, but it was leisurely and restful, speeding at about 15 miles an hour. That leisurely pace was in tune with the tempo of life in the city then. Whatever vehicle you took, you could get to your destination in unharmed comfort and safety, something unthinkable today. Many took the tram not only because it was cheap and comfortable, but also because it afforded them time to relax; you could browse



Home's where you find it on Ring Road



It is heartwarming to see other road work progressing day-by-day, especially on the Vadapalani segment of Ring Road. The levelling is nearly done; come 1993 and the nightmare that is Vadapalani junction should become a dream drive.

One final thank you from all Ring Road users to Dr. Cherian of MMMM fame (The Man from Madras Medical Mission) and to Chief Minister Jayalalitha. Thanks to her visit via Ring

Road to the recent foundation stone-laying of the Mogappair MMM Hospital, Ring Road got a splendid facelift. The canyon on Ring Road near the Koyambedu bridge, which was the Waterloo of many a Maruti axle and truck tyre, was levelled and paved. Ring Road got its full complement of sodium vapour lamps. Even the zebra stripes on the road dividers got a new coat of paint. Puratchi Thalaivi Vaazhga! Ring Road Vaazhga!

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The New Curiosity Shop

If a barrage of birthdays and anniversaries threaten to make you wear out your footwear gift-hunting, pay SMCS, at 14-A College Road, a visit. This little shop is crammed with giftables of every size, shape and description — and to suit all pockets. For my part, I found the terracotta and ceramic pieces from Auroville irresistible — antique-looking jars, blue pottery, glazed mugs and vases, all with delicate leaf-patterns and whorls. There was even a hurricane lamp, complete with ceramic bowl, gold-trimming and wick!

If I were to choose a gift for myself, however, I would pass up the crockery and crystalware in favour of the long-necked, pointy-eared wooden Bankura horses from Bengal or the miniature paintings (small Rs. 125/-, larger at Rs. 225/-), especially the ones of birds, which, apart from a peacock turning his head at a precarious and impossible 245 degrees, are exquisite. The terracotta vases and pot-holders start from a modest Rs. 35/- and go up to Rs. 125/- and above. The terracotta animals — elephants and horses — though not uncommon are still a draw.

The brassware and batik paintings deserve a second look, as do the various animals made from coconut-shell which double as pen-holders. For those whose money is burning a hole in their pockets, the massive metal kangaroo, complete with baby kangaroo in its pouch, at a whopping Rs. 9,000/- and odd, may be the answer. A less expensive delight, however, is a one-handed mug that comes in various sizes, shaped like a

wrinkly, twinkly old man with blue eyes, brown beret and white moustache — he looks cheerfully down from almost every corner and reminds you of the brownies in fairy tales! There are also the usual crystal-bodied ball pens with an animal on the top, and lampstands in various shapes, sizes and prices.

FOODS & FADS

Altogether a new curiosity shop for every person and every taste.

Venkatagiris & organzas

While walking down Nungambakkam High Road the other day, I noticed, for the first time, a new saree boutique CLEOPATRA (opp. Hotel Ganpat). The area is getting quite cosmopolitan, by the way; just look at the names — Signora, Cleopatra, Mayuri, La Femme etc.

CLEOPATRA has a collection of sarees ranging from Venkatagiri, Pochampalli and polyester to Tashar silk! Check out the sarees immediately to your left as you enter — mostly cotton, organza and various blends in

vibrant shades and prints. There are some pleasing combinations, especially in the Venkatagiri, but look for the price-tag — you might find one priced at Rs. 350/- rubbing shoulders with a haughtier five hundred rupee version. Not intended for daily wear definitely (they have to be dry cleaned), but probably

suitable for not-too-special occasions.

The Tashar silk sarees at Rs. 1,000/- and above don't quite look their price. But the latest arrivals, velvet-printed organza sarees, come in some pretty shades, especially the pastel ones.

There is a discount of 15% on polyester sarees and 10% on cotton ones until Pongal.

