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And so, Ford's are coming ...

• Last fortnight, we went ahead with our lead story, 'Are Ford's coming?', even though the answer was pretty well known by the time Madras Musings was out, namely that Ford's Mahindra were signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tamil Nadu Government on setting up a plant in Maraimalainagar, that southern industrial suburb of Madras. That decision was partly due to the hazards of publishing a laid-back fortnightly. But it was also partly because Madras Musings does not believe an MOU is the last word on the subject. Much as Madras Musings is cheering for the project — and at least a couple of other automobile projects — to put down roots in suburban Madras or elsewhere in Tamil Nadu, Madras Musings is equally aware that the third part of last fortnight's story will remain a real cloud on the horizon till the Maraimalainagar plant is well and truly in place. It was to keep readers aware of post-election possibilities and of the Shiv Sena's rather undue interest in the project that we went ahead with the story in the form it was last fortnight. This fortnight we bring you below a detailed report of the Ford Mahindra joint venture — and leave you with the thought that this could well be what the scenario in Madras will be two years hence, **IF ALL GOES WELL.** — THE EDITOR

(By A Special Correspondent)

Mahindra Ford's are coming to Madras. The joint venture has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tamil Nadu Government to set up its Rs 2000 crore car project in

Maraimalainagar, 45 km south of Madras.

In the first phase, the company plans to invest Rs 800 crore in the plant, which will eventually have a capacity of 100,000 cars (starting with

60,000 in the first year). Apart from the 2,000 people who are expected to be employed, the Mahindra Ford project is likely to be a boon for small automobile component manufacturers, with many ancillary industries expected to come up.

The five-door hatch-back Fiesta car is what Mahindra Ford's plan to make in Maraimalainagar. It will have an engine capacity of 1.3 litres, power steering and also come in a diesel version. The car will target the middle segment of the market, between the Maruti 800 and the Maruti Esteem.

The company will, in phases, acquire 350 acres of land at Maraimalainagar for Rs 30 crore. According to John G Parker, Managing Director-designate of Mahindra-Ford, nearly 40 different factors were considered in evaluating the project's location: land, financial incentives, sales tax concessions, city environment, specific site environment, power and water availability, port and airport, housing, school facilities and infrastructural support, among others. That Tamil Nadu was able to pass all the tests successfully is an indication of how well-developed Madras is becoming.

Ford's Automotive Component Division (ACD) will also set up shop in India, after conducting a feasibility

(Continued on P6)

From left to right: Hiding Wenlock Park. May be it should be hidden, but will such hoardings start a trend on the Marina? The pictures that follow certainly seem to indicate the possibility. For instance, in the next picture, Presidency cricket ground and the College itself are hidden. And in V S RAGHAVAN's third picture, a hoarding closer to Presidency College hides what was once a fine view of the City's first college.

The thin end?

Is this the thin end of the wedge? Madras Musings sincerely hopes not. But these hoardings for the SAF Games, sited on the land side of the Marina and hiding much of that distinctive skyline, seem to be anchored on awfully strong legs. And Madras Musings wouldn't be surprised at all if what started as an invitation to the SAF Games becomes permanent commercial hoardings. It is true that hoardings are sprouting all over the city, legitimately and illegitimately. But Madras Musings least expected them to spring up on the Marina, which had all these hundred years and more been free of them — enabling all to admire the distinctive Madras skyline — and which was to have been the showpiece of Vision 2000. Surely that vision of tomorrow is not going to be one of a splendid skyline hidden behind massive advertising hoardings — just because someone in the Corporation, or is it the PWD? feels that here's a way to raise some money for the 'public good'? Surely that 'good' does not mean defacing the Marina in this ghastly way?!

— THE EDITOR

Soaring prices in fish-short City

(By A Special Correspondent)

Prices of all varieties of fish have soared in the Madras wholesale and retail markets. The retail price of the popular Seer fish, which had never crossed Rs. 100 a kilo even during periods of acute shortage, touched Rs. 120-150 last July-August and stays there. Even cheaper varieties of fish like Bekti, normally selling at around Rs. 40 a kilo, have doubled in price. Freshwater fish, which usually do not have a good demand in the metro, have also become costlier.

Fish traders as well as fisheries experts and Central Government agencies attribute the steep price rise to acute short supply caused by poor fish landings in Madras and other parts of Tamil Nadu, fluctuations in supply from Andhra Pradesh and increasing demand in export markets. Traditionally, the fish catch in Madras is low and 90 per cent of the demand is met by A.P., particularly during the Southwest Monsoon season. But of late, a major portion of the fish catches of A.P. is being diverted to Bombay at better prices by traders who swarm the fish

landing centres, according to the fish merchants of the Chintadripet and Royapuram wholesale markets. Bombay traders shop even in Madras, making a further dent in the supply to Madras consumers. Lured by higher prices, the fishermen ignore the local market.

A large chunk of the consignments to Bombay is exported to overseas markets. Many varieties which previously had no takers in the foreign markets have now found buyers. Even cheap varieties like Sardines and freshwater species like Calla are now being exported to West Asia. The export of Tuna to Singapore has also almost doubled, it is reported.

For poor fish catches in Madras, fisheries scientists blame the fishermen for catching small-sized quality fish like Seer and Pomfret and for fishing during the spawning seasons, affecting their reproduction and growth. The indiscriminate pollution of the coastal waters by sewage and industrial effluents is also responsible for the decline in the marine harvest. (Courtesy: Fishing Chimes)

While waiting for Ford's, what next? Older yet, and older ...

It's truly a feather in the cap of the Jayalalitha Government, getting Ford Mahindra's to sign on the dotted line and say, "Yes, we're coming to Maraimalainagar". With a couple of other car projects in the wings, waiting to see how the wind blows, it would certainly seem as though happy days are here again in the Tamil Nadu industrial scenario. And that, *The Man From Madras Musings* is inclined to think, would make things a lot easier for Chief Minister Jayalalitha and her followers at the April polls.

If, however, the Ford Mahindra's project is to become a reality, both Central and State Governments will have to do much by way of developing infrastructure before the new multi-billion rupee plant puts down roots. As *MMM* sees it, the first priority will have to be to develop a superhighway into Mount Road FAST. Some work has been going on in Pallavaram, Chromepet and Alandur ... but at a snail's pace. Not touched, however, is that major bottleneck in Tambaram. Whereas the road from Maraimalainagar to Tambaram is superb, it's a nightmare in Tambaram, a little better between Chromepet and Saidapet, then a nightmare again till you're past the Eldam's Road junction. Major work will have to be done on this entire stretch by the end of 1996 if Ford Mahindra's are to show continued interest.

Ford Mahindra's will also be looking at how fast work progresses on another road which *MMM* considers essential for the success of the project — an OUTER RING ROAD which takes off from NH 45, bypasses Tambaram and swings around the city to reach the harbour. Such a bypass will not only free the city of North-South traffic but, more importantly in the context of the Ford project, make

access to and from Madras Port easier.

Other areas of infrastructure the Government will have to speed up in the next couple of years will be water for the Maraimalainagar area and a whole lot of power for the Madras industrial belt with its numerous auto ancillary units. *MMM* sees the need to wake up to getting Palar water on the move and increasing Neyveli power generation as well as getting Jayamkondam power on stream.

Another important area that will need looking into is providing for the new township that is bound to develop around the new plant. If Ford Mahindra's see themselves employing 2000 persons in their facility two years hence. *The Man From Madras Musings* sees a township of a hundred thousand developing around the plant, taking into consideration families, shops and services to meet their needs and the ancillary industries that are bound to develop nearby. Remember, that's how Perambur developed nearly a century ago around the Railway workshops and the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills. It'll happen again in Maraimalainagar — and Government will have to be ready to provide the new township with all infrastructural facilities, including schools, hospitals and transport systems.

Signing an MOU is the easiest part of such deals, *MMM* has always felt. What has to take place thereafter, as facilities are developed, can be back-breaking. Has Government the will for that? That's what concerns *The Man From Madras Musings*.

Saving buildings

The Man From Madras Musings was listening in the other day to a meeting which, among other things, discussed the fate of several buildings conservationists in Madras wanted saved. But, sadly, the discussions made dismal hearings.

A substantial amount of the money necessary to renovate and refurbish the University of Madras's splendid *Senate House* has been collected and finding the rest won't be a problem, *MMM* heard it stated. But the work has just not taken off — despite regular committee meetings. Why, no one was very clear. But it did seem that disputes in committee, over how best to do the work, could have much to do with the delay, besides the lack of a fixed focus

on what to do with the building once it is restored.

Some of the disputes, as *MMM* heard it, have had to do with the method of restoration. Some feel the 'weakened' domes should be pulled down and rebuilt anew, others apparently feel they can — and should — be restored by strengthening the original domes in the same way as when they were built. Perhaps such disputes will one day in the not too distant future be resolved. As for future use, several suggestions have been put forward in the columns of *Madras Musings* ... but such concrete suggestions are not discussed; instead, there's vague murmurings of let the University decide ... and that's a decision not likely to be taken soon. Yet such a decision is necessary for the planning of the refurbishment of the building. No wonder all concerned are taking things easy — having as they do NO GOAL in mind.

Rather similar is the case with Victoria Public Hall. After Sheriff Suresh Krishna had

Police Commissioner's presence at a Public Relations meet. It was suggested there that restoring the DGP's office to its original splendour would be a wonderful public relations exercise by the police, as its restoration had been sought by over a thousand senior citizens who had signed a restoration petition. But the Commissioner, who stated that he had helped prepare the note for a new police headquarters at the expense of the old building, was unmoved. In fact, he thought the Delhi report would be in favour of the building being pulled down. What then is Authority waiting for, *MMM* wonders.

Failing system

Not so long ago, *The Man From Madras Musings* considered the Indian postal system one of the finest in the world, one that worked, one where the postman — and other postal service personnel — cared and took the trouble to get a

SHORT N' SNAPPY

shown the way to restoration by renovating a SMALL part of what was once Madras's premier theatre and public hall, his successor, Dr Chokkalingam, formed a committee headed by Suresh Krishna to continue the good work. Nothing has been heard since of restoring VPH — the Town Hall — to its glory days, and NOW the Sheriff's office is no more. *The Man From Madras Musings* wonders who is going to look into the affairs of the Hall next. Probably the Corporation — unless the historic Trust comes to life. If it is indeed the Corporation, *MMM* wonders whether a Mayorless, memberless Corporation, prodded by the Government's priorities, will show the interest necessary in the building. Or will that moribund, decades-old Trust now come to life?

