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Transcription into dollars

(By Venkatachari Jagannathan)

India, it is stated, has the second largest number of technically-qualified people in the world. With liberalisation and globalisation brought about by the new information order, new avenues of employment have been opened for them. Data conversion and legal/medical transcriptions is one such opportunity. And Madras leads in this field.

Says Ganesh Shastri, President, Vetri Software India (P) Ltd., "Data conversion has the potential to create at least 3000 new jobs". His company employs more than 150 persons and works in two shifts. Obtaining US court judgements and other articles on legal topics from its US parent company, it refits them in the required format and sends them back to the US.

Domex Technical Information is another company in Madras handling legal transcriptions. The company receives the unedited English version of Japanese patent papers pertaining to electronics, communication and mechanical engineering. Domex engages engineering and science graduates in Madras to edit and condense the original version. The final abstract is sent to a UK company for publication.

Employing on full-time basis about 40 persons designated as editors and over 100 freelancers, Domex edits around 2000 patent papers a week. It

plans to increase this to 5000 a week in the near future.

The most high-tech operation in the transcription business is by the Madras partner of Transcriptions International, USA. Medical transcriptions is big business in the US, as doctors are mandatorily required by law to keep proper records of their patients. A spokesman of Transcriptions International told *Madras Musings*, "Doctors in the US call our parent company there over the phone and record their messages. The recorded voices are relayed to Madras and the data entry operators in Madras hear them on their headphones. They simultaneously key in the words and the material is sent back to the US via satellite".

As in a hospital, Transcriptions International too has different departments, viz., Cardiology, Nephrology etc. The data entry operators in each are given three months' training in medical terminologies. Started recently, the company intends to operate 5000 minutes per week in the coming months from the present level of 1000 minutes per week.

Nittany Capital, another Madras-based company, employs 60-70 medical transcriptionists. In their case, the doctor dictates the information over the phone. The Indian company gives him a toll-free number for which the

doctor does not have to pay. His voice is digitised and received in India on the computer. The transcriptionist then creates a file and sends it back to the doctor.

The medical transcriptionists only require to have a good knowledge of English and an aptitude for computers. The company provides the training in computer operations and medical terminology. Each Nittany transcriptionist is assigned to one doctor and the working hours vary according to that of the doctor.

Though more and more companies are entering this multicore industry in India, competition is more severe from companies in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Brazil. "In these countries, data conversion is like a cottage industry," says Ganesh Shastri. While no one in the Madras industry is prepared to talk numbers, *Madras Musings* understands that Madras operators charge 10 dollars an hour against the American 50 dollars. Madras medical transcriptionists earn Rs. 2000 — 7500 a month, whereas in America transcriptionists earn over \$ 2000 a month. And, so, a new profit-making export industry is born.



What do the stars foretell. Mu Karunanidhi is no doubt wondering as political parties in Tamil Nadu start preparing for next year's elections. Meanwhile, both political parties as well as private entrepreneurs have a whale of a time 'decorating' public property. (Photo by V S RAGHAVAN)

Tamil Nadu goes bananas

Leads in production, productivity

(by Our Agriculture Correspondent)

Tamil Nadu stands first in India in banana production, with 10 lakh tonnes every year, followed by Maharashtra. In Tamil Nadu, Tiruchi stands first with a total cultivated area of 22,000 hectares, with a nation-high productivity of 40-45 t/ha. The *nendran* variety is cultivated in 15,000 of these hectares.

Tiruchi is fast emerging as the main producer of the *nendran* variety, not only in Tamil Nadu but in the whole

country, and the bulk of its produce is being sent to Kerala. The high-input wetland cultivation in the Kaveri delta has helped farmers achieve the highest productivity.

Bananas are a quarter of all fruit production in India. The gross production is 87 million tonnes of bananas and plantains, of which 9.8 million tonnes were exported to the developed market economies last year.

(Continued from P. 10)

THE PROHIBITIVE COST OF PLANNING

(By A Special Correspondent)

Does the MMDA want to rush through the process of notifying its II Master Plan without having any informed discussion or debate on it? That's the question being asked by several NGOs and leading citizens of the city.

According to them, the prohibitive cost of the draft Plan — equivalent to the price of a ground in the suburbs! — its enormous size, the short time given to file any objections and its language prevent any informed and detailed public discussion on the Plan which is going to be the guidelines for the development of the city over the next two decades.

The MMDA has priced its Master Plan at Rs. 1000 and the 16 detailed Development Plans at Rs. 500 each, thereby making

it Rs. 9000 for the whole set. Considering that the MMDA is a government body and the document is only a draft, this price is exorbitant. Could it be merely to curtail public discussion by preventing people from buying the draft Plan?

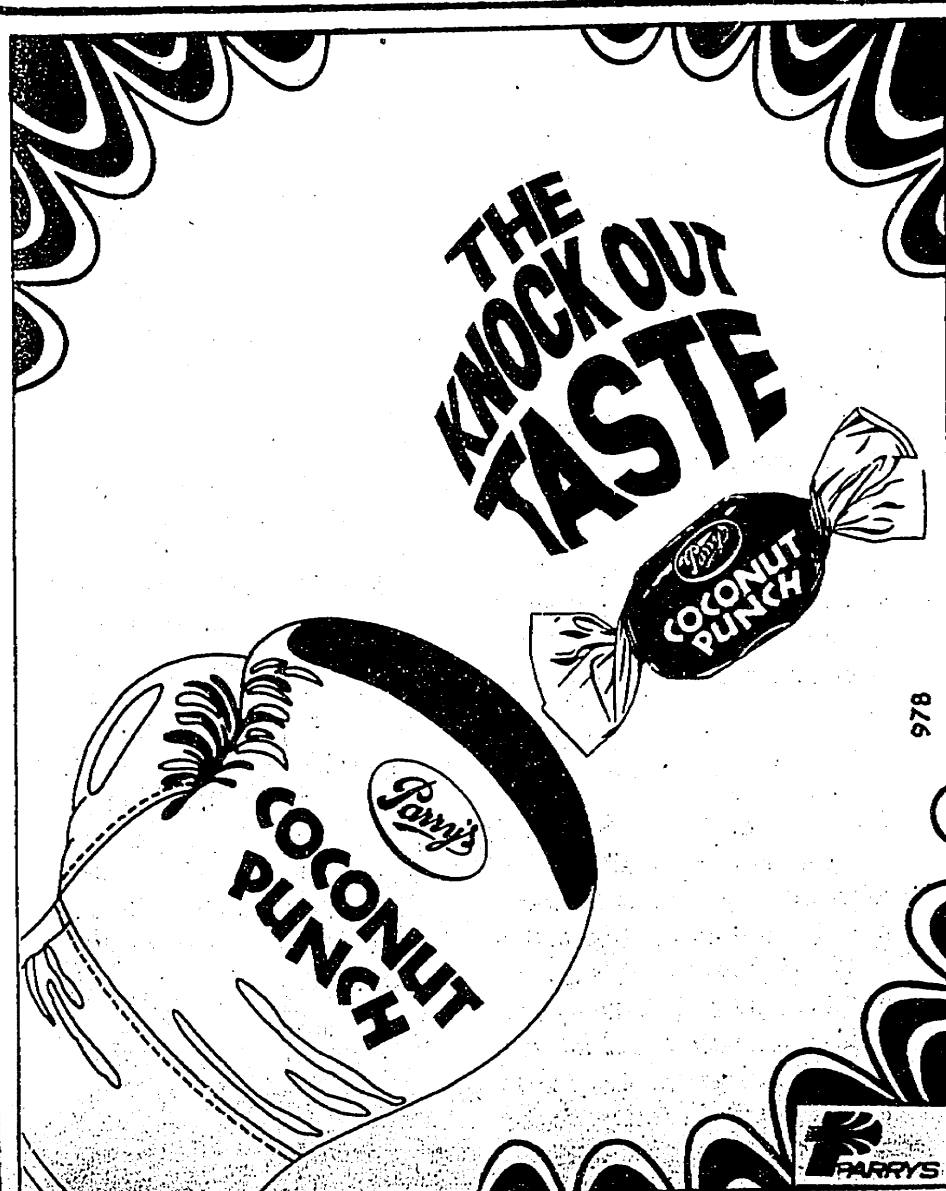
In this connection, the MMDA's announcement of giving citizens the opportunity to inspect the draft document at its office, free of cost, is nothing but eyewash. If it needed seven years for the Town Planners to put together the several studies made earlier as this draft Plan, how can the MMDA expect citizens to read through the entire document at its office and file their objections within two months?

It is also surprising to note that no Tamil translation of the draft Plan is available in a State

where Tamil is stated to be the official language. This, in turn, excludes a majority of the city's population from understanding the fine print of this vital document.

Incidentally, the deadline for registering public protest expired on September 30th. It is learnt that several city-based NGOs have written to the Member Secretary, MMDA, requesting an extension of the deadline and allowing inspection of suggestions and objections received by the MMDA till date.

While the Plan situation is like this, it is rather ironic that the MMDA is the coordinating agency for the UNCHS-sponsored Sustainable Cities Programme which aims to involve the people at grassroots level in the town planning exercise!



Indo-Pacific, Indo-Arab Centres urged

Few people in India show a greater concern for their fellows or take a rosier view of the country's history than Dr K S Singh, former Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India, *The Man From Madras Musings* would think.

The former is demonstrated by the massive 'People of India' project he initiated and which he, though now in retirement, still supervises. The project takes off, at least in the South, from where E Thurston's monumental 1909, seven-volume *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* left off. There have undoubtedly been others of Thurston's ilk in Northern, Eastern and Western India to whom the project owes much. Nevertheless, Dr Singh and his team, in studying 4635 communities in 3581 villages and 1011 towns and cities in 421 districts and 91 cultural regions in India, have, in the Project which commenced on October 2, 1985, gone beyond the work of all the pioneers put together. Their findings are being published in separate volumes on each State and Union Territory and in overall National volumes — the first of which came out in 1993 and the last of which, Dr Singh hopes, will be released before the end of 1996.