Palate ticklers

In spite of the many *bhel-poori* joints springing up all over the City, GANGOTREE has been able to hold its own. Perhaps its location opposite a City college has something to do with it!

Situated on busy Cathedral Road, a short distance from the

Agri-Horticultural Society, it offers a wide variety of chaats. Priced from Rs. 6/- upwards, all the chaats are uniformly spicy and tasty. My favourites are *bhel-puri* and *Raj Kachodi* (Rs. 12/- each). The best way to cool off is to try the *dahi papdi chaat* (Rs. 7.50) or the wonderful Indian sweets. And I strongly suspect that none but the extremely blasé would try the *Kaju Katli* when there's *Rasamalai*, *Chenna Pais* and other delicacies right next to it.

A splendid invitation is that you can sample the varieties before you make your choice. The sweets range from Rs. 100/- per kg upwards to Rs. 500/- per kg, depending on the variety.

The Dollops counter that is attached to the shop provides single scoops for those who are broke and double scoops for the yet hungry.

If we had an indigenous version of the *Guide Michelin*, GANGOTREE would probably have gained mention. *Bon Appetit*, anyway!

— Bhavana Kay

Quizzin' with Ramanan

(Quizmaster V V Ramanan's questions are all from the fortnight of October 1-15.)

1. What was 'Operation Timber Trail'?
2. Who has been awarded the RSPCA's (England) Lord Erksine medal this year?
3. What was October 14th celebrated as this year?
4. Who is the new Guyanese president?
5. Which bowler regarded by Sir Don Bradman as the best bowler he had ever faced died on October 6th?
6. Name the exclusive Hindi channel of STAR TV which was inaugurated on October 2nd?
7. Which Irish singer committed the blasphemous act of tearing the Pope's picture during a concert?
8. Where did the Israeli aircraft "EI Al flight 1862" crash on October 7th, killing more than 250 people?
9. Who is India's new representative to the United Nations in New York?

seeds sizzle, add the paste and fry till the oil separates.

Add the turmeric powder, salt, chopped vegetables. Sprinkle some water. Simmer on a low heat till the vegetables are tender.

Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

EASY FRUIT CAKE

- 2½ cups sifted flour (maida)
1 cup margarine or butter
1 cup sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
6 eggs
4 tbs milk
2 tbs burnt sugar (see method)
3 tbs musambi juice
1 teaspoon lemon rind, grated
Pinch of salt
1½ teaspoons mixed powdered spice (cardamom, clove and cinnamon)
¼ cup sultanas, cleaned and chopped fine
¼ cup glacé cherries, chopped fine.

Method

To make burnt sugar: Melt in a saucepan one tablespoon sugar in two tablespoons of water. Cook until dark brown. Set aside.

Dust the dry fruit in two teaspoons of maida. Set aside. Sift flour with a pinch of salt and baking powder, Cream butter and sugar. Add the lemon rind. Mix an egg, a bit of the flour, powdered spice. Repeat till all the eggs, flour, milk, musambi juice, burnt sugar are folded in.

Finally fold in the dry fruit. Pour into a greased cake pan and bake in a 400°F oven for 45 minutes to an hour till done.

Cool and serve in slices.

Chandra Padmanabhan



IN THE STEW POT

Add the rice. Fry for a minute. Add the oregano, chilli powder, salt and tomato puree. Cook covered till rice is almost done.

Remove the bay leaf. Transfer the rice to a casserole. Sprinkle the grated cheese. Dot with the remaining butter. Bake in a moderate oven till the liquid is completely absorbed.

Serve hot.

SPICY CAULIFLOWER AND POTATOES

- 1 medium cauliflower, chopped into ½" flowerets
2 medium sized potatoes, peeled and chopped into ½" pieces
1 teaspoon turmeric powder
1 teaspoon cummin seeds
½ tbs oil
½ teaspoon asafoetida powder

Salt to taste
Small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine for garnishing

- PASTE
1" piece ginger
1 medium onion
1 teaspoon cummin seeds
½ teaspoon coriander seeds
1 red chilli
1 small piece cardamom
1 small piece cinnamon

Method
Heat oil. Add asafoetida powder and cummin seeds. When the cummin

BULL'S EYE (Continued from P3)

support a price of Rs 75 for March 1993 results. The scrip is a good medium-term investment at present level.

