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MUSINGS

Vol. III. No. 19

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

January 16 — 31, 1994

Infrastructure improves

(By The Editor)

It was at one of those Season's parties the other night that we were startled by the much-travelled head of a large factory in the western outskirts of Madras. This executive, an outsider to Madras but a city-resident for some years now, thought that, in the last year or so, the **infrastructure had improved** considerably in the city. And he was sure that the Chief Minister's drive was responsible for it.

Taken a bit aback by his enthusiasm, we wanted to know what the improvements he thought there were.

But will we pay to improve it still further?

And using his list, we report the latest position:

- ★ The street lighting has not only improved considerably, but it is also some of the best in the country. Madras Musings understands that all bus routes will be lit with sodium vapour lamps by year-end and, next year, work will be taken up to bring light to all road junctions in residential colonies.
- ★ The water drained fast during the recent heavy rains and there were almost no main roads which got waterlogged, causing cars to stall. Madras Musings understands that the storm water drains were cleared well in advance of the rains, resulting in a reasonable pace of drainage and little flooding. The only areas that got flooded were where traditional wetlands and former waterbodies had been filled in.
- ★ The repair work on the roads has been quick after the battering they

received from the rains. Madras Musings can't say it has seen any of this, but it has noticed inspection parties on the prowl. And it understands that repair work will be carried out within the next few weeks and that, by year-end, the re-laying of many roads will be completed.

- ★ Shade trees are being planted and they seem to thrive. Madras Musings has been noticing this and in some areas there are stretches that are beginning to be shaded by trees as much as in that classic photograph of old Moubray's Road.

Much of this improvement, Madras Musings understands, has been made possible by the Chief Minister increasing the limits of the amount the Corporation Special Officer can sanction on a single capital works project. She has raised it from Rs. 7.5 lakhs to Rs. 50 lakhs. Still not totally realistic, but we're getting there, it would seem. And Special Officer R Poomalingam and his team have ensured that every bit of money is well spent.

All this, however, is not enough. If Madras is to improve and a Madras worthy of an international-level Vision 2000 created, two things are still necessary:

- The Corporation has to be revived with the **election** of councillors and a Mayor; and
- And an **elected** Council must **raise** civic taxes to much more realistic levels.



Work on the City's infrastructure gets underway. That narrow road from San Thome to Madaiveli, which skirts one of the worst slums in the city, is at last being widened, making use of the 'fill' that has, over the years, been dumped here reducing the extent of the Adyar backwaters. This garbage 'fill' is now a jungle (on left) — and Madras Musings wonders what its future is going to be. The widened road, however, would be welcomed by many a vehicle-owner, for it will help reduce considerably the risk ever present on this road for years, as the slum developed and children from the slum darted onto a road never high on visibility.

(Photograph: V S RAGHAVAN)

more if they are to get a better city. But at the same time, they need to be assured that their money will be well spent. Will we see both happen in 1994?

'Dangerous Summerwear' designed by the LTTE

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, recently described by an IPKF General as "the greatest guerilla force of its time", is reported to have developed a 'knicker bomb' whose detection, when worn by either its men or women suicide cadres, is virtually impossible. After the splendid victory in Pooneryn in their 'homeland', it is with this improvement of the weapon that killed Rajiv Gandhi that the Tigers now threaten the leadership in Colombo and, possibly, even across the Palk Strait. This is no joking matter; nevertheless, this delightful little piece by columnist SRIDHAR RAGHAVAN in the monthly Gentleman is too much fun to ignore. We publish Raghavan's 'para' in full — if only to recognise the fact that in a country and in a medium where there is so little humour, there is, from time to time, an occasional writer who can make us smile.

THE EDITOR

The cottage industry division of the LTTE has diversified from manufacturing bombs and ammunition and has got into clothes and fashion in a big way with their Dangerous Summerwear. The first design they've come up with involves a pair of shorts with 3.5 kilograms of RDX and a kilogram of ball-bearings sewn into the lining. Industry sources inform us that the entire line-up is pretty explosive and is bound to have a major impact. Also, this happens to be the first time casual wear has been tailored specifically for formal occasions — a new range suiting the dress code to meet VIPs, VVIPs and the like.

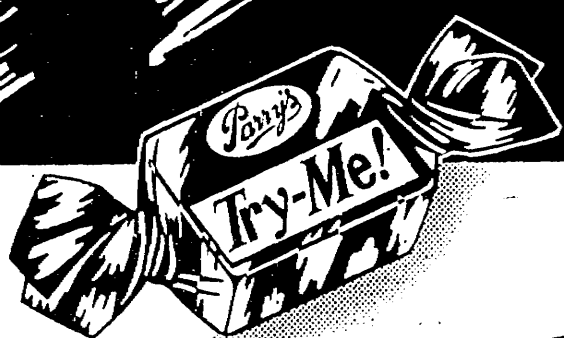
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The Bold New Taste

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Who killed Sumati Iyer?

(By A Staff Reporter)

It's not exactly a new story; it happened early in November. But it hasn't got as much airing in Madras as it deserved, despite the fact that Sumati Iyer was working on the translation into Hindi of works by such well-known Tamil writers as Indira Parthasarathy, Pudumaipithan and Rajam Krishnan.

Sumati Iyer, who was the Hindi Officer in the Employees Provident Fund Office in Kanpur, was a well-known figure in the Hindi literary world. It has been said that she had "a rare talent for Hindi", both as a writer and translator. Author of three Hindi short-story collections and a collection of poetry, she had been working in Kanpur these past eight years. She and her 10-year-old son

were living in Kanpur, while her husband worked in a bank in Madras.

She was alone in the house when she was killed, but three used tea cups indicate that she probably knew at least one of the killers, deduce the Kanpur police. Apart from that, "there is just no clue," the police add.

But whoever it is, there's no gain-saying the fact that the Hindi literary world has lost a considerable talent and many Tamil writers a friendly, understanding and able translator who was making it possible for them to reach a wider audience. In a country where good translators of literature are rare, Sumati Iyer's tragic loss is a severe blow to both the Hindi and Tamil worlds of letters.

How do you put a stop to tradition?

There was a report in *The Hindu* recently which said that "there appears to be a spurt in the smuggling of fuel and essential life-saving drugs from the coastal belt of Tamil Nadu to the Jaffna peninsula, especially after the LTTE overran the Sri Lankan army and naval camps (in November) at Pooneryn..."

The report, based on a visit to the nearly 1000 km long Tamil Nadu coastline, which has "26 big and small urban centres and about 450 fishing hamlets", adds that "the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam still continues to lean on Tamil Nadu as its prime source for supply of fuel and other essential commodities". Citing the high prices the LTTE pays — Rs. 500-700 a litre of diesel and Rs. 1200-1500 a litre of petrol (*The Man From Madras Musings* thinks all those figures are a zero too much), the report quotes sources as alleging that it is such prices that have created "a fisherman-politician-police nexus" which is in touch with "the clandestine network of contacts and supporters of the LTTE".

It was this kind of half-baked information that got the IPKF in trouble in northern Sri Lanka. Armyman after armyman has written about the failure of information that resulted in

military operations getting bogged down in unfamiliar terrain. But not only was there a lack of maps and other source material, there also appeared to be the lack of a knowledge of history.

If those concerned had a historical perspective they might have realised the links — including the smuggling links — between the Chola and Pandya coasts and the Yael coast, especially the Velvettiturai region that is Prabhakaran's home, were not forged yesterday or today but go back centuries, possibly even a couple of thousand years. But even if they did not want to go back that long, all they had to do was go back fifty years when the traffic in human beings was a regular activity across the 30 km Kodikarai-Velvettiturai stretch. Those were the days when estate labour from Sri Lanka's central highlands were ferried to and from India. And in the early Fifties, when their citizenship became in doubt and the traffic increased, Ceylon, as it was then, established its first military presence on the Jaffna coast, stationing most of its then small army there.

In those days, not only did the Ceylon Army have a fair number of Tamils in it, but all

its numbers had a good rapport with the Jaffna population. Nevertheless, it could do nothing to stop the 'Kallathonis' and neither could the Indian police on the other side. Later, as restrictive national economic policies virtually starved Ceylon of even everyday commodities, the smuggling nexus between the two countries grew further. And it has continued to grow with the LTTE's needs.

The Man From Madras Musings is certain that this is one link between the two countries that will never be severed. To attempt to do so would only be futile. If the present smuggling operation — with the dangerous situation in Tamil Nadu it is creating — is to be stopped, it can only be done by putting enough pressure on the Sri Lankan Government AND the LTTE to work out a fair, negotiated settlement.

TAILPIECE: The spotting of an LTTE vessel some time ago — and the subsequent death of LTTE leader Kittu — was an amazing piece of luck, the equivalent of finding a needle in a stack of straw. Or was it 'information' that India received? That is exactly what Prabhakaran is now alleging and, from all reports, another lieutenant, Mahattaya, and his supporters are to pay the price before a firing squad on January 26th. Will eagles dare?

writer showing the tribe of journalists the way to write with dignity and without defaming anyone.