The Man From Madras Musings, who has perused a few of the South India volumes, being published by Affiliated East West Press, Madras, feels the researchers have relied rather more than was needed on Thurston, for one thing, and, for another, they have tended to document their information to a rather set pattern that makes for dull reading. But for sheer data on the communities of India, there will not be a better source for years to come — and having made that possible must be considered a major contribution to Indian

social anthropology by Dr. Singh.

It was his closeness to the roots of various Indian communities that made him the other day make an important suggestion to commemorate two of the most important of those roots. Speaking on 'Island Cultures' at the University of Madras, in a lecture sponsored by the Society of Indian Ocean Studies' local branch and the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, he urged that the Government of India should set up two major museums and study centres in India's island territories, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. Both were island groups which played major roles in the ancient migrations to and from India, he stated, and were, therefore, the ideal locations for an Indo-Pacific Centre and an Indo-Arab (MMM) would be more inclined to call it an Indo-Semitic) Centre.

Certainly, MMM feels, the interaction between the Negrito populations of the Pacific and the pre-Sangam age 'South Indians' and the later South Indian influence on the islands of Southeast Asia, as well as the still later interaction between the Arabs and Jews of West Asia and the people who lived on the Coromandel, Fisheries, Malabar and Konkan Coasts, need to be studied far more than our North-centric histories now permit. It is indeed heartening the interest Dr Singh, a former IAS officer in his home state of Bihar, is taking in changing India's sociohistorical outlook.

Not quite so rosy

The Man From Madras Musings, however, can't so enthusiastically endorse his rather rosy picture of Indian history and the rather scant attention he was inclined to pay to the last 400 years.

There may have long existed an overall 'Indianness' in the subcontinent, especially in certain basic cultural patterns, but MMM is inclined to believe that the differences are rather more than the similarities. And that, MMM tends to think, is reflected in the present simmering cauldron that is India. The possibility of the seams sundering and the pot exploding into the different factional segments that once existed — in other words, going back to separatist roots — is rather real. In its reality, MMM is inclined to believe, it only reflects a past many like Dr Singh would like to forget.

A spin-off of this is the question: What made communities migrate? Dr Singh feels

that it might have been famine or, more likely, lack of employment opportunities that led to migrations, apart from war. MMM is inclined to feel that WAR — the almost constant internecine warfare that kept the subcontinent fractured — was responsible for the migrations and that famine as a reason became much more likely in the last two hundred years.

One other point Dr Singh stressed was how much of the subcontinent's culture had passed down to the present. MMM is rather more concerned about how much of it has been

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

lost as king battled king and victor razed all the vanquished had created, except temples and some fewer palaces and forts. The story of the seven Delhis is as much reflection of this as what the Cholas, Cheras, Pandyas and Pallavas did to each other in Tamil Nadu and what Vijayanagar, the Marathas and the Mughal satraps later did to the lot of them.

Gagging librarians

The Man From Madras Musings may have not had much to do with it, but the Madras Librarians' Association meeting addressed by James Nye — which MMM noted on September 16th — very likely did have a lot to do with a gagging order issued by the Director of Public Libraries on September 14th. MALA's meeting on September 4th had Nye not only being unkind to Indian librarians but it also saw at least one Government Librarian pouring his heart out. The result must, then, be the gagging order of September 14th issued by the Director of Public Libraries.

The order states that Government Librarians must get the Director's PRIOR permission to participate in any meetings, seminars or workshops, that they must submit manuscripts of papers to be presented for his prior approval and present them only after approval, and they should not be critical of Government policies. Silence, it would seem, must reign not only in libraries but among Government librarians wherever they be. By order of Government.

While most Government Librarians have for years followed this policy of watching in silence the deterioration of the State's library facilities, MALA meetings are unlikely to be ever the same again if the few Government librarians who kept its sessions lively with their outspokenness decide to allow themselves to be cowed by the order. That will be a sad day, MMM feels.

Peninsular view

Ambassador J N Dixit, who retired as Foreign Secretary, probably remembers best the time he was considered by many in Sri Lanka as behaving like a "Viceroy of Sri Lanka". Looking anything but viceregal, the short, tubby, softspoken Dixit has, however, chosen to write about Pakistan and not Sri Lanka in his first post-retirement publication, *The Anatomy of a Flawed Inheritance, 1970-94*. And it was to talk about the book and matters

of Indian concern that might arise out of it that he was at the Madras Book Club recently.

Dixit, who has what *The Man From Madras Musings* thinks is a rather unique record of serving in every South Asian country except Nepal, besides serving in what might one day become a member of SAARC, Afghanistan, pointed out to one of the Book Club's biggest audiences that, just as almost no one in South India was particularly worked up over the conflict of views with Pakistan, most Pakistanis west of the Indus — in Sind, Baluchistan, western

Punjab and western NWFP — were not particularly concerned with the Indian issue. This was something Delhi better needed to appreciate, he felt. Delhi, he also felt, should encourage bilateral economic links with Pakistan — in the age of economic liberalisation, trade could do wonders.

Citing history — which he felt most in India had forgotten together with the geographic realities — Dixit said the danger to India is not to the North. History, he pointed out, shows that the most vulnerable part of the country is Peninsular India. Not only should Pakistan and India build bridges, he seemed to suggest, but they should look at a common enemy who, as in the past, would covet the subcontinent's wealth and use the sea routes and the weakened southern coasts to get at it.

Citing the Chola Empire's 700-year-old control of the southern seas, citing the arrival of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and the French on the southernmost coasts of India first, and citing the British moving into the North on the strength of its Carnatic (Tamil Nadu) troops, Dixit said India should pay more attention to what the countries, who control the eastern and western routes to the oil of the Arab Gulf, consider the "geographical attraction of South India".

While MMM was delighted to hear, after a long time, someone agree with his views that it's time greater attention was paid to History together with Geography, and that the British won India with troops from the South, he was rather startled to hear Dixit repeatedly stress that India should pay greater attention to its coasts than to its northern frontiers. This appeared to be an echo of Admiral Roy's call for a strengthening of the Navy (MM, June 16 '95).

India must establish a strong blue water navy and increase its Air Force, Dixit urged. Indeed, that the South must insist on a greater say for itself in foreign and defence policy, would seem to have been the thrust of Dixit's presentation in Madras the other day.

The Man From Madras Musings couldn't help but wonder how much all this had to do with the fact that Dixit was born in Madras and his mother taught at Queen Mary's College and Presidency College — both colleges once-renowned for their history and geography departments. But that's just by the

In brief

★ Speaking of the state of our libraries, *The Man From Madras Musings* rather thinks that that state is due to the indifference of those who run them. One well-known private library with a distinguished history and membership held its Annual General Meeting at 4 p.m. on September 30th. The notice for the meeting was HAND-DELIVERED to at least one member on October 6th. MMM does not know when other members received their notices or how many attended the AGM, but he is sure that the views of at least one member were not of interest to those who run this library.

★ The Balaji Group, now linked with the Oberois in developing the Madras Oberoi as the tallest building in Madras, are going even further and higher. They are planning the biggest building in Madras — twin towers of 18 stories each, linked by a slightly smaller tower that will be their corporate headquarters. The landmark Rs. 65 crore building, to be designed by Singapore architects and completed by mid-1997, will come up on the site of another landmark, the Soundarya Nursery. Founded in 1936 and at the present location since 1954, the garden nursery was perhaps the biggest and best for many years till, in recent times, the three sons of the founders took less interest in it as their sons began to move into new fields. So the decision to sell the 33 grounds on Mount Road in Nandanam. *The Man From Madras Musings* understands that the Balaji Group has acquired an additional dozen or so neighbouring acres and the new highrise will come up with plenty of parking space and landscaping in 45 acres. Underground parking is likely to be a major feature of this project, MMM hears — and commends the idea. The Balajis, MMM is told, paid Rs. 12 crore for the Nursery's property and bought the neighbouring property at the same rate. The rumour that the biggest property-buyer in the State had pipped the Balajis at the post would appear not to be true.

★ What has been predicted a couple of times in the past in these columns, namely that American, British, Australian and Canadian educational institutions were eyeing the Indian market through tie-ups, seems to be coming true. *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that the London School of Economics is joining hands with the South Indian Education Society, Matunga, and students enrolling at the SIES's new Nerul complex in suburban Bombay will be able to study there for three years and take the LSE's external exams for the B.Sc (Econ.) and B.Sc (Mgmt.) degrees. Classes, MMM understands, will commence in January 1996 and admissions have just started. With the SIES's background, will Madras students get any advantages, wonders MMM.

MMM

Heading for gridlock?

Courtesy of Arthur C. Clarke's invention of the geo-synchronous satellite (his famous paper, describing in precise mathematical terms how this could be done, appeared exactly fifty years ago in October this year) and local cable TV, I spend hours every day watching the BBC's excellent news and feature programmes. A recent feature was one on Bangkok, Thailand's capital, where, we were informed, motorised traffic is suffering from what, in medical terms would be called terminal symptoms.

Moving literally a few inches at a time, it now takes so long for people in cars to get their kids home from school that most family cars have their rear compartments fitted out like mini-playrooms. TV rooms and even kitchens, with toys, books, TV, potties for the smaller ones, drinks, refreshments and so on. People can expect to spend most of the evening just getting back to a home in the suburbs. In local terms, this would amount to getting from Mount Road to Anna Nagar in four hours! Such a traffic condition, I'm told, is called a gridlock.