Tamarai Mills Ltd (Current Market Price: Rs 98.00); Tamarai Mills, formerly known as Coimbatore Kamala Mills, is engaged in the manufacture of both cotton and blended yarn. Recently it undertook to implement a modernisation-cum-expansion programme at a cost of Rs 4.55 cr for which it had come out with a rights issue in the ratio of 1:1. Financially the company has been performing extremely well. The March 1992 results were gratifying, even with the

interruption to production in the second half due to an industry-wide strike in the region coupled with a steep rise in cotton price. On the export front too, the company is emerging as one of the leading export-oriented spinning mills. Taking into account its excellent prospects, we have projected the sales and PAT at Rs 25 cr and Rs 1.25 cr respectively for March 1993. This should yield an EPS of Rs 7 on the enhanced equity supporting a price of Rs 150 at that time. Buy for medium-term gains.

K Gopalakrishnan

(Answers on Page 8)

No one view in London on Chandralekha

Ah! It's nice to be back. Every time I set foot back in Madras, it feels like I've won the pot at the end of the rainbow. The sunshine I've always taken for granted feels like a thousand blessings and so do the noise, the dirt and the dust. Even the oily smoke from a Pallavan bus smells like the sweetest fragrance in the world!

But there were happy memories too of the weeks abroad. In London, our Chandralekha was making waves in the *Vivarta*, the revolutionary manoeuvres festival at the Palace Theatre. There was much expectation in the air and *The Guardian* had announced five free tickets, on a first come, first served basis, to those who took a picture cutting from the paper to the theatre. There was a big build-up with large pictures in all the major newspapers. And audience reaction was predictable. Some simply loved it, some thought it was atrocious. I spoke to many who had seen the show and there was no one taking the middle path.

Rasa and rasikas
The first thing I did after getting back was to visit the Narada Gana Sabha hall and take in the last presentation at the Vintage Raga festival. It's nice to know that Madras is increasingly being considered for such nationally important festivals. The festival felt like the peak of the season in Madras. Knowledgeable and deeply involved *rasikas* thronged the hall. And Bangalore's Usha Radhakrishnan gave us a glittering preview of the Season

ahead with her luxurious silk sarees and artistic jewellery.

Usha runs 'Rasa', the Windsor Manor's art club in Bangalore which organises music, dance, painting and sculpture shows in the hotel. 'Rasa' got together with the Chola Sheraton, Anant Vaidyanathan of the ITC Sangeetha Research Centre, Calcutta,

The View From The Wings by V.R. Devika

and McDowell and Co., to give Madras a splendid musical treat. Star musicians featured included K.V. Narayanaswamy and T.V. Sankaranarayan (Carnatic vocal), U. Srinivas (mandolin), Parveen Sultana (Hindustani vocal), Shivkumar Shama (santoor) and Hariprasad Chourasia (flute).

M.S. Gopalakrishnan was the last featured, playing the Carnatic violin. His daughter Narmada featured with him. MSG's first rate team included Umayalapuram Sivaraman on the *midangam* and Vinayakaram on the *ghatam*. The evening was truly exhilarating. MSG presented a very deep and elaborate Hindolam that showed no trace of his equal expertise in Hindustani. Sivaraman was as unpretentious and simple as he was on the recent "Tana Bana" programme on network T.V. when he talked about

his music to Bala Kailasam. He had said in the interview that he played the *midangam* in the spirit of being the first *rasika* of the main artist in any programme. His *midangam* is played with no frills but the simple, direct approach creates a masterpiece. Vinayakaram and he were in a class apart that evening. Vinayakaram is known to non-Carnatic music audiences as a member of the Shakti fusion music group and of a group of percussionists from around the world who won a Grammy Award for their music ensemble.

