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MADRAS

MUSINGS

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Thank you, Mr. C.M. ...

(By the Editor)

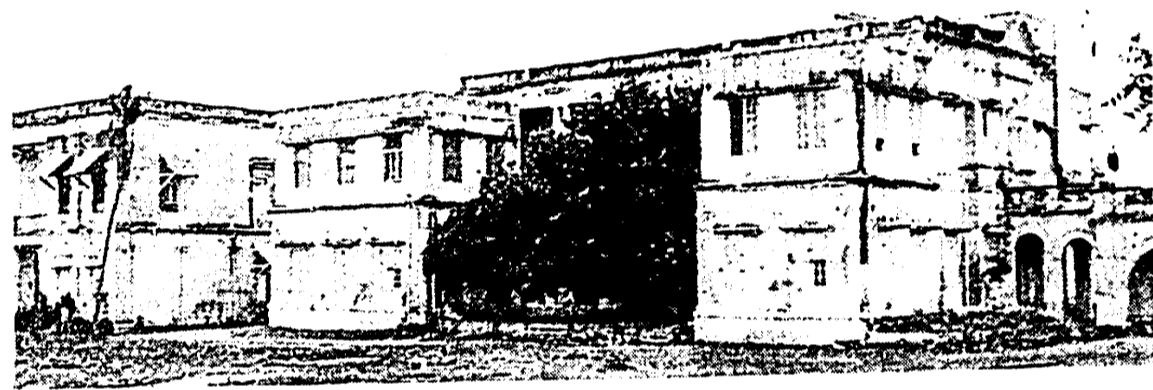
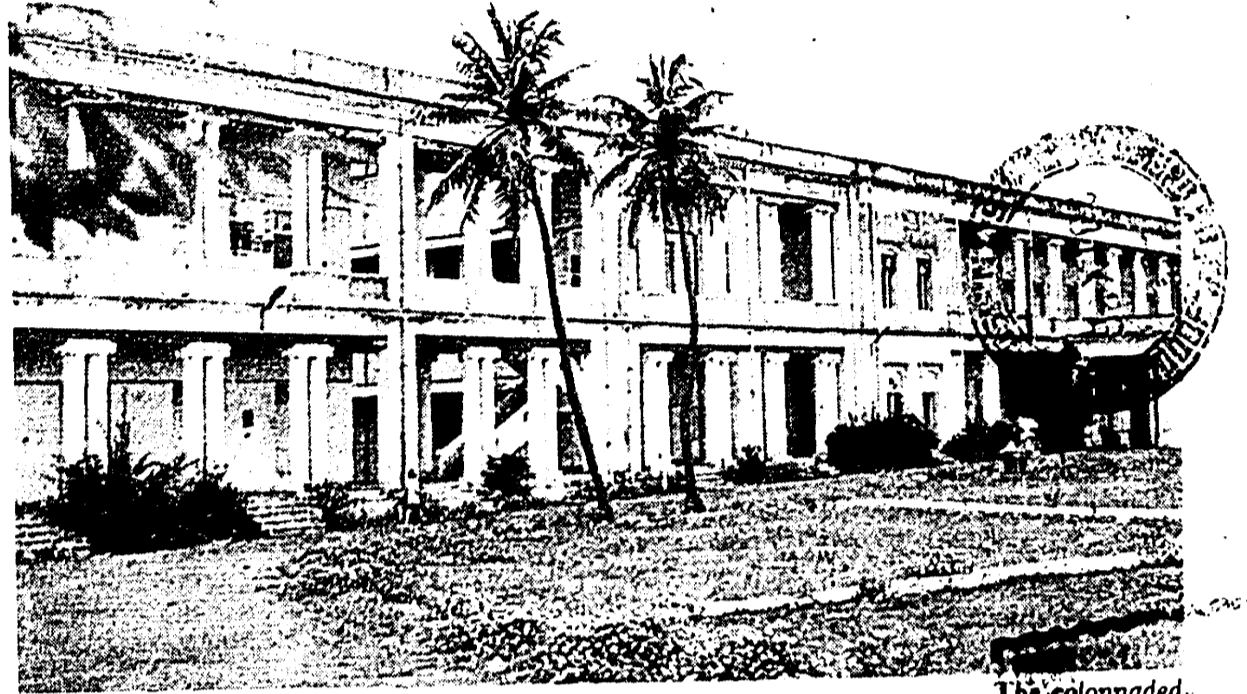
Thank you, Mr. Chief Minister, for respecting tradition once more and deciding NOT to pull down the DGP Building but, instead, to have it restored, renovated and conserved. Thank you even more for deciding to retain the refurbished building as Police Headquarters, which it had been from 1865 to 1995.

May we request you now to appoint a committee of architects and engineers dedicated to structural conservation and knowledgeable about such conservation techniques to supervise the restoration of the building and to design and supervise the additional buildings in this complex, which you have assured the House will be environment-friendly and integrated with the standing building? The building work may be contracted out, but the restoration planning and designing for integration must be by those knowledgeable about conservation and planning for buildings that will integrate with the old, in the manner the newer buildings on the university campus integrate with Senate House. *Madras Musings* looks forward to the Police Headquarters

complex, when complete, being a model for the whole country of conservation of the old and integration with the new.

May we also request you to look into what is happening in the Adyar Estuary Sanctuary area, by the coast, and bring to a halt the building activities in the area?

And, finally, may we request you to legislate as soon as possible a Heritage Act we have long been requesting and ensure its implementation? Broad drafts of such an Act have already been given to the MMDA's Sustainable Cities Project and the Ministry of Local Administration by *Madras Musings* and INTACH, respectively. Only the next step, the political will, is awaited. May we count on you, Mr. Chief Minister?



The colonnaded later addition (above) to the original building (left) once a Masonic lodge but later the first and till 1995, the only headquarters of the Madras Police. (Photographs by V S RAGHAVAN.)

... But we're also disappointed, Sir

And so Madras is to be re-named Chennai, is it? We are disappointed, Mr Chief Minister. We are also saddened that it was a decision taken

without public discussion, leave alone legislative debate. But with no report of a vote being taken, dare we live in hope?

We are also disappointed with your statement in the House, Mr Chief Minister, while introducing the Bill. You had stated that Chennai is "a historic name from time immemorial". We reiterate that it is a name in existence from only 1639-40, after Madras was founded on that piece of land granted to the East India Company by Venkatappa Nayak, son of Chennappa Nayak of the House of Kalahasti, the last descendants of the Vijayanagar Emperors. In this context, it may be historic — though post-dating Madras — but it is not a name that has existed from "time immemorial".

Be that as it all may be, when a fiat becomes law, if it does, we shall accept Chennai as the name for the geographical entity that was Madras, once the Survey of India has recognised it as such. But *Madras Musings* will retain its identity like any 'given' name or a 'trade name' of identificatory ilk.

In this connection, we would like to point out that several Tamil Nadu place names that the Chief Minister mentioned in the House as warranting change have long been changed in the eyes of the Survey of India, which insists on them appearing in maps in the changed forms. And as a consequence we have used those forms consistently in these pages, as well as in other writings, if they appeared in a geographical context. Some of these names, as used by the Survey of India, are: Kanniya-kumari for Cape Comorin, Tiruchchirappalli for Trichinopoly, Tarangambadi for Tranquebar, Kanchipuram for Conjeevaram, Parangipettai for Porto Novo, Thanjavur for Tanjore. But we don't know of many who follow this style with exactly these spellings as decreed by the organisation considered the custodian of geographical accuracy in India. We now look forward to that happening in print, even if it is unlikely to ever change in speech. Traditions die hard, Mr Chief Minister.

The Editor

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY — and telephone users suffer

(By A Staff Reporter)

They just walked into the driveway of a complex of six row houses in T'Nagar, past a rather antique watchman, climbed the telephone pole, snipped the wire and walked away with a good 200 feet of it — all in broad daylight on a Saturday morning. When the watchman protested, the uniformed two-some retorted that they were from the Telephone Department and would come back to replace with new wire the old they were taking away. A complaint was made to the Telephone Department's area Junior Engineer that evening — to no avail. Hangers-on at the area office helpfully suggested that, if a linesman or two was handsomely paid something, they'd restore the

line immediately, "even if tomorrow is Sunday". It was an offer that was turned down.

On Monday and Tuesday two teams of linesmen hung about the complex for a while and, when questioned by the lady of the house, answered that they were "just looking" — whatever that means. On Wednesday afternoon, on intervention from higher levels, the line was restored. But on Thursday morning it was out again. On Thursday afternoon one of the teams was back and, amidst much grumbling, restored the line again. The household are keeping their fingers crossed that all will be well with their telephone for a while.