Is Madras heading for a similar gridlock condition? Every day I use Mount Road convince me that it is. Remember, I'm an old-timer who's known Madras since September 1947, just a month after Independence, and I've seen it getting worse and worse as it grows ever larger and more densely populated. As I've said and written repeatedly over many years, it's not so much the population increase, bad though that is, it's the population density that causes these dreadful problems.

When I lived there during the 'Fifties, London was a densely over-populated city too. It's not any more. The streets are wide, clean and not at all crowded, either by traffic or people. In my time there, public transport buses,

One Man's Madras — HARRY MILLER'S

to which I have belonged since those days, moved from central London to a fringe village, or small town, some distance from London proper. Our staff hated and strongly resented it. They were miles away now, they thought, from the city's great attractions — Oxford Street shops, Whitehall Government departments, the theatres, concert halls, parks, museums, and all the other facilities of what most Brits still feel is the world's most beautiful city. (If only it had the climate of Madras, I might never have left!)

Forty years later, opinions and feelings have significantly changed. The staff of my Institute, like all others, delight in the freedom, the fresh air, the absence of pollution, the feeling of ample spaciousness and freedom from stress they now enjoy. The local High Street provides them with all the

(Continued on Pg)

all of which are double-deckers, allowed standing room on the lower deck only, and then only during rush hours and never more than five 'standees'. If more than five tried to get on, the conductor would not ring the bell and the bus would not move until the offending passenger got off, which, through the impatience and ire of other passengers, as well as the conductor, he or she quickly did.

Alarms bells warning of overcrowding, not just of buses but of the great metropolis itself, were ringing loud and clear almost half a century ago, and the Government sensibly responded, though at the time people were powerfully reluctant to accept what the authorities and their employers urged upon them.

The answer was to encourage companies and establishments of every kind to move out of the city centre and settle in satellite towns. For example, the Institute of Professional Photographers,

Auto menace

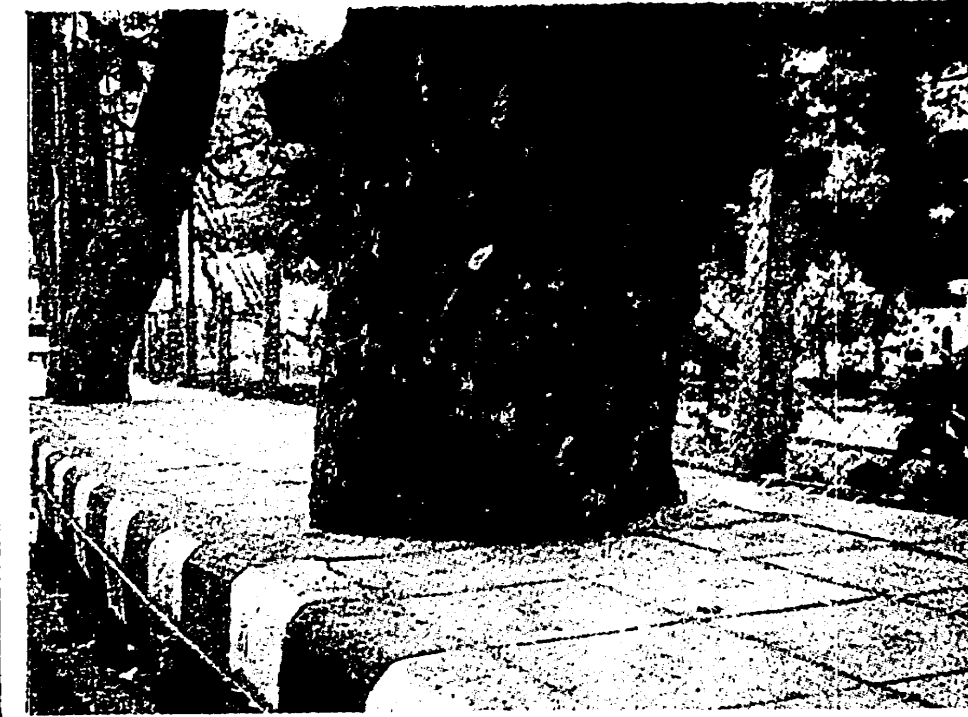
So much has been written and said on the arrogance, callousness and indifference, not to mention the cheating habits, of the auto drivers of Madras. Here is one more story.

A friend of mine was arriving from Bombay by train and did not wish to bother me to receive him in the wee hours when the Bombay-Mail arrives. He asked me to give him the names of two good hotels near the station as he had a one hour's job and was leaving for Bangalore the same afternoon. I suggested two hotels just 1 km away



Giant trees, that must go back a while, are truly cemented in on an Adyar stretch of pavement. As reader Gautham has wondered in the past, how long will they survive in these thoughtless circumstances?

(Pictures by RAJIND N CHRISTY)



OUR READER'S WRITE

rom Central and asked him to pay Rs. 10 as auto fare.

My friend arrived at 5.05 am, approached an auto and told him to go to Hotel Peacock. The automan was very obliging and took off at great speed on the free roads. My friend saw the Marina, some large buildings, Hotel Chola, a flyover, and after 20 minutes he was in Peacock, with the meter showing just 54 rupees. My friend was confused and said that I had told him it was very near, to which the auto driver said 'Everyone says even Tambaram is just 45 minutes by electric train'.

When I met my friend at 10 am he narrated the incident, and when we were

travelling by car, he was shocked to note that Central was only a stone's throw away and our auto-friend had literally taken him for a ride.

So much for the 'honesty' of the Madras autos!

M Fazal

Flat No. 1, Seaview Apartments,
16 Leith Castle Road
Madras 600 028.

Endangered trees

One recent Sunday I noticed a huge tree (on a 'concretised' stretch of pavement, of course) fallen on Luz Church Road, apparently a victim of the heavy rains that had lashed the city. This giant tree (all right, all right, may be not a giant, but certainly a big one like those that survive in some parts of the city) had fallen right across the road, blocking the entire width of the carriageway.

I wanted to telephone the police and the Corporation as well, but somebody had beaten me to it. Further down, I noticed a police jeep parked across the road and a policeman diverting traffic onto a side street. I thought of telephoning *The Hindu* and the *Indian Express*, but it would have been too late.

In a few minutes, a Corporation jeep, pulled up and a supervisor and two workmen got down. With an aravaal, one of the workers quickly began hacking away at the smaller branches. The other worker cleared the cut branches, moving it to the side of the road.

The Corporation jeep that had left the scene returned, this time bringing two more workers. Using a long saw with handles at both ends, the workers sawed the thicker sections. After an hour or so their work was completed and the sawn portions were pushed out of the way. The road was cleared of debris and traffic began to ply. The entire operation took just about an hour and a half or so.

It is extremely unfortunate a photographer was not present on the scene. For, the tree, in its wisdom, had decided to fall right across the road, exactly perpendicular to it.

A passerby commented that, just two days earlier, he had noticed that the tree was 'dry' and had 'told' (whom?) This incident brings to the fore the points I had raised in my earlier letter, viz. our city has more trees than we think, but appearances are deceptive and many of them could be in danger. My worst suspicions have been confirmed. This incident vindicates my stand. I wonder how many more such trees are endangered.

B. Gautham
122 Walajah Road
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BELL, S	Elements of visual design in the landscape
CURWEN, P (ed.)	Understanding the UK economy, 3rd ed.
DONALD, T (ed.)	The Everyman's book of Victorian verse
FRANCIS, D	Steeplechase jockey
JOHNSON, S	Readymade activities of customer care skills
LACHMANN, S	Soft tissue injuries in sport, 2nd ed.
LYNCH, D	Quality in the finance function
MOODY, A D	The Cambridge companion to T S Eliot
MORRIS, D	The naked ape trilogy
MILLS, H R	Practical astronomy
PHILLIPS, E M	How to get a Ph.D. 2nd ed.
RICHHARIA, M	Satellite communication systems
YARWOOD, A	Autosketch for windows
FICTION	
BROOKER, A	A private view
DEIGHTON, L	Violent war
WELLS, H G	The shape of things to come

Industrial scene in T.N. looks up

Much of the present interest in Tamil Nadu (not only for its people but for others in the country as well) is centred on its politics. Gone rather unnoticed, however, has been the resurgence of industry in State.

Whether it is power, energy, telecom, hotels and tourism, textiles, engineering or petrochemicals, you name it, investments in the State have been thick and fast during the past couple of years. A striking feature has been the entry of new business houses, which have helped take Tamil Nadu (Rs. 22,459 crore) to fourth place (Maharashtra, West Bengal and Delhi occupy the first three) in the prestigious race to get foreign investment approvals. In all, from 1991 to 1995, Tamil Nadu, has attracted Rs. 76,628 crore investment — Rs. 40,628 in the power sector and Rs. 35,959 in other industrial projects.

For long, the business climate in Tamil Nadu had not been conducive to spectacular growth. The State's leading industrial groups since Independence, Amalgams, T.V.S., Murugappa's, MRF, Sanmar and TTK's, all of them closely-held organisations, have been growing steadily on the strength of the high reputation of their products and services. But it has been left to new Tamil Nadu companies like SPIC, NEPC, Balaji, Empee, Sterling, Pentafour, Square D, Elgi, Apollo, Tata, Iggi, and TIG Industries to aggressively push forward. Now players from other parts of India and abroad are beginning to move into the State, like DuPont, Ford-Mahindra's, Videocon, R P Goenka's, DCM Shriram, Exide, Williamson Magor, JK, Grasim, Wockhardt, Essar, all already in Tamil Nadu or planning to set up major industries in the State.