Gurus and sishtyas

The Music Academy's Kasthuri Srinivasan Hall will be the venue for an exciting dance festival presented by Lalshya, an association of young dancers. They plan to hold the festival from November 11-15 and have, in the true *guru-sishtya* tradition, respected gurus to present their *sishtyas*. On the inaugural day (the 11th), a dance recital choreographed by a young dancer, Revathi Ramachandran, will be presented. On the 12th, Dhananjayan gives a lecture-demonstration followed by presentations by the disciples of Gurus S.K. Rajarathnam and Vasanthalakshmi Narasimachari. On the 13th, Kalanidhi Narayanan, the *Abhinaya* exponent, gives her demonstration followed by Guru Adyar Lakshmanan's disciples and then there will be a choreography of Dr. Padma Subramaniam with taped music. The 14th being Children's Day, dancers below the age of 12 will have a workshop between 9.30 and 12 in the morning and there will be a talk on dance for children in the evening. This will be followed by a dance presentation by the four winners of a recently-held dance competition.

Madras is really warming up for the Season and exciting events are being planned. Are you getting ready too?

Mayhem and fun

Feudalism is alive and well in the Deep South of Tamil Nadu, where the Thevars live by the code of an eye for an eye and honour to such a degree the code of Omerta that they'd shame any self-respecting member of the Sicilian Mafia. And when in this land with laws its own two brothers feud, the struggle for power can only be bitter and brutal, drenching with blood the hundreds of acres they own.

It is to this cruel country that there comes the Elder Thevar's son, fresh from England, a Telugu wench on his arm, and both well-versed in the love-play of swinging London (which brings to the Indian screen the first semblance of kissing in over 50 years). He also brings with him a determination to introduce the laws of the Republic of India in place of the laws of the Thevars. The result of the latter is mayhem in widescreen and the impact it has on the former

is that the Thevar's son unwillingly accepts a Thevar bride and discovers he has not forgotten how to make love the old-fashioned Indian way.

It's a moving story — at times even a fun story — that *Thevar's Magan* tells well. But why, oh, why, Kamal Hasan, must you drag it out for a half an hour to an hour too long? That Murugan and Meenakshi want it is an argument I won't buy. Almost all the extra time comes from stretching Kamal Hasan's song, dance and fight sequences — and that's almost narcissistic.

But for all that extra length, here's a film that holds your attention. And that's got everything to do with the first-rate playing of all the cast, the broad acting so favoured of the Tamil film being kept to a minimum, a simple story well told and supported by a lively script, some fine direction by Bharathan and some spectacular photography by Sriram.

Sivaji as the Elder Thevar is not only still a magnificent presence but he also still breathes thespian fire. Kamal Hasan, who deliberately underplays his role till he takes over from his father, the Elder Thevar, then goes on to display his versatility from acting to wielding the *silambu*. What a range he has! The only pity is he doesn't know when to stop; or, rather, he's convinced the crowd doesn't want him to stop. But the real surprise is the two girls — Gouthami the sophisticated and rural Revathi. How nice it is to see a tall, slim and good-looking girl in a Tamil film! But Gouthami is more than

that; from mix to a maniacal fury, she's been coaxed by Bharathan and Kamal into giving a splendid performance. As for Revathi, her village girl on whom the Gods are constantly playing tricks is an opportunity for her to display a whole range of emotions — and she grabs chance by the forelock with a moving bit of acting.

Embellishing the performance is Sriram's camerawork. The screen is alive with colour throughout; it's richness that is almost but not quite surfeit. But his shooting of the breached dam and the flood that followed and of the climactic *thiruvilla* — for both of which the special effects man should take a bow — was every bit as good as any of the big ones out of Hollywood. These must be among the best action sequences in Indian film history.