Report awaited

A third building that *The Man From Madras Musings* heard discussed was the DGP's former office, once Police Headquarters, on the Marina. The High Court, which had issued a stay on the building being pulled down till it received a report from an expert committee from Delhi, is still waiting for that report. The Delhi team came to Madras some time at the end of August, if *MMM* remembers aright — and that's surely enough time for a report to have been submitted. But the High Court is still awaiting Government's pleasure.

At the meeting *MMM* was present at, a visitor from Delhi was sure that the report had been prepared and sent long ago. Maybe it had got lost in transit, suggested someone. Maybe Government did not want to present it, thought another. But what struck *MMM* was that neither the petitioners nor the Government seemed to be in any hurry to get the issue resolved and the stay vacated or made permanent. Meanwhile, the DGP's building languishes, untended, uncared for. Incidentally, *MMM* last fortnight made reference to the

Archaeological Survey of India team to a plan drawn up by INTACH. This was work started for the Tamil Conference and now, several months later, the palace is ready to receive visitors. But the question being asked in Thanjavur is who is going to ensure continuous maintenance of the handsome building hereafter. Already there are signs that the first portions restored are not being looked after quite as they should. If that trend continues, the restoration would have been in vain. But that, unfortunately, is the tendency in India, *MMM* finds. Be it new or restored, few care to maintain it as it should be — and ruin sets in faster than elsewhere.

★ There's a growing tendency in Tamil Nadu in particular for a person to flaunt his or her qualifications as well as honours. It is not international practice to use honorary doctorates to prefix the names of those honoured, and so those with honorary doctorates are not addressed as Doctor. A practice *The Man From Madras Musings* is happy to note is followed by *The Hindu*. But now *MMM* finds we're going one step further. Names of engineers are being prefixed with Er., of architects with Arch. A recent notice *MMM* saw in *The Hindu* listed a family whose every individual had a prefix: Prof., Er., Dr., Arch. and one plain Mr.!

Business briefs

★ *The Man From Madras Musings* congratulates Suresh Krishna of Sundaram Fasteners on being elected 'Businessman of the Year' by *Business India*. The quality standards he has introduced and the firm's consequent export record have earned him the title ahead of several other big names with bigger organisations. If *MMM* recalls aright, this is the first time any entrepreneur from the South has been honoured with this title. *MMM* looks forward to many more — if they follow the example set by Krishna.

★ With VGP Golden Beach faced with enormous competition, the VGP family are looking into the future and drawing up plans to stay one step ahead of the competition. *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that the next VGP venture will be a massive 250,000 sq ft, Rs. 2 crore shopping mall which will, with its shops, restaurants, amusement facilities, theatres etc, ensure LEISURE shopping. 'Spend a day out shopping' will be further facilitated by the enormous parking space and shuttle bus services to the city promised. That's a shopping complex *MMM* is looking forward to.

★ The Sterling Group, now promoting heritage — also pilgrimage — holidays is also planning to do its bit for culture, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears. It will shortly be setting up at a cost of Rs. 2 crore, an Indian classical music and dance institute in Madras. The Institute, *MMM* understands, will not only promote classical Indian dance and music throughout India and abroad, but will also provide instruction.

In brief

★ Speaking of restoration, *The Man From Madras Musings* is glad to hear that the 400-year-old Thanjavur Palace, built and expanded by the Maharrats and the Nayaks, has now been completely restored by an

in a previous issue of *Madras Musings* reported the discovery in my photographic archives of pictures of an Iron Age dolmen site just beyond Amberam, which I had long ago forgotten, and asked if anyone could tell me whether the dolmens were still there. No one has written in yet. Perhaps no one cares, or this publication has no readers who venture as far as Tambaram in these terrible days of kamikaze road-users and dense pollution. But a visitor to Madras I met recently by chance told me to my delight that the dolmens are still there and can be clearly seen even from the

One Man's Madras — HARRY MILLER'S

and, I do hope someone who reads these lines will summon up enough courage and energy to go down there and confirm that report. Please write to me or the Editor if you do.

Meanwhile, I came across yet another find in my archives and files. This is much older than those dolmens, older perhaps by several millennia, and within easy reach of Madras, too. I'm not going to reveal the location of this site for fear of vandalism, but I will say that there is no secret about it, that the site was excavated by professional archaeologists long before independence, and that their results can be seen within the walls of the Madras Museum, or still should be.

I call this older yet, because whereas Mamallapuram is an affair of a metaphorical yesterday, and 'my' dolmens older by a factor of a mere ten or so, the site I am thinking of now

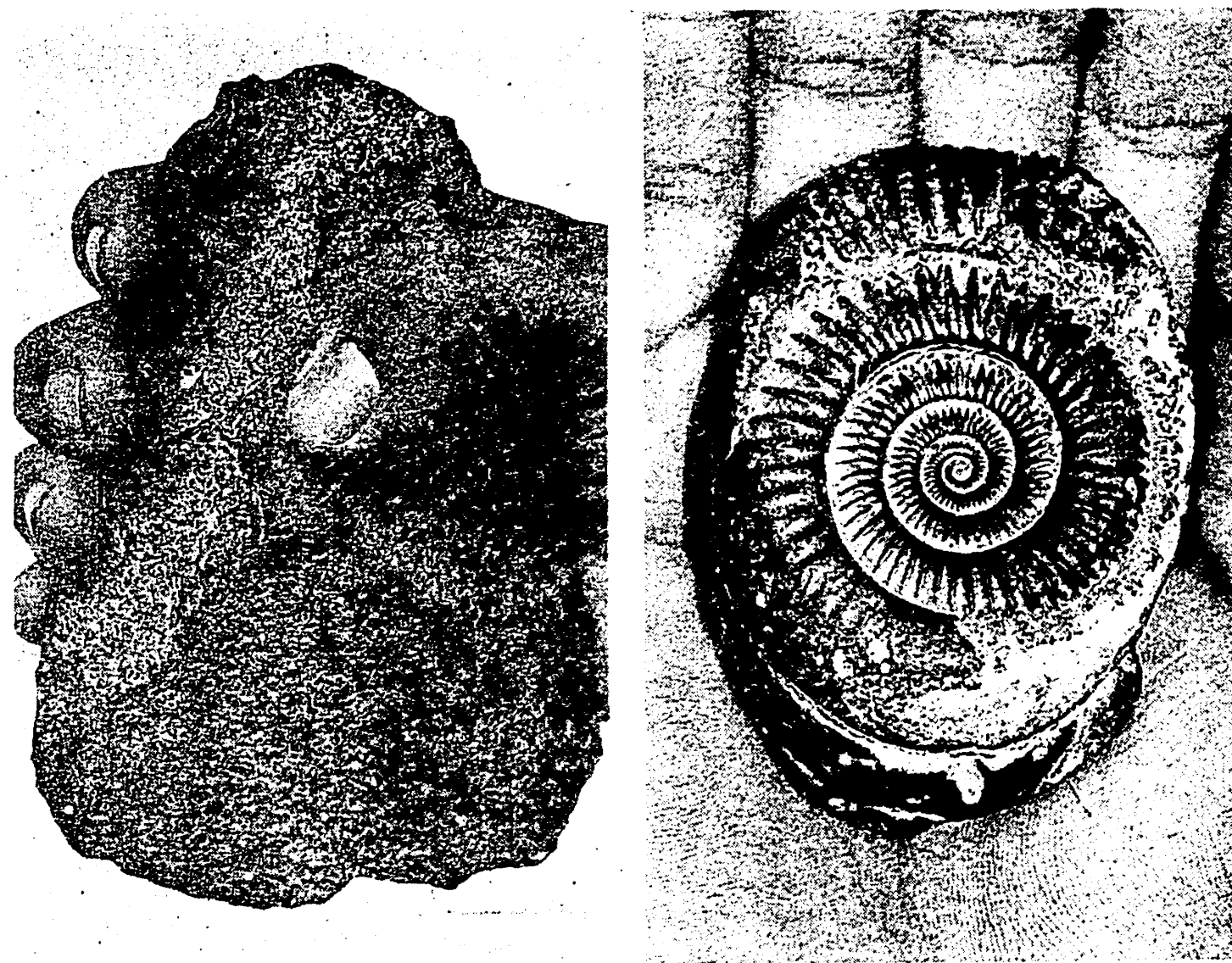
goes back many millennia, to the days long before people had discovered metals and how to refine them from ore, when tools of rough-hewn stone were the best that could be made or, imagined, and perhaps before it occurred to some Leonardo that a shaft of wood attached to one of those rough-hewn stones would make its use that much easier — the first stone axe.

My picture here today shows a hand-axe that I found on that well-known Stone Age site twenty years or more ago. I was taken there in a four-wheel-drive vehicle — the going is rough — by an amateur but skilled archaeologist from whom I quickly learned, as anyone can, how to distinguish a genuine artefact — a stone that had been roughly fashioned into a tool by human hands — from the massed litter of other stony fragments abounding on a river-bed there.

The experience had its amusing side, too, for the hand-axe I found and still possess was a far better specimen than any of the three the archaeologist found. He did his best to coax me to surrender mine to him in exchange for his inferior three, and sulked pettishly all the way home when I stoutly refused.

I once saw an 'almanac', a sort of diary actually but called 'The Indian Almanac', that was printed by the Madras Orphanage Asylum in the year MDCCXCV (which are the old Roman numerals we would now render as 1795) solemnly giving the age of the world as 5,800 (sic) years. You see, many earnest Christian scholars, accepting, as millions still do, that the Bible and everything in it is literally true, had laboriously traced our ancestry back through the various generations recorded in the Old Testament and had arrived at that figure.

We know now that the age of this planet is many hundreds of millions of years, though I read recently in an



A hand-axe of the Stone Age found near Madras by the author (left) and an impression left on sedimentary rock by an ammonite. (Pictures by HARRY MILLER)

essay by the late Isaac Asimov that in the United States alone there are an estimated twenty million graduates who still believe that Biblical figure, together with all the other myths and legends about the Creation the Bible contains. And I can guess, of course, that many a Christian reader of this journal here in Madras will already be glowering with rage that I should dare to contradict it.

But I'm afraid they are wrong, and it is not at all difficult to prove it. There are as many ways of doing that as there are of proving that the Earth is round. It's a bit technical, perhaps, but in the space the Editor will allow me for this piece I can do no better than to say that the rocks contain an isotope of the element Potassium that is radioactive, that it decays at a known rate into Argon, and that by determining the amount of Argon in such rocks their age can be established.