A study conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) states that the State expects an increase in export turnover by about 44 per cent, sales turnover by about 36 per cent and a net profit increase by about the same margin for 1994-95.

Amidst the fresh surge of industrial activity, the power sector in the State has received a considerable boost, accounting for the major share of the investment in Tamil Nadu. There is expected to be a capacity addition of over 5000 MW in the next few years. The three major projects are the 1320 MW coal-based thermal project in

Cuddalore (Cuddalore Power Project Co.), the 1500 MW lignite-based project in Jayankondam (TIDCO), and the North Madras thermal project-Stage II (Videocon International). There is also talk of a 1250 MW oil-fired power station being relocated from Hong Kong on a 60 acre plot in Ennore.

In the private sector, apart from the business houses from outside Tamil Nadu investing in the State, there has

● by Sashi Nair

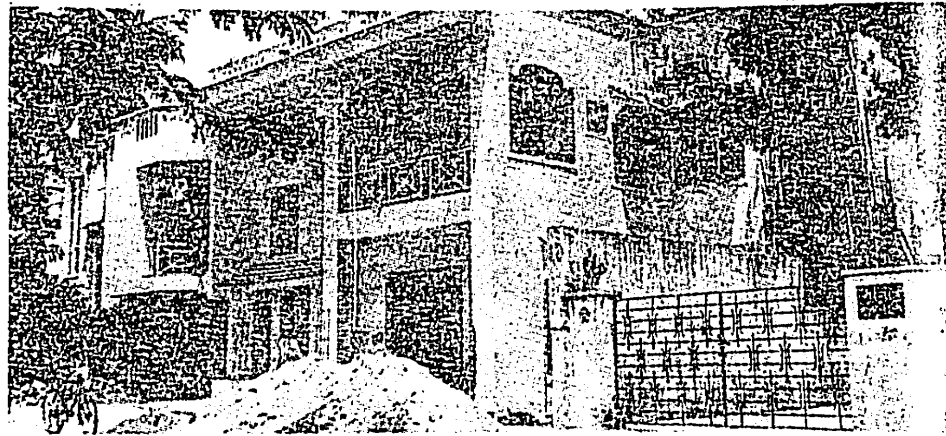
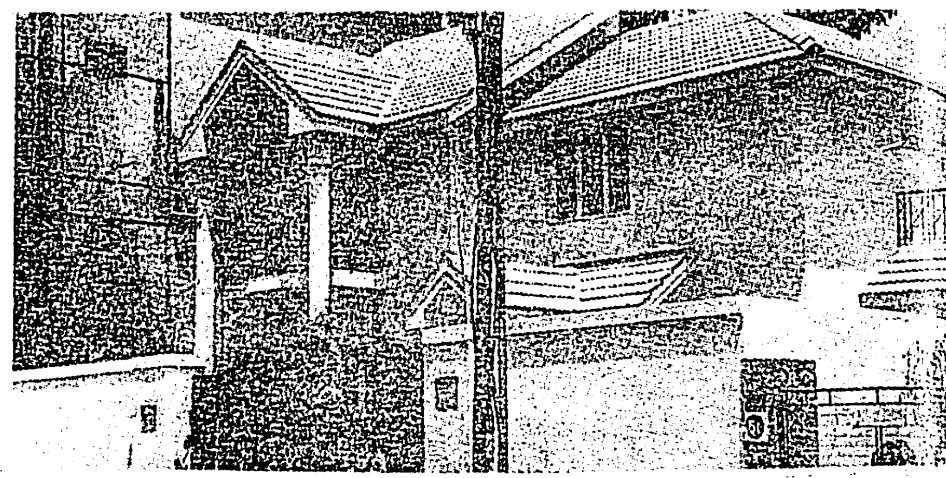
been a complementary surge from some of the State's players. SPIC is engaged in putting up a polyester filament yarn production facility as well as petrochemicals project. MRF is all set to start an archem business. The Balaji Group has invested more than Rs. 4000 crores in power, hotel and liquor businesses; while the Empee Group is into distilleries, textiles, prawn farming and hotels.

The upswing in Tamil Nadu's industrial climate has not been due to the enterprise shown by business houses alone. Official agencies like

TIDCO, SIPCOT, THIC, SIDCO and ELCOT have also come forward to promote projects, industrial and technology parks and export promotion centres. To help investors to get a foothold in the State and for the government to monitor the money flow, an agency called the Industrial Guidance and Extension Bureau has been set up. The State has also put in much effort in obtaining funding from foreign agencies like the World Bank for programmes in agriculture, urban and infrastructure development, and nutrition.

The New Industrial Policy framed by the State Government in 1992 has also helped. NRIs and exporters have been given incentives, and a fine example of incentives acting as a catalyst for growth has been the Madras Export Promotion Zone's (MEPZ) performance! When it started ten years ago, exports were just Rs. 0.5 crore. Today, it is a very healthy Rs. 282 crores. Nineteen units in MEPZ are owned by NRIs and many others, belong wholly or partly to foreign nationals.

Indeed, Tamil Nadu appears ready once again to move to the top in business and industry.



They all look NEW in this fortnight's rather different OLD and NEW. But the top two pictures reflect a trend that seems to be catching on in the city, namely, making OLD NEW. Indeed, these two houses, one in T' Nagar and the other in Raja Annamalaiapuram, are old...&THE NEW... OLD

houses of 1930s-50s vintage which are being rehabilitated to look totally new, even though some of the features in them look as though they belong to an older age. Our NEW, in Kotturpuram, reflects some of the features of both renovations... with some distinctive features of its own which go back, like the former, to an earlier era. Those bay windows, tiles, and verandah, for instance.

(Pictures by V S RAGHAVAN)



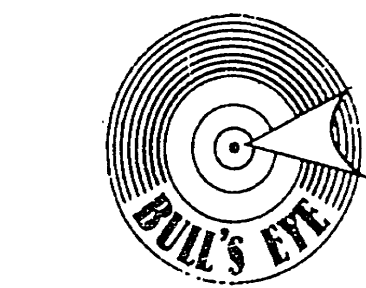
USING THE P/E TO INVEST

The computation of a share's value and its potential capacity to generate earnings is the key to the puzzle that is investment. The person who unlocks this riddle has hit the proverbial jackpot. In the evaluation of a share, while there are many indicators that are used, there is none so common as the Price Earning Multiple or Price-to-Earnings ratio or the P/E factor.

The P/E Ratio, or the Price Earning Multiple, is simply the ratio between the ruling market price of a company's share and the earnings per share of that company. If the P/E ratio of one company is higher than another's, it usually implies that the market expects the future earnings potential of the former to be superior to that of the latter.

However, what is surprising is the fact that this commonly-used indicator is as misunderstood as it is widespread.

Moreso because factors such as the level of infrastructure, state of the market — whether emerging or developed — sophistication of the system in place and so on are not given due weightage in calculating the correct figure. It is, therefore, not surprising to find different analysts giving disparate



recommendations, even though their calculations might match. Other subjective factors which need to be used in conjunction are those like the asset value of a company and management's strength.

There are experts who devote considerable effort in assessing the impact of various kinds of information on a company's future profitability and the expected return of the shareholders. If the prevailing price, or the P/E ratio, of a security is higher than the estimated fundamental value (i.e., if the security appears to be overpriced), they recommend selling, since once the information becomes common knowledge, the price of the security may be expected to fall. On the other hand, if the security is underpriced in the market, the prevailing price, or the P/E ratio, of the security being lower than the estimated fundamental value, they recommend a long position, i.e. buying the security, counting upon a price rise.

Thus, evaluation of the right P/E demands a lot of broad-based thinking, an understanding of the market sentiment, unemotional analysis and, above all, the mental flexibility to change your perceptions with changing circum-

stances both at the micro- and macro-level. This means that arriving at the right P/E will remain a continuous challenge and, as long as it remains a challenge, will be used as a valuation model.

However, it has to be noted that there are no hard and fast rules about P/E ratios being high or low. For what is high P/E for one scrip may perhaps be reasonable for another. A low P/E ratio need not necessarily signal a 'buy', but it could mean that the scrip is undesirable and not fancied. And a high P/E need not imply that the scrip is overpriced but just that there is an expectation of a good EPS.

In making an investment decision, there can be no single indicator that becomes the basis of judgement, be it the P/E ratio or any other. The Price to Earnings ratio is but the first of the many factors that have to be scrutinised. But what is undeniable is its value as a guide in making the right choice.

Now here are our recommendations for this fortnight:

Odyssey Video Communications (CMP: Rs. 23.75): We had earlier recommended this share at around Rs. 26. The share has reacted to current levels due to the weakening of the market sentiment and there is, thus, another opportunity to pick up this share. The downside risk is also low, as there is good support at the Rs. 20-25 level. The Company, which reported satisfactory results for the year ended March 1995, has begun the current year on an optimistic note. The first quarter of the current year has witnessed trebling of the previous year's total income. The affiliation with Noel Gay Television, U.K., and its clientele of repute in the domestic market all augur well for this company's future. Moreover, the parent company, MAA Borell Communications Ltd., is also planning a public issue at a premium and this might trigger this share's price to rise

further. We expect the company to post an EPS of Rs. 4 for 1995-96, which will support around Rs. 50 for this share. The share is underpriced now, discounting the possible EPS by barely 5.9 times. Buy with a stop loss at Rs. 20.