Kamal Hasan's got a winner in this one, no question of that. The only question he might face — apart from the initially raised one of the film's length and the now mandatory one on expecting audiences to suspend time and belief (amazing how he not even still remembered how to fight with a *silambu* — but could also beat the whole village team with it single handed!) — is about the shock end to the climactic sequence. Was it really necessary? A killing no matter how bloodless will still get you before their Lordships. On the other hand, might not justice at the hands of Lord Muruga have been more meaningful — especially in the context of the present lawlessness in the state?

— H.A. Sumith

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The actor who wouldn't give up

It was news that passed Madras by. But if only they had known about it early enough, all theatre lovers in the city would have gathered to pay public homage to perhaps the finest actor to have graced the Madras stage in recent years. As it is, every one of them mourns Vimal Bhagat, who died recently after a long and debilitating illness. He was too young to die, but he left behind a host of memories to those who live.

Madras Musings pays tribute to a great actor by reproducing excerpts from the interview, one of his last, which appeared in *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, about a year ago. SHALINI GUPTA, who met him in Dehra Dun, writes:

"Vimal Bhagat," once proclaimed Alyque Padamsee, "is one of the most outstanding actors in India." Recently, Bhagat chuckled up his career as a 'boxwallah' with ICI and proceeded to Dehra Dun to embark upon the single consuming passion of his life — theatre. Full time, that is.

Wait a moment. Consider the man's enthusiasm: a crippling backache forced him to use a walking stick in *Man for All Seasons* and the audience could never have known that he was painfully ill. When the play ended, Bhagat collapsed on a bench in the wings. Worse still, this backache does not seem to be easing.

The painful back has not prevented Bhagat from continuing to dream... "I feel like doing more films. Then there is a plan to enact a section of the *Mahabharat* with school-children in Dehra Dun... Oh, I have many plans, but only if my health permits. My stint with theatre is an unfinished story and there is so much to do offe."

On why he sticks to English theatre:

It's amusing how Bhagat took to acting in the first place. "I was in prep school; and playing Tweedledum in *Through the Looking Glass*. Guess who played Alice? General Brar (of Operation Bluestar fame). With his long hair, he made a pretty little Alice." (And then Bhagat went on to answer specific questions):

On Acting as a profession:

An actor's life is like fertile ground from which you produce something creative. The fallow periods are also important; they provide for the rejuvenation. There is always scope for improvement, you never reach the ultimate. An actor has to take a lot from his surroundings... the way people move, the way they laugh or cry, all this has to be observed and projected on stage. I have seen so many of my characters living around me...

On his addiction to theatre:

Love it! Acting is like building a sandcastle; there is an imaginary element in it. It is primarily concerned

with communication. When one conveys a particular emotion to the audience, it reacts — by laughing or keeping quiet — and you can feel the contact in the vibrations. That is the kind of communication that I strive for and that is what adds me to the stage.

Acting in front of the camera-lens:

Acting on stage can be compared to painting a huge canvas with a thick huge brush in which only the overall effect is noticed. Cinema is different; the camera catches the nuances of your facial expression; your face has to carry just the right emotion and in order to do that you have to live the part you are playing. If your mind is far away, the lie shows on your face. To that extent, acting in a film is tougher.

On his obsession with Shakespeare:

To my mind, Shakespeare has been the greatest playwright ever, at least of all whom I have read. There is a quality about his work that transcends all barriers of time, space and nationality. Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, based on *Macbeth*, bears evidence of this. Shakespeare deals basically with human emotions — passion, jealousy, ambition, exhilaration, you name it, he has it. And then there is the stupendous use he has made of the language. One is awed by the beauty of the spoken word, the lovely ring that it evokes... In fact, in modern times he would have made a fantastic script-writer... Once the actor understands his character and directs the right emotion, the alienation from the dialect vanishes. The crux in play-acting is communication and Shakespeare makes it so easy for the actor.