The residents of this particular complex described to

this reporter two other such responses when their lines went mysteriously dead after visits by telephone linesmen enquiring whether all was well with their telephones. They appeared to have paid a couple of hundred rupees each to have their lines restored each time.

What is the Telephone Department going to do about such barefaced daylight robbery? Will they ask the police to look into such cases? Or will the consumer courts have to take action against the Department for non-performance and lack of proper supervision of its employees?

EDITOR'S NOTE: May we hope for prompt action from the Head of the Telephone Department in response to such shocking vandalism?

A sadly forgotten contribution

The celebration of Leander Paes' bronze is now over. And the reams written on his triumph are now dwindling. But in all the interviews the Paes family gave the media, *The Man From Madras Musings* came across NO mention in any of them of his development as a tennis champion in Madras through the efforts of the Britannia Tennis Academy headed by Maggie Amritraj and her sons. Nor has there been anything but passing reference in other articles to the years he spent in Madras and at BAT, years during which he won the Wimbledon Junior (1990) and performed well in the Australian Junior.

Whatever the differences between the two families, MMM finds it hard to believe that Paes has not expressed one word of appreciation about BAT's contribution and the part 'Mother' Maggie played not only in his tennis improvement but also in his spiritual and character development. Such 'forgetfulness' on Leander Paes' part rather diminishes him in the eyes of not only MMM but many others who watched with enthusiasm his progress in Madras and at BAT.

It was as a 11-year-old that Leander joined BAT, one of its first trainees. Six years later he left; it was stated at that time that BAT and his family were not quite agreed on how his future path should be planned and that father Vece Paes would do the advising from thereon. During those years at BAT, major inputs from Vijay and Anand Amritraj and Rod Laver would have contributed to Leander's improvement as a tennis player. He came as raw talent and received a solid grounding not only from these part-time coaches but also from the full-time ones like Dave O'Meara, who was sent to Wimbledon with him. The news MMM now hears is that Dave O'Meara and Leander Paes might get together again, the American offering full-time support if the Paes' can raise the money. MMM wishes the Paes' well in this, but also hopes that Leander would have found the time to get together with the Amritrajs, when he was in Madras for the ATP Challenger last fortnight, and build bridges once again.

Being brief

It was the shortest speech *The Man From Madras Musings* has ever heard the eloquent, not to say loquacious, Dr. Venkatasubramanian, former Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University, make. It was at an Oxford University Press book release function, where Venkatasubramanian received from C. Subramaniam the first copy of *Raja Chelliah's Essays in Fiscal and Financial Sector Reforms in India*. He got up, said he was present on the occasion only because he was an OUP author (it was an En-

glish-Tamil picture dictionary he had done), had been a student (when he was 17) of Chelliah (who had been 21 at the time) at St. Joseph's, Trichy, and started his career as a District Educational Officer when Subramaniam was his Minister in the Madras Government, and sat down, taking his audience by surprise.

Subramaniam had more to say. Riding his current hobby-horse, he disagreed with Finance Minister Chidambaram's spending on agriculture; put that money into science and technology, he advised, and agriculture will automatically grow through the new finds. And speaking of agriculture, he added, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has for years now been headless because of a dispute with a caste background; we are once again becoming a caste-dominated society to the detriment of progress, he rued.

The occasion was, in a way, a farewell to OUP's Director (South), Vembu Iyer. His last public function, he was retiring the next day but will continue as an adviser for some time to come. MMM can't think of anyone else in the publishing industry who has worked with ALL the major private publishers — Macmillan's, Orient Longman's and OUP — and in ALL the Metros. But that has been Vembu Iyer's record in nearly 40 years spent with the industry. He is being succeeded by Seshadri, who had built up OUP's Bangalore Office over the last decade.

TAILPIECE: The function was held at the Hall of Guines, Anna University. Pardon MMM's ignorance, but who or what is 'Guines'?

Where's scholarship?

Several leading academicians got together recently, under the auspices of the Keshavilal Oza Memorial Foundation, to discuss 'The Current Status of Scholarship in India' and came to the conclusion that Indian scholars did better abroad than at home. *The Man From Madras Musings* heard several ideas to remedy this situation being batted about, but no concrete answers emerged. It seemed being critical was easier than being constructive.

Among the critical views expressed were these that MMM took note of:

- Such citadels of excellence as the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Science Academy are proving to be "monstrous" wasters of funds. By isolating themselves from the normal environment they are creating comfortable "ivory towers" from which few wish to emerge into the harsh realities of the world of scholarship and research outside. They are, thereby, proving "counter-productive".
- There are "enormous distortions" in the distribution of University Grants Commission funds. There is no

mechanism to "judge effectively and objectively the distribution" of funds, based on the priorities of research.

- Indian scholars are "more focussed on foreign scholarship". There are few who know what is happening in a neighbouring state.
- Scholarship only provides a basis for knowledge. "Knowledge cannot produce a creative thinker." The proper environment has to be provided to develop that inner urge that is creative thinking.

SHORT 'N' SINAPIPY

- Excellence is achieved not through the driving force that is material reward. Such rewards are important, but far more important is "the appreciation, encouragement and recognition by his peers" that the creative thinker craves. (MMM couldn't help being struck by the similarity of Arabinda Ray's views on athletic excellence expressed in *Madras Musings* last fortnight!)
- There is a need for 'demystification of knowledge'. And this the media does not do, concentrating as it does on "muck-raking" alone in the country's academes of excellence.
- The scholars of excellence the country was producing was in the sciences. There is, today, little first-rate scholarship in the country in the arts and social sciences.

Those who attended, MMM was happy to note, agreed to meet again and come up with some ideas on how these problems could be tackled. "And tackled they must be," thundered D K Oza, former Civilian and a former Vice-Chancellor of Gandhigram deemed University.

Another English

Yet another Cambridge University examination is arriving in Madras shortly, actively encouraged by the British Council. And *The Man From Madras Musings* was pleased to note that the local advisers on the course felt India was ready for British English Certificate 2 (BEC 2) and did not need BEC 1, which was taken by 25,000 in China in 1995! MMM, after a couple of decades in the business world in Madras, disagrees; not only is BEC 1 the greater need in commercial organisations in India today, but in the changing world of business in India the creation of fluency in Conversational English is even more important.

No doubt the British Council will get around to both — and possibly even to the more advanced BEC 3, which even some of the regular practitioners of the language in Madras could do with. Meanwhile, there's BEC 2 — and a British Council

trainer has trained a team of a dozen local trainers to take on the task of training those wanting to take the exam. Applicants for the exam will be given the list of trainees and each will be able to choose his own trainer to take him through the 60 hours of 'Reading, Listening (Understanding!), Writing and Speaking' estimated to be necessary for tackling the 135-minute BEC 2 test.

Indians are marvellous at taking examinations and earn-

ing certificates, but, wonders MMM, will any of those who'd be only too happy to put the initials BEC 2 behind their name be any the more conversant with Standard English than they were before the exam? That, MMM feels, will come only with regular reading and speaking in English on the most everyday of subjects — and THAT not many in the lower echelons of the Madras business world are ready to do.

An example of the kind of questions candidates taking BEC 2 are likely to face is: Which is the odd man out — catalogue, souvenir, brochure or manual? That, MMM is told, is what "junior management and administrative levels" in business need to know for personal growth. BEC 1, he was told, was meant for clerical levels and BEC 3 for middle and senior levels of management. The latter levels could certainly do with the discovery of a world of English apart from "enclosed herewith" and "refer to the same". MMM only hopes that we don't find them tossing in words and phrases like "rubrics", "very essential", "succinctly", "imparting" and "language functions"!

In brief

- It's a discovery that has been described as "incredible". It is a finding that may change the world. Certainly, it may change the economic equations between nations and catapult India into the highest ranks and impoverish many others. But is it true, *The Man From Madras Musings* wonders. It needs to be further checked out, but "we are convinced it is worth pursuing", says the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology after preliminary trials had been held in IIT, Madras. At those trials, 30-year-old Ramar Pillai from a village near Rajapalayam demonstrated his "herbal petrol" that, if ever manufactured, will cost "less than Re.1!" Pillai, a school dropout, was in Class 8 when he noticed during a picnic how a spark from a stove set a green leaf ablaze. Ten years later, when he was 23, he tracked down the plant and began experimenting with it. His experiments demonstrated that a

petrol-like fuel could be manufactured if the leaves and bark of the herbal plant were boiled for ten minutes, the mixture cooled and blended with salt, citric acid and some chemicals, and then allowed to settle. The 'fuel' rises to the top and can be easily separated. The whole process takes less than 30 minutes! The DST, MMM hopes, will help Pillai patent the invention as quickly as possible; meanwhile, it is funding a 300 litre/day pilot plant for Ramar. Will there come a day when we'll be able to drive vehicles with tapwater — with, of course, the addition of the Ramar distillate?

★ There has long been a tradition that India's gods and saints are kept far from its coinage. *The Man From Madras Musings* understands that that tradition is likely to be broken shortly. Finance Minister P Chidambaram, like Chief Minister Karunanidhi, is an admirer of Saint Thiruvalluvar — and that admiration, MMM hears, is being translated into the Saint being featured on the new one, two and five rupee coins being minted to commemorate the 8th World Tamil Conference. The poet-saint's portrait will certainly be an improvement on what might have been; imagine the coins with the portrait of the organiser of that Conference!

★ In a recent interview, John Parker, head of Mahindra Ford in India, is reported to have stated that the Tamil Nadu Government needed to appreciate how close the race had been between Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, before Ford's final decision. Are the people of Tamil Nadu and the State Government to consider themselves honoured by that decision, Mr Parker? *The Man From Madras Musings* considers this pronouncement a bit tactless, if indeed the report is correct. And if another quote has been reported correctly, it would appear he is only compounding this tactlessness. "What we want to tell the Government," he is quoted as saying, "is that if they want to attract investments, they have to provide an international school." They don't "have to" do anything of the sort, Mr Parker; for Ford's to come in, for Pilkington to set up a float glass plant for Ford's windshields, for Johnson Controls and Alfin's and other Ford accessory manufacturers to come in, for 16 Korean companies to come in to provide accessories to Hyundai, an international school might be a welcome attraction, but MMM does not see it as a precondition, a necessity or a "have to" compulsion. Indian schools have provided America and much of the developed world with millions of talented doctors, engineers, scientists and teachers. Those same schools from which this talent came wouldn't do much harm to expat children, MMM would think.

MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Double-decker dangers

It is reported that double-decker buses are to be introduced on the city roads. If they are used as single-decker buses are today, the result will be wholesale bloodshed. As you may know, in London standing in buses is allowed only during rush-hours, and then only five persons are allowed 'standing' downstairs. No standing is allowed upstairs at any time. As it is, a crowded London bus going round corners heels over alarmingly, and if there were people standing upstairs it would be bound to topple over.

In Madras, there is no limit to standing room on our single-decker buses, with as many people inside as can squish in, together with bunches of students hanging on the outside by their fingernails in defiance of laws forbidding them to do so. In rush hours, no wonder our buses heel over alarmingly. Now supposing we have double-deckers, the top deck will be as crowded with standing passengers as the lower deck! Knowing as we do the impossibility of instilling discipline, this is bound to happen. And with only a helpless conductor to regulate them, there's nothing to stop them filling the upper part of the bus as today they do the lower single-deck buses. That would inevitably lead to the bus capsizing, particularly with drivers roaring round corners as they do!

Harry Miller
3A, Satyanarayana Avenue,
Boat Club Road,
Madras 600 028.

Beach tragedy

I endorse every word of Mr. Srinivasan on the condition of the Elliott's Beach (MM, June 16 and July 1), as I have been living very close to this beach ever since 1980. There is a tribe of philistines, mostly young and obviously from affluent families, who visit the beach in droves on holidays. Most of them seem to have been provided with expensive two-wheelers and cars, which they drive to-and-fro at breakneck speed on the 32nd Cross Street and on 4th Main Road, with loud music blaring even after midnight and disturbing the families living in houses situated on these streets.

I was one of the few persons who was opposed to the so-called 'beach-beautification' proposal mooted some years ago, since I hold the view that Elliott's Beach needs to be kept in its pristine glory as God and Nature intended it to be.

A few minor improvements were all that was required, but, alas, that was not to be! We, as a nation, do not yet have the discipline to make proper use of such resorts with decorum and decency.

R.C. Narayanan
T 59B, 32nd Cross Street,
Besant Nagar,
Madras 600 090.

Changing names

Why is it the Dravidian political parties have this pre-occupation with trying to erase history? Why don't they use their imagination and creativity to find names for their own achievements? Like Anna Nagar, for instance. It is frustrating to locate an address there. By the time you can decipher the Mains, Crosses and Blocks, you end up going home disgusted. It is such an impersonal township. I am sure there are enough DMK leaders whose memory can be honoured by naming some of the roads after them rather than going around changing names of existing ones which only create confusion.

Malika Gulvady
Greenfields Farm,
Satyamurthy Nagar,
Madras 600 062.

Why not Tamil too?

The name of the ingredients for the recipes in the cookery column are described in English and are not always intelligible to the average Tamil housewife. Why not give its Tamil equivalent in brackets, as it will not only be helpful but also please Thiru Thamizhkudimagan!

Mrs. Lalitha Rajagopalan,
14, Anandam Street,
T. Nagar, Madras 17.

Editor's Note: We try most of the time; but we'll try a little harder in future.

Use tyres well

When we went to attend the workshop on the 'Role of Students in Developing an Eco-friendly Madras', we got down from the bus at Royapettah High Road, near the Emma Foulger School (opposite Woodlands Theatre). We noticed the road being laid there and were shocked to find scooter tyres being burnt by the contract workers to melt the asphalt. This is the general practice of contractors laying our roads. But burning tyres causes toxic gases.

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The pigs of Kotturpuram, in the Boat Club area... and there are hundreds more elsewhere in the city, living on the spoils of refuse heaps. They carry the encephalitis virus, a doctor told Madras Musings, urging their ban in the city. We've long heard promises of bans on livestock in the City, but we're still waiting for the promises to become a reality. Meanwhile, let's lament with Padmini Natarajan... (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

When the cows come home

In Madras we have seen great developments, Industries, flyovers, malls and high-rise apartments, Change in governments, new faces in prominence, But one factor constant in this bustling scenario Has been the ambling brake inspector buffalo.

Unfettered, untrammelled and merrily let loose With other members of his animal brood, To wander and use the middle of the road, To defecate, delude and block the flow Of pedestrians, vehicles and traffic galore.

Wise men have created a great commotion, Protesting against this animal pollution That's fertile breeding ground for pestilence, And sought to evict and settle the cattle far away From the hustle and bustle of the city's highway.

Promises of politicians have always been empty (For the vote bank has influence in every party), So milkmen continue to hold the people to ransom, Making them pay fancy prices for watery dilution. That stunts the child, but lets milkmen flourish in profusion.

Can we not cry halt to this suffering Of many at the hands of a few benefactors? Can we not band together and publicly proclaim, We do not want the cows to come home Or the pigs to feed on our city's streets?

Padmini Natarajan

A historic session

The first budget session of the DMK Ministry should be considered historic, not for the revelations it brought out regarding the previous AIADMK regime, but for the far-sighted vision displayed by Chief Minister Karunanidhi in announcing that the State police headquarters would not be battered into oblivion. But many feel that Chief Minister Karunanidhi took a retrograde step after this progressive one when he introduced the Bill to rename Madras 'Chennai' in all languages.

"I care for the city," he seemed to indicate when he said that the offices of the heads of police would be brought back to the DGP building. If the space was inadequate, a new building would be built behind the present one. And it would be in keeping with what Rajaji and others had said long ago, that the Marina, being the major lung of the city, NO highrise building should be permitted on it. But that care appeared to be lacking when no debate or discussion was encouraged on the Bill to rename the city Chennai.

Equally important, but more pleasing for City residents, was seen wearing a red shawl. He explained it by saying he was feeling indisposed! But

the image of the police as a people-friendly force. As encouragement to the force, he offered a 'police city' that would be built near Greames Road to house officers up to the level of Assistant Commissioners.

On a lighter note, there was the discussion on whether the colour red denotes danger, as the AIADMK's Tamarikanni seemed to think, or is contributory to good health, as the CPI's Subbarayan believes! The discussion started when the TMC's whip, Chokkar, was seen wearing a red shawl. He explained it by saying he was feeling indisposed! But

Law Minister Aladi Aruna said a Law University, bearing the name of Dr. Ambedkar, would be established in the State. Such a university would be the first of its kind in India.

The month-long budget session ended on August 31st and the Assembly was adjourned sine die. Members of the districts left the city the same day, satisfied that their job had been well done. Of the 4736 questions received by the Speaker's Office, 3300 were admitted, besides 77 special call attention motions.

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

Beckoning software

In Financial Year '96 the Indian software industry notched up an amazing 61 per cent growth, recording a turnover of Rs 4,190 cr. Software exports recorded a 80 per cent rise, with an unprecedented and record global outsourcing from India.

Long sidelined by other hot-spots, like Bangalore, Haryana and the like, Madras made its presence felt in this growth of the Indian software industry. Topping the list of local firms who have made it big are Pentafour Software & Exports Ltd., Square D Software, Software Solutions and Ramco Systems. And ending strength to the city's claim for recognition are the Madras divisions of major firms like Tata Consultancy Services, Dun & Brad-

this would require projects taken up with a long-term perspective and, ideally, as a partnership between educational institutions and companies.