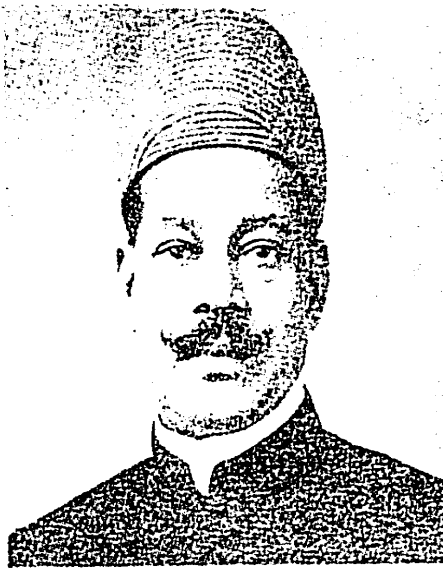
ISCT Infotech Technology (OTCE) (CMP: Rs. 33.75): Having started operations with nine training centres, ISCT today has about sixty training centres all over India providing value-added information technology. This company has had two major mergers during the last two years. The first has been with Ascendant Computer Systems (P) Ltd, which was engaged in providing software services and marketing software tools and products. This brought about a turnaround in ISCT's bottomline by helping it reap a profit of Rs. 0.64 cr for 1993-94 from the net loss of Rs. 0.22 cr made in 1992-93. While Ascendant's software are used in ISCT's training institutes, Ascendant markets ISCT's software abroad through its export tie-up with Nucleus Offshore of France, Femont Group and Axis Inc.

Solutions (P) Ltd, a 100% EOU, selling basically to UK and Europe and also having a 64kb satellite link with Europe. For the year ending March 1995, it achieved sales of Rs. 21.93 cr and a PAT of Rs. 6.54 cr, which resulted in an EPS of Rs. 4.55 on the enhanced equity.

The various concessions proposed for systems and application software in the 1995-96 Budget and the World Bank's projections for software exports from India, which anticipate Rs. 3000 cr by 1996, augur well for ISCT. It is expected to improve its performance in 1995-96. For March 1996, we project a sales of Rs. 30 cr and a PAT of Rs. 9 cr, with the resultant EPS being Rs. 6.25. The scrip is discounted by only about five times, while the other software scrips are discounted heavily in conventional exchanges. Buy for medium- and long-term gains.

K. Gopalakrishnan

The Raja who became Manthri



P. Ramarayaningar, the Raja of Panagal. (Photo from RAGAMI'S COLLECTION)

A landmark in Madras is Panagal Park, in Theagaraya Nagar. But you remember the man behind the name — a name of Telugu origin, Panagal deriving from 'Paanagallu', place in Guntur District. The Park named after one of the leaders of the Justice Party, the first Chief Minister of Madras (also known as 'First Minister'), statesman, scholar and a man with vision, he was the Raja of Panagal. Panaganthi Ramarayaningar (later, the Raja of Panagal) was born in the sacred town of Kalahasti, near Tirupati, on July 9, 1866. His ancestors were from Paanagallu. After marrying into the Kalahasti Raja's family, the family moved south and settled in Kalahasti.

Those were the days when members of blue-blooded zamindari families did not believe in attending school where they would have to mix with plebeian boys whose blood was merely all in keeping with such snobbish traditions, Ramaraya too was made to leave his early education at home, where he studied Telugu and, unusually, Sanskrit. Zamindari boys rarely showed interest in studies, for their interests were different. But Ramaraya was made of different clay. Breaking tradition, he joined the famed Hindu High School in Triplicane, Madras, and proved such a bright student that he received 'Double Promotions'. (In the British Indian age, outstanding students in a class were occasionally promoted, skipping a class.)

Panagal joined Presidency College and took his B.A. degree in Chemistry there was no B.Sc. degree in those days. He followed it up with an M.A. degree in Telugu Literature, and became the first zamindari scion to acquire a postgraduate degree! To reward such signal achievement, the Raja of Ramnad presented Panagal a solid gold pocket watch. More significantly, the Governor of Madras

bestowed on him the rare privilege of allowing him an audience at any time, without protocol or prior appointment! Such a concession, rarely given to an Indian in those days, was known as 'Private Entry'. It made news all over the Presidency.

Panagal was at college with another prominent Madras citizen, the famed theatre pioneer Pammal Sambandam Mudaliar, who, as a student, had founded the Suguna Vilas Sabha (SVS). Mudaliar was keen to stage at the Victoria Public Hall the first play in Madras to be based on a Telugu drama. Mudaliar requested Panagal to translate the play into English and from that translation Mudaliar translated the play into Tamil. The Tamil version bore little resemblance to the Telugu original except in plot! Mudaliar discarded it and decided to write plays himself, thus taking the first step to fame and immortality. Panagal chose another path.

With his family background and education, Panagal was drawn to public life and politics. He joined the Justice Party, which consisted mostly of zamindars, wealthy landowners, and successful professionals of high status, all belonging to the non-Brahmin castes. Commoners had no place in the

party and that's why its opponents, the Congress, described it as the *Sarigai Thalappa Party* (a reflection on the silk turban most J.P. members wore).

Panagal possessed abundant oratorical and debating talent and soon made his way in the Party. His merits were recognised by the British rulers and he was made a member of the Imperial Legislative Council, Delhi. His debating powers won the approbation of fellow ILC members as well as of the rulers.

After the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, elections were held in Madras in 1920 and the Justice Party came to power with a thumping majority. Lord Willingdon, the Governor, invited the Justice Party leader Sir Pitti Theagaraya Chetti to form the Government. One of the founding fathers of the non-Brahmin movement in South India, Sir Pitti, unlike politicians of today, was no power-seeker and chose Subbarayulu Reddiar, a landowner and lawyer, to form the cabinet. Reddiar became the 'First Minister' and chose two others to be members of his Cabinet. The Raja of Panagal was one of them. The other was a wealthy Barrister of Eluru, (Sir) Kurma Venkata Reddi Naidu.

With the J.P. comprising a Tamil group, Telugu zamindars, Mudaliars, and other groups, dissensions surfaced in the party (which was described as forming an 'Andhra Hindu Non-Brahmin ministry' and Reddiar, who did not enjoy the best of health, stepped down. The Raja of Panagal took over and his political foes quipped, "Raja becomes Manthri, what a fall!" But Panagal's political acumen helped cement the cracks in a party of disparate representation.

During his tenure, Panagal introduced several measures which reveal his wisdom and foresight. The first and most significant was the Hindu Religious Endowments Act. Several Hindu

temples in the province had considerable assets, both immovable and moveable, which were not being properly managed. Power was concentrated in the hands of a few who were accountable to nobody. Brahmins controlled many of the old temples. In a stunning social reformist move, Panagal introduced the HRE Act to control Hindu religious endowments. Understandably, the Bill met with stiff opposition and was criticised as an anti-Brahmin measure. In a smart move, Panagal appointed an 'expert member', N. Gopalaswami Iyengar, as his advisor. A Brahmin, and a member of the PCS (Provincial Civil Services, the predecessor of the ICS, and open to Indians), he was a brilliant administrator. Iyengar was later knighted for his services by the British and, after India became independent, he was a minister in Pandit Nehru's cabinet.

A Board to administer the endowments was set up under the Act and, in another inspired move, Panagal appointed another Brahmin, a retired Madras High Court judge, Sir T. Sadasiva Iyer, as the first Commissioner. Thus, Panagal silenced his critics!

Panagal realised that our ancient systems of medicine, like Siddha, suffered from sheer neglect, and to revive them he established the College of Indian Medicine at Kilpauk, Madras.

They made OUR Madras
A walk down Memory Lane
with
RANDOR GUY

• Many men and women contributed to the unforgettable Madras that existed in the first half of this century. Statesmen ... lawyers ... judges ... doctors ... writers ... journalists ... musicians ... film personalities ... theatre devotees ... performing artists ... social workers ... educationists ... Indians ... British ... All of them did their bit to make Madras the grand

R.G.

city it was before the second half of the century began. In this series, you will meet many of them, the men and women who have earned their place in the history of Madras between 1900 and 1950. Come, take a walk down Madras memory lane with me and let us remember their contributions.

In later years, it became the Kilpauk Medical College but, in those days, the hospital was known as the 'London Thottam Aspathi', a 'Familiarisation' of 'Landon's Garden Hospital'. Panagal was an avid chess fan and also a player of considerable skill. Like most zamindars, he was a keen follower of racehorses and a regular visitor to Guindy. Once, on a racing day, during his tenure as First Minister, he was at an important Cabinet meeting at Fort St George presided over by the Governor, Lord Willingdon, also a race enthusiast. As the meeting progressed and time ticked away, Panagal kept glancing at his watch. Races would begin soon! And it would take at least 20 minutes to reach Guindy. So he suggested that the meeting be adjourned. But the other ministers did not relish the idea. Lord Willingdon, however, took a look at his watch and, closing his files, rose and walked out! The Governor and First Minister at once raced to Guindy together, leaving the bewildered ministers to wonder when the next meeting would be!

A person of great culture, a voracious reader, a lover of literature, a linguist, the Raja of Panagal was a much respected man. He passed away on December 15, 1929. Not remembered by many today, it is small consolation that his name at least lives on in the Park in T' Nagar.

Panagal realised that our ancient systems of medicine, like Siddha, suffered from sheer neglect, and to revive them he established the College of Indian Medicine at Kilpauk, Madras.

A peep into...

A hospital 1000-years-old

Tirumukkoodal may be just another sleepy village in Chengalputtu District, but a thousand years ago it had a 15-bed hospital besides a Vedic school and a hostel, according to the inscriptions found in the Venkatesa Perumal temple in the village.

The inscriptions on the east wall of the temple state the shrine has been in existence from the time of the Pallava King, Vijaya Nripatunga Vikramaditya, in the 9th Century A.D. The inscriptions describe how the king's birthday, the day of the natal star of eminent persons and festivals were celebrated. They have also recorded the provisions made for the running of an educational institution, a hostel as well as the maintenance of a hospital.