On why he sticks to English theatre:

On why he sticks to English theatre:

...I went to Doon School where we were quite active in English drama. The same continued in St Stephen's... At home too we speak in English. Somehow I never got around to experimenting with the vernacular. During the Sixties... Amitabh Bachchan had suggested exactly this: "Why don't we do Hindi theatre?" he asked, but the idea was considered too adventurous.

On future plans:

We have a small piece of land in Dehra Dun where I intend to build a theatre, a small one, the experimental kind. Should be able to seat 200-300 people, should be able to double up as an art gallery. I have around Rs. 3-4 lakhs in our trust, Khela, and hopefully, after five more years, should have collected enough to build this theatre...

One day, Madras Musings is certain, Bhagat will be remembered in that theatre. His friends all over the country will see to that.

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GOLDEN FRIED CHICKEN

- 1 chicken, cut into medium sized pieces
½ teaspoon turmeric powder
1 teaspoon chilli powder
2 teaspoons pepper powder
1 teaspoon ginger paste
1 teaspoon garlic paste
2 eggs, well beaten
2 tbs Worcestershire sauce

Bread crumbs
Salt to taste
Oil for shallow frying

Method

Cook the chicken with salt, turmeric powder and chilli powder.

When almost dry, add the pepper powder, ginger and garlic paste. Stir till dry. Remove from heat. Add Worcestershire sauce and stir the pieces to get an even coating. Cool.

Dip the chicken pieces in the beaten egg and roll in bread crumbs. Chill the chicken in the fridge for 1-2 hours.

When ready to serve, heat oil in a shallow pan and fry the chicken to a golden brown. Serve hot and crisp.

Neela Prabhakar

VEGETABLE PAELLA

- 1 cup basmati rice, soaked in water for 10 minutes and drained.
1 cup tomato puree
1 cup water
1 onion, chopped fine
1 medium sized brinjal, chopped fine
1 capsicum, deseeded and chopped fine
½ teaspoon red chilli powder
1 teaspoon oregano (optional)
¼ cup grated cheese
1 bay leaf
4 tbs butter
Salt to taste

Method

Heat two tablespoons butter. Add the bay leaf, chopped onion, capsicum and brinjal. Sauté for a minute or two.

Hashing after the hares

They are not cross-country racers nor are they marathoners or athletes in training. Then who are the forty or fifty people, both expatriates and Indians, who run on Madras roads almost every other Sunday?

They are the Hash House Harriers (HHH, for convenience sake). And, strictly speaking, they are not running but 'hashing'. But what is hashing?

Remember your school days? And the Scouts? When you played 'hares and hounds' and the day climaxed with a campfire? Hashing is more or less on the same lines, but with adult touches.

Three members of the informal 'club' volunteer to play the 'hares'. They mark the trails for the harriers to follow. There are two types of hash runs. One is a 'live hare run' and the other is an ordinary run. The highlights of the live hare run is that, if any of the harriers catch a hare on the way, before it reaches the end of the trail, then that hare will have to be the slave of the catchers for the evening!

The trails are laid with colour powder, arrowmarks on the road etc. But the hares are not like the mug-headed rabbit which lost to the tortoise. These are foxes in the guise of hares, leaving false trails at every turning and junction! If you fall for their ploys, you might end up running a couple of kilometres up and down before realising that you've been foxed! To overcome this problem, a check is made by sending a harrier in each direction and if the answer to the call, "Are you?" is "On, On", the pack follows. Eventually the route usually returns to the starting point.

Harriers who take short cuts to reach journey's end quicker, get no prizes. They are baptised 'Short Cutting

Bastards' (SCBs) and face punishment after the run!

The Sunday I followed the live hares was a hot evening with the start from Satyanarayana Avenue, near the Park Sheraton. We followed 15 minutes after the hares. All along the way, horns were hooted to add gaiety to the occasion. The trail led us through the Madras Club and then to the YMCA grounds.

• by Venkatachari Jagannathan

The cricketers stopped play to watch in wonder as a bunch of crazy foreigners and Indians barged into their grounds. We ran through the YMCA and the golf links and exited by jumping over a wire fence! We entered the animal husbandry complex and crossed into Mount Road. Traffic braked and pedestrians stood still, open-mouthed, as the harriers raced by.