Anyway, we are certainly a good deal older than the 5,800 years allowed by that Madras Almanac, and the hunk of rock shown in my picture was used by people you would not like

to share a seat in a bus with. If you were to hold it in your hand you would certainly get the sensation that it is indeed a roughly hewn but certainly a human tool, not a mere accidental chunk of rock.

And so then we can push the history of Madras — if we can be allowed a somewhat larger area — not only back beyond Mamallapuram, but back beyond the Iron to the Stone Age, and that's very far away indeed.

However, that stone axe — going by its human not geological origin — is a baby compared to yet another artefact I'm inordinately proud of. I'll include a picture of it here, if the Editor will allow me the space. This curiously spiralled artefact is the impression left on sedimentary rocks by an animal called an ammonite. There were many species of ammonites, some like this, a mere few inches in diameter, some almost as big as cart-wheels. But that little spiralled animal in my picture is the fossil of a creature that lived at least 65 MILLION years ago. For the ammonites, along with the equally abundant trilobites and, most spectacular of all, the celebrated dinosaurs and an estimated 85 per cent of all other living species, were wiped out in a catastrophe that overtook our planet Earth at the end of the geological period known as the Cretaceous, almost certainly by the impact of a large body from space, an asteroid or a comet.

But I wander far — too far some will say — from Madras, and One Man's view of it. Yet I wonder. A new and very large comet called the Hale-Bopp comet after its two discoverers, is at the moment falling sun-wards at a speed of about a million miles a day, a speed that will accelerate as it approaches the Sun. Last year, the comet Shoemaker-Levy 3 was dragged by Jupiter's prodigious gravitational field from its solar orbit and impacted the giant planet itself. Comet Hale-Bopp is predicted to miss planet Earth by several million miles, though it will be clearly visible to us here in Madras around March and April in 1997 — that's only fifteen months away — but comets are notoriously unpredictable, so let us hope the astronomers have got it right. Let us hope that Hale-Bopp doesn't change its mind and we have another Mass Extinction of life on Earth. The way things are going, there are some who would welcome it. In a private, despairing communication to me, a world-famous author and scientist, discussing the end of the Cretaceous, said he thought planet Earth, with its destructive, polluting, verminous spread of exponentially exploding human population, was just about due for another 'sanitising' event.

And if that ever happened, I have a powerful feeling that One Man's Madras would never be quite the same again.

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CAHILL, S J	C for the microprocessor engineer
CATER, E	Ecotourism
DYSON, A	Britain in view
FREEDLAND, M	Sean Connery
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Snakes alive! Again!

The Madras Snake Park, now enjoying a new lease of life under the trusteeship of B Vijayaraghavan IAS (Retd.) and his team, has on display at present twenty species of snakes, two of crocodiles, two of turtles/tortoises and four of lizards.

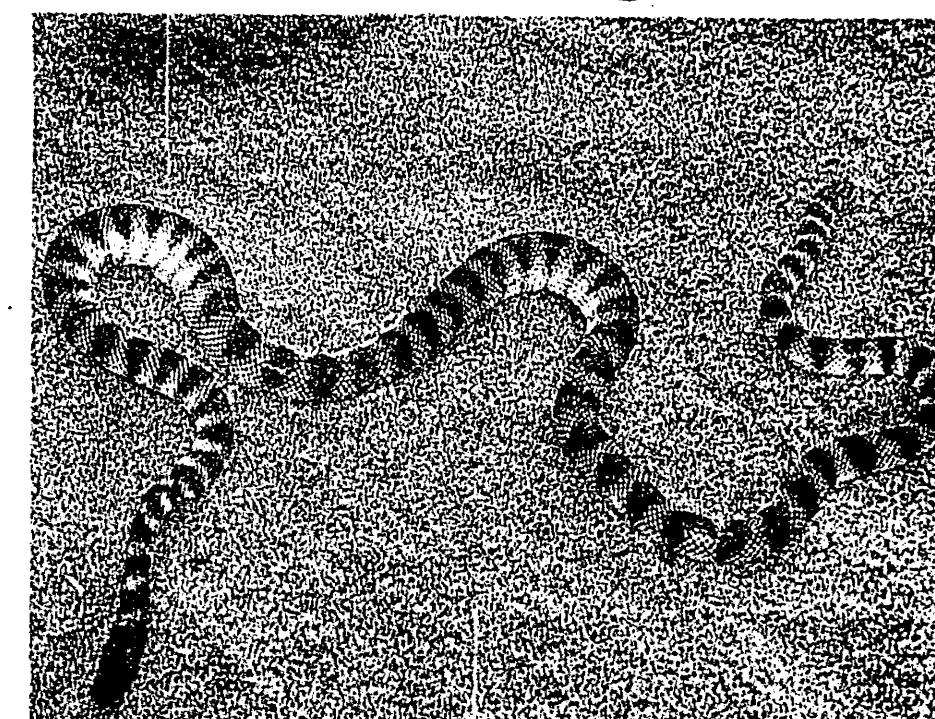
In 1994-95, a marsh crocodile, an Indian soft shell turtle, an Indian python, a reticulated python, a chameleon, a checkered keelback, an Olive keelback, an Indian pond turtle and a common sand boa bred in the park.

With assistance from the Central Zoo Authority, an aquarium for sea snakes and turtles has been constructed at a total cost of Rs. 1.5 lakhs. Twentytwo cages for snakes have been renovated/modernised.

During 1994-95, 7,79,754 visitors (5,94,509 adults and 1,85,245 children) visited the Park.

The hourly demonstration of snakes for the education of the public, which had earlier been discontinued, has been revived in response to popular demand.

The Madras Snake Park Trust maintains and displays a captive collection of snakes and other reptiles to promote knowledge on snakes and other reptiles and to dispel the erroneous beliefs about them. It



The now alive-again-and-active Madras Snake Park Trust has brought out a set of ten 'Protect Reptiles' picture cards, which are on sale at the Park. And very nice they look too. Which is why *Madras Musings* plans to publish them in the coming weeks.

Our picture in this issue is of one of the snakes in the Park's new collection — its sea snake collection. This picture is of a Chittul or an Annulated Sea Snake (*Hydrophis cyanocinctus*) and we are told it is one of the commoner of the twenty species of sea snakes found along the coast of India. We are also warned, "All sea snakes are highly venomous", "but are reassured that they 'rarely bite humans'". (Photograph by R J Ranjit Daniels, courtesy Madras Snake Park Trust.)

undertakes captive breeding of vulnerable species of snakes and other reptiles and assists research in herpetology. The Trust undertakes

surveys on the distribution and status of snakes and other reptiles and provides consultancy services on them

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What can we expect from 1996?

1995 was one of the worst years for the capital market as nothing seemed to go right. The year opened on an illiquid note, and as the year progressed the cash crunch only worsened. Other factors, like the MS Shoes scandal, Enron controversy, tight credit policy, Reliance-BSE skirmish, the 'share switch' scam, the declining rupee and a spate of devolved issues, filled the deficit side of the economic balance sheet. And the Government's failure in PSU disinvestment, raising Rs. 7000 cr. against the targeted only Rs. 7000 cr. hardly helped matters.

Against this backdrop, the one fact that stands out is the uniformly good results churned out by the Corporate Sector, though high interest costs have taken their toll. Industrial production grew by 8 per cent compared to the 8.5 per cent in the previous year. Exports went up by around 24 per

cent, though imports, mostly capital goods, increased by around 30 per cent. The declining rupee is bound to hit imports in the coming year, though exporters should make enhanced realisations.

This year's elections are definitely going to have a long-term effect. A hung Parliament or a messy coalition government could just about seal the tailspin. A more drastic fallout will be the adverse impact on the reforms process, as it will be forced to the backburner. In such a case it would take a minimum period of another 12 months before the markets recover. Investors may very well write off 1996 in such an eventuality. To add to our woes, world history points to the government changing when prices (of essential commodities) rise. The Indian scenario fits this bill. It has to be noted here that we are not ruling out the chances of the new government being stable. That, in fact, would be the ideal solution to the market's ills. The next crucial stage is going to be the Budget presented by the incoming Government. The stability of the party(ies) in power will be the best boost to the market. The saddest plight has been that of the small investor. His holdings have depreciated, his credit is costlier and, worst of all, nobody is paying enough attention to his grievances — lack of transparency and of protection. However, ironically, he will never have it so good. The P/E ratios are ruling at the bottom. Though the March 1996 results of the Corporate Sector might not be extremely flattering, all the investments made by the various companies, in expansion/modernisation, should soon be bearing fruit. With the inability of the railways to meet industrial freight demand, road transport will finally come of age. If we factor in the plans of Ford Peugeot, Benz and their ilk,

there is no doubt that the auto and ancillary sectors and scrips will do well. Similarly, the urgent need of Forex might prompt the authorities to increase benefits to export-related companies, which can also look forward to a bright 1996. Hospitality, software and the traditional agricultural and food-related sectors should all do well.

Mutual funds, though not having performed up to expectations, will continue to attract investors. Telecom, copper, distilleries, finance and banks will join the 'green' or eco-friendly scrips on the top of the 'Good for 1996' list. The forward trading falling into place and a less restrictive credit policy may finally help alleviate the problems brought about by the liquidity crunch.

Thus, the latter half of 1996 can be expected to be better. But any expectations of the Sensex climbing steeply will prove to be over-optimistic, as all indicators point to a slight recovery, not a sharp turnaround. Meanwhile, some suggestions:

Indsil Electrosilts (CMP: Rs. 21.00): Indsil Electrosilts, incorporated in 1990, had gone public in 1993 to set up a Rs. 11.70 cr project manufacturing ferro silicon. The original capacity of 7800 MT was later increased to 8560 MT in the unit which had been set up in Palakkad, Kerala, to avail of concessional power tariff for a five-year period. Ferro silicon is an essential input in the manufacture of steel and certain grades of castings and, hence, is directly related to the iron and steel industry. The company's production facilities have been made flexible to produce various grades of ferro-alloys, like ferro silicon, silicon magnesium, and extra-low carbon silicon manganese.