Business briefs

★ Among the top ten advertising agencies in the country in 1992-1993, in terms of capitalised billing, only two are from the South. And, of them, only R K Swamy's is headquartered in Madras. Its six branches totalled Rs. 50 crores — against the leader HTA's

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Rs. 208 crores — and enabled the agency to rank 7th. Recording a growth of 23 per cent from the previous year, RKS, which is tied up with the internationally known BBDO, has targeted a growth of 35 per cent for this year. Director Srinivasan Swamy, son of the founder, is quoted as saying, "We are going to chase new business as if there is no tomorrow". Swamy's recorded a billing of Rs. 15 million per employee against Lintas' (No. 2) Rs. 33 million per employee and HTA's Rs. 17 million per employee. While Swamy's growth has been impressive for a comparatively new agency — only Mudra and Trikaya Grey of the newer agencies being ahead of it — that last figure strikes MMM as a case of overstaffing, something that is becoming a bit of a habit in the South.

★ With Big Mac and Kentucky Fried Chicken round the corner, can Wrigley's chewing gum be far behind? Wm Wrigley Jr Co, USA, have tied up with Parry's Confectionery in a Rs. 40 crore joint venture to set up a factory in Dodaballapur, near Bangalore, to manufacture 2000 t of chewing gum a year. The choice of location was probably Wrigley's, who might have reacted more favourably to the easier clearance in Karnataka. In any case, the Americans had an 85 per cent equity, while Madras-based Parry's is only 15 per cent. The projected turnover of the new company, Wrigley India (P) Ltd, is Rs. 90 crore and production is expected to commence in June. Parry's, incidentally, in late 1992 experimented with a delicious jelly sweet in fig and date flavours. But MMM has not seen it on the shelves at any time since. Have constraints on the shelf-life led to these flavour-rich jelly sweets being shelved? If so, some work on them might prove worthwhile. MMM thought they were a winner when he was offered a sample box.

★ The Perungudi Industrial Estate was set up by Government to encourage the electronics industry. Convinced that the Estate is now well settled, Government is planning to expand activity there. It plans to promote three tower blocks which will comprise "120 units... exclusively for the Electrical, Electronics & Allied Industries". Rather confusing to MMM is the Government announcement that it "will provide Land at reasonable price. The Entrepreneurs have to meet the full cost of construction including the Land Cost". Who, then, is promoting 'Electronic Towers', Perungudi? ★ There's help on the way for Tamil Nadu fishermen affected

by attacks on them by the Sri Lankan Navy. A Palk Bay Fishermen Rehabilitation Scheme has been launched to rehabilitate these fishermen in an aquaculture project. Two aquaculture projects are being established — one in Ramanaapuram District, the other in Chidambaram District — by the Government at a cost of Rs. 15 crores. The Palk Bay fishermen will be re-located in one, while the other estate will establish satellite estates for 200 farmers. The Brackishwater Fish Farming Development Agency has also identified 266 hectares along the coast from Chengalpatu District to Chidambaram District and plans for a Rs. 10 crore project are being drawn up for small aqua farmers.

★ A major new tyre factory is to be set up in Tamil Nadu. The Rs. 400 crore factory is to be set up by American Trac Tyres Ltd., whose project proposal has been cleared by the Centre. The plant, which will have US \$ 13 million foreign investment, will manufacture 1.5 million tyres and will employ 800 persons.

In brief

★ Toilet waste flushed out of passenger trains and onto the tracks could soon be a thing of the past. The Integral Coach Factory has developed a "biological toilet" and several of them are being tested on the Madras-Bangalore route. These new toilets have developed a bacteria-system which converts toilet waste into a gas that is let out through a vent, while the rest is discharged onto the tracks as chlorinated water. Now all that's wonderful for the tracks, feels MMM, but he wonders when a CLEAN TOILET is going to be developed for passengers!

★ A sense of humour is something most Indians lack — especially the politicians. That is why hoarding humorist Mustaq Ahmed got into trouble with several of his hoardings. Now *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that a local ice cream company is being sued by a Congress (I) politician for one of its hoardings. The hoarding had an unconcerned Prime Minister Narasimha Rao enjoying his ice cream while Big Bull Harshad Mehta offers a suitcase. The caption read "Nothing interrupts an Arun ice cream". The ice cream company is now being sued for Rs. 1 crore damages "for making libellous innuendoes against the Prime Minister". There's time yet for the case to be heard, but it might be well for the petitioner to take a leaf out of Chief Minister Jayalalitha's book of New Year's Resolutions. There's too little fun in our world for it to be stifled in this manner.

★ A printer's devil was busy at the Indian Security Press in Nasik and a million inland letters were printed with the Hindi equivalent of 'Marat' instead of 'Bharat'. No, the devil's own work didn't deserve shredding, especially when the cost was reckoned to be in the region of a couple of million. And, so, an ingenious way out was devised: ship them to the back of beyond in Tamil Nadu. After all, who'd know the difference in those boonddocks, goes the story. *The Man From Madras Musings* would love to see one of those envelopes, or is it just another tall story that printers like to tell? **MMM**

Might not the TTK way have been better?

The furore over the Manmohan Singh resignation will die out. He is back in office, dedicated to liberalising the Indian Economy, and business circles and those who will benefit from business will, no doubt, be happy that the Prime Minister chose to ignore criticism and retained 'The Good Doctor' who, to many, has 'The Right Prescription'.

But there will be a few — and among them many in Tamil Nadu — who must be wondering what made Prime Minister Rao spend time thinking the issue through and then not accept the Sardar Economist's resignation while he had, with almost unseemly haste, accepted the resignations of P Chidambaram and R Kumaramangalam, whose names had figured in no learned report of a probe and whose 'faults', if acts of omission they indeed were, could hardly be described as even peripheral.

But neither of these names or their fates — fates already forgotten — figured much in the debate on the JPC Report in both Houses of Parliament. The person most cited as the example to follow was T T Krishnamachari, with Nehru the architect of the industrial and economic policies that enabled a bankrupt, infrastructureless nation come so far and on which foundations the Raos and the Manmohan Singhs of today are building. Speaker after speaker referred to TTK's resignation as a consequence of the Mundhra scandal. The resignation followed the report of the one-man commission, in which Justice M C Chagla observed:

"The minister has complete autonomy within his own sphere of authority. As a necessary corollary, he must take full responsibility for the actions of the servants."

It is true that this may throw a very great burden on the minister because it is impossible to expect that in a highly complicated system of administration which we have evolved, the minister could possibly know, leave alone give his consent to, every action taken once the policy is laid down by the minister. If his subordinate fails to do so, he may be punished or dismissed. But, however vicariously, the responsibility of his action must be assumed by the minister.

It may be said that a minister is merely part of the government and his policy is the policy of the government as a whole. If the minister should take the responsibility for his subordinate's actions, equally so must the Cabinet.

But, it is well established that the Cabinet only takes the responsibility for the minister's action if the minister reports the matter to the Cabinet and obtains the Cabinet's sanction before he puts into effect this policy. Then the policy becomes the Cabinet policy and not only the minister but the whole Cabinet must take the responsibility for whatever might have been done by a subordinate.

In this case, therefore, Mr Patel (H M Patel) who admittedly was acting as the principal (finance) secretary of the minister, cannot be fastened with the responsibility of having effected this transaction in his own secretarial capacity.

The minister must fully and squarely accept the responsibility for what Mr Patel did and if the transaction is improper and unjustified, although Mr Patel may be actually responsible for the transaction, constitutionally the responsibility is that of the minister. ●

Accepting Krishnamachari's resignation, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "The whole episode has been a painful ordeal for me and, on my part, I am convinced that your (T T Krishnamachari) part in the matter was of the smallest and that you did not even know much that was done." But, agreeing with Krishnamachari on the ultimate responsibility of a minister, he added, "The conventions which we endeavour to follow are basically right,

by A Special Correspondent

and we should adhere to them, even though they may result in the innocent suffering thereby." TTK later returned to the Cabinet and served it for many years, continuing where he left off, pioneering many of the steps that helped to build a New India.

In the eyes of many, this might have been a better way of handling the later situation. Manmohan Singh's resignation could have been accepted, the blemishless P Chidambaram could have been rehabilitated by being brought in as Finance Minister and, after a while, Manmohan Singh could have made his comeback. Many would see that as a more ethical way of doing things.