Of the over 20,000 collections of inscriptions made by the Epigraphical Department in the then Madras Presidency, the one found in this temple is one of the biggest inscriptions known so far and it registers certain historical facts not known or noticed till now. The inscriptions indicate how the income of paddy and money, gifted by the people, were expended annually in

the temple and the institutions like the Vedic school, hostel and the hospital attached to it. It also details the payments made to the accountant, potter and washerman attached to the temple, for its annual repairs and for the purchase of clothes for the servants.

As for the Vedic school, one teacher taught the *Rig Veda*, for which he received a certain amount of paddy and some money annually. Another teacher taught the *Yajur Veda* and was paid similar emoluments.

The hostel attached to the Vedic school fed sixty students daily — ten Brahmins who studied *Rig Veda*, ten Brahmins who studied *Yajur Veda*, 20 Brahmins and students who studied the *vyakarana* and *rupavata* and 20 studying other subjects. Its expenses included the cost of mats to sleep on and oil for lamps and for bathing on 21 Saturdays in the year. Maleservants were paid to keep the premises clean.

The last item of expenditure lists maintenance of a 15-bed hospital for treatment of sick hostel inmates and temple servants. It was supervised by a physician, who was given paddy and

money in addition to some land for his service. There was also a surgeon. Two persons, who were engaged to fetch medicinal herbs, also supplied firewood and were involved in the preparation of medicines. Two nurses attended on the patients. A barber performed minor operations in addition to his professional duties. The ration for the sick consisted of some amount of rice per head per day. The hospital was also provided with lamps at night.

The inscriptions also detail the medicines stored in the hospital. Some of the diseases treated at the hospital were internal piles, jaundice, dropsy, fever, diseases of the urinary organs, tuberculosis, rheumatism, haemorrhage, colour in the urine, sperm diseases, lung diseases and enlargement of the spleen. While medicines like *panchaakataila* were prescribed for curing tuberculosis, *bilvadi ghrita* was given for dropsy and distaste for food.

Interestingly, most of the articles of daily use were obtained by exchanging paddy, but some like sandal paste, vermilion, camphor and turmeric could be obtained only with money. (Courtesy: PTI).



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Dr. A. LAKSHMANASWAMI MUDALIAR

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, ex-President of India, said of the brothers:

"The public life of Madras has been greatly benefitted by the brothers, Dr. A. Ramaswami Mudaliar and Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar. The services of the former in politics and industry and of the latter in medicine and education will be long remembered. They are undoubtedly the pride of our Country."

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Hello, but no goodbyes

When the Madras Christian College team walked away with the honours and the Rs. 3000 winner's cheque at the first English Play Contest for Colleges in Madras, organised by the Association of British Council Scholars of South India (ABCS), it came as no surprise. For it was almost a dream performance (as brother and sister in *Hello and Goodbye*) by the duo of Biju George and Priscilla Powell (acting on stage for the first time) which dominated the afternoon.

If the organisers expected a packed auditorium at Ethiraj College, they were sorely disappointed. There were not more than a hundred in the audience. But a start is a start nevertheless, and in spite of the ABCS notching a first here, the onus is on it (and Tamil Nadu's colleges) to keep the momentum going by organising the contest annually and getting more colleges to participate. If the ABCS succeeds in this, it will give a much needed fillip to English theatre in Madras and encourage talent, something that is not lacking in the city, as the students from both colleges showed.

The first play of the afternoon was by a group from Queen Mary's who seemed all at odds in *For coloured girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf* (a title which did not make much sense to me), a play about the plight of black women living in the US, who were exploited and were fighting for their rights ("without relinquishing their rights to rapists"). The performances had to be anything but ladylike and called for passion — and swirling skirts whenever the music breaks came. Unfortunately, all these were worlds unknown to the refined young ladies of Queen Mary's. Nevertheless, they deserved appreciation for their courageous efforts, and the runner-up prize of Rs. 2,000 was more recognition.

In striking contrast, Powell's and George's portrayals were riveting. Discarding mikes, they screamed and shrieked and sobbed, but their superb voice modulation never let you go. The cameo they played out was a reflection of the lives whites led in Africa, a subject as heavy as the first, with issues like coloured women, gender, love,

hatred and unfaithfulness, all thrown up during one long conversation between Powell and George. The play may have been a bit stretched, but the sheer power of the voices of the two-person cast held the audience.

For Powell, a final year zoology student, and George, doing his MA (Economics), the recognition they received was a pleasant surprise. "But we would never have done it without Dr Rajani (the professor who directed them) who constantly goaded us into doing the play," they chorused. If a tired looking George was unable to decide how to spend the money, Powell certainly knew how to start, anyway. Into the nearest ice cream parlour she led her teammate.

The prize money was sponsored by Pond's (India) Ltd. There were other attractive gifts (wall maps, dictionaries, books, etc) from Oxford University Press, TTK Maps, Higginbothams, Affiliated East West Press and BI Publications. It is to be hoped such largesse will draw more entries next year than this year's four.

SASHI NAIR

Dates for Your Diary

October: 'Artist of the Month' — Ebenezer Sunder Singh. A diploma-holder from the Govt. College of Arts and Crafts, Madras. Singh currently lives and works at Cholamandal Artists' Village. Ebenezer's works are found in the Madras Museum, Lalit Kala Akademi, and several private collections. He has participated in many group-shows all over India.

October 17-23: Mural paintings by Sasidharan of Kerala. He has a background of traditional lore, Malayalam, leftist literature and mastery of mural art gained from his experience in Rajasthan. He has also been influenced by the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera.

Sasidharan is by temperament and training a muralist and that accounts partly for the abrupt colours and forms — they are seen to advantage from a distance as well. "To a cultivated sensibility, his handling may appear harsh, but therein lies its virtue; in fact, the crude, unpolished utterance is a vehicle through which something that is both public and intimately visionary at the same time is trying to break forth," says Gieve Patel. Sasidharan is specially coming to Madras to work on a mural inspired by the Centenary of Cinema. (At the Alliance Francaise.)

October 20-21: Symposium on Bio-Ethics: *Gene Technology — Scope and Ethics.* In cooperation with Centre for Biotechnology, Anna University, Madras. With mankind's growing potential to interfere with vital functions and to modify and manipulate its own genetic material as well as that of animals, plants and micro-organisms, we are reaching a stage, the very idea of which former generations would have regarded as atrocious or even blasphemous. At the same time, the often blind confidence in science and its beneficial results has virtually vanished due to the disastrous effects that technology has had on environment as a whole. The critical situation raises the issue of whether man should be allowed to do what he is able to. The Madras symposium will concentrate on gene-technology and its manifold applications in the fields of medicine, eugenics and ecology. Bearing a philosophical and ethical perspective in mind, discussions will focus on how we have

to safeguard future generations' human interests against our own inventions and technologies and how to demarcate beneficial modification from potentially catastrophic manipulation. (Max Mueller Bhavan, 9.45 am - 5.30 pm, by invitation.)

October 24: *Stop Calling Me Vernon* by The Right Size, a play presented by the Welcomgroup-Sheraton and the British Council.

The Right Size was set up in 1988 by Sean Foley, Hamish McColl and Michelle Vendepool. Since then they have created an international reputation for making people laugh, with comic theatre that is surreal, eccentric and surprisingly moving. In all their shows, extraordinary physical routines combine with gripping stories, visual jokes and absurdly human characters. With seven productions to date, the company has rapidly gained international success.

Stop Calling Me Vernon is a show about a brilliantly inept and achingly funny double act. On an old vaudeville stage, Austin and Porter fall out of bed and into their hackneyed double act for what could be the last time. A string of hilariously failed sketches is followed by a heroic attempt at High Drama and is finally topped with their own anarchic classic 'Waiter on Elastic'. Performed by two of the company's co-founders, Sean Foley and Hamish McColl and directed by long-time collaborator Josef Houben (Theatre de Complicite), *Stop Calling Me Vernon* is a truly hilarious and touching piece about partnership: a collision of slapstick, extraordinary visual gags, eccentric dance, songs and beautifully insane repartee. (At 7 pm, Museum Theatre. By invitation.)

October 26 - November 2: Exhibition of paintings of Thierry Cauwet of Paris. He started his artistic career with video art, then turned to painting. In his two years as Professor at Ecole Regionale d'Art Plastiques de la Martinique, French West Indies, he was able, with local models, to express the forms and colours which had fascinated Gauguin, Van Gogh and Matisse. In 1994, Thierry Cauwet was in India on a Romain Rolland scholarship from the French Government. He has recently been commissioned by Ateliers Loire, Chartres, to work on stained glass. (At Alliance Francaise.)

October 28 - November 1: Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Raga Tarangini at the Music Academy. Concerts 5-7 pm and 7-9 pm every day.

Oct. 28: 5:00 pm Inauguration, 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm U. Srinivas (Mandolin), S.D. Sridhar (Violin), Mannargudi Easwaran (Mridangam), T.V. Vasan (Ghatam).

Oct. 29: 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm: Vijay Siva (Vocal), T. Rukmini (Violin), T.K. Murthy (Mridangam), 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm: T.N. Seshagopal (Vocal), V.V. Ravi (Violin), Palghat R. Raghu (Mridangam), Harishankar (Kanjiira).

Oct. 30: 5:00 to 7:00 pm: S.P. Ramh (Vocal), Vittal Ramamurthy (Violin), Tanjore Ramdas (Mridangam), 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm: Sudha Raghunathan (Vocal), Embar Kannan (Violin), Thiruvarur Vaidyanathan (Mridangam), Karthik (Ghatam).

Oct. 31: 5:00 to 7:00 pm: Nithyashree (Vocal), Kalpana Kishore (Violin), Neyveli Narayanan (Mridangam), 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm: T.V. Sankaranarayanan (Vocal), M Chandrasekharan (Violin), Umayalpuram Sivaraman (Mridangam), Nagarajan (Kanjiira).