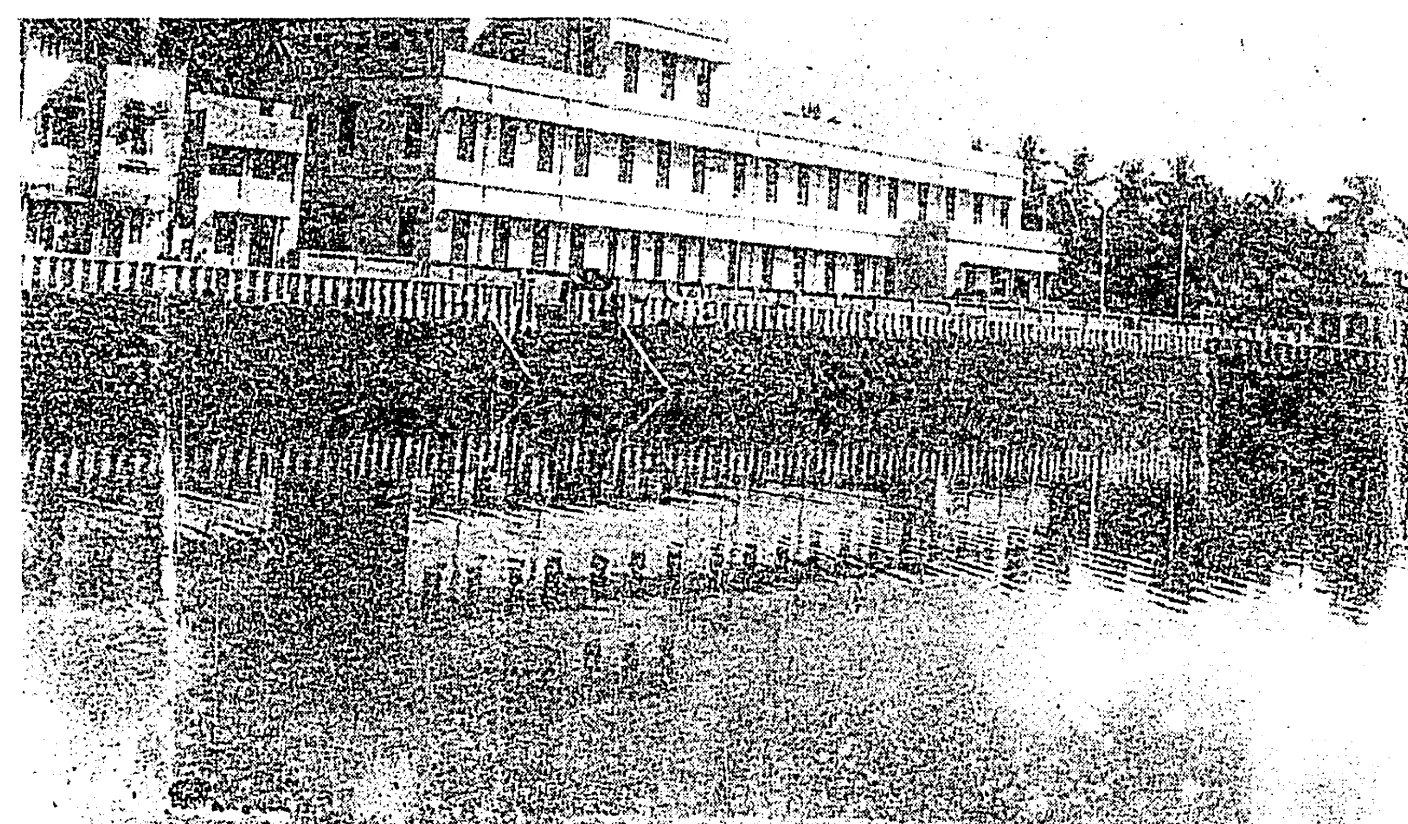
For 1995, the company had achieved a PAT, sales and EPS of Rs. 0.62 cr, Rs. 4.56 cr and Rs. 1.77 respectively in six months of operations. Turnover almost doubled to Rs. 8.09 cr in the first half of 1995-96 and it should be noted that this company's operating margins are higher than most others in the industry. The annualised EPS stands at Rs. 6.06, which discounts the CMP only about 3.7 times. Technically, the short-term trend is up and has risen above the moving averages. Buying recommended.

Pasumai Irrigation (CMP: Rs. 25.00): Incorporated in 1989, Pasumai Irrigation Ltd. (PIL), a Madras-based company, was engaged in marketing fertilisers, seeds and agro-chemicals. Later PIL also started assembling and marketing drip irrigation systems (DIS) and is, at present, engaged in the manufacture of drip irrigation components, which include drippers, PVC and LLDPE pipes, and accessories like connectors, end plugs and spikes.

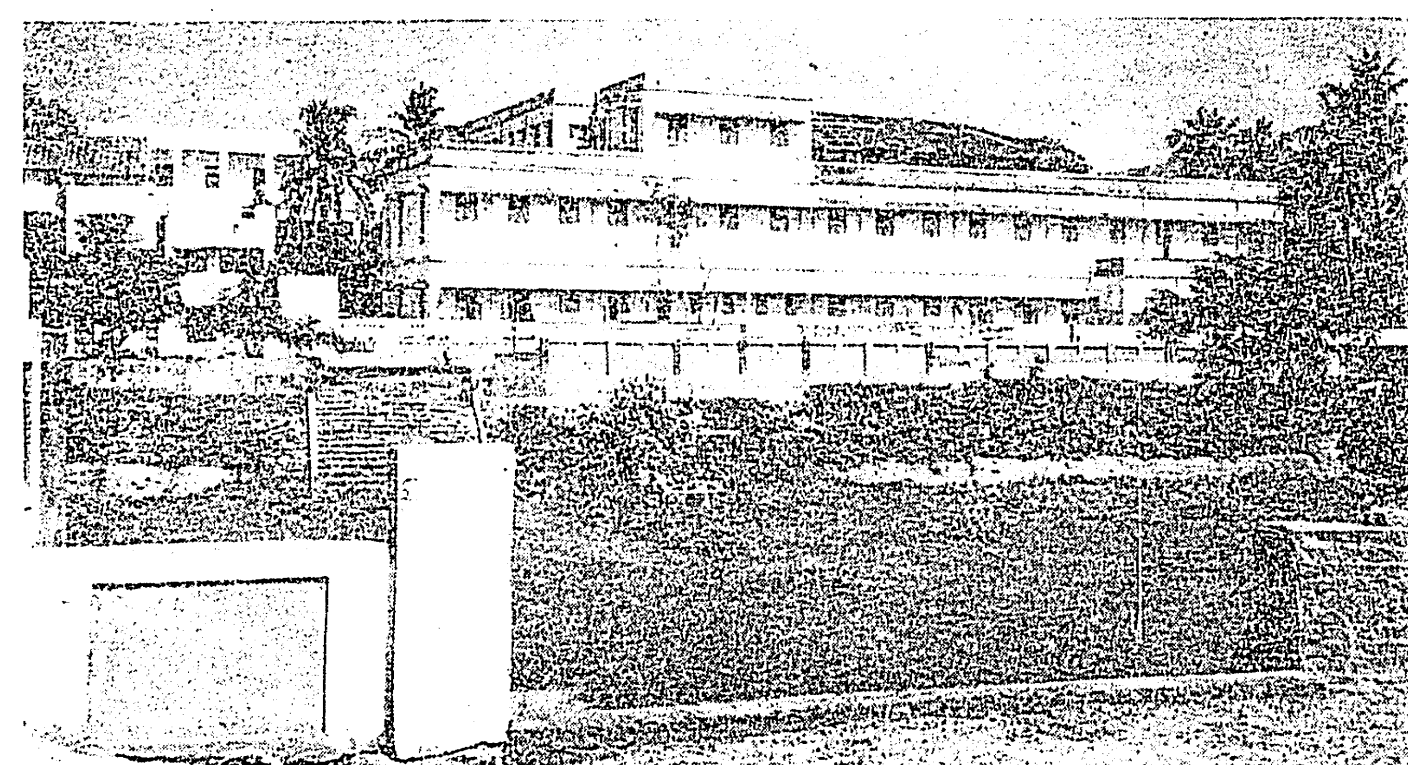
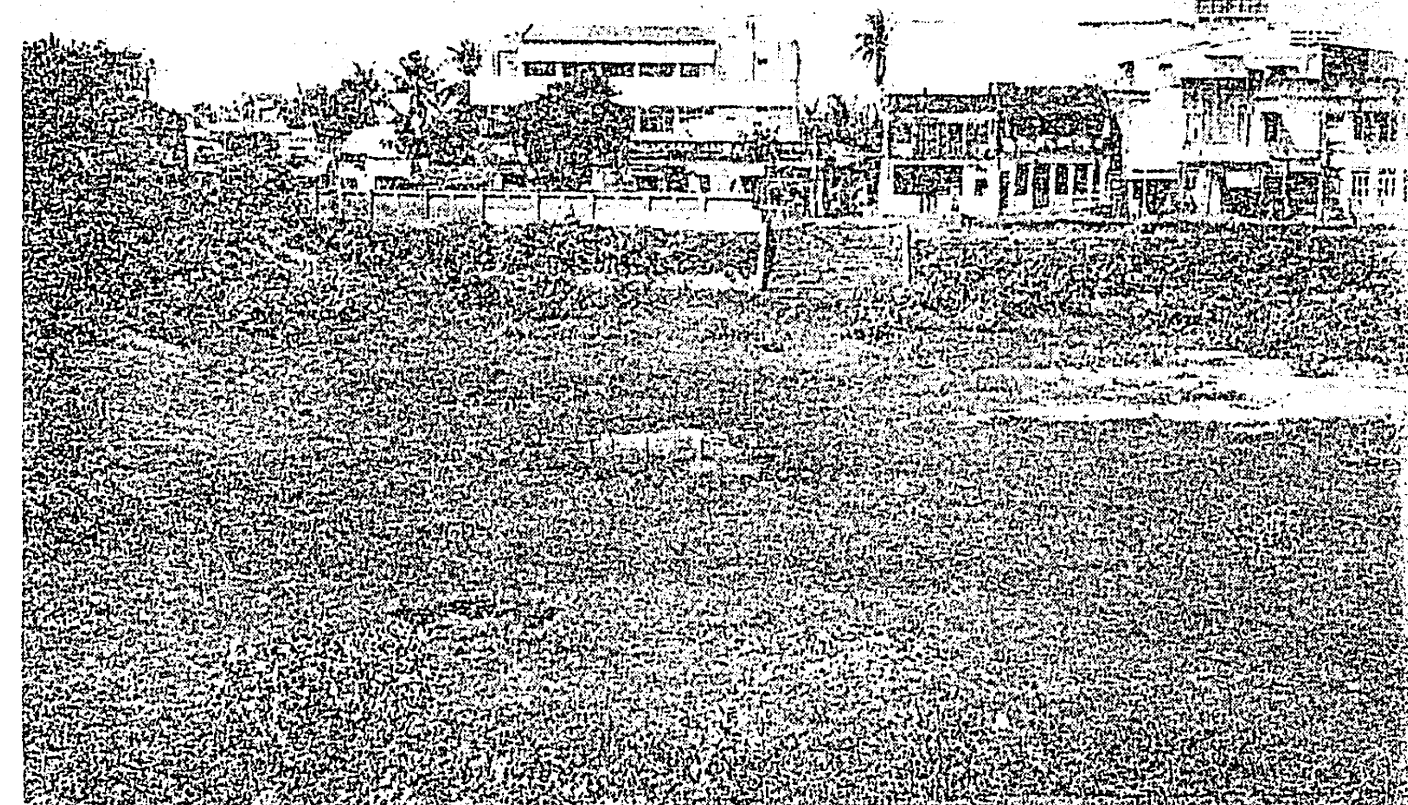
PIL has also undertaken the manufacture of integrated drip line (IDL), an advanced version of non drippers, in collaboration with No Prem Irrigation of Israel. The greenhouse division of Pasumai, actively involved in tissue culture, floriculture and horticulture, is undertaking projects for Tata Tea, Ramco Group, Nirmal Floritech and the Wimco Group. This division, contributing high margins, gives PIL advantages over competitors.