No need for lights or lamps

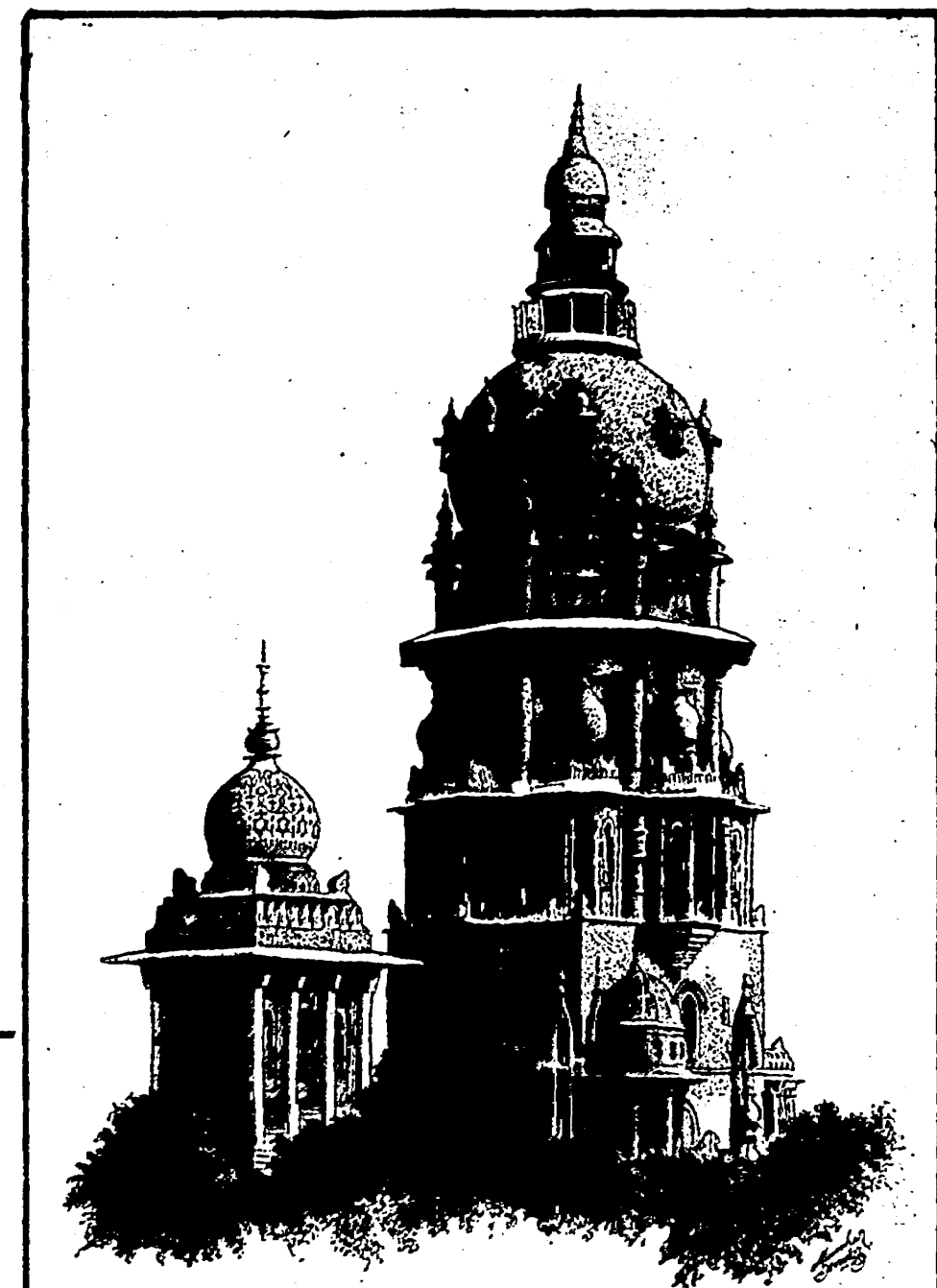
A reader from Calcutta sends us the following editorial, which appeared in *The Statesman* under the heading **LIGHTS AND LAMPS**. We publish it in full because little of it has been heard in Madras — where all the action has taken place. We also publish it with only the comment that it would be nice if everyone in this city, from the political leadership to officials to every Madras road-user, followed traffic regulations, without any special privileges being conferred on any one of them. In this connection, it might be stated that the fourlane experiment on Anna Salai has succeeded to a great extent; move beyond it and get on to Mount Road and it is chaos. Why not make everyone obey traffic regulations on the Mount Road extension of Anna Salai, then spread the culture throughout the city? No one then will have problems travelling about the city and there will be no need for such requests as those which are part of the subject of the following editorial.

THE EDITOR

The one comment that can be made about the Justice Ramalingam case in the Madras High Court is that the matter should never have come to court; at the same time, given the wooden attitude of officialdom the judge had no choice. The facts bear repetition. The deplorable conditions in Government hospitals led Justice Ramalingam to take his wife to a private hospital which presented him with a bill for Rs. 9,784 which he quite reasonably sent to the Government. By applying the relevant rules it was decided that the lady should have been taken to a Government hospital where it was calculated, in a manner beloved of bureaucrats, that the treatment would have cost Rs. 591 exactly. It was shown in court that the same Government had sent two Ministers abroad recently for which advances running into several lakhs of rupees had been granted for their treatment. The facts can be abandoned here because, in the course of the hearing, the State Government paid up the full amount and also cleared the medical expenses

of other judges which had been neglected for months.

The judge would have had no case if it could have been shown that one single bureaucrat of any consequence or any Minister, whether or not of Cabinet rank, ever entered the portals of a Government hospital for treatment. What the judge failed to appreciate was that the greater the progress you claim to make towards socialism, the more the New Class in Dijas' immortal phrase set a distance between themselves and the rest. It is the scheme of the Constitution that emoluments of judges shall not be at the whim and fancy of politicians or of their not so distant cousins, the bureaucrats. Unfortunately, only the salaries are fixed and, presumably because judges do not serve, strike notices in the manner of postal employees, their salaries have remained unchanged for many decades. A few years ago, a mere Joint Secretary to the Government of India had the temerity to address a circular to judges of the Supreme Court setting out the circumstances under which their wives may



Manohar's Lighthouse

As the *Madras Musings* of January 1 went into print, we received Manohar and Mahema Devadoss's greeting card — one in the 'Heritage' Series they have been doing for INTACH. It may have been too late for that issue, but it is not too late as a postscript to this one. Manohar's ink sketch of the City's third lighthouse, the one in the High Court's tallest tower, is, as usual, meticulously drawn and is a delight to behold. Mahema adds the historical note which accompanies the drawing. Together it is a card worth preserving. A series of prints of Manohar's drawings in the original size drawn in what the Devadosses should be thinking about — for they're drawings for posterity.

THE EDITOR

accompany them; when they may fly, when they must go by train and assuring their Lordships that for any contingencies not specified they would receive the same benefits as Class I government servants'. This outrage was no doubt intended as the conferment of a great blessing.

Medical expenses began to be used as an instrument for the attainment of political objectives long ago. Indira Gandhi imported doctors from overseas to attend on the AIADMK leader M.G.

OUR READERS WRITE

Medical expenses began to be used as an instrument for the attainment of political objectives long ago. Indira Gandhi imported doctors from overseas to attend on the AIADMK leader M.G.

Sorry, Harry!

Sorry, Harry. *Madras Musings* not only misplaced your Scrooge stamps but also lost the film at the last moment, there-upon going ahead with a blank space rather than delay the January 1st edition. We still haven't found the film, but we did manage to find the stamps. So here's Scrooge wishing readers "The Compliments of the Season" and informing Harry Miller that he's back and we're sorry.

THE EDITOR

By changing these old names in favour of present favourites, our past history and memories are not only mutilated and tampered with, but their importance and contribution to the present is forgotten.

New names, if at all necessary, can be given to the ever-so-many new projects, schemes, buildings and innovations. **Mrs Sujatha Ganesh Vallalar Street Madras 600 083.**

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The Consul was a Nabob

The American Consul-General's office building celebrated its 25th Anniversary on January 3rd. And at the celebrations a question very much in the air was: Who was the first American Consul in Madras? For several years now, Consul-Generals have asked your Editor this question and he did not have an answer. Then American research got down to it a couple of years ago and came up with an answer. That answer is part of an article Brian Croce Aggeler, a Consular Officer in Madras, wrote in the SPAN, December 1992 issue. These excerpts from it, with acknowledgements to both author and SPAN, remind us that it was 200 years ago this year the first American Consul in Madras was appointed.

THE EDITOR.

Americans first made contact with India in 1786, when the *Chesapeake* sailed up the 'Hoogli' River into the port of Calcutta. By the following year, four Massachusetts ships were trading in Bombay, Surat and Calcutta. Trade grew rapidly. ...

... (in) 1790 ... President George Washington urged the U.S. Congress to institutionalise an official consular service ... and on April 14, 1792, Congress created a consular service. In the same year, President Washington appointed Benjamin Joy — a businessman from Newburyport and Boston with years of successful experience in the India trade — to be consul at Calcutta "and other ports and places on the coast of India and Asia" ...

... Two years after his appointment as consul, Joy was informed that "the Governor-General, having no instructions from England, does not think himself at liberty to admit you in the public character of a consul entitled to privileges; but you may reside here as a commercial agent, subject to the civil and criminal jurisdiction of this country" ...

As far as East India Company officials were concerned, then, Joy was an ordinary businessman. But with France and Britain vying for naval superiority around the globe, U.S. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson instructed Joy: "As a general war appears to be gathering in Europe, I have to desire your utmost vigilance in protecting our vessels in the rights

of neutrality and in preventing the usurpation of our flag by the vessels of other nations." ...

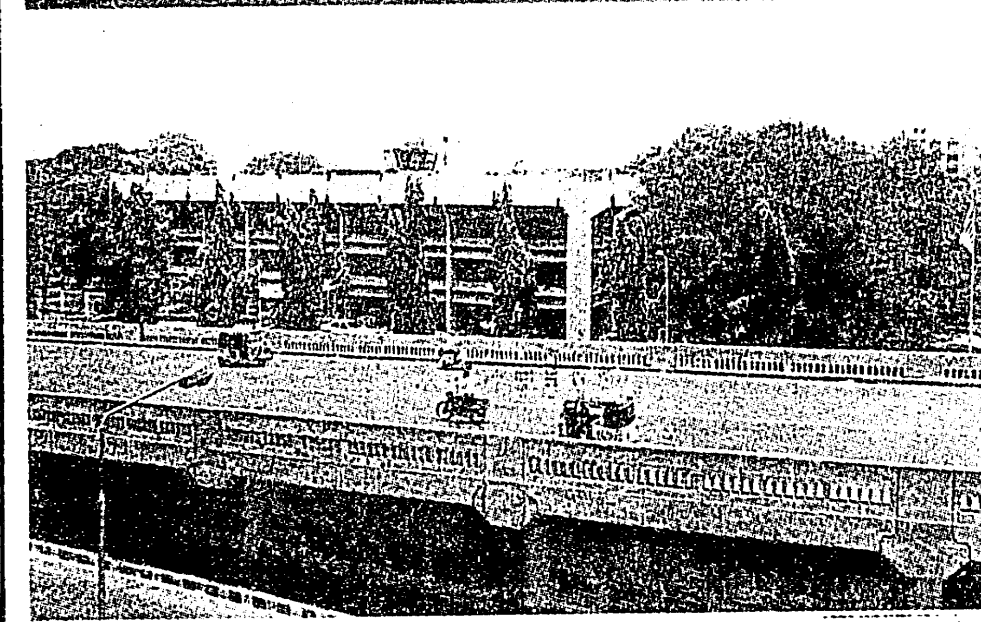
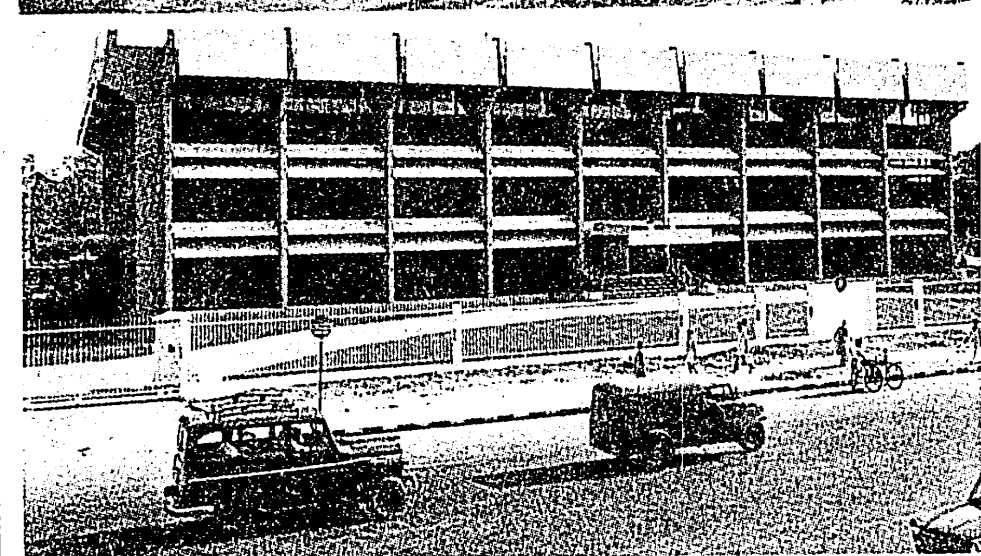
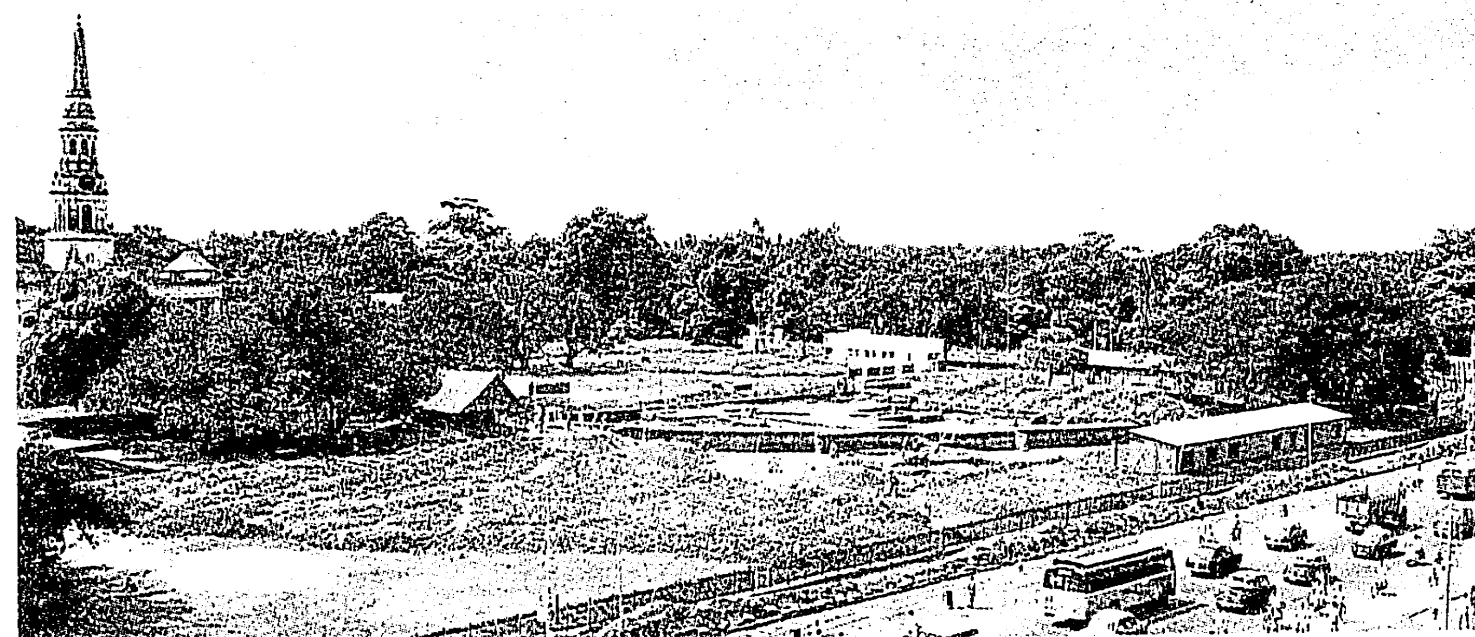
Benjamin Joy believed it important also to have consular agents at Madras and Bombay "where many American ships go". On November 24, 1794, he informed the U.S. Department of State that he had appointed a consular agent at Madras, one William Abbott, whom he described as "Secretary to the Nabob of Arcot". Abbott had also spent several years as an agent to a building contractor, then as an agent to the proprietors of the weekly newspaper, *Madras Courier*.

Abbott's duties as consul did not seem to have distracted him from his varied commercial ventures. In 1798, he was Deputy Master Attendant, one of whose responsibilities was to supply water to ships calling at Madras. Subsequently, he set up a company called Abbott & Maitland in Madras. He was a creditor to his old employer, the Nabob of Arcot, who had borrowed huge sums of money from various people. (Ultimately, the East India Company undertook to clear the Nabob's debts.)

Abbott was active in local politics as well, being appointed one of nine aldermen of "Madraspatnam" between 1793 and 1798. His career ran into a temporary hitch when, on December 8, 1797, he and his family were asked to leave India for allegedly having shown disrespect to the government. He tendered an apology, and the order was withdrawn. The following year Abbott became the mayor of Madras! ...

Extensive outside business interests, such as Consul William Abbott's in Madras, were the rule rather than the exception in the early years of the American republic. American consuls of the 18th and 19th centuries were not paid regular salaries but rather received commissions out of the fees they charged for the services they performed. ...

EDITOR'S NOTES: It was 1852 before the British Government recognised an U.S. Consul in India. So recognised was Edward Ely in Bombay. But it was to be well into the 20th Century before U.S. Consuls were a part of the regular scene in the three major port cities of India and it was after



THE OLD...

The picture of THE OLD we really wanted to use is now part of the exhibition at the American Centre, but the negatives are lost. That shows the 3½-acres of tree-shaded site where the US Consul-General's office came up on. Part of St. George's campus, those grand trees which shaded the spaciousness of the Cathedral's gardens were very similar to the ones seen in our picture of THE OLD, a photograph taken not long after work began on the building in the late 1960s.

The 33,654 sq ft building was designed by Burk, Le Breton and Lamantia of New Orleans, who used features from the southern parts of both countries. The South Indian mutram or vaasal (the central, open courtyard) is one of the features of the building, which was constructed by Oriental Builders of Delhi who had built Roosevelt House, the U S Embassy in Delhi.

...and THE NEW

THE NEW shows the handsome US Consulate building shortly before its inauguration on January 3, 1969, by the then-Governor of Tamil Nadu, Sardar Ujjal Singh. Present on the occasion were the then-U S Ambassador Chester Bowles and Tamil Nadu Industries and Education Minister V R Nedunchezian. When the Silver Jubilee of the building was marked at a small and brief function on January 3rd this year, Nedunchezian was again present and made, what everyone present agreed was, his shortest speech ever; obviously the Assembly in session summoned.

...and THE NOW

The Consulate Building Nedunchezian visited on this occasion was little different from what he had visited on its inauguration. But the one difference he would have found was that no longer could a view of it be taken from the road to match the USIS's NEW. High protective walls ensure that the picture of the NOW can only be taken, as V S RAGHAVAN did, from the Anna Flyover

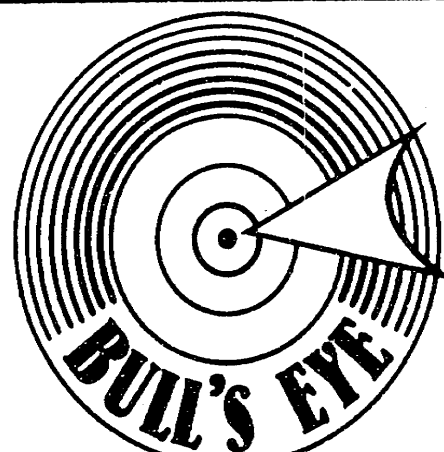
(Photographs: THE OLD and THE NEW : USIS; THE NOW: V S Raghavan)

in the case of rice cultivation. While this difference between non-vegetarianism and vegetarianism is intriguing, the development is also alarming.

Good paddy fields are gradually being converted into shrimp farms. Leasing of lands for aquaculture is hurting cultivable areas. The problem looms large when imported feeds carry hazardous chemicals, affect exports and the health of the consumer.

Despite the world trade for seafood standing at \$ 35 billion, the demand-supply gap is expected to widen further. China and India are, therefore, currently in focus. Domestic demand in India for shrimp is currently meagre, which would ensure it better foreign exchange inflows than China, where consumption is high. The industry is currently

(Continued on P7)



and marketing. Some tie-ups result in a guarantee of certain yield, while others help the exporters produce high quality products.

The realisation from headless shrimp works out to as high as Rs. 265 per kg, even though they are 30 per cent lighter by weight. The returns from ten acres of shrimp cultivation run to lakhs as against thousands

Doctors in a Dilemma-II

What worries the doctors

(Continued from last fortnight)

It is the summary disposal of cases of medical negligence that the medical profession is against, since this will do tremendous harm to the morale of medical practitioners who are already working under conditions which are far from ideal. Doctors working in rural areas often cannot afford or reach sophisticated diagnostic equipment and have to diagnose by their clinical knowledge and experience. Overplaying of medical negligence under these circumstances will only demoralise doctors and prevent medical help from reaching the poor who need it badly. With the threat of the CPA's action being unleashed on them, doctors will move more and more towards practising defensive medicine — ordering more investigations and refusing to treat risky cases. This will only make medicine unaffordable for the poor.

Consider the circumstances under which many doctors work. They face lack of diagnostic facilities, lack of supportive staff, insufficient medicines and poor facilities for surgery. The unchecked availability of substandard drugs and unreliable medical equipment definitely affect standards of medicare. Even lack of continuous supply of electricity, a common feature, can affect the functioning of medical machinery which, in turn, affects the outcome of surgery or medical management. A defective valve in an oxygen cylinder leading to reduction of oxygen to a patient under anaesthesia, can cause him never to recover consciousness; spurious antibiotics given to patients after surgery can retard their recovery. But in all these cases, it is the doctor alone who is blamed. The average Indian doctor is grossly overworked

and functions under very adverse conditions. To bring his profession under the CPA is to further demoralise him.

It must be noted that many cases of medical negligence result from the general medical environment in India. A major deficiency in the Indian health care network is manpower, surprising though that may seem. The system is currently disorganised, unsystematically structured and top-heavy. Instead of the ideal, pyramid-shaped health delivery unit with a doctor, five nurses and 50 paramedical staff, we have an inverted

pyramid with more doctors than nursing staff. Similarly, even in government hospitals, we have far more specialists than general physicians. Also, the specialties are loaded in favour of certain fields, while others are ignored. Thus, a district hospital might have more gynaecologists than it needs, but no ophthalmologist. Similarly, a TB Centre may easily be headed by a paediatrician, because doctors specialising in the treatment of TB are not available.

Ideally, at the base of the medical structure, there should be the general physician, the family doctor who can treat most ordinary ailments and refer the patient to the taluk or district hospital if necessary, which, in turn, can refer the patient to the referral hospital in more serious cases. In this

way, overcrowding at the referral hospitals can be avoided and the hospital machinery can be used more effectively to treat severely ill patients. Further, the family doctor should be reintroduced so that apart from treating basic ailments, he can also act as a bridge between the patients and the specialists, thereby reducing misunderstanding of the patient's problems.

Meanwhile, it seems that a good number of medical men are being unnecessarily implicated in speculative and painful malpractice cases in the Consumer Forums, as filing a case here does not require a court fee as normal courts do. At the same time, by including medical negligence cases, which usually take much longer than three months to resolve, because of their complicated nature (now it is as much as 3 years), disposal of cases is taking much longer at the Consumer Forums and their efficient working is hampered.

● By A Special Correspondent,
based on a paper by
Dr. MARTHANDA PILLAI
(Professor of Neurosurgery, Trivandrum Medical College, and Past President, Indian Medical Association, Trivandrum Chapter)

The medical profession does not wish to claim immunity from law or accountability. What it objects to is doctors being bracketed with traders under the purview of the CPA. This downgrades the dignity of the medical profession. Even in countries like the USA and the UK, which top in the number of litigations against doctors, the cases are not dealt with under the CPA.

By all counts it would, on the whole, be wiser to leave cases of medical negligence to the Indian Medical Council, or a similar competent experts panel. Along with this, the public health care system should be revamped and private medical practice more strictly supervised. This, rather than hauling doctors to the Consumer Courts, would be true reform.

(Concluded)

The View from Fort St George...

Surgery in the House

The short session of the State Assembly which began December 30th will be remembered for a long time to come, because of the significant surprises it had for history.

The session saw noisy scenes, hands raised in anger, evictions, hostile and hardhitting interventions, the shifts and evasions in politics — they were all there. Chief Minister Jayalalitha was at her tactical best, speaking only when she should, and a silent spectator at other times. All this was par for the course.

What was surprising was that the House, in three swift, separate and surgical moves, 'sidelined' the Supreme Court's 50 per cent reservation formula for the BCs, SCs and STs, did away with the customary Governor's address at the commencement of the session in the New Year, and, more important still, passed two bills, divesting the Governor of his powers as Chancellor of the 13 Universities in the State. The Bills also paved the way for the Chief Minister to become Chancellor instead. This last is seen as a sequel to the Chief Minister and Governor Channa Reddy not seeing eye to eye on many matters of state.

The Congress (I)'s anger was aroused by the absence of the Governor's mandatory address to the House, and the Party saw some motive behind it. Most of the members walked out, followed by the DMK and the MGR-IAADMK's Thirunavukkarasu, who boycotted the Assembly after registering

his protests at the Business Advisory Committee meeting itself. Congress (I) ire spilled over to the second day and reached a crescendo when Congress (I)'s R Singaram was allowed to raise an adjournment motion on a labour matter. Uproarious scenes and what Speaker Muthiah described as threatening gestures followed, and when the Opposition leader, Congress (I)'s S P Balasubramaniam, and several others did not resume their seats despite the Speaker's warning, the watch and ward men were called in. Some members walked out, and as a few were still there, they were ordered to be removed. A Congress (I) member, P V Rajendran, who had hurled some books at another of his party inside the House, was suspended for the rest of the session. The Congress (I) presented a divided unit, as a few members continued to be present, prompting Balasubramaniam to say later that the ruling party was trying to split his party. Thirunavukkarasu was also evicted along with Congress (I) members.

Speaker Muthiah's contention throughout was that there had been precedents in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, when there had been no Governor's address to the legislature. Only the 'first session' in the New Year required a Governor's address. "The present sitting is a continuation from the previous year." But Balasubramaniam thought this "technical argument" was a negation of the mandatory provision in Clause 1 of Act 176. He also questioned the Government's 'motive' in fixing the debate on the Reservation Bill at the year-end and continuing the sitting in the New Year.

The Reservation Bill, to achieve social justice through continuance of 69 per cent reservation in the State, was unanimously passed on December 31st. It was introduced by the Chief Minister who also spoke about the need for such a measure. An all-party meet on October 26th had wanted the Government to take all measures to either get the Constitution amended or pass a State law to protect the existing reservation percentage. A special session on November 9th urged a Constitutional amendment and a Government-sponsored *bandh* on November 16th had preceded the introduction of the Bill.

Amongst other matters, the Assembly passed a resolution seeking upgradation of Avadi township into a Municipality. The Tamil Nadu Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Bill, which also bans posters on buses, was among the 13 bills passed — nine without discussion — on January 4th.

A White Paper on the recent rains, and the havoc caused, said that 277 persons had died. In Madras City, 226 km of roads had been affected. Repairs to these roads would cost Rs. 17 crores.

(Continued on P6)

— R K K

The aquaculture boom

Ascientist called his colleagues home for a party and plied them with several dishes and desserts, including icecream. Appreciative guests were taken aback when they were later told that the main ingredient of each food was, believe it or not, cultured algae!

Marine products are no longer a 'coastal', 'inland', 'offshore' or, for that matter, even a 'fishy' affair. Aquaculture or fish farming (the breeding of shrimp, fish and other aquatic forms of life under a controlled environment) has taken the centre stage with companies falling head over heels to join the bandwagon. December 1993 alone

saw three companies in this field tapping the capital market.

Few industries offer as exciting a future in India. With production in the major seafood countries like Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines dwindling, and India bestowed with a vast stretches of brackish water, it is only natural that business houses have decided to cash in on this golden opportunity.

The techniques followed for the cultivation of shrimp are either extensive, semi-intensive or intensive. While the yield is highest in intensive farming, the same carries with it a high risk of disease. Generally, therefore, the semi-intensive method is preferred. An inte-

grated aquaculture unit consists of a hatchery, grow-out farms, feed mill and processing plant. Each step implies value addition as well as better technology management, but each step also need's intimate monitoring and additional capital cost.