From there the trail led into a nearby slum! The slum dwellers realised something funny was going on and started to speculate on the nationality of the runners. "That's a Russian, that's an American, no... it is German" etc., then one nationality-spotter exclaimed, "Aada Nama Ooru", as I passed them.

We were now in Todhunter Nagar. The hooting of horns and accompanying commotion made the residents come to their flat balconies only to wonder whether the Indians were chasing the expats or vice versa or whether both were in search of some other alien!

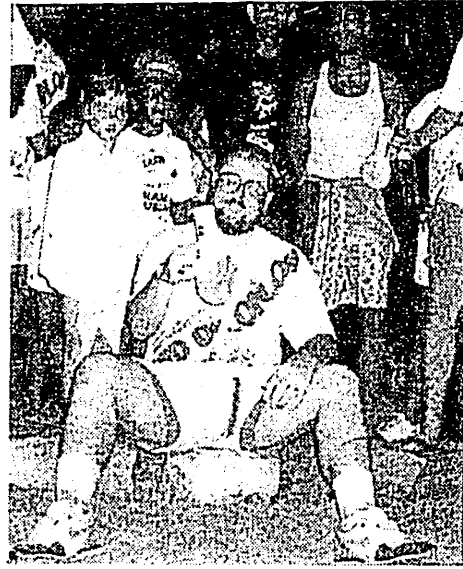
Meanwhile, an enterprising harriette had shouted, "There's a hare" and moved slowly towards a shrub. Catching a hare is a rare thing in a live hare run. Along with a couple of other runners, I rushed to help her, only to find her chasing a real rabbit! Fortunately for us, no person came chasing us for trying to catch the animal.

I was told by my puffing neighbour that in Malaysia, once, an HHH pack ran into guerrilla hideout and later led the police to the site. Fortunately, or unfortunately, there were no such camps on our route. We meandered along the trail without hitch for 1½ hours, sniffing for the elusive hares, until stopped by a humourless YMCA official on our way back who wanted to book us for trespassing. He let us go after a bawling out and, to cut a 10 km story short, we harriers reached the starting point about 6.15 pm without catching a hare.

Evening's end provided the adult variations I mentioned earlier. The 'SCBs' and those who ran fast or slow now faced punishment. These persons were made to sit on blocks of ice and drink in one gulp an 'amber coloured liquid' — it turned out to be beer — from a urine pan. And anything remaining was poured over their heads! For the teetotalers it is cola instead of beer. This was done to the tune of the Hash House song. There were six persons so privileged. (In other centres, the punishment varies slightly i.e. the SCBs and others are made to drink the beer while lying on their stomachs over an ice slab (called 'Down, Down') or on their backs (called 'Up, Up').) This honour is also bestowed on unfair hares, newcomers, half-way returnees



Haring after the hashers (above)... and paying the penalty for being too quick (below) ...



or anyone celebrating their birthdays, weddings and other anniversaries. After this 'splash', it was time for food and then there were the goodbyes, till we meet again.

The Hash House movement is an Asian one and made its Indian appearance in Delhi and Bombay ten years ago. Now there are Hash Houses in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Durgapur and Madras. The Madras chapter was started in August 1990 by Steve Ponman, a Briton. In April this year an All India Hash Meet was conducted by the Madras Club and participants included hashers from Colombo.

Sashi Varma of Bay India, one of the two joint Masters says, "The stress is on having fun, lots of fun. We have about 120 members in Madras and conduct runs every fortnight. About fifty

per cent are locals, the others expatriates."

True to their logo — a swaggering autorickshaw with a couple of beer bottles sticking out — the Madras hashers prefer running on the city roads and bylanes rather than going to the outskirts. "It is only because of the club that I've got to know the city roads well," says Neena Mathur, who recently shifted to Madras from New Delhi.