PIL has achieved a turnover of Rs. 16.32 and a PAT of Rs. 1.71 cr for the year-end September 30, 1995, resulting in an EPS of Rs. 4.46 compared to Rs. 2.85 earned in the corresponding previous period. The current earnings discounts the CMP only 5.60 times, giving good scope for appreciation.

K. GOPALAKRISHNAN



The good news is that Mylapore's Chitrakulam is to be brought back to the water-filled state it was in our OLD. In that picture of the tank in the 1940s — a picture taken by the late M K RANGASWAMY IYENGAR, whose son M S Krishnan sent us its somewhat faded negative — the reflection of Lady Sivaswamy Ayyar Girls' School and of the tank steps is clearly seen in the depths. But look what this once water-rich tank is now — in ... & THE NEW pictures taken by RAJIND N CHRISTY a few weeks ago. Development all round has drained the Chitrakulam of its water and it's parched open-air latrine with stagnant pools of water breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Will Chitrakulam be its beautiful old self this time next year? The rains — and how the government grant is spent — will alone provide the answer.



New lease of life for Chitrakulam

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Mylapore Adhi Kesava Perumal Temple's tank, Chitrakulam (meaning 'beautiful tank' — a misnomer today!), will shortly get a new lease of life. Government has recently sanctioned Rs. 18.5 lakhs for the renovation of the tank.

The work will include spreading a layer of clay (to a height of one foot), on top of which will be spread another foot of sand. Four borewells will be sunk and motors will be installed to pump up the water. The existing walls will be raised to a height of five feet and topped by a wire fence. All the tank steps will be repaired and cleaned. And four grill gates will be provided for access into the tank.

This huge tank, "one Cawnie, nine grounds, 464 sq feet" (approximately 32 grounds), is at present overgrown with bushes. Whenever there are rains, water stagnates in the middle and breeds mosquitoes. The rest of the area is used as a public lavatory. Sometimes, locals play improvised games of cricket in it! The steps leading to the tank are in a pitiful condition.

As late as in 1972, this tank, like the better-known Kapaleeswarar Temple's Periyakulam, had a float festival. After all, this was a tank that is believed to have existed for at least 2000 years.

The tank was made a permanent structure in 1875, after the "land was

granted by the East India Company in perpetuity for the support of the Pagoda of Kesava Perumal"

As the years went by, large-scale urban development took its toll and by the 1980s the tank could no longer be called a water body.

Some time in 1980, an NGO, with the blessings of the Kanchi Acharyas, built a concrete wall around the almost decrepit tank. But after that, nothing much was done. There was a proposal to convert one portion of the tank into a shopping complex, but this was so vehemently opposed by most devotees, that it was dropped. Now, 15 years later, restoration is at last beginning.

And so a 268-year-old institution comes to an end ... and in these two articles, Madras Musings looks back at what the Sheriff's office was all about

A Sheriff in search of a posse

Time was when a Sheriff (to this writer) was Nottingham's Scourge of Sherwood's Merrie Men or a "Bring-em-Back-Alive-or-Dead" hero of the Wild West. It was only some years later that I realised that 'out there' they still had sheriffs; only these law enforcers had traded horses for cars and models for sirens, and they could even now raise a posse of lawmen and townfolk to keep the peace. It was about this time, too, that I discovered that Madras also had a Sheriff.

The first Sheriffs of Madras were lawmen and they could call out, in an emergency, long before the days of the Wild West, something called the posse comitatus comprising a local armed force or militia! Imagine a venerable senior citizen of Madras whistling up a posse! The mind boggles.

The Lord High Sheriff was a picturesque and powerful office in Anglo-Saxon England, a judicial and administrative official who administered the King's Writ in the local baronies. Any institution as English as this inevitably had to be exported to the colonies — and so America and Madras got their Sheriffs, in effect representatives of the Crown who could summon local authority to assist them in enforcing the Crown's will.

However, in Madraspatnam, the local village system was allowed to continue for some years. Black Town had an Adhikari or justice-administering headman, a Kanakkapulle or accounts clerk, and a Peddanaick or watchman. The Peddanaick belonged to a clan of Poligars (Palayakkaras) and held, hereditarily, his law-enforcing office. The Peddanaick had a number of palanquins, or peons, under him and they policed Madras, arresting wrongdoers and bringing them before the Adhikari's court. By the Charter of 1661, the East India Company abolished the Adhikari's office — as well as the Kanakkapulle's — but retained the Peddanaick's to assist the Governor in his administration of Civil Criminal Law. But the Peddanaick's power began to wane and his office was finally abolished in the early 1700s.

Subsequent charters wrought several changes in the administration of the law in Madras, but it was the Charter of 1726 that finally introduced the Common and Statute Law of England in the Indian settlements and Presidencies. It was then that the office of Sheriff was created to summon Grand and Petty Juries."

The Charter, which rather ambiguously proclaimed its jurisdiction over any area within ten English miles of any English Factory in India, also ambiguously defined the role of the Sheriff. The "Junior of the Council of St. George" was to be sworn in to carry out his duties of office for one year. The Sheriff's duties were "to execute and make return of all process" of the Courts and to summon "the principal inhabitants" to serve as Grand and Petty Juries in these courts. The Sheriff's duties also included serving Summons and Warrants on defaulters. The Charter came into effect on Sunday, August 17, 1727. The

occasion was marked by a great procession that started on the Parade Ground in the Fort, wended its way across Old Black Town (where the High Court campus now is) and reached the Company's Garden House in Peddanaickenpet where the Governor and Council waited to receive the Mayor, the Aldermen and the Sheriff and administer the oaths of office. The procession on horseback has been described as a wondrous one: "Major John Roach (the Captain of the Garrison) on horseback at the head of a company of foot-soldiers with kettle-drum, trumpet and other music; the dancing girls with country music; the Peddanaick on horseback at the head of his peons; the Marshall (in charge of the Mayor's prisoners) with his staff on horseback; the Registrar carrying the old Charter on horseback; the Sergeants (guards of the Mayor's Court) with their maces on horseback; the Old Mayor on the right hand and the new Mayor on the left; the Aldermen two and two all on horseback; the Company's chief peon; the Sheriff with a white wand on horseback; the chief gentry in the town on horseback."

The first person to carry the "white wand" in Madras was August Nicholas Morse, who was sworn in as Sheriff on August 22, 1727.

Being a Sheriff of Madras in those early days was not without its moments of excitement, or, at least, travail. Sheriff Toriano in 1735 was fined by the Mayor's Court for claiming in the Bill of Sale of a house the fee paid to the Choultry Justice". In 1736, the Sheriff discovered that the 10-mile radius meant nothing when a Poligar was involved. The Sheriff had arrested a Poligar of a village which was less than two miles away from the Fort, for not respecting the Fort's jurisdiction. But the Council ruled that the Poligars and their prisoners were protected persons and ordered the release of the Poligar. Towards the end of that year, the same Sheriff was in greater trouble, this time almost inciting a religious riot.

On September 28th, Governor Richard Benyon was startled by the roar of a crowd outside his chambers. Councillors soon learned that the crowd wanted the immediate release of merchants "Perrima Moodalare" and "Ram Chundree", who had been arrested by the Sheriff simply because they had "refused to take certain Oaths which, they alleged, were contrary to their religion and the Rules of their Cast". Benyon, a born negotiator and a man who had spent years on the coast, was just the man to tackle the unpleasant situation, which threatened the mass exodus of the entire Indian community from within the Company's bounds "if such a Power was tolerated". Benyon, "knowing there was nothing about which these people are so tenacious as that which affects their religious Rite and Ceremonies", ordered the release of the merchants after a prompt inquiry and saved an ugly situation.

In 1745, a special seal was sanctioned for the Sheriff's use, augmenting the dignity provided by his white wand and place in the Mayor's

Procession. The "Device" on the seal was to be "the Maces crossed on the Sword in a Mashle, with Sheriff of Madraspatnam in the circle round it". The next year the French captured Madras and remained in occupation till 1749 — all appointments lapsing till the Charter of George II was granted on January 8, 1755. Under this new Charter, the Sheriff's office was resurrected, but, wisely, no mention was made of the extent of his demesne — the "ten miles" clause was omitted, as it was "deemed to be fraught with inconvenience", and no wonder, for the settlement bounds at the time did not extend anywhere near that limit!

But even within settlement limits, the Sheriff faced a host of problems in those days, for, as a law enforcer, he often risked the wrath of those unwilling to have the law enforced. The most infamous incident of this sort happened in September 1779, when Sheriff William Jackson went to take possession of a house in Tiruvatteswaranpettai which had been bought in public sale by one Captain Nathaniel Bacon. The house had belonged to Ameer-ul-Umrah, the ambitious second son and spoil favourite of his father Nawab Mohammed Ali. When action had been brought in the Mayor's Court against Ameer for non-settlement of a debt and Ameer did not appear in Court, the property was sold to Bacon. Ameer, however, was not prepared to give up his property without a fight.