Value addition in shrimp processing takes two forms, Block Frozen and Individual Quick Frozen (IQF). The value addition from the IQF form, or the new technology, is higher. Still, most companies export their products in the Bulk Frozen Form, as IQF equipment involves high capital cost. Foreign tie-ups are for P & M, technology, development of design of equipment, processing

When do fruit bars become an industry here?

Kerala and Maharashtra pioneered the mango bar, but in recent months a well known name in branded sweets has flooded the Madras market with mini-mango-bars wrapped in some very attractive, up-market wrapping, offering it as an addition to its range of sweets. Now *Madras Musings* hears that the Food and Agriculture Organisation is encouraging the manufacture of fruit bars in developing countries.

Giuseppe Amorizzi, a food technologist and an FAO Consultant, was recently asked by FAO to develop simple fruit bar processing methods for the developing countries so that the surplus seasonal fruit — such as mango (rich in vitamin A), bananas, papaya and guava — could be profitably converted into "colourful, nutritious and wholesome snack bars".

Writing about his experience in the FAO magazine, *Ceres*, Amorizzi says:

● The bars have a long shelf-life (up to one year) and are far superior nutritionally to common sweets and toffees, which consist largely of sugar and artificial flavours. The process by which they are produced is 'low-tech',

inexpensive, provides local employment and a market for locally grown produce. In short, it is truly 'sustainable'.

There is, admittedly, no shortage of methods already in existence for producing what is known in the trade as 'fruit leather'. A simple, traditional method of keeping mangoes, for example, is to spread the mango pulp on a bamboo mat or aluminum tray, with or without addition of sugar, and let it dry in the sun for four to six days until it has a leathery consistency. The dried product is then rolled or cut into pieces for sale. Although the freshly prepared product is of good quality, standards are virtually non-existent and the storage life is relatively short — only two to three months. During storage, both colour and texture deteriorate and insects may infest the fruit. The method does not work well with banana, guava or papaya.

As for more sophisticated methods, a number have been developed, using electric or steam through flow dryers, for example, to dehydrate mango slices... The more advanced techno-

logies, however, are all characterised by the use of less labour per unit of output — and thus not only fail to expand employment in proportion to output in the areas where they are introduced, but in some cases actually add to already substantial unemployment problems. Such technologies of an

Main raw material required to prepare approximate 100 kg of fruit bars.					
Type of fruit	Fruit required in kg	Pulp required in kg	Sugar required in kg	Yield (%)	Yield (kg)
Mango	720	360	33	13.8	27.7
Banana	600	360	30	16.6	27.7
Guava	406	325	60	24.6	30.7
Mango + Banana	540	360	35	14.5	27.7
Papaya + Banana	500	336	54	23.4	29.7

require large plants and equipment and are capital-intensive. Often, their introduction requires new and higher levels of labour skill, and makes new demands on the countries involved to change their economic and social structures...

The leitmotif for choosing a processing technology for developing

countries ought to be to combine labour, material resources and capital so that not only the type and quality of goods and services produced are taken into account, but also the distribution of their benefits and the prospects of overall growth...

The method developed involves only a single major operation, namely drying the fruit pulp after mixing it with suitable ingredients, and can be used to produce mango, banana, guava or mixed fruit bars. A dual-powered dryer, working by solar energy during the day and by electric or steam power at night and on rainy days... is well-suited for dehydration of the pulp to the desired moisture level of 15 to 20 per cent.

The resulting product should have a long shelf-life, high organoleptic value (stimulating to the senses of taste, colour, odour and touch) and an acceptable production cost...

Mango and banana pulp, as well as papaya and banana pulp, can be mixed in a calculated ratio for preparing mixed fruit bars...

The dried pulp is removed from the dryer trays and cut into square pieces of 5 x 5 cm at a thickness of about 0.3 cm... Cellophane, a transparent film produced from regenerated cellulose, provides an ideal package for dried fruit bars, which require moisture barrier protection (shelf-life of one year at room temperature).

With the wealth of fruit available in Tamil Nadu, will be soon see a boom in fruit bars?

Quizzin' with Ramanan

(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN's questions are from the fortnight December 16th — 31st.)

1. Name the great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi who was killed by armed robbers in South Africa.
2. Complete the list M.S., D.K. Pattammal, M.L.V., T. Brinda, Balasaraswathi and?
3. Name the historical colonial building rededicated to the Madras public by C. Subramanian on 18-12-1993.
4. Who is the new Sheriff of Madras?
5. What immortal movie memorabilia was sold recently for \$82,000?
6. Who won the Mahindra International Squash Challenge held recently in Bombay?
7. The Diamond Jubilee of what Indian cricketer "first" was celebrated on December 17th?
8. According to *Indian Express* reports, which Union Minister is alleged to be bogged in a Rs. 9.8 crore slush money mire because of his brother's shady deals?
9. Why was American philanthropist billionaire Walter Annenberg in the news?
10. Alina Fernandez Revuelta, who was granted U.S. Asylum amidst publicity, is the daughter of....?
11. Name the former international Tamil Nadu basketball star-cum-skinner who passed away recently?
12. Why was the sacred tank of the Thayumanavanswamy Temple, Tiruchi, in the news recently?
13. Where was the Professional Chess Association's Qualifier Tournament, won jointly by V. Anand, held recently?
14. Name the former Minister who returned to AIADMK after an unsuccessful stint with Dr. Subramaniam Swamy's party.
15. According to its Commissioner, K. Rajagopalan, what record for any Metro did the City Police achieve in 1993?
16. Why was the Tamil film thespian, Sivaji Ganesan, a subject of controversy recently?
17. Name the character Ian Botham essays in the recently released pantomime *Dick Whittington*?
18. Which posthumously-released book caused a furore in the country recently?
19. Where is the next SAF Games going to be held in December 1993?
20. As 1993 came to a close, what has the UN designated 1994 to be?

(Answers on p.8)

A small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine

3 tbs oil
Salt to taste

Method

Heat oil. Add asafoetida powder and cumin seeds. When they splutter add the grated ginger, chopped cauliflower and a little water to cover the vegetables. Simmer till almost done.

Add the chilli powder, turmeric powder and chopped tomatoes. Cook till well blended.

Add the garam masala. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and serve hot.

Chandra Padmanabhan

One Man's Madras

(Continued from P5)

be taken on as Director of Photography and regular columnist by the *Indian Express*, where I remain today, still grumbling, cursing, snarling, growling and complaining, as all good Englishmen do, should and always have done wherever they happen to be in the world, including their own country, no matter what the subject of their rage

might be, whether it's policemen or the weather, the lack of water or the fluctuations of the voltage, the heat, the mosquitoes, the flies, the ignorance of hygiene — oh, the list is endless. But there you are: I'm a Madras, and a Madras I shall remain for whatever little more time it pleases the Almighty to allow me.

Sruti's 'Artistes of the Decade'

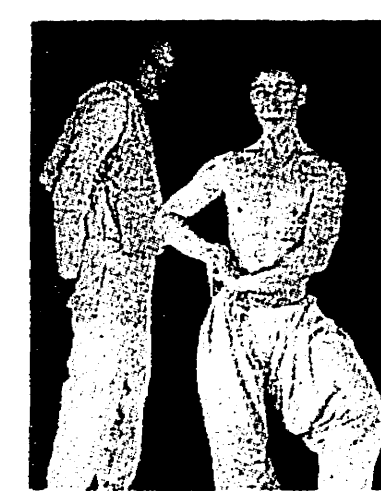
Sruti, the Madras-based monthly devoted to classical music and dance has selected the following ten 'Artistes of the Decade' — 1983-93'. Palakkad K V Narayanaswamy (Carnatic vocal), U Srinivas (Carnatic music — mandolin), Bhimsen Joshi (Hindustani music — vocal), Zakir Hussain (Hindustani — tabla), Kelucharan Mahapatra (Odissi), Birju Maharaj (Kathak), Vempati Chinna Satyam (Kuchupudi), Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair (Kathakali), Malavika Sarukkai (Bharatha Nattam) and Bharati Sivaji (Mohini Attam).

They might not make everyone's list, but there is no doubt that they are outstanding.

What's real?

Judging a competition is an unenviable job, particularly a dance competition. There are so many individual styles that have developed in independent India that it is very difficult to say what exactly is the real Bharatha Nattam.

The Kalakshetra rigour and basic structure have influenced all other



Ramli Ibrahim (as the shishya) and Manonmani (as the guru) in the Odissi ballet 'Adoration' — (Photograph: S Anwar).

styles. They are the basic minimum to be expected from a dancer wishing to exhibit the art from the platform. But there is much more to it.

Judging the dancers at the Indian Fine Arts Society's talent promotion programme was tough. There were experienced professionals, like Mahalaxmi and Narendra, and very young dancers like Nitya Jagannathan. There were big disparities in age, experience, style and training. So I decided to look for an inner spark a

dancer might possess apart from her/his training.

Mahalaxmi and Narendra, being a class apart, were excluded from the competition; they should be giving full-length performances and not entering competitions like this one.

A Laxman, who won the award, has a verve to his dancing. His guru, K J Sarasa, also impressed — with the way she conducted the recital, doing *nattuvangam* with her left hand while

The View From The Wings by V.R. Devika

sporting a right hand in a bandage, the result of a fracture.

Differing views

Dance is such an individualized art form! And how different are the feelings it evokes in an audience!

Malavika Sarukkai's Narada Gana Sabha performance was lacklustre to

many of us, but there were many who were bewitched by it. I thought she was back in form at the Bharath Kalachar, where she introduced some interesting new ideas in her *Sanchari*. The audience resoundingly applauded her and requested an additional piece. Yet there were a few who said it was boring!

Need for intimacy

Dance needs an intimacy for effective communication. Balasaraswati's daughter Lakshmi Knight needs the intimacy of space and a *Sahridaya* to fully enjoy her dance. She sang and did *Abhinaya* delightfully at the inauguration of Ravivendra Rao's photo tribute to the greats of music and dance at the Sakshi Gallery. Her performance gave us insights into Balasaraswati's school of dance and music. But, why did she attempt a *Varnam* on a large stage like the Sadguru Gnanananda Hall? Several people left early, not waiting for the real joy of the *Padams*.

That great art need not necessarily be inherited was amply proved by the dance of Ratikanta Mahapatra. There is a certain arrogance in his dance that cannot be excused. Just happening to be the son of the great Odissi guru is not enough. Humility and surrender to the art is essential before it can be shared with an audience.

Ratikant's father Kelucharan Mahapatra's dance is sheer poetry and incredibly beautiful. There is some merit in the sublimation theory after all....

Adoration on stage

"There is a very thin line between the sacred and the profane," said Guru Debaprasad as portrayed in 'Adoration', a tribute to the late guru by his disciple Ramli Ibrahim.

'Adoration' is an Odissi theatrical piece which narrates a *guru-shishya* relationship, offers some subtle points about Odissi and incorporates some postures, movements and also pieces of dance. It also demonstrated on stage the wrapping of the *dhoti* and make-up being put on, all very sensitively presented.

Both demonstrations and the question-and-answer session afterwards were very lively. In Ramli's dance you can't see the choreographic details; what you see is the performance, the consciousness and the adoration of the dance. The students of Padma Seshadri reacted intuitively to the stillness of his static image as much as to his dynamism.

K. Gopalakrishnan

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



'Jerome Thomas the balletic juggler' — later this month at the TTK Auditorium.

January: 'Artist of the Month' — Indrapramit Roy. He lives and works at Cholamandal Artists' Village, Injambakkam.

January 18: *Belle of Amherst*. Written by William Luce, this one-woman, two-act play is based on the life of 19th Century poet Emily Dickinson. It will be presented at the American Centre Auditorium (6.00 p.m.).

January 20: Miriam E Guichard, USIS Director for South India, will deliver the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Lecture. Co-sponsored by the Indo-American Association (6.00 p.m. USIS).

January 25: Jerome Thomas at TTK Auditorium, 6.30 p.m. Jerome Thomas learnt juggling at the age of 14. In 1990 he began teaching at the national school for circus. He has been described as "a fiery young virtuoso who entirely breaks down the division between juggling and ballet. Co-sponsored by Alliance Francaise and ICCR.

February: 'Artist of the Month' — Gridhar Gowd.

February 4-5: 'Documentary Films of the Former GDR'. Of the generation which set out in the Sixties to remedy the painful lack of films about the GDR, the most important name is that of Jürgen Böttcher. Seminar with Jürgen Böttcher, Berlin. (Max Muller Bhavan — On invitation only.)

February 4-11: An international seminar on Real Madras Handkerchief, hosted by the Madras Craft Foundation. The Real Madras Handkerchief, also known as Madras, Madras Lungi, Madras Checks, George Cloth or Guinea Cloth, is a major export to West Asia and the African countries. In fact, the women of Nigeria use Madras cloth for everyday wear as 'turbans' and as a *lungi*. The seminar will look at the different aspects of weaving the cloth and will also have a hands-on workshop in which designers, weavers, exporters and development organizers will participate. Participants are from around the world and there will be papers presented on the historical and geographical perspective, the use of the cloth around the world, the current situation of weavers, design trends and directions in Rural weaving. MCF's Dakshinatchira (a museum-in-the-making) is creating a collection of woven designs which will be catalogued and displayed in the museum.

It's dinner on a silver platter!

It was one of those days when you wake up on the wrong side of the bed and everything goes haywire. From misplacing my contact lenses, to letting the milk boil over and breaking the coffee jar, I had my share of ill-luck.

Muttering curses, I tried to calm myself down with the thought that things couldn't possibly get worse. I looked forward to the evening. I had called eight to ten friends over for dinner. We were planning to sit out on my terrace, enjoy the cool breeze and strum our guitars while we sang.

Come evening, and my maid didn't show up. Now it was time to hit the panic button. There was no way I could dish up a meal for ten people in less than two hours and, anyhow, the prospect of sweating it out in the kitchen has never appealed to me!

It was then I decided to try out the SINDOORI HOTEL's 'Company Chef'. Having seen

the service advertised in the newspapers, it had always struck me as a very attractive concept. However, I had always balked at the expense involved.

Anyway, stuck in this situation, I had no option, apart from slogging it out myself. Calling up SINDOORI, I discovered that the menu included Fast Foods, Indian and Continental cuisines and a full complement of desserts. "What about the prices?" I croaked. To my surprise, the rates were fairly reasonable. (I discovered there is a 10% discount. However, the transport charges do more or less offset that discount.)

I ordered a sumptuous dinner of *Seekh kababs*, *Tandoori Rotis*, *Kashmiri Pulao*, *Makkhani Dal*, *Murg Mirch Masala* and *Gulab Jammuns*. I then sat back and heaved a sigh of relief. My worries were taken care of!

Needless to say, it was an evening to remember. The food

was excellent and since I had ordered a 'Silver Platter' service, it came with all the trimmings — a well laid out table with silver cutlery, crisp linen, flowers and efficient service.

It was such a pleasure to just sit back and enjoy myself without worrying about what was happening in the kitchen. The headache of chopping vegetables, frying, cooking and cleaning up was not there. My friends had a wonderful time and I had a tension-free evening!

If cooking is not top on your list of favourite activities, 'Company Chef' is an excellent alternative. Believe me, it is a blessing not having to worry about overcooked rice, burnt *dosas* or *pappad* like *chappattis*! The next time you have unexpected guests or feel too lazy to cook, think of the easy way out. It is just a phone call away — at SINDOORI!

— Viniitha

MERRY READING FOR A FEW YEARS

Not many today are aware that the late Thiruthirupondri Subramania Srinivasan, better known as S S Vasan, the Indian movie mogul and proprietor of that popular Tamil weekly *Ananda Vikatan*, also published a magazine in English. It was over half a century ago and was styled *Merry Magazine*. During a chat at a wedding in the mid-1950's Vasan told this writer that the name of the magazine was actually a translation of *Ananda Vikatan*!

Vasan founded the magazine as a monthly in 1933 and initially it enjoyed a fair amount of success. In January 1935 it was converted into a fortnightly.

Merry Magazine catered to the intelligentsia of South India. Vasan, ever a talent-scout, encouraged many new writers to test the waters in English. The most successful of them all, and one who established an international reputation, was R K Narayan, whose earliest writings appeared in the magazine. Interestingly, in a story by

him entitled 'The Poor Burglar', which appeared in the June 15, 1935, issue, his name appears as 'R K Narayana Swami'; he seems to have later dropped the 'Swami'.

A noted judge of the Madras High Court, A S P Iyer, also wrote for the magazine and so did that lawyer-dramatist whose middle name was humour, V C Gopalratnam. Indeed, V C G was a regular contributor and even wrote humorous detective stories in which everyone except the detective seemed to know whodunit. Harindranath Chattopadaya, the famed poet and man of letters, contributed poetry.

Old-timers still recall those popular fiction serials in *Merry Magazine* with alliterative titles... 'Bala, the Bad Woman', 'Devi, the Dancer' and 'Misfortunes of Meena'. The writer was 'DEISVI', a pen name for D Sundara Varadan. Whatever happened to him afterwards?

Many others wrote under odd and incredible pen-names, like Naar A. Yanen (Narayanan), Fritz-Boodle,

Narak N. Nurak and Neil O'Canteen (the pen-name of a Professor of English of Loyola College, Madras — M G Neelakantan!). Vasan paid his writers Rs. 50 for a short story, a handsome remuneration during the Thirties when

(about movies) appeared in every issue. So did crossword puzzles.

Merry Magazine carried interesting advertisements which most publications would hesitate to accept today. Ads for 'Rejuvenation and Cure for Impotence',



by Randor Guy

you could buy almost 4 sovereigns of gold or around 750 Madras measures of Nellore rice with it!

The magazine included excellent cartoons by the famous cartoonist 'Mali' (T R Mahalingam — not the actor nor the legendary flautist). The famed movie art director and production designer A K Sekhar contributed many sketches in his own inimitable style. Columns like 'Flashes in My Brain Pan' and 'Star Dust'

'V D rooted out in 24 hrs!' and also 'a cure' for 'Wet-Dreams' appeared regularly in the magazine. I wonder how many really benefited from these ads.

S S Vasan ran a successful mail order business from his old residence in Mint Street which he continued even after he hit the big-time, and the ads of such companies as The Krishna Agency and Genuine Watch Company, with the famed address, Post Box No. 119, Madras, appeared in

every issue. You could buy a gold-plated watch for Rs. 5-14, and a film camera for Rs. 4-12. Vasan also sold, a hand-operated film projector with a few movie clips of Hindi and Tamil films for Rs. 6. (This writer was gifted one such projector in the early 1940's with which he conducted shows in his hometown!)