Nov. 1: 5:00 to 7:00 pm: Balaji Shankar (Vocal), Raghavendra Rao (Violin), J. Vaidyanathan (Mridangam), T.O. Balasubramaniam (Ghatam), 7:00 to 9:00 pm: Hyderabad Brothers Seshachari & Raghavachari (Vocal), Delhi Sundararajan (Violin) Srimushnam Raja Rao (Mridangam). All are welcome.

The call of the Western Ghats

Continued from last fortnight)

In the 1950s when my parents were in school, commercial forestry was confined to the area adjacent to the township; the Palani Hills, for the most part, were undisturbed. Kodai itself was a sleepy village attracting mostly American missionaries and Indian mooners. Life in the hills revolved around boating, picnics, fishing expeditions, and church. However, as a result of hunting, a popular pastime, populations of animals like the Nilgiri tahr and gaur had touched dangerously low levels.

On returning to India in 1970, Dad was shocked to find old haunts unrecognisable and now occupied by long

One of my earliest inspirations was the great American landscape photographer, Ansel Adams. His timeless black and white images, besides being studies in technical perfection, did true justice to nature's indescribable beauty. What is most important, his photographs were used effectively by citizen groups, like the Sierra Club, to campaign against the wanton destruction of the American West. Adams's work had awed Dad and he had visions of documenting the Palani Hills with a large-format camera. When he got busier with other projects and I became interested in photography, he passed those dreams on to me.

encounters with wildlife have proved to be quite educational — and made me a firstclass sprinter!

The novelty of simply seeing new areas and wildlife soon wore off. Looking for a more meaningful way to channel my energy, I started working on a series of articles and photographs that would highlight conservation themes in the Western Ghats.

The Western Ghats stretch 1,440 kilometers from Kanniyakumari to a little north of Bombay. Thus far my work has focussed on the southern high-altitude ranges. Lately I have been

Text and photograph by IAN LOCKWOOD

stretches of sterile eucalyptus trees. He would try to take our family hiking to places that still retained some semblance of the not-so-distant past. This became increasingly difficult.

The pace of conversion has increased in the past 40 years with aggressive, but sometimes thoughtless, exotic tree-planting drives that have replaced the native grasslands. There is also much more pressure on hill stations by the fast emerging, multi-million middle class with its newfound wealth. Thus the carrying capacity of hill stations like Ooty, Mahabaleshwar, and Kodai is being stretched to the breaking point. The cumulative ecological impact of all these activities on indigenous flora and fauna has been disastrous.

Regrettably, landscape photography is an undependable career. So ... I went to ... College ... in 1989 in ... distant ... Ohio ... Throughout the sojourn in the United States thoughts of tropical South Indian mountains haunted my winter-weary mind. Free time was scarce, but when it came my way I buried my head in books about India and the Western Ghats ... I returned to the subcontinent soon after graduating from Wooster in 1992. I knew little about wildlife, conservation dynamics, and the mountain ranges beyond the Palani Hills. By motorcycle, bus, truck, train, and foot I have since been visiting as much of the Western Ghats as possible. Meetings with wildlife researchers, forest officials, and estate managers have given me a greater understanding of the mountains and the endemic wildlife. Firsthand

working in the lower rain forests, and eventually I hope to explore all the significant areas encompassing the chain. My photographs mostly depict empty places (a psychological consequence of living in an overcrowded city like Dhaka), but increasingly I am recording human interaction with the natural environment.

Mountain streams, explorations, and photography still don't pay my bills, so I teach at the American International School in Dhaka to cover costs. I spend almost all of my spare time in the Western Ghats. The more I see of these enchanting mountains, the more I feel committed to the cause of their conservation.

Still a little shaken, I sit in a thatched shack sipping a cup of tea, reliving the elephant chase and other adventures I have had.



Anai Mudi, the highest peak in India south of the Himalaya. At its base is Eravikulam National Park, the last refuge of the Nilgiri Tahr.

Staring up toward Anai Mudi's massive granite ramparts I am again reminded of how minuscule we human beings are in the face of Mother Nature. As a fledgling artist I try to convey nature's infinity in my photographs, while as a young

conservationist I attempt to spread awareness about nature's treasures that we human beings are frittering away. As a restless adventurer I keep moving, following some murky thing called bliss. — (Courtesy: SPAN)

Quizzin' with Ramanan

(Quizzmaster V.V. RAMANAN's questions are from the fortnight September 16-30th)

- Who is to succeed Ajit Wadekar as the manager of the Indian cricket team?
- Which well-known consumer product was registered as a three-dimensional trademark in the U.K. recently, the first of its kind in the world?
- To what physical phenomenon was the 'miracle' of Ganesha idols drinking milk on September 21st attributed?
- Who won India's only gold in the recently concluded Asian athletic championships at Jakarta?
- Name the senior party functionary and former minister who was expelled by the AIADMK high command recently.
- Which country did India upset to reach the World Group in Davis Cup competition?
- The *Washington Post*, on September 19th, published in its entirety a manuscript written by a serial bomber condemning the industrial society. It was done to meet the demand he had made to halt his attacks. How has the FBI called the bomber?
- Which prominent citizen of Madras has been elected the president of the Indian Newspaper Society? (Clue: He is the president of the IOA.)
- Who is the new DGP of Tamil Nadu?
- Why was the colliery at Gastilim in Bihar in the news?

- Name the third in the popular *Die Hard* series of films, starring Bruce Willis, which was released in the city recently.
- Who regained the World professional billiards championship at Bombay?
- The U.K. has become the second last country in the planet to formally adopt what? (Clue: Think of a different 'pound')
- An important institution with a daily role to play in Madras declared a lock-out recently. Which institution?
- A three-day 'Peyyar Mela' was recently organised, not in Tamil Nadu, but in a North Indian capital city. Where?

(Answers on p. 8)

Heading for gridlock?

(Continued from P3)

Madras — is not new, but if it is accepted it must also be accompanied by cheap and reliable public transport to enable the new suburbanites to commute if they have to, or to visit the parent city whenever there is a compelling need.

Here in Madras the main problem on Mount Road is the prodigious number of huge, packed-full buses, most of them battered, scralched,

patched up and dirty. The Pallavan Transport inner-city buses cannot, of course, be done away with, though their condition could certainly be improved, but surely a step in the right direction would be to find — or provide — an alternative route out of the city centre for those noisy, air-horn-blasting mofussil buses.

It is heart-breaking to see — as I do every day — dozens of these buses, packed with people, inching their way over the Gemini flyover towards that bottleneck rejoicing in the name of Thousand Lights. I pity the suffering people inside them, and the enormous stresses that must be building up in them as well as the bus crews, though they may well be made of sterner and tougher fibre than the average Londoner. Then the awful thought occurs to me that those people do not know any better, that they are of a generation so accustomed to these conditions they take it for granted they are natural and unavoidable. Like the people of Bangkok, they have never experienced any other conditions and have come to accept them. The generations following will think the same. If that is so, then they naturally will never demand anything better. What a dreadful thought!

(To be continued next fortnight)

CITYSCAPES FOR A PRIZE

An All-India Photographic Competition is being organised by the British Council Division (BCD) throughout India. The theme of the competition is *Cityscapes*. The competition coincides with the inauguration of the exhibition 'Shifting Focus — Photography in India 1840-1900' at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi, arranged by the British Council Division and sponsored by the Standard Chartered Bank. The exhibition will tour South India from January to March 1996.

one entry per person will be accepted and there will be separate categories for professional and amateur photographers.

All entries are to be sent to the nearest British Council Office by December 1995. Entries should be black/white prints of size 10" x 12" or 12" x 15" and the photograph should have been taken during the previous 12 months.

Photographs will be judged at two levels, Regional and National. The 40 short-listed works from South India will be shown in an exhibition at BCD Madras in February 1996.

The 40 best works (10 from each centre) will be shown in an

exhibition at the BCD centre in Bombay in April 1996.

For the final selection an eminent British photographer/critic will join the panel of Indian judges to select the award-winning photographs.

There will be two first prizes, one in each of the two categories, in the form of a ten-day programmed visit to Britain for the two winners. There will also be four consolation prizes (of books and films worth £100 each).

Entry forms may be collected from the British Council Division, Madras.

Another mega-event



The dance scene in Madras witnessed an unprecedented event on October 4th. Anybody who had anything to do with dance was invited and given an award by Saraswathi of Balamuralikrishna's organisation, Vipanchee. Honoured were more than 400 dancers, dance gurus, musicians, technicians, make-up artists, organisers, institutions, sabha officials and patrons.

The event was something like a mother-of-all felicitations. Saraswathi made no distinction on grounds of seniority, popularity, quality, success or style. She invited everyone she could think of. There were dance gurus, like the ageing veteran Kittappa Pillai, and unheard-of young girls who had started dance classes just a few months ago.

There were gurus with no students and there was the entire staff of Kalakshetra. There were scholars like Periya Sharada of Kalakshetra and Nagaswamy as well as small-time correspondents. Some dancers were considered world class and given special honours. They were Arlene Valli, Chitra Visweswaran, Lakshmi Viswanathan, Sudharani Raghupathi and Nalli Jayalakshmi. And felicitations of all categories were given their gold medals by Subbudu.

The talk of the evening was how much whose medal weighed. VAK Ranga Rao and I weighed our respective medals and found, to our disappointment, they weighed the same. He delightfully teased everyone he knew and it was nice to see Subbudu *mama* being ribbed constantly by Ranga Rao, even on stage while receiving his medal.