When Sheriff Jackson and party turned up at the house, they were surrounded by troops in the Nawab's service and prevented from entering it. Sheriff Jackson huffed and puffed and waved his wand, but all to no avail. Eventually he had to send for "the posse comitatus" to assist". And that was when the "Subidar and about Forty Sepoys" attacked the Sheriff's party with reversed muskets and the flats of their swords. The Sheriff and his party fled, still shouting for the posse comitatus, which seemed to be strangely slow in turning up. In the first hundred yards of the rout, Sheriff Jackson lost his wand. And a few hundred yards later, "quite exhausted with running so far in the heat of the Sun," he "threw (himself) into a Botque or Shop" and continued calling out for his posse, but in vain. The sepoys then dragged Jackson out of the shop and thrashed him "so much that I was put in fear of my life". His sword and hat were stolen and he was then dragged towards the disputed house, but on an official coming out from it and whispering instructions to the Subedar, Jackson was dumped in the middle of the road, his sword and hat thrown at him and "told repeatedly to 'Jow'". And Jao he did, calling now for his palanquin and not his posse. The outcome was that the Nawab appealed to the Council, seeking on behalf of himself, his brothers, five sons, 107 "Cawns", 42 Hindu Officials, 3 Commandants of sepoys and 17 Subedars, the "Privileges of an independent Prince residing within the Territory of another Power". The whole affair was ignored by the



Dr Chokkalingam, the last Sheriff of Madras, in the Sheriff's traditional ceremonial dress.

In recent years, it's been ...

A quiet life for the Man in Black

The bewilderment of many a modern Sheriff of Madras over the functions of his office prompted us to request SRIRAM PANCHU, Advocate, to examine the nature of the office. The following note, on what can best be described as a "limbo office", was prepared with the help of Panchu.

The office of the Sheriff, introduced into the Indian Presidency towns of the British in the 18th Century, no longer enjoys the importance it once did. The palanquins surrounded by pike-men, or gilded coaches with prancing Arab steeds and liverymen, are all long gone; now even the main work of this institution — its police duties — has been taken away.

Once the Sheriff was a power in the land. The first known Sheriff anywhere was appointed by King Canute (1017-1036) and described as the "King's steward and judicial president of the Shire, the administrator of the royal demesne and the executor of the law". Today's Sheriff is a long way from that, though he remains a Royal or Presidential officer. In Madras, his duties are mainly ministerial or ornamental, such as calling public meetings (a civic function reminiscent of the ancient right to call out the populace in emergencies), reading proclamations, organising fund-raising

Indians were first considered for appointment as Sheriffs early in the 19th Century and the first

(Continued on P7)

Government thereafter. And Sheriff Jackson was left to nurse his bumps and bruises.

A new Charter in November 1798 abolished the old courts and institutions and Madras received a Recorder's Court, which was to grow into the High Court of today. But the Sheriff's office continued.

The only known instance of a Sheriff not being at the receiving end but using his office for his own ends happened early in the 19th Century. Gilbert Ricketts, who was the owner of the garden house that was to become Raj Bhavan, had abused his position as Registrar of the Supreme Court to embezzle large sums of money from the estates of deceased persons. The Sheriff of 1814 was charged with the custody of the monies belonging to the Suitors of the Court in this instance. But he, unannounced, quit India and

campaigns for civic causes, meeting visiting dignitaries, and so forth.

On such ceremonial occasions the Sheriff may don the uniform prescribed by the Dress Regulations. This ornate ceremonial dress is reason enough to describe the Sheriff as 'The Man in Black' for it is an all-black outfit of serge and silk. The black, pigeon-breasted court dress with stand collar and burnished steel buttons is teamed with a black (or white) waistcoat, black breeches buckled at the knee, black silk hose and black patent leather shoes, black beaver or cocked hat, and black silk belt with black scabbard for sling sword. Only the lace-filled and ruffled white gloves add a touch of colour to the sombre Sheriff. His symbol of office is a silver-giltted white wand, once carried at the opening of all judicial sessions, was replaced by

In recent years, it's been ...

A quiet life for the Man in Black

a symbolic oar if the Sheriff was attending a session of the Admiralty Court. On either occasion he was accompanied by javelin-carrying bailiffs.

Together with most of the duties, much of the pomp has gone out of the office today, but the type of man who occupies the Sheriff's office has remained the same over the years. He is invariably a man of substantial wealth. As Blackstone, the father of English Jurisprudence, once stated, "As the Sheriff may have the custody of the men of the greatest property in the County, his own estate ought certainly to be large, that he may be above all temptation to permit them to escape or to join them in their flight". The Sheriff may no longer have to perform police duties, but he has to maintain the dignity of his office. This he can only do if he has considerable private means, as the Sheriff receives no salary. So the practice has been to appoint to this position only rich, prominent and influential citizens. (Government servants, persons in the legal profession and those in military service are, by law, excluded from the office.)

Indians were first considered for appointment as Sheriffs early in the 19th Century and the first

(Continued on P7)

proceeded to America. And once again the Suitors lost their money!

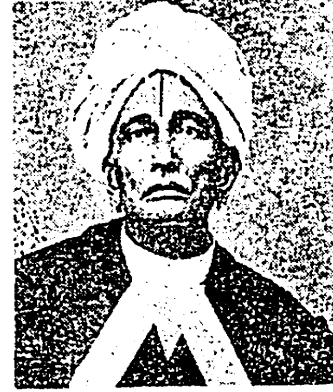
From 1877 onwards, the Sheriff's powers as a law-enforcer began to decline and by 1924 they had become almost non-existent. Today, the Sheriff continues, as K Narasimhachari of the High Court wrote, "merely a picturesque functionary with purely ceremonial duties a *roi faineant*", holder of an ancient and honourable office with long historical traditions and great dignity, an impressive link with the past, but NO MORE than that. (Courtesy: *Aside* — 1978).

— S.M.

* The incident led to single point registration of all property, and all persons were asked to produce to this Authority, within six months, their titles to land or houses, failing which the "proprietors of the Soil", the Company, would take over the property!

Only the Law matters

He was one of the greatest jurists India produced. He dominated the legal world of Madras about a century ago. Along with two other great luminaries of the day, Sir T Muthuswami Iyer and Sir S Subramania Iyer, he created history in many respects in the old Madras Presidency. Indeed, Sir Vembakkam Bhashyam Ayyangar, who also sat on the Bench of Madras High Court for a while, was a legend in his lifetime.



Sir Vembakkam Bhashyam Ayyangar, jurist extraordinary
(Picture courtesy RAGAMI)

Bhashyam Ayyangar was born in the noted Brahmin Ayyangar family of Vembakkam in the Chengalpattu District. This little village has given birth to many well-known Madras personalities. The galaxy includes the Hon. V Satagopalachari and V Rajagopalachari (great lawyers), V Rama Iyengar (a famed Dewan of Travancore whose name is enshrined in a street in Vepery as Dewan Rama Iyengar Road), V Rangachari (Dewan of Mysore), V Raghavachari (a noted police officer popularly known as 'Police' Raghavachari, one of the earliest Indians to be appointed as Magistrate with powers of a Police Commissioner.), V V Srinivasa Iyengar and V C Gopalratnam among others.

A brilliant student, Bhashyam wanted to follow in the footsteps of the members of the Vembakkam family who had achieved great success at the Bar. At this time, the ambition of most young men, especially from middle-class Brahmin families, was to get a government job. It offered safety, security, a steady take-home pay packet and a certain social status. No wonder Bhashyam Ayyangar was attracted. He quit Law College and joined

Government service as a Sub-Registrar. However, his mind was not in it. The limited scope for advancement ... boring work ... the absence of challenge in duty, all these prompted Bhashyam Ayyangar to go back to the study of law. When he took his B.L. degree, he stood first in the Madras Presidency; second was T Muthuswami Iyer!

Bhashyam joined the chambers of the then Advocate-General of Madras, O. Sullivan. (Sullivan lived in a palatial mansion in an area named after him, Sullivan's Garden in Mylapore. The name was recently changed in memory of another great citizen, Sir P.S. Sivasami Iyer.)

Sullivan, greatly impressed by his apprentice's brilliance, intellect and capacity for tireless industry, foretold — and it is on record — that his disciple would occupy the highest positions an Indian could in that age.

When Bhashyam enrolled himself as an advocate of the Madras High Court, the Bar was dominated by the British barristers practising in the city. Working hard and fighting many prejudices the 'native vakil' made his

way to the forefront of the Bar till he occupied an equal status with the British barristers. It was a golden age in the history of the Madras High Court and the *vakils* who made it possible were S Subramania Iyer, P Annandachari, C R Pattabirama Iyer (Sir C P Ramaswami Iyer was his son) and the most successful of them all, Bhashyam Ayyangar.

Quickly he built up a large practice as a civil lawyer and before long his income was in the neighbourhood of five figures a month at a time when sovereign gold sold for 13 rupees and five litres of petrol was on tap at 25 paise! There was a period when Bhashyam Ayyangar's monthly income was believed to have touched Rs. 50,000! His intellect and knowledge of law won him the approbation of the British rulers who bestowed on him a knighthood and the orthodox Brahmin lawyer came to be known as Sir Vembakkam. However, the Government of Madras treated him unfairly when it came to appointing him Advocate-General. It did appoint him as A.G. twice, but both occasions were short, temporary stints. Even though the Governor and his Advisors were aware that Bhashyam Ayyangar richly deserved the high office on a permanent basis, they failed to do justice to him merely because he was an Indian.

When in the 1890's Sir T Muthuswami Iyer, the first Indian High Court judge, was to retire, Bhashyam Ayyangar was offered his place. He was initially reluctant to accept the offer. His income was several times higher than a High Court Judge's salary! Besides, a judge had to retire at the age of sixty and was not permitted to practice at the same High Court thereafter. Bhashyam Ayyangar explained the position to the Governor, Lord Amthill. The Governor recommended his case to the Secretary of the State for India in London and, after much hesitation, the period of judgeship was extended by six months.

However, Bhashyam Ayyangar was keen to resume his practice after retirement, something which had not been done by anyone else. A controversy arose over this and Bhashyam Ayyangar sought the opinion of a famous British barrister, John D Mayne. (Mayne was not only a successful lawyer but also the author of a classic textbook on Hindu Law, *Mayne's Hindu Law*, even today much respected and quoted in Indian courts, underwent several editions, suitably rewritten by legal giants like S Srinivasa Iyengar, who was Bhashyam's son-in-law and also a Congress party leader.) Mayne opined that legally there was no prohibition preventing a High Court judge from practising in the same court and, accordingly, Bhashyam Ayyangar resumed his practice after retirement.

Bhashyam Ayyangar was no orator. In fact, he spoke slowly, often haltingly and his delivery was heavy, ponderous and unattractive to a listener. But his arguments were filled with wisdom, legal skills and knowledge of law. He had a phenomenal memory and never referred to books or case records while arguing in court.