Vasan, a prolific writer and journalist, wrote, much to the surprise of many, one book, *The Pleasures of Married Life*, which sold freely at 8 annas a copy in that now-lamented Madras institution, the Moore Market, during the Fifties and Sixties. Surely those were the days!

Regrettably, *Merry Magazine* was not a financial success and ceased publication with the onset of World War II (1939).

(NOTE: This writer was the proud owner of a bound volume of MM, a gift from his guru V C Gopalratnam, but, alas, like many things in life, that rare volume vanished some years ago, courtesy, good friends!)

An eloquent plea for wider sports sponsorship

Indian Bank, India Cements and Kumbhat Group of Companies recently helped the Tamil Nadu Billiards and Snooker Association and the Madras Cricket Club to organise prize money tournaments featuring world stars like Geeth Sethi and Yasin Merchant, both of Gujarat. Madras, indeed, had never before had a green baize games carnival like the one that pulled the crowds in, in the last week of December.

Main crowd-puller at both the TNBSA's State championships, at its rented building on Royapettah High Road, and the Kumbhat-MCC Masters snooker tournament was, understandably, Sethi, the world billiards champion. Maharashtra's Yasin Merchant, Sarang Shroff and Devendra Joshi, Gujarat's Syed Multani and Rupesh Shah and Tamil Nadu's Rafath Habib, all talented players, were there all right. But pride of place went to

Sethi, who rose to the occasion with dazzling performances, the like of which Madras had never before witnessed. Century breaks, even five-century breaks, flowed from his cue in the same manner in which runs came off the bat of Sunil Gavaskar while the age

by
JAICI

cricketer was in full flight. Even India's former world champion, Michael Ferreira, and S.W. Edwards lacked Sethi's top-of-the-table artistry.

Well as he is the pride of Indian sport, Sethi is no mere champion. He is the most fluent and knowledgeable speaker Indian sport has known. After N. Ramachandran, Director, India Cements, presented the prizes and cheques at a colourful function,

presided over by M. Gopalakrishnan, Director, Indian Bank, Sethi took everybody by surprise with the fluency of his thanksgiving speech. He emphasised the need for sponsorship, which **alone** could improve Indian standards.

Recalling the whitewash many an Indian sport had taken in the international arena, Sethi said the sorry state of affairs was due to the lack of adequate sponsorship which, unfortunately, in our country was confined to a handful of disciplines like cricket. He requested sport-minded bankers and industrialists to develop a broader outlook and extend their sponsorship to all sports. Only then could Indian sport hold its head high. Otherwise it would continue to eat humble pie.

Unfortunately, the world champion's plea for equal sponsorship for all sports went unnoticed in the local media.

Dismal showing

— by Tamil Nadu in badminton

It is time the Tamil Nadu Badminton Association woke up and launched a scheme to make the shuttle game more popular in the State, spot talent and encourage promising youngsters develop their skills. Tamil Nadu's badminton's bankruptcy was exposed as never before by the Anubhav Plantations-sponsored all-India South Zone championships, which the country's No. 1 'all-rounder' club, the Madras Cricket Club, conducted in the first week of the New Year.

There was not a single Tamil Nadu player in any of the events of any standing. All the events were dominated by players from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and other States. No Tamil Nadu player was among the seeded elite, and, understandably, none from the home State's microscopic minority came within sight of a title. Indeed, never before had Tamil Nadu come out of a home inter-state championship with a more dismal record than the one it had to swallow in this tournament, which saw Anubhav Plantations make their debut in sports sponsorship.

If in spite of Tamil Nadu's known low standards, the star-studded tournament was allotted to the State, it was mainly, if not solely, due to the facilities available at the MCC and the reputation the ancient club had earned over the years for the smooth running of championships. Fittingly enough, all-India

by
AJAX

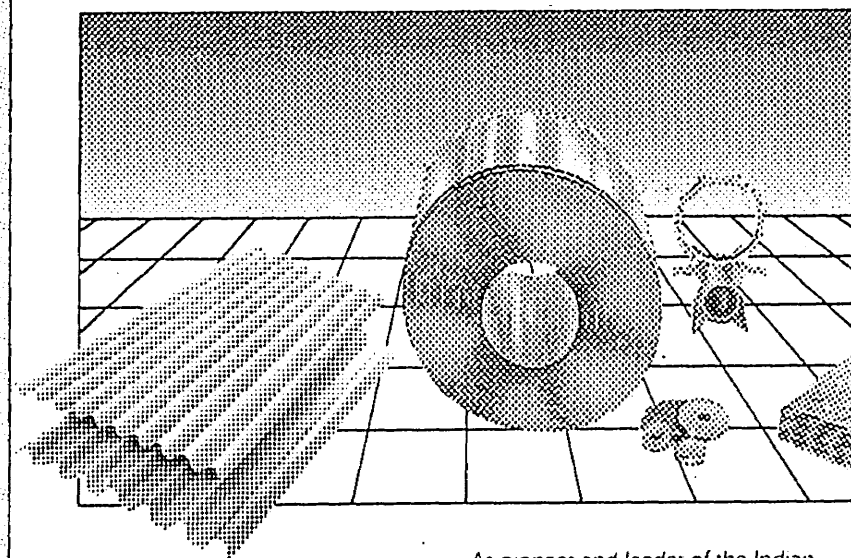
stars, headed by National champion Rajeev Bagga of Maharashtra, the top seed, second-seeded Deepankar Bhattacharya of Assam, the women's No. 1 and 2 seeds, Manjusha Pawangadkar of Maharashtra and Seem Bafna of Madhya Pradesh, respectively, and others turned up to make the tournament a memorable one.

With matches on almost throughout the day, the three-day tournament with a sizeable entry for all the seven

events — the men's singles and women's singles topped the lists with over 30 and 20, respectively — was gone through to schedule. This was possible mainly due to the hard work put in by the MCC organising committee, headed by S.K.A. Manickavasagam, and the MCC secretary, R. Ramesh.

On the eve of the championships, the MCC president, K. Rajendran, had told Pressmen that while the City was having its annual music festivals, the MCC were having a sports festival. He was vindicated by the excellent manner in which the badminton championship was gone through a couple days after the same club had conducted the Kumbhat-MCC Masters snooker tournament.

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ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Kush Ramgobin; 2. Mani Krishnaswami. They have been the only *Vidushis* to receive the Music Academy's Sangeetha Kalanidhi title; 3. Victoria Public Hall; 4. Dr. K. Chockalingam; 5. The famous bowler hat & cane of Charlie "The Tramp" Chaplin; 6. Brett Martin beating Sami Elopuro; 7. The first Test century by Lala Amarnath (at Bombay); 8. Capt. Satish Sharma, the Minister of State for Petroleum; 9. He announced a \$500 m grant to US

Public Education, the single largest gift in the country's history; 10. Cuban President Fidel Castro; 11. M. Senthilvelu; 12. Two crocodiles had managed to find their way into it, thus scaring worshippers away; 13. Groningen (Norway); 14. V.V. Swaminathan; 15. No single instance of police firing; 16. The West Bengal Government resented his being the Chief Guest at the forthcoming International Film Festival of India in Calcutta, but later dropped the objection. Tapan Sinha has since been chosen Chief Guest; 17. "Silly Mid-off", of course!; 18. *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi* by Nathuram Godse; 19. Our very own Madras; 20. International Year of the Family.

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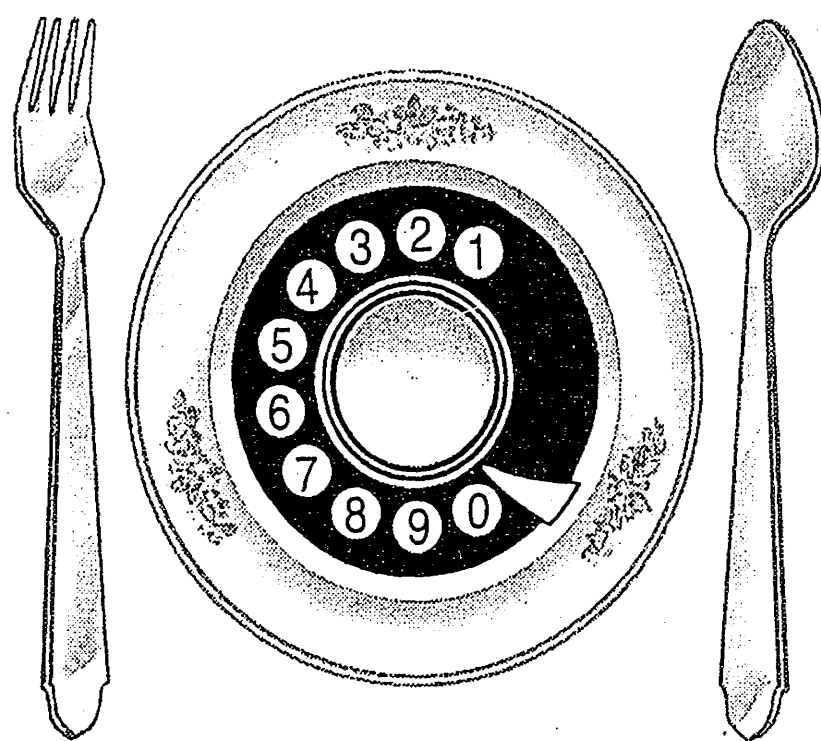
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