Gayatri Sridhar, a student of Mass Communication at the University of Madras and who is from a family of hashers, said, "When I came to know about this club, I thought it would be elitist, but I soon found it otherwise." Admission is not restricted and anyone can become a member by paying a nominal fee. The only rule followed by the HHH scrupulously is, "There is no hard and fast rule for the members to follow".

"On Sundays there is nothing much to do, particularly during the afternoons. This event provides fun as well as an opportunity for socialising with people from different walks of life," explained Tim Bostock of the Bay of Bengal Fisheries Programme.

But make no mistake. The HHH are not just beer quaffers with elitist aberrations. They can be serious too. The funds collected are accumulated over a period and used for a worthwhile charity. The runs are sponsored by Hotel Trident, Pepsi Cola and London Pilsner.

Sports contest of the year

BSivanthi Adityan, the Indian Olympic Association President, has taken Suresh Kalmadi's premature election campaign for the IOA presidency and boastful remarks in his stride. The election is to be held in Calcutta on November 15th, and Kalmadi, the Amateur Athletics Federation of India President, flew into Calcutta recently and, after announcing his candidature, boasted at a Press Conference that he was as good as in the presidential chair. A week later the soft-spoken Madras newspaper magnate responded at the same venue with characteristic sobriety.

Ever since the Princely order vacated it over a decade ago, the IOA *ghadi* has become the most coveted seat in the Indian sports world. The contest for it has not infrequently been marred by ugly incantations through the media as well as at public meetings. The ugly turn the IOA meeting in Madras took two years ago, when Adityan and V C Shukla were the presidential candidates, is still fresh in the minds of those who attended it. It had to be abandoned because of the rowdiness of half a dozen young men from the North who sprang to their feet, raised full-throated anti-Adityan slogans and performed mock Kathakali the moment Adityan rose to speak. Justice was, however, eventually meted out, a Court declaring Adityan elected IOA president.

Without being flamboyant or boastful, Adityan has, since, acquitted himself creditably. Through his persuasion, he won over the Union Government, which has cleared more sports projects and set up more sports institutions than ever before. If by stating that the "IOA general council, specially in the light of the Barcelona debacle, has a special responsibility and the time has come when they have to decide if they want a change or go in for a *status quo* of persons and policies", Kalmadi

was casting aspersions on the IOA and its President and blaming them for the country's latest Olympic Games debacle, the AAFI President was only betraying his ignorance of what's happening in sport in our country and of the rank discrimination in sports sponsorship, which seems to care only for cricket.

Come to think of it, Kalmadi and his AAFI have to blame themselves more than anybody else for India's sorry Olympic performance. Athletics is the *piece de resistance* of an Olympiad, and the fact that the AAFI could find no more than a beggarly three QUALIFIERS from a nation of over 800 million is a sad commentary on the field work put in by Kalmadi and his AAFI committees. For such an official to claim that the time had come for a change in the IOA set-up is Indian sport's biggest-ever joke.

Will the IOA members be taken in by him on November 15th?

JAICI

EDITOR'S NOTE: Whatever happens, the contest is typical of the sporting scene in India. There's more action OFF THE FIELD than ON it! No wonder we are where we are in world sport!

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. It was the operation carried out to rescue 11 people who were trapped in a trolley car in Parwanoo, H.P.; 2. Maneka Gandhi; 3. World Standard's Day; 4. Cheddi Jagan; 5. Bill 'Tiger' O'Reilly; 6. Zee TV; 7. Sinead O'Connor; 8. It crashed into an apartment building in Amsterdam; 9. Hamid Ansari; 10. To tackle communal riots and tension in zero response time; 11. Willy Brandt; 12. Lennart Meri; 13. Shri Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar; 14. Siddharth Shankar Ray; 15. Kamarajar District; 16. Laurie Baker; 17. Sotheby's; 18. S. Venkatraghavan; 19. Maues River in the Amazon, and it has been appropriately called Maues Marmoset; 20. Nobel Prize.

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