Bhashyam Ayyangar was interested only in Law, Law and Law! Nothing else mattered. When he was down

with illness, the doctor advised him to stay in bed and permitted only light reading. One day, he asked his wife to get him a book from the shelf; it was a thick legal text discussing problems of a most complicated nature! On another occasion, during a friendly chat, one of his professional colleagues mentioned a famous English essay titled 'Compensation', by a noted writer. Bhashyam Ayyangar exclaimed that he had not heard of such a book on the law of compensation and asked his friend when the book was published! Bhashyam Ayyangar wielded enormous influence and clout with the provincial government and his word would easily fetch an applicant at least a Tahsildarship. If Bhashyam Ayyangar gave a signed visiting card, a Deputy Collectorship was certain! Consequently, many young men accompanied by their fathers called on him every morning. One auspicious day, a father and son came for such a favour and Bhashyam Ayyangar gave the boy a signed visiting card. In gratitude, the young man prostrated himself and touched the jurist's feet, while the father remarked, "My son is a very good fellow. Please bless him, Sir!" Much

to the shock of all present, Bhashyam Ayyangar snatched the visiting card back and told the parent and son to leave!

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

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. R.G.

While arguing in court one day, Bhashyam Ayyangar took suddenly ill and collapsed near the famous marble statue of Sir T Muthuswami Iyer in the Madras High Court. It was perhaps the most fitting end for a legal giant.

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Fords are coming



(Continued from P 1)

study on bringing components into the country. Parker had good news for Indian automobile component manufacturers (several of them are based in Tamil Nadu) when he said that Ford intended to encourage its core component suppliers worldwide to enter into joint ventures in India or establish licensing agreements with Indian suppliers. A meeting of all the top component suppliers to Ford would be held next month in London, he said, where details about the vast potential of the Indian market would be made clear to them.

Mahindra-Ford plans to source 70 per cent of its requirements locally in a year's time, when the first Fiesta cars will start to roll out. Suppliers would, however, have to conform to Ford's stringent quality standards.

The advantages that will accrue to Tamil Nadu as a result of the Mahindra-Ford car project can be better appreciated by looking at the plans Mahindra & Mahindra has made to help in developing the State's infrastructure. These include the setting

up of an exclusive industrial park for auto components, development of smaller ports on built-operate-transfer (BOT) basis, building a 100-room four-star hotel, and establishing a steel service centre and metal stamping unit, both of which will principally cater to the Mahindra Ford project.

Ford's setting up a plant in Maraimalaiagar is indeed a major boost for Tamil Nadu and will go a long way in consolidating its position as India's number one State in the automobile industry. However, all eyes will be on the Fiesta when it makes its appearance on Madras roads a year from now, and on other Ford models which, no doubt, will start to move out from the plant later.

Of the project cost, half the sum is expected to come from term loans and the balance will be contributed equally by Mahindra & Mahindra and Ford's. The company will also be investing Rs 200 crores in Nashik, Maharashtra, erecting a new facility by the side of M & M's plant — to build the Ford Escort modified for Indian conditions.

Mask tradition deserves study



A Padayani Bhairavi mask

Madras will host an international seminar on MASKS, and their use in rituals and performances, from January 21st to the 24th. The seminar is being organised by the Madras Craft Foundation, which has, in the past, invited several masked performances, like Padayani, from Kerala.

Masks, masquerade and the manifold forms of guise and disguise have always been modes of particularly intense cultural expression, modes in which cultures give voice to many of the most powerful and most subtle understandings of the self and the world.

The mask traditions of Southern India, especially Kerala, are still vibrant and present unique opportunities for observation and analysis. They also parallel the living traditions of masked performance in Southeast Asia, Japan and West Asia. Yet no serious studies

have been devoted to South Indian masks, whether on their own or in comparative perspective. The Kerala tradition of *Theyyam* and *Padayani* represents a richness that could easily sustain long-term study by several scholars.

Padayani is the ritualistic masquerade that encourages creativity in crafts, poetry and dance. Kali the

Goddess is angry and to lessen Her anger, different amusements are offered Her and poetry sung to Her with a play on different letters. People who have taken vows also make these masks and get children to wear them and dance for Kali.

The seminar participants will present papers on different aspects of the mask tradition. They will also go down to Kerala to see *Theyyam* and *Padayani* in their native context. In Madras, they will see demonstrations of the Topeng ritual mask tradition of Bali, by I Made Djimat and Christina Formaggia, and of the Chau mask dance by Sharan Lowen. They will also witness a performance of Narthevan Gudigadu Koothu Prahlada Charitam.

— V R DEVIKA

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

January: 'Artist of the Month': Ravi Shankar (at Max Mueller Bhavan).

January 23 — February 3: 'A Shifting Focus: Photography in India 1850-1900'. A fascinating selection of photographs from the Indian subcontinent drawn from the archives of the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library and brought to India by the British Council. These 150 images represent the golden age of photography in India, from 1850 to the turn of the century. They are an invaluable record of the landscape, people and architectural heritage of the country.

The shifting focus of the exhibition's title refers both to the kaleidoscopic range of subjects recorded by the camera as well as the late Twentieth Century attempt to encourage a re-reading of historical photographic images. (11 am to 7 pm daily, except Sunday, at Lalit Kala Akademi.)

January 23 — February 3: An exhibition of shortlisted entries from the 'CityScapes' competition will be on

display. Ten photographs selected from this regional shortlist will be sent to Bombay for the finals of the competition. The finalists will be displayed at the British Council during March/April 1996 (11 am to 7 pm daily, except Sunday at the British Council).

January 24: ABCS Seminar on 'Madras First'. The purpose of the seminar is to bring government officials and committed groups together for the 'Sustainable Madras City' Project. Registration fee: Rs. 30. For details: Dr M Naseema, Secretary, ABCS, Tel: 4928616 (10 pm to 4 pm at C P R Environmental Education Centre).

January 27: 'Beyond the Palette' — Charity Auction of Tapestries produced during two international workshops on Creative Weaving — Synthetic Dyes (1991) and Natural Dyes (1992). 9.30 — 11.00 am: Tapestries on View 11.00 — 2.00 pm: Auction conducted by S Raghavan (Murray & Co) (At Taj Coromandel Ballroom 1)

The Man in Black

(Continued from P 5)

to hold the office in Madras was Sir S Ramaswami Mudaliar, Sheriff in 1886 and 1887. Our first woman Sheriff was Mrs Mary Clubwala Jadhav, in 1957.

The Sheriff of Madras is nominated on the first Tuesday in December every year and assumes office on December 20th (the 21st, if the 20th is a Sunday or public holiday). Soon after assumption of office, the Sheriff, in consultation with the Chief Justice, appoints an honorary Under-Sheriff (a post created in 1940), to act for the Sheriff in his absence.

A Deputy Sheriff was first nominated in Madras in 1753 to serve as an honorary deputy to the Sheriff, but the post was soon abolished. In fact, between 1852 and 1880, there were numerous proposals to abolish the Sheriff himself and set up a permanent judicial establishment to do the Sheriff's work. The proposals did not go

through, but in Madras a permanent Sheriff's office was established in the 1880s. On a suggestion made in 1922 by Sheriff M C Muthiah Chettiar, a permanent Deputy Sheriff was appointed (by the High Court) and the process-serving office came under him in 1924.

The Sheriff's office is today merged with that of the Registrar of the High Court and is run by the Deputy Sheriff. The Sheriff's office handles the serving of Summons and Warrants and executes the Writs and Orders of the Courts. Though the Summons still go out "in the name of the Sheriff of Madras", the Sheriff himself has nothing to do with them and has little to do even with the small office in the High Court building where a few clerks and bailiffs function under the Deputy Sheriff. Probably the only Sheriff in India who still has any Court functions is the Sheriff of Calcutta, who, by tradition, must be present when the High Court hears a Sessions case.

Sheriffs are appointed annually and this was always the intention — Madras's first Recorder and Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Strange, making this clear in a ruling in 1814, when the question was first raised. But from 1861 to 1922, and again after 1958, there have been Sheriffs who've served consecutive terms, though the trend now is once again for yearly terms only.

A Sheriff of Madras enjoys all the trappings of office even now. He flies a flag on his car, wears the ceremonial dress (which he must pay for himself) at official functions and ranks 31st in the Warrant of Precedence. But for all the glamour, he has precious little to do. Yet since there are no clearly defined duties or limitations to the office, an energetic Sheriff could well make himself and the office more powerful and influential in the promotion of public causes. (Courtesy: *Aside* — 1978)

— SM

An open letter from The Madras Players

For almost thirty years now, the Madras Players has brought Madras a range of productions — large and small, serious and light-hearted, theatre of universal appeal, as well as rooted in the Indian context. We feel that, over time, a partnership has developed between us and our audience — you enjoy good theatre, and in doing so fuel our enthusiasm and efforts in producing it.

As an amateur theatre group, however, we face several limitations. We can contribute our honest intention as actors and directors, but there are many external factors which inhibit us from doing some kinds of plays we would like to do! Production costs involving elaborate sets, sound and lighting; costs of hiring halls for large audiences; publicity and administrative costs — these have all been steadily escalating, bringing down the number of productions a year. In order to deal with this, we tend to focus on major productions which will draw large audiences, and help us cover our costs. But in the process, we miss out on other kinds of exciting theatre which we would very much like to experiment with, and share with you.

We enjoy doing major productions for larger audiences, and will continue to do so. But equally, we would like to do challenging and entertaining low-budget plays for smaller audiences, conserving energy and costs on aspects such as theatre space, publicity etc. We

Do send in your Cheque/D.D. in favour of "Tejaswi Acct. The Madras Players" C/o. Bhagirathi Narayanan (address given below), along with your name, address and phone number.

BHAGIRATHI NARAYANAN
47 Urur Olcott Road
V Avenue, Besant Nagar
MADRAS-600 090

traditional textile craft and the formal language of modern art.

The inspiration for these workshops was provided by the French artist M Chevray and especially by Ludwig Pesch without whose involvement much of the success of this project would have been impossible.

As the concluding phase of this cooperation between traditional weavers and modern artists, Max Mueller Bhavan is now organising an auction of the tapestries and has transferred the property rights of the carpets to the Crafts Council of India so that a major share of the proceeds can be used to establish a charity fund for an indigent weavers' community

believe that there is a core audience which would welcome and support such theatre activity.

With this in mind, The Madras Players is now starting a theatre club which we invite you to join. The annual membership fee is Rs. 200. The Madras Players Theatre Club will:

- Produce three plays a year for its members. Each year's programme will be announced at the beginning of the year.
- Stage these plays at several small theatres in the city. Members will be notified of venues, dates and times.