Provided the right ambience, with the Indian software industry set to gross \$ 2 billion revenue, the software firms in the city can only grow.

Meanwhile, here are three recommendations concerning excellent South-based shares. However, we recommend that the purchases be considered at the lower levels indicated

Software Solutions Integrated (CMP: Rs 53) The Madras-based SSI (Software Solutions Integrated), specialising in training software professionals in advanced areas like RDBMS and GUI, has done well in FY'96. The total income for the year is up 273% to Rs. 13.51 cr and the PAT has risen 188% to Rs 4.84 cr. The equity has remained at Rs 4.74 cr, thus resulting in an EPS of Rs 10.22.

SSI is doing well in the field due to the flexible course timings and the 24-hour facilities it offers. It now plans to open 15 new branches in the current year at an estimated cost of Rs 18 cr, which would be financed through debt and internal accruals. A turnover and a PAT of Rs 19 cr and Rs 6.65 cr can be expected for 1996-97, earning an EPS of Rs 14.00. This discounts the CMP only 3.78 times. The scrip is recommended for investment at the Rs 30 levels.

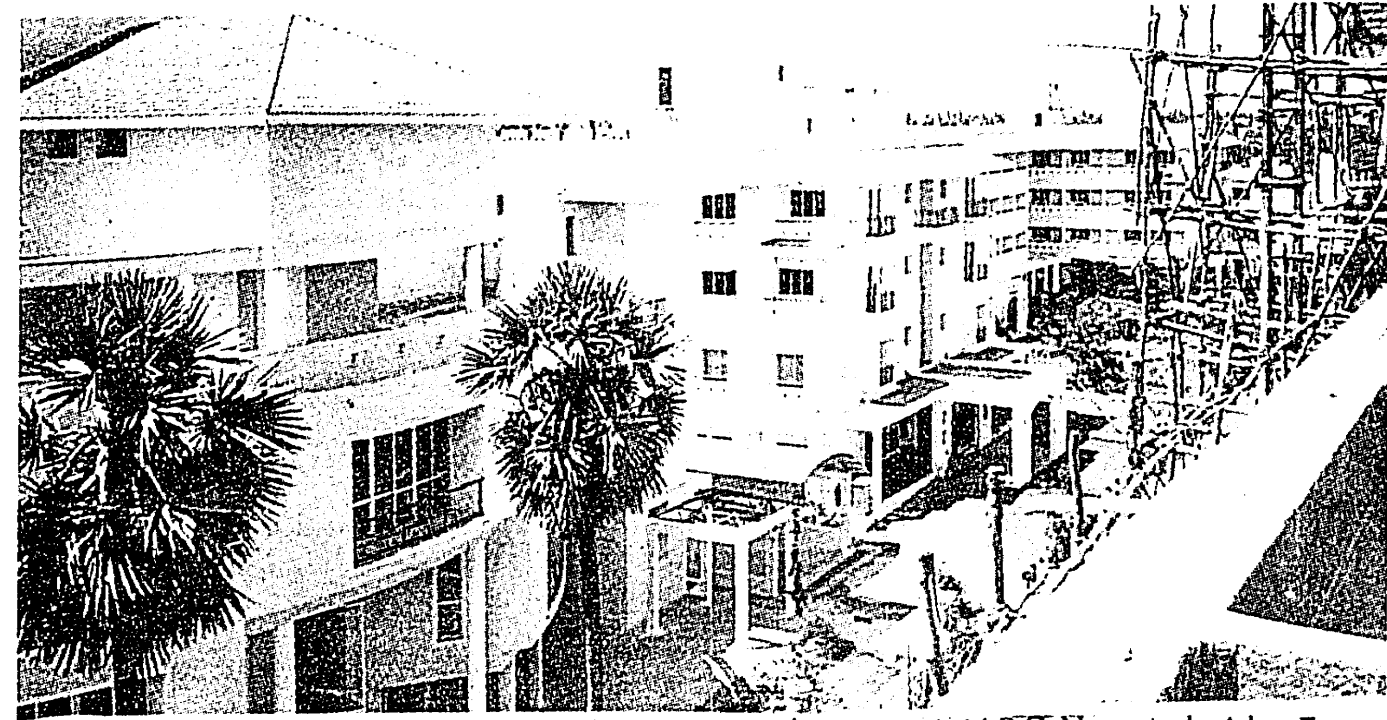
Infosys Technologies (CMP: Rs 648.25) ITL, the Bangalore-based software firm, which is mainly involved in developing packages for the banking sector, has displayed impressive results for 1995-96. Infosys achieved a turnover and PAT of Rs 93.41 cr and Rs 21.01 cr, respectively, as against Rs 55.42 cr and Rs 13.32 in 1994-95. A 50% dividend has been declared for 1995-96 and the EPS works out to Rs 28.94. This discounts the CMP of Rs 648.27, 22.40 times.

A turnover of Rs 130 cr and PAT of Rs. 28.76 cr is projected for 1996-97. The equity, at Rs. 7.26 cr, is not expected to increase in the near future, so this will earn an EPS of Rs 39.61, which discounts the CMP 16.36 times. Buy for medium-to long-term gains at the Rs.500 levels.

Oberoil Associated Hotels (CMP: Rs 79.50): OAH, an associate of the East India Hotels owned by the Oberois, operates a 166-room, 5-star hotel, 'Trident', in Madras. Strategically located, just 2 km from the airport, it caters mainly to business travellers. A second hotel, with a 75-room capacity, is to be commissioned by March 1997 in Jaipur. This, coupled with the encouraging trend in tourist arrivals during the first three months of 1996-97, which was higher by 7.2%, and the increasing business traveller segment, augurs well for the company. OAH is expected to post a sales of Rs 27 cr, translating into an EPS of Rs 8.09 in the current FY.

However, existing shareholders can quit at current levels, and consider re-entry at lower levels, in the region of Rs 60.

K Gopalakrishnan



This is just a part of the massive Indian Bank training centre that came up in M.R.C. Nagar, in the Adyar Estuary area, during the last couple of years. This palatial building is part of the prime assets that are always being referred to as a lifeline whenever the Bank's troubles are mentioned.

Two banks in trouble

Two Madras-based banks — the Indian Bank and the Bharat Overseas Bank Ltd. (BOBL) — have been in the news recently. The former for not following prudent lending principles and, consequently, going into the red and the latter for not banking on its human resource.

As far as the Indian Bank is concerned, the RBI has ruled out liquidation/merger with the SBI as well as infusion of additional funds. The future of the bank, thus, hinges on the revival package to be formulated by the Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency (ICRA). As a first step, the RBI has asked the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarant-

ee Corporation to settle the Indian Bank's Rs.165 crore on a priority basis.

While the Bank has stopped sanctioning fresh credit, its main focus now is to salvage as much as possible out of its doubtful outstanding estimated at over Rs.2000 crore. According to Chairman S. Rajagopal, the silver lining is the Bank's real estate, valued at Rs.1100 crore, which can be disposed of if necessary.



Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE

In the other case, the 48-day strike in BOBL has been banned by the Centre by a notification under the Industrial Disputes Act 1947. A solution to the tangle will now have to be found in three month's time by the three-member tribunal which is to sit in Bangalore.

The strike in the small bank had snowballed into an industry-wide agitation with other major unions, like the NCBE, AIBEA and BEFI, going on a nationwide strike to express their solidarity with their comrades in BOBL. With the management of BOBL not willing to come to terms with the union, another countrywide bank strike on a larger scale

1500 chargesheets in the past three years, in a bank which has less than 1100 employees, has not helped matters, the employees state.

Strangely, the shareholding banks — IOB (30%), The Bank of Rajasthan (16%), The Federal Bank (10.67%), The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd. (14.66%) and The Karnataka Bank (8.67%) — have not shown much concern over what has been happening at BOBL. But it is learnt that the IOB is likely to depute a top official to BOBL to protect the shareholders' interests.

Exporting tough

The Federation of Indian EPZ's Industries Association (FIEPZIA) is in favour of the Centre sharing a part of the country's export earnings with the States where export processing zones (EPZ) are located, so that the latter will be enthused to promote exports.

In this regard, the Federation is appreciative of the Tamil Nadu Government's gesture in extending sales tax concessions on items bought in the State by units located in the Madras Export Processing Zone (MEPZ).

Given the prevalent situation, exporting will be tough for units situated in EPZs and free trade zones, not because of competition from China or Taiwan, but due to Government's attitude towards their needs, Federation officials feel. They fear the minimum alternate tax (MAT) will squeeze further "our already narrow margins due to stiff competition in the international markets". D.M. Prasad, Secretary General, FIEPZIA, is sceptical about the country achieving the export target of US\$ 75-billion, with the existing credit delivery system.

Lancer for Tiruvallur

As anticipated earlier by *Madras Musings*, the Hindustan Motor-Mitsubishi combine's Lancer car project will come up near Madras. This was announced by G.P. Birla, Chairman, at the AGM

The project, with a capacity of 30,000 cars a year, is expected to go on stream in 1998 and the models likely to be manufactured are 1.3 and 1.5 litre petrol and 2 litre diesel cars. It is learnt that prototypes of the cars have landed in Madras port and major component manufacturers have been given the drawings for development of products.

Though officials state that they are still looking for a plant site, the location is likely to be at Tiruvallur, where HM has its earthmoving equipment manufacturing division. Of the 500-plus acres owned by HM there, the existing plant occupies only about 160 acres. With the State Government insisting that the Company utilise the excess land productively or surrender it, and the Mahindra Ford and Hyundai MoUs barring new car projects within a 40 km radius of their plants, the HM-Mitsubishi project is more or less forced to opt for Tiruvallur.

A pointer to the finalisation of these plans has been the shift by the Company of its paint assembly unit from Vadodara to Madras recently.

The Rs.300 crore project, it is reliably learnt, has approached ICICI for a Rs.900 crore loan, keeping future indigenisation programmes in mind. In addition, the Company is also planning to manufacture a rural transport vehicle in Indore, in collaboration with OKA, Australia.

The 'not-to-worry' Swadeshi bank

If all those connected with the decision to build the Indian Bank's headquarters where it is had been a little more superstitious, they would never have raised it at this location. The site of this highrise is on the southern corner of Arbutnot Street and Rajaji Salai (North Beach Road or 1st Line Beach). And that was where Arbutnot & Co had their headquarters, a handsome building in classical Regency style.

Arbutnot & Co, as the story below narrates, was the leading business house in 19th Century Madras, till its collapse in 1906 affected thousands in the Presidency and trade throughout the South. Now, 90 years later, the bank which rose from the ashes of Arbutnot property and built its own highrise by pulling down Arbutnot's headquarters, faces its own crisis, posting the largest ever loss in Indian banking history, Rs.1336 crore-plus for the year 1995-96, and showing accumulated losses of Rs.1712 crore! The superstitious who remember the Arbutnot story and its Indian Bank connection must be having a field day with their 'I told you so's'.

This is not the first crisis the Indian Bank has faced. Back in 1941, it faced heavy with-

drawals. As the Bank's historian R.K. Seshadri records, "It was suspected at that time that it had advanced fairly large amounts against stocks, accepting false declarations. The advances, however, ultimately proved to be sound. While they were in the process of being recovered, the bank's liquid resources were adequate and it also had enough eligible securities in its portfolio, against which it was in a position to borrow from the Reserve Bank. The withdrawals stopped after some time..." Sounds familiar in part, doesn't it?

But Seshadri adds, "..... this was only a short respite and very soon, the bank had to face even greater trouble..... It was destined to be put to a very severe test before it could resume normal operations and participate in the growth of banking during the war". He was referring to the run in 1942 when Madras thought itself threatened by the Japanese. Profits in 1942 were down to Rs.2 lakh from Rs.4 lakh the previous year.

A third major crisis the Bank faced was in the early 1960s, when there was a run on its deposits. In 1960, the year the Palai Bank failed in Kerala, the Indian Bank's profits were

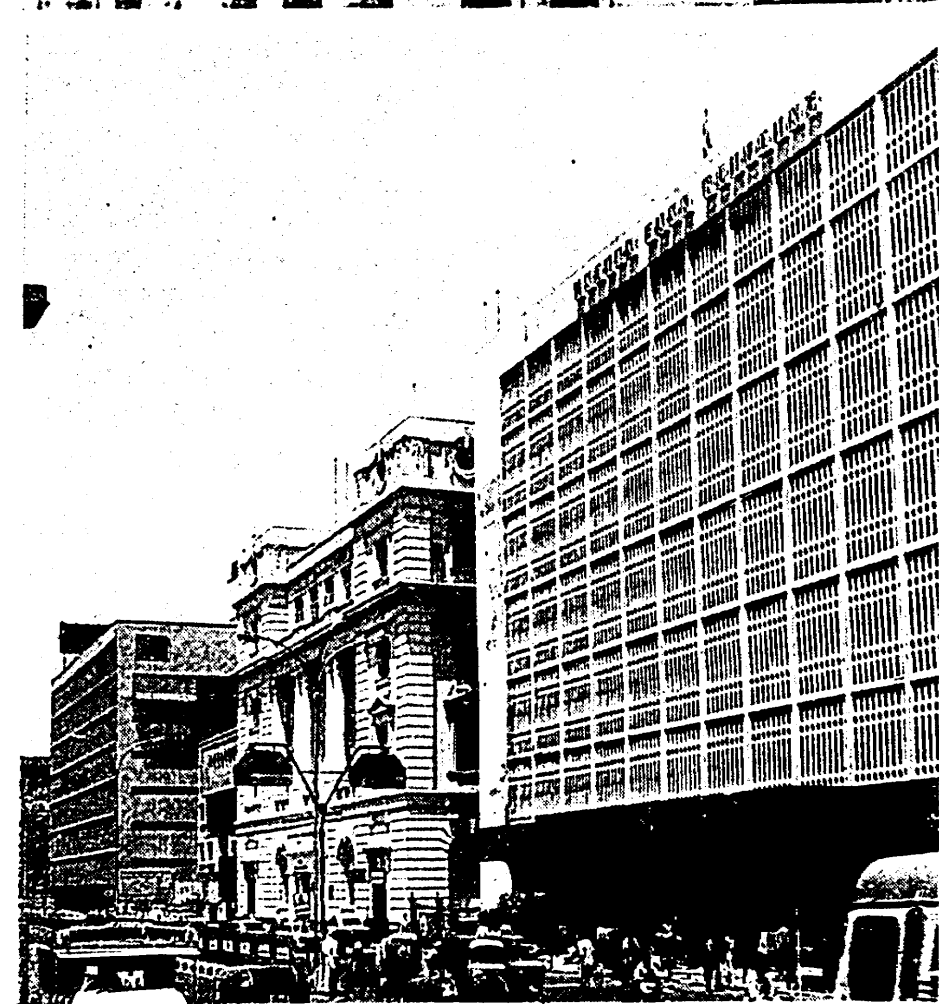
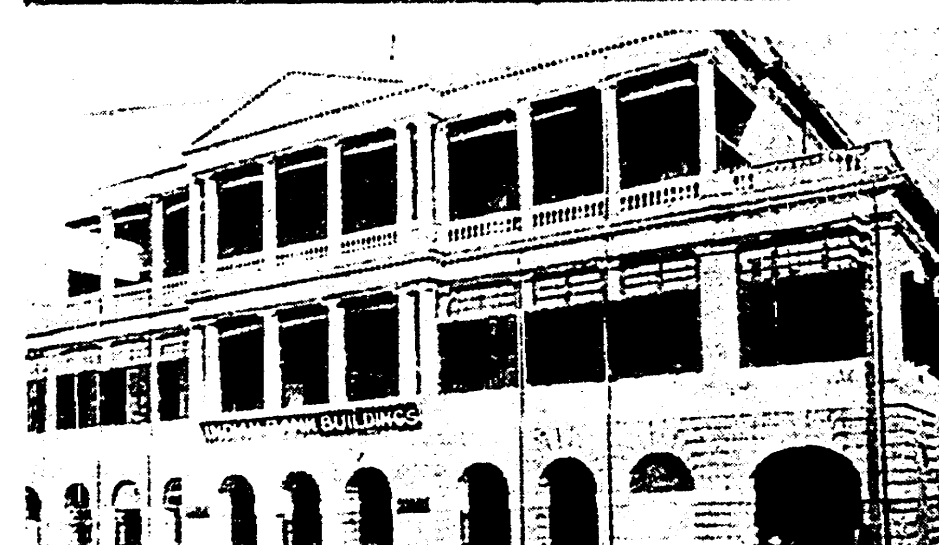
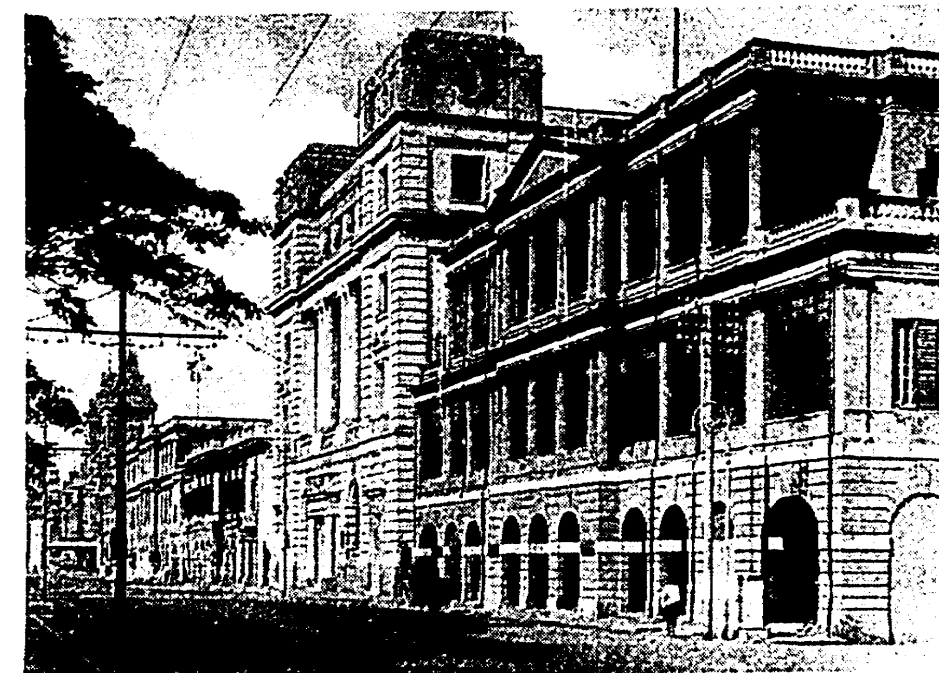
Rs. 4 million. In 1962, profits had come down to Rs. 1.5 million as deposits not only were withdrawn but few were willing to invest in the Bank. At that
(Continued on Page 6)



THE OLD...

...& THE NEW

The tall, twin-tower building in the centre of the OLD is the Mercantile Bank building — and that dates this picture to some time after 1923 when the Bank moved into this building built on the site of the building that housed The Mail. Next to it, on the right, looking almost derelict, is the handsomely pillared, balustraded and pedimented Arbutnot Building. The picture below it is of the same building, but as put to use by the Indian Bank in the 1930s. And the picture above shows the junction of Arbutnot Street and Rajaji Salai (North Beach Road), where the building is located. NEW shows the highrise that exists on the same site; work on it started in 1963 and it became the Bank's new headquarters building in 1970. (Photographs: The OLD, courtesy VINTAGE VIGNETTES; The 1930s' view, from The Swadeshi Bank; Arbutnot Street by VS RAGHAVAN, and the NEW by G VIJAYAN.)



LOOKING BACK

English failure, Indian success — at times

In the last quarter of 1906, Madras was hit by the worst financial crisis the city was ever to suffer. Of the three best known British commercial names in 19th Century Madras, one crashed, a second, Binny's, had to be resurrected by a distress sale and the third, Parry's, had to be bailed out by a benevolent benefactor! It was out of this financial shambles that the Indian Bank arose after a circular issued on November 20, 1906, had stated: "The failure of Arbutnot's and Binny's has set many people thinking as to whether an Indian bank on a financially sound basis should not be established."

The agency house to close shop was considered the soundest of the three. Parry's may have been the earliest of these three British firms and Binny's may have had the oldest association with Madras, but it was Arbutnot & Co that was the city's strongest commercial organisation in the 19th Century.

George Arbutnot, an Aberdeenshire Scot, came out to Madras as a free merchant in 1800 and joined the firm of Francis Latour, a company founded by a French merchant who arrived in Madras from

Pondicherry in 1777. Latour became Latour and Arbutnot and when John de Monte joined it in 1810 it became Arbutnot, de Monte & Co. before finally becoming Arbutnot & Co. This company was sponsor of some of the earliest industry in India; it established the Madras Portland Cement Works, the Bangalore Bricks & Tiles Works, the Reliance Engineering Works, the Chitalvasal Jute Mills and several other factories.

In its century of existence, several persons who were kin of the Arbutnots who ran the company, or who were associates of theirs, became men of substance and power in England and in India. Amongst them were an acting Governor of the Madras Presidency, a Governor of the Bank of England, a Madras Civilian and several senior army officers. One of the military branch was Field Marshal Viscount Gough whose daughter married Archibald Arbutnot, a nephew of the founder of the Company. Their son, Sir George Gough Arbutnot was the head of Arbutnot & Co. at the time of the crash. He was a member of the Madras Legislative Council and a

prominent figure in Madras society at the time.

Sir George's social eminence had not a little to do with the travails of the firm. He used the deposits for speculation and personal advantage. Much money was also spent on searching for gold in the Nilgiris and the Anamalais, on investment in American railway projects, on new South African gold fields and in the plantation crops of the West Indies. Arbutnot & Co. was drained dry. When P Macfadyen, senior partner of P Macfadyen & Co., London, Arbutnot's correspondent and associate in England, committed suicide on October 20, 1906, the crisis broke. Both firms petitioned the courts on the 22nd to be declared insolvent. The auditors appointed by the Official Assignee estimated Arbutnot & Co's liabilities at Rs 27 million and its assets at only Rs.7.7 million! The firm had 2300 operating accounts in India with balances of Rs. 2.75 million and about 4000 fixed deposits with claims amounting to over Rs.25 million. With the assets being described as being only on paper and "beyond all belief worthless, which crumble to dust when touched", there

was no way to meet the claims of the depositors, who were almost any and everyone in Madras who had savings or some money to invest.

Describing the scene at Arbutnot's when it put up a notice announcing suspension of all payments, *The Hindu* wrote, "Since Saturday last there has been a great commotion in Madras. The anguish of the disappointed creditors can be more imagined than described. A regular panic had taken hold of them and a rush was made to the High Court where it was understood that an application would be made for the taking of insolvency proceedings."

The paper went on to say, "The consequences of this sudden and disastrous failure will mean the ruin of many hundreds of families in Southern India. The firm was the most popular one in Madras... (and an) enormous business was being done and vast sums of money belonging to Maharajas, Rajas, and Zamindars, the well-to-do official classes, the Governments of native states, public charitable endowments and private trusts, mutual benefit funds and Nidhis, besides the small hard-earned investments of the

earning classes were all there. To the vast majority of the investors who with their helpless dependants can be counted by the thousands in southern India, the insolvency of the firm is a calamity which might well mean their ruin... To the confiding public it had seemed that the solvency of Arbutnot & Co. was almost as stable as the British Government itself."

When *The Hindu* announced on October 23 the death of Macfadyen, it thundered, "The public will be shocked to hear that a man who was at the head of a firm of merchants who enjoyed for such a long period and in such abundance measure their wholehearted confidence and respect should not only have caused the wreck of so many homes and unspeakable anguish in many households but has closed his inglorious career by an act of supreme selfishness and cowardice. It will be true to say that it is sufficient to blast for a long time to come the reputation of Englishmen for probity and righteousness."

In the aftermath of the crash several things happened. Sir Arthur Lawley, Governor

(Continued on Page 7)

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN's questions are from the period August 16 to 31. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Madras Past and Present.)

- Who has been chosen to pilot India's Light Combat Aircraft on its maiden flight?
- Name the noted Indian businessman honoured with membership to the House of Lords.
- The trek to which famous pilgrimage centre saw the death of around 220 people due to cold and landslides?
- Name the Indian actor selected to play a role in *Lost World*, Steven Spielberg's sequel to *Jurassic Park*.
- On August 27th, former Chief Minister Jayalalitha made a statement considered very significant to the fortunes of her Party. What?
- Which country's immediate past presidents were sentenced to death and life imprisonment for corruption and embezzlement?
- The uninhabited Rose Island in the Andamans, named after the man, Hugh Rose, responsible for the death of the Rani of Jhansi, has now been named after...?
- 'Sanjeevini' was handed over to the Indian Army by ICF recently. What is it?
- On August 20th, India won a world championship by upstaging Pakistan in the final of an event which didn't get much attention. What tourney?
- Name the two individuals, one a leading consumer advocate and the other a billionaire businessman, who have decided to enter the U.S. presidential race later this year.
- On August 24th, the PM dedicated to the nation a unique pension scheme of the LIC. What is it called?
- Amitabh Bachhan Corporation Ltd. plans to hold the prestigious 'Miss World 96' pageant in an Indian city. Where?
- Name the senior founder member of the AIADMK who resigned from the party on August 24th.
- The Tamil Nadu Government is planning four satellite towns near Madras. Where?
- Which legendary Carnatic musician's birth centenary was observed on August 29th with a commemorative FDC among other things?
- Where in the city would you find a 32-foot tall 'Rama's crown' surmounting a memorial for the person who translated the *Ramayana* into English?
- At the Church of the Madonna of the Mount, there is a painting entitled 'Holy Mother and Child', a gift to St. Thomas. Who is believed to be the painter?
- Where in the city will a Rs. 100 crore 'police city' come up?
- The vegetable, fruit and flower sections of the recently inaugurated Koyambedu wholesale market have been named after..?
- A symposium to mark the centenary of Sir Thomas Holland's discovery near Madras of 'blue granite' was held recently. How is this rock formation better known?

M.M.'s quizmaster 'Quizzer of the Year'

V V Ramanan, of *The Hindu's* Sports Desk and *Madras Musings'* Quizmaster these past five years and more, won the title 'Landmark Quizzer of the Year' with a bravura performance in the ninth and final round of the Landmark Quiz '96 held at the Music Academy recently. But neither his top score of 8 out of 12 in that quickfire round nor the out-Paasing Leander imitation he did, as he immediately thereafter pumped air in jubilation, were enough to ensure victory for his team, The Samsapthagas. They were pushed into second place by a mere two points in the very last moment of the contest by Seshadri of The Suitable Boys who was the least tense of those nominated by each team for the quickfire round. Calmly he scored the required 7 for victory, reaching his target with the very last question of the afternoon.

The other finalists in what was a tougher-than-usual quiz — till the quickfire round — were Top Dome, who finished third, Mustafa and the Bridge on the River Kaveri from Bangalore, and the High Inquisitors, Con Flakes and Morons of the Nth Order. None of them, however, picked up the prize for the best team name; that went to I.yer...lyengar, headed

by Dr Arjun Rajagopalan who found it easier playing hooky than explaining the name. Other quizzing prizes went to Cerebrally Inspired Adolescents, a team from Padma Seshadri Secondary School who were the best of the schools' teams, and Three Doctors, from Sankara Nethralaya, who were the top-scorers from among the corporate teams. There wasn't a girl on stage during the eight-round plus-one final and not many among the record 430 teams that took part in the elimination preliminary round. Perhaps there should be an all-girls' teams contest one of these days.

As intriguing as the name of the teams were most of the questions, whose emphasis seemed to be on trivia, and a question net which did not seem to have enough room for India, if you except the music and film scenes. It was only the occasional individual in the audience who came up with the right answers after the teams had struggled and failed with the questions in each round.

Among the more intriguing questions were:

- What do Calcutta, San Francisco, a tennis court and Apache Indian have in common?

- How did Karsh get that scowl in his famous portrait of Winston Churchill?
 - What do Captain Cook, a U.S. State and something to eat have in common?
 - Why was the title of the film *The Madness of King George III* changed to *The Madness of King George* for screening in America?
 - What did Kanchipuram, Kalaripayattu and Zen Buddhism have in common?
 - What is the difference between 'mediation' and 'arbitration'?
- Overall, I think most of Quizmaster Naveen Kumar's questions — framed by mother Saranya and the third member of this team of erstwhile national champions, Gautham Padmanabhan — would have stumped the majority of quizzers in Siddarth Basu's Beanstalk Quiz. Here they let Samsapthagas get off to a flying start in the first two rounds, flounder in the middle rounds as the other contenders picked up bits and pieces, come back into contention in the last two rounds and look like winners in what was Ramanan's round till Seshadri pipped them on the



V V Ramanan, Madras Musings' quizmaster and Landmark's 'Quizzer of the Year'.

post for The Suitable Boys, who came from Madras, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, to live up to their name. As Naveen Kumar said, Ramanan's teams have long had a habit of being the bridesmaids, seldom the brides.

- S.M.
- ANSWERS
- 1. Rajesh Pant, the other his decision is a decision binding on the other five.
 - 2. The noted Indian businessman honoured with membership to the House of Lords.
 - 3. The trek to which famous pilgrimage centre saw the death of around 220 people due to cold and landslides?
 - 4. Name the Indian actor selected to play a role in *Lost World*, Steven Spielberg's sequel to *Jurassic Park*.
 - 5. On August 27th, former Chief Minister Jayalalitha made a statement considered very significant to the fortunes of her Party. What?
 - 6. Which country's immediate past presidents were sentenced to death and life imprisonment for corruption and embezzlement?
 - 7. The uninhabited Rose Island in the Andamans, named after the man, Hugh Rose, responsible for the death of the Rani of Jhansi, has now been named after...?
 - 8. 'Sanjeevini' was handed over to the Indian Army by ICF recently. What is it?
 - 9. On August 20th, India won a world championship by upstaging Pakistan in the final of an event which didn't get much attention. What tourney?
 - 10. Name the two individuals, one a leading consumer advocate and the other a billionaire businessman, who have decided to enter the U.S. presidential race later this year.
 - 11. On August 24th, the PM dedicated to the nation a unique pension scheme of the LIC. What is it called?
 - 12. Amitabh Bachhan Corporation Ltd. plans to hold the prestigious 'Miss World 96' pageant in an Indian city. Where?
 - 13. Name the senior founder member of the AIADMK who resigned from the party on August 24th.
 - 14. The Tamil Nadu Government is planning four satellite towns near Madras. Where?
 - 15. Which legendary Carnatic musician's birth centenary was observed on August 29th with a commemorative FDC among other things?
 - 16. Where in the city would you find a 32-foot tall 'Rama's crown' surmounting a memorial for the person who translated the *Ramayana* into English?
 - 17. At the Church of the Madonna of the Mount, there is a painting entitled 'Holy Mother and Child', a gift to St. Thomas. Who is believed to be the painter?
 - 18. Where in the city will a Rs. 100 crore 'police city' come up?
 - 19. The vegetable, fruit and flower sections of the recently inaugurated Koyambedu wholesale market have been named after..?
 - 20. A symposium to mark the centenary of Sir Thomas Holland's discovery near Madras of 'blue granite' was held recently. How is this rock formation better known?

The 'not-to-worry' Swadeshi bank

(Continued from Page 5)

time, the Chief Minister of Madras, Kamaraj, and the Finance Minister, C. Subramaniam, had their officials assure the public of the safety of their money, guaranteeing it by saying the Government of Madras's resources were behind the Bank if needed. No such utterances, obvious though their import are in today's circumstances, have been heard from Government of India or State officials in the present instance. The only reassuring noises have come from present Indian Bank Chairman and Managing Director S. Rajagopal and various unions making statements that almost seem to reflect their need to reassure themselves.

The 1960s were bad years for the Bank, with profits coming down to Rs.9 lakh in 1969. Says Seshadri, "Like many other banks at that time, the Indian Bank made some bad loans in its anxiety to achieve some targets immediately and to establish a record of performance..." A recession did not help matters. But by the end of this period "the bank also realised the need for greater caution in granting loans... It tried to retrieve the earlier mistakes and to streamline the procedure for the grant of such loans." But that was only till the 1990s.

charge of banking, the Finance Minister, is one of the party leaders? Fortunately better counsel has prevailed and Gopalakrishnan has resigned from the Party — until he is exonerated.

The good news in all this is, in Seshadri's words back in 1982, "A banking crisis, in case it occurs at all, is no longer likely to result in widespread losses to a large number of people, who are not in a position to bear them. Apart from the availability of insurance cover, effective steps can always be taken to minimise the damage." That's welcome news; the Arbuthnot tragedy is not likely to occur again, not even in the case of those who rose from its ashes. But does that mean we should have people who can't say 'No' running banks and looking to the political leadership for their well-being?

Its large losses, in the context of what Seshadri says, may not be cause for worry on the part of the public, but what is serious is the damage to the reputation of the Indian Bank as a result of the losses which, for the most part, appear to be from earlier accounting periods and not provided for. Here accounting creativity has been

taken to its ultimate end. But who will pay for it?

I was talking to an Indian Bank Manager the other day and he said the rescue package being worked out will see the Bank handsomely back in the black. That may be; the rescue package may well help the Bank tide over bad times till most of the dues are recovered. But what about those Rs. 500 crore-plus that, it is estimated by some, is irrecoverable? That write-off may be seen as the Government of India's problem, being as it is the sole shareholder. But the Gol's money comes from you and me. And we, like all good Indians, relax and enjoy being taken for a ride, if it's by our own people.

Old Sir George Gough Arbuthnot and his London crony P Macfadyen must be having a good laugh somewhere up there. Especially if there is any truth in a rumour that a foreign bank might be willing to help by agreeing to a takeover!

S Muthiah

* R.K. Seshadri's book, *Swadeshi Bank from South India.*

D.K. Murthy to close shop



D K Murthy, the gold and diamond expert. By his head is a piece of Tanjore art done by him using real gold. (Photograph by V R DEVIKA.)

D.K. Murthy is closing shop. The diamond expert with the formidable reputation says he is too old to carry on and does not wish to hand over 'D.K. Murthy, Jewellers' to anyone else, as he prides himself on the quality of his work. So the small shop with the great reputation will no longer be there on North Mada Street, Mylapore, to be visited by dancers from all over the world looking for 'temple jewellery'.

There are any number of shops selling temple jewellery in Mylapore and other places nowadays. "But not of my quality..." D.K. Murthy is quick to point out. But are they really 'temple jewellery', all that jewellery featuring red and green stones and pearls embedded in silver-dipped-in-gold and worn by classical dancers?

"It was once called antique jewellery, but it was I who began to call it 'temple jewellery' because exporting something called 'antique' became a problem," Murthy explains. "Costume jewellery" would have been more accurate, but 'temple jewellery' sounded better," he adds. Murthy has always made temple jewellery, like the *kavachams* and *kreetams* for the deities, and he merely extended the thought.

Murthy has many memories of the people he has made jewellery for. He made all the exquisite gold jewellery worn by Rukmini Devi Arundale and remembers every piece ordered by her. Kalanidhi Narayanan had a beautiful socialite mother who loved jewellery; the *mekhalas* and every other piece ordered by her are still remembered by Murthy. He remembers Vyjayanthimala, her mother and the caustic tongue of Vyjayanthi's grandmother, Yadugiri Devi, whose taste was exquisite... Hema and Vijaya... the three sisters Lalita, Padmini, Ragini and the gold *golusu*, he made for them and how they gave the jewellery they wore for their dances to MLV's daughter Srividya when

she began to dance... Sowcar Janaki... and the trips the dance gurus of the Raja Rajeswari school of dancing made to place big orders for dance students like Vani Ganapathi...

D.K. Murthy was the first person in his family to get interested in gold and diamonds. This happened when he took a job as an accounts assistant in a big gold business called Shastri and Shastri. He was getting the princely sum of Rs.150 when he quit and started his own business with the Rs.1000 given by his helpful employers. He began business on Mundakanni Amman Koil Street, then moved to Sundaeswarar Street. Before long, he got that prime location on North Mada Street, abutting the Kapaleswar Temple, and became a household name for his knowledge of gold and diamonds. Gold merchants like Bapalal's consider Murthy the Dronacharya of diamond-testing.

"But," says Murthy thoughtfully, "though I am quite comfortable, I have not made the kind of money that is possible in this business in spite of my reputation. Brahmins are not fit for this business." Of his children — six daughters — eleven grandchildren and four great-granddaughters, only one



'Temple jewellery' from D K Murthy's

daughter has shown an interest in the gold business and has started a shop called Bhuvaneshwari Jewellers.

Murthy considers the making of temple jewellery a cottage industry, artistic though it be. But he has never accepted bulk orders for the same type of jewellery. He firmly believes that quality and quantity do not go together.

The base for temple jewellery is silver and the coloured stones and pearls are embedded in the silver with lacquer and fixed with gold leaf. The stones are deep-set and are uncut. "Temple jewellery has its roots in Vadaseri, near Nagercoil," says Murthy. "This could be due to the availability of raw materials like pearls nearby."

This type of jewellery was worn in the past by princesses and mirasdars' wives. Now it is increasingly being worn for parties and weddings. And many a South Indian bride wears temple jewellery for the *muhurtham* these days, with shops hiring out *tala saaman sets*. These include the *mangai malai*, *makar kantigai*, *addigai*, *oddyanam*, the *kuoti bulak* that falls from the cartilage of the nose, the *mukathi*, the *vanki*, and the *jhumkas*.

Murthy is conducting a closing down sale at present with attractive discounts. A visit to his shop will only intensify the feeling that another link with our heritage is snapping.

V.R. Devika

Looking back...

(Continued from Page 5)

of Madras and himself a victim of the bankrupt company, launched a public fund to raise money to help the weaker sections who had lost everything in Arbuthnot's. Amongst the scores of letters in *The Hindu* on the scandal, there was one that suggested the starting of an Indian bank "now that European integrity and honesty (have come) under a cloud". Sir George was tried on eleven counts... After he had been sentenced to 18 months R.L., *The Hindu* wrote, "For a dozen years now, the business of Messrs. Arbuthnot & Co. has been a swindle of the vilest description. The firm has kept on a banking business under false pretences, deceiving innumerable innocent men and women into investing in its rapacious maw all their hard-earned savings and earnings... not knowing that Messrs. Arbuthnot & Co. was but a white sepulchre!..."

Eventually, the most constructive thing to come out of the 1906 scandal was the Indian Bank. A young vakil, V. Krishnaswamy Iyer, later to become an eminent lawyer and High Court Judge but at the time just making his way up, was active on behalf of several Arbuthnot creditors. Taking his cue from the letter that appeared in *The Hindu*, he set out with a will to promote



September 20: Poster exhibition on Gender & Economic Reform (at British Council).
September 28: N. Ramani on the flute (at Krishna Gana Sabha).
Till September 30: 'Art during the 50 Years of Independence', an exhibition (at Values Art Foundation).

Answers to Quiz

- Rakesh Sharma, India's only cosmonaut; 2. Swraj Paul; 3. Amaranath; 4. M.R. Gopakumar of Kerala; 5. That she was severing all links with Sasikala Natarajan's family; 6. South Korea; 7. Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi!; 8. It is the first airconditioned military ward car-cum-sleeper coach; 9. The under-15 World Lombard Challenge cricket championship; 10. Ralph Nader and Ross Perot, respectively; 11. Jeevan Suraksha; 12. Bangalore; 13. K.A. Krishnaswamy; 14. Jamin Pallavarum, Sholinganallur, Mamallapuram; and Sripurumbudur; 15. Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar.
- Rajaji Memorial in Guindy; 17. St. Luke; 18. Greame's Road; 19. Periyar, Annadurai and Kamarajar, respectively; 20. Charnockite or Pallavaram gneiss.

Neila back with a surprise

(By A Staff Reporter)

Neila Sathyalingam, once of Kalakshetra and perhaps the best Bharata Natyam dancer from Sri Lanka, was back in Madras recently as one of the co-producers of 'Singapore Surprise', a multicultural programme by musicians and dancers from the three main cultural forms of Singapore—Chinese, Indian and Malay. The programme has been presented in many countries since 1988, creating a great deal of interest in its multiracial cultural content that, according to Neila, "transcends ethnic and national stereotypes". In some sequences, the dancers from the various ethnic streams adopt the costumes of the others.

After leaving India for Singapore Neila founded Apsaras Arts there, to spread the Indian Classical dance forms. Apsaras Arts was one of the three groups in 'Singapore Surprise'.

Neila's work in Singapore began in 1975 with teaching Indian dance, particularly Bharata Natyam, in the Government-sponsored community centres. She is at present the Indian dance choreographer for the People's Association, which is the cultural wing of the Government. Her noteworthy contribution to Singapore has been in her unique ability to adapt Indian dance by fusing it with Chinese and Malay dance into a refreshing blend to suit the multicultural national scene in the island.

Neila has led several cultural groups to international festivals to project Singapore as a multiracial, multicultural society. In 1989, she was awarded the Cultural Medallion by the Government of Singapore. The Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society conferred on her the title of 'Kalaratna' and, in December 1995, Bharath Kalachar in Madras bestowed upon her and her husband, S. Sathyalingam, the prestigious title 'Vishwakala Bharathi', awarded in previous years to Sivaji Ganesan and the dancer Padmini.

'Singapore Surprise's' core group of musicians was trained and nurtured within Singapore with the help of prominent visiting artists from India, China and Malaysia. The orchestra, consisting of vocalists and di-

(Continued on Page 8)

Paru's, the Madras-style Hollywood restaurant on Sunset Boulevard, had its beginnings in Jamshedpur. Natesan, a native of Madras, moved to the steel town in search of work many decades ago. There he found many South Indian bachelors craving for typical South Indian food. The enterprising Mylaporean sensed an opportunity to do better than his job with Tata's. And so, with the help of his wife Parvathi, an expert cook, he organised a South Indian 'mess' in Jamshedpur. When he found it to be a profitable venture, he decided to give up his regular job and concentrate on catering full-time.

(One of the regular customers of the 'mess' was a young executive from Thanjavur District. From Jamshedpur, the dynamic young man made his way up, and up, and today he heads the oldest bookshop in India, Higginbotham's, as its executive director. His name is S. Chandrasekhar. Incidentally, the stylish clothes the Higginbotham chief wears are all from America. How does he manage that? Well, that's another story.)

In time, the Jamshedpur meal-maker, seeking greener pastures, headed for the United

PARU'S

— From Mylapore to Hollywood

States. Work in offices, he found, did not suit him. So, when he noticed that many Indians were arriving in America and they were all looking for Indian food, he gave up his job, went back to catering, promoting an Indian-style restaurant in New Jersey, named 'Paru's', after his wife Parvathi. As business prospered and Natesan learnt the business of running a restaurant in the U.S., he relocated in Los Angeles, which had a larger Indian population. And Paru's was born right in the middle of Hollywood.