The talk of the event, as in the case of other recent mega-events, was the amount spent on the enterprise. Some said 14 lakhs, others said 16 lakhs. The benefactor was a Mr John who runs the Kalaimagal Trust for Education and Art in Erode.

Inspired, no doubt, by the silver jubilee celebrations of Sudharani Raghupathi's Bharathalaya, at which many artists, critics and patrons were honoured, Saraswathi embarked on a felicitation function to beat all felicitations. It took a good five hours to distribute all the medals. No one talked about the purpose of the felicitation or the aesthetics of presenting dance items as punctuation marks during the medals distribution, even while the chief guests were sitting on the same stage as the performers. When it was announced

that every awardee would get a small carrybag, there was a beeline to get that too. Each awardee also got a pearl garland and the traditional *tamboqlam* with coconut. It certainly was a fun evening.

This mega-event marked a new philosophy in art. Gone are the days of Balasaraswathi, when dance was the prerogative of a chosen few who practised it for the benefit of a few patrons well-versed in the appreciation of the particular style of presentation and who were all well-known to the artist. Gone are the aesthetic presentations of Kalakshetra, where a strict dress code was observed by even the students in the audience and an ambience of Indianness was created in every nook and cranny. Gone are the days of artists looking at each other's dance with respect. Gone are also the times when art was separate from life. But there is also now an audience for art as well as more and more serious artists making their debuts. Unfortunately, everyone wants to be on the stage by hook or by crook and every gimmick is employed to get a crowd to witness them dance. Where are we headed?

A prize for translation

Would you like to translate into English a story from any of the following languages: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu? The best translation in each language will receive Rs. 4000 and a citation. It will also be

published by Katha in Visions-Revisions. If you wish to enter the contest, write to Katha, PO Box 326, GPO, New Delhi 110 001. Your letter should be accompanied by a bank draft for Rs. 30 drawn in favour of Katha. The last date for receiving requests is October 30, 1995.

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Madras links of England 'A' skipper

The England team has in recent years been known as the United Nations of England, such has been the preponderance of overseas cricketers in its composition. Among them has been Nasser Hussain of Madras origin, and now named to captain the England 'A' team to tour the West Indies.

The Jamsaheb of Nawanagar, K S Ranjitsinghji, the immortal Ranji, was the first cricketer of Indian origin to play for England. Ranji was the first overseas player to be preferred to an Englishman as a member of the Test team. He was followed by his gifted nephew, Duleep, and the Nawab of Pataudi Sr. Incredibly, all three achieved the distinction of scoring a century on debut.

In recent years, Nasser Hussain of Essex and Mark Ramprakash of

Will Essex's Nasser Hussain be England's next captain?

match. Migrating to England in the Sixties, Jawad played league cricket with some success, impressing with his all-round ability none other than the West Indies and Warwickshire off-spinner, Lance Gibbs, who became a close friend.

MCC, Madras, included a couple of foreign players in the early Eighties. One of them, Robin Singh, a Trinidadian of Indian descent, has been an outstanding success in Indian cricket,

season, Gooch's close friend and senior colleague, Allan Lilley, had to be dropped to afford young Nasser the opportunity to parade his talents.

The 1993 season has been the highlight of Nasser's county career. According to the critics, he really came of age during that season, averaging over 50 in the county championship. In addition to his technically sound brave batting, Nasser is known for his brilliant fielding. Though he has not met with outstanding success at the Test level, he has shown in his appearances against the West Indies and Australia that he does not flinch from fast bowling.

Like Ramprakash's, Nasser's too has been a baptism by fire, his Test career starting with the 1991 tour of the Caribbean. He has had few chances to play against relatively easy attacks. During that tour of the West Indies, Nasser came to realise that his captain, though an Essex-man, would show him no favours if he stepped out of line. Gooch and the team management reprimanded him when he demonstrated dissent against the umpire in a tour match.

Gooch's favourite young Essex player has the dubious distinction of ramming his car into the captain's brand new Toyota on the way to Trent Bridge to play a Sunday league match during that memorable 1993 season. Nasser's car suffered the greater damage and the pair completed the journey in Gooch's car, going on to top score in a match they were to lose.

The captaincy of the England 'A' team is not only recognition of Nasser's claims to a place back in the senior team in the foreseeable future, it could also mean that Illingworth & Co. think of him as captaincy material in the long term. A good performance in the Caribbean as captain and batsman could bode well for Nasser's Test future.

TAMIL NADU GOES BANANAS

(Continued from P 1)

The fruit, cultivated in about 3.9 lakh hectares, with a turnover of about Rs. 3,000 crore per year, has emerged as the second most important fruit crop in the country, next only to mango. Used as a dessert fruit, it is also used in medicine, cattlefeed and for culinary purposes, possessing as it does rich sources of dietary carbohydrates.

Banana, the second largest fruit crop in the world, is the fourth most important food crop in India in terms of gross value, after paddy, wheat and milk.

The per capita consumption of banana in India is 9 kg annually, which is comparatively low, and it is planned to increase this to 15 kg.

A promise to volleyball

B Sivanthi Adityan, the Madras newspaper magnate, who was recently unanimously elected President of the Indian Newspapers' Society, is better known in the world of sport. And in one particular sport he has left an indelible mark. Tamil Nadu's fifth successive National Volleyball championship success last January was in no small measure due to the pioneering work he had put in, as The Tamil Nadu Volleyball Association President, along with his indefatigable Secretary, K Murugan.

Not to mince words, volleyball was for long an also-ran in the Tamil Nadu sports set-up, until Adityan and Murugan revolutionised it and helped it emerge as the lone sport to hit the headlines for their home State. In no other Indian sport have a President and Secretary worked in such harmony and achieved so much. As a result, the TNVA is indeed South India's, nay, the nation's most successful sports body.

Oddly enough, volleyball in Tamil Nadu has no home of its own. None realised this more than Chief Minister J Jayalalitha, and she has now risen to the occasion. She has promised the TNVA that her government would soon provide it with a modern indoor stadium. When her promise will materialise, time alone can tell. But when it does, the volleyball stadium will boost the record number of stadia the ancient city will have after the SAF Games to be held in December.

Madras will indeed emerge as India's No. 1 sports city as far as its infrastructure is concerned even if Tamil Nadu's national record in all sports is poor. Indeed, the Nehru Stadium provides Indian sport's biggest irony, for the country's best stadium is yet to host the Santosh Trophy for the National Football Championship.

JAICI

• V. Ramnarayan

Middlesex have gladdened Indian hearts by being selected for England. Both are of Indian origin, though Ramprakash's forebears left their homeland perhaps a hundred years ago to work as indentured labour in the West Indies.

Nasser, who hails from a Madras family, is, on the other hand, a first generation Briton, born in Essex on March 3, 1968. Nasser's father, Jawad Hussain, was a popular cricketer of Madras in the Fifties. A very useful all-rounder, Jawad played for Young Men's Association in the local league, switching to Madras Cricket Club in his mature years. He played for Madras in the Ranji Trophy, as did his elder brother Nawaz Hussain, who once scored a double century in a University

having opted for Indian citizenship and represented the country in international cricket. The other was Mel Hussain, Nasser's brother, who in his two-season tenure with the club, proved to be a correct, pleasing batsman and competent off-spinner. An obvious product of English coaching, Mel played for the Essex Second XI, but did not progress the way Nasser did. Nasser was briefly seen at the Chepauk grounds watching a local game some years ago. That was before his Test debut.

One of the outstanding young batsmen of England, Nasser was spotted by Essex and England captain Graham Gooch in the summer of 1989 when, thanks to Keith Fletcher's sporting decision to step down in the young man's favour, the captain was able to blood the latter. In the following

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Sandeep Patil; 2. The contoured Coca Cola bottle; 3. Surface tension; 4. Jyotirmoyee Sikdar in the women's 800 metres; 5. R.M. Veerappan; 6. Croatia; 7. Unabomber; 8. Sivanthi Adityan; 9. Walter Dawaram; 10. It was the worst colliery disaster in two decades, when 64 people died; 11. Die Hard with a Vengeance; 12. Geet Sethi; 13. Adopt the metric system; 14. Indian Express;
15. Lucknow; 16. T.T.V. Bhaskar; 17. The right of citizens to hoist the National Flag on residential and office premises as the flag code; 18. The Jannalal Award; 19. It allows one-time transfer of military hardware to Pakistan by the US, thus slightly modifying the Press Amendment; 20. The Madras Medical Mission at its Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Vijaya Hospital.

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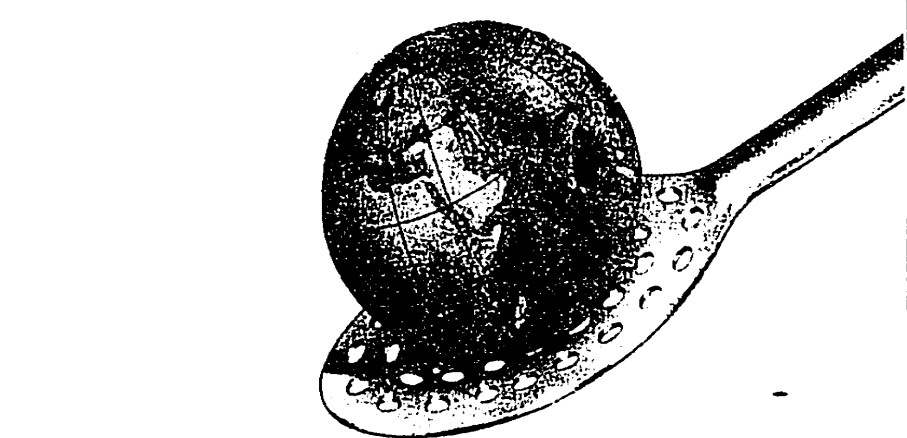
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