We hope, in time, to expand the activities to workshops, informal readings and discussion of plays, and any other theatre-related activities members might wish to suggest and be involved in.

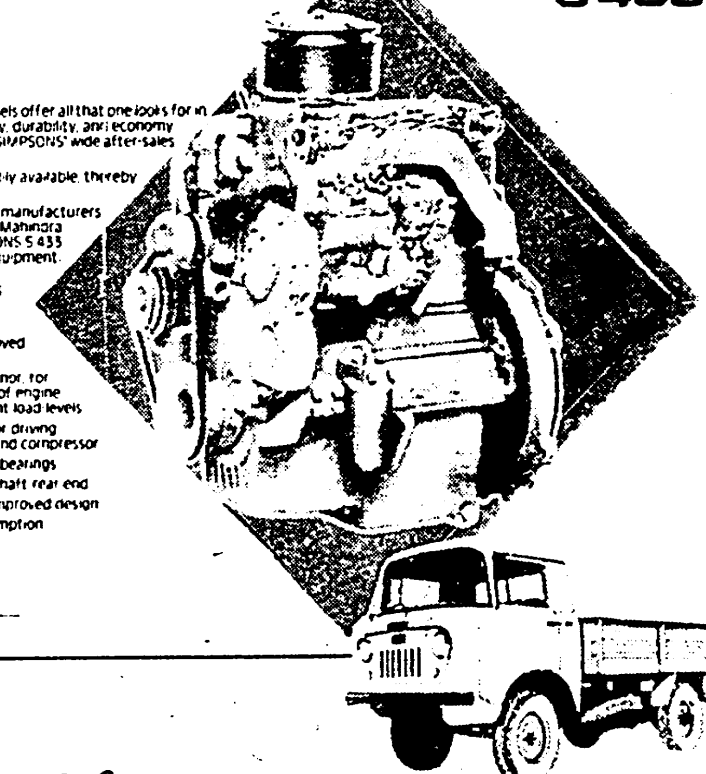
To launch the Madras Players Theatre Club, Yamuna will stage Mahesh Elkunchwar's play *Reflections* at Parinam, Injambakkam (behind Cholamandal Artists' Village), at 7.00 pm on Saturday, February 10, 1996.

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The channel-beater

As the bells rang out 1995, they rang 12-year-old Chhavi Madan into the Guinness Books of Records for her feat of swimming across ten international channels in a calendar year. Chhavi, who had, till September '95, crossed eight channels, swam two more in quick succession at the end of the year — the Rottenest Channel, off Australia, and the stretch between Ross Island and Port Blair to reach the magic figure of ten channel-crossings in a year.

While girls in their teens hang around star sportsmen for their autographs, Chhavi, an eighth standard student at Kendriya Vidyalaya, IIT Campus, Madras, is busy signing autographs for her schoolmates. Success hasn't gone to the head of this little Indian mermaid. She is just like the kid next door, reading Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys and Enid Blyton, except for the fact that she goes for long distance sea swims regularly. It is no surprise that a character in one of her favourite novels inspired Chhavi to perform her swimming feats. But another young Madras achiever, Kutraleeswaran, also played a role.

Chhavi, daughter of Col (Dr) Madan and Dr. Molly Madan from Calcutta, read an article about Kutraleeswaran in a magazine some time in late 1994. The little girl, who used to swim in the Army Swimming Pool, Barrackpore, immediately got

interested in long distance sea swims. The chance to seek her goal came when she, along with her mother and younger brother Akshay, came to Madras on a holiday. They contacted R V Veerabhadharan, who was training Kutraleeswaran for his Palk Strait swim. Veerabhadharan was initially sceptical about Chhavi's capability, but he was astounded by how much she improved every day.

Meanwhile, the family experienced the pangs of an uncertain future. Col. Madan, who was stationed in Calcutta, had to live alone, while the trip to Madras cost Dr Molly Madan her lucrative medical practice there. Further, the cost of having two establishments added to the strain. Above all, the doctor couple were concerned about the children missing school, in pursuit of an uncertain sporting future which was not lucrative enough for them to take the risk.

Dr Molly Madan decided to pack up and leave for Calcutta. But the strong-willed Chhavi, who had listed all the pros and cons on a sheet of paper, announced that her mother could go back without her as she wanted to pursue her ambition to swim a channel. That was the last time the Madans were in doubt.

Dr Molly admitted her children in the IIT Kendriya Vidyalaya. And soon afterwards, fortune smiled when Dr



Chhavi Madan, channel-swimming mermaid.

Madan got a transfer to Madras. The Madans then began their life in Madras, which thereafter was to revolve around Chhavi.

Chhavi's tryst with long distance swimming records started on January 23, '95, when she crossed the 33 km between Neil Island and Port Blair in the Andamans in 2 hrs. 52m and 58s. With that swim she became the first

"I wanted to be in one piece; I had already broken my ankle, knee and finger at different times in competitions," she smiles. But Karate has helped her a lot in her swimming, she feels. "It has helped me to be flexible and develop a strong mental make-up," Chhavi says.

Crossing the English Channel is Chhavi's goal, but a new rule puts the minimum age as 16 for swimmers to get their swim recognised. This has put a spoke in Chhavi's wishing wheel.

According to Col. Madan, swimming is a systematic exercise which has no adverse side-effects if done properly. To the question whether small children might be physiologically affected and burn out early in life, he answers, "I have not come across any reports of injuries due to swimming at a young age. At times, I have even told Chhavi to leave sea swimming if she doesn't like it, but she was determined



The Doctors Madan and their 'water baby' (Pictures by V S RAGHAVAN)

technique, tactics, speed, agility different types of strokes.

Speaking about her future competitive swimming, K T Muralidharan says, "Chhavi is good for 200 metres, in the Nationals. She has the stamina, power and she is improving her technique. In the Senior Nationals she can compete in the 800 metres"

Chhavi, in order to carve herself a name in competitive swimming, practises at the Shenoy Nagar Swimming Pool three times a week. Will Chhavi take off from where Nil Millet left off in this pool? Only time will tell.

by Venkatachari Jagannathan

in the world to cross this strait. Soon afterwards, she swam the Palk Straits, then the Dardanelles, Zurich Lake, the Straits of Gibraltar (she was the youngest to cross this Strait — her time 4 hrs. 10 m.), the Solent Channel (a double channel swim in the UK), the Messina Straits, the Isle of Zannone to San Felice Cicero, Italy, Rottenest and Ross Island to Port Blair.

Speaking of her achievements, Chhavi rates her eighth swim, the 28 km stretch between the Isle of Zannone and San Felice Cicero, the toughest, as the sea was extremely rough and threw her frail little body up and down. "After four hours in the sea, I thought of getting into the boat. But the thought of breaking the 35-year-old record and making eight swims in a year made me continue," she recalls. Chhavi completed the distance in 9 hrs. 30 m; according to her, had the sea not been rough she would have finished the swim two hours earlier.

Like her swims in Europe, Chhavi's 26-day European trip was a tough one. Says Col. Madan, "We travelled in a car throughout, as train travel was costly. Further, we spent most of the nights inside the car as hotel accommodation was beyond our budget!"

Apart from taking to the sea, Chhavi is adept at painting, singing and dancing. She is also a green belt holder in Karate. Why didn't she pursue Karate and obtain the coveted black belt instead of switching to sea swimming?

Games memorable in many ways

It is a safe guess that the South Asian Federation Games, which the Sports Development Authority of the Jayalalitha Government organised in Madras recently, have sown the seeds of a revolution in Tamil Nadu sport. Never before had a sports competition caught the imagination of the Tamil Nadu sports fans as these Games.

While the Games made the Tamil Nadu public more sport-conscious than ever before, it is now up to the State sports authorities to drive home the advantage and thus help the State contribute more persons to future National squads. Equally important is the Tamil Nadu Government's task of making full use of the new, costly infrastructure it provided for the Games — infrastructure which has made Madras India's best-equipped sports city. The airconditioned indoor stadium within a stone's-throw of the Nehru Stadium, the modern tennis stadium at Nungambakkam, the swimming pool at Velachery and the renovated hockey stadium at Egmore will all need the constant attention of dedicated and knowledgeable officials not only to vindicate the tons of money that went into their construction, but also to save them from deterioration.

In keeping with the record-breaking championships, in which India stole the thunder, was the media coverage the Games got. The number of Presspersons who covered the Games, indeed, added to the list of records the Games established.

Never before in the history of South Indian sport had so many Presspersons — reporters and photographers — turned up

to cover a competition, national or international. The media centre of the Nehru Stadium was packed not only by Indian journalists but also by media persons from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the other countries. Unfortunately, they all had a bitter, unforgettable opening ceremony, if their opening day entry into the Nehru Stadium is recalled. For security reasons, and without being informed, they were forced to climb as many as four narrow staircases and then get down into the Press

by
JAICI

box, which they could enter only after a hop, step and jump!

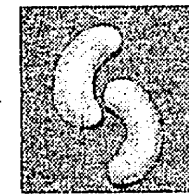
Fortunately, thanks to the efforts of the Tamil Nadu Sports Journalists' Association. President, S Thyagarajan, and Secretary, R Easwar, and media criticism, the journalists did not have to go through subsequent ordeals. Thanks again to media criticism, old, unusable typewriters, which provided a shameful picture, were promptly replaced by new ones.

But the journalists can never forget the first-day ordeal of being forced to climb staircases while lifts were available. It gave the impression that every writer was taken for a suspect, despite the accreditation card he carried. Indian journalists' bodies, not merely sports journalists' associations, will do well to take steps to see that a journalist's accreditation card, with his/her name, age, country, journal, etc. given in it, means something.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Luxembourg; 2. Mr. Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the U.S. House; 3. Julius Nyrere, the former President of Tanzania; 4. The Sheriff of Madras; 5. Purulia; 6. It was where over 400 children died in a fire at a local school; 7. The first multiorgan transplant and the first liver transplant in the country; 8. Dean Martin; 9. Muthiah Muralidharan of Sri Lanka; 10. Chinthaka De Soysa (men) and Susanthika Jayasinghe (women), both from Sri Lanka; 11. Rakchakan (Saviour); 12. Truth, Love and a Little Malice; 13. Ivan Lendl; 14. To be equipped with biological toilets; 15. Hum Aapke Hain Kaun; 16. The two millionth visitor to the country in the year; 17. Trimurti; 18. \$ 12 billion; 19. To cross both the North and South Poles; 20. Taiwan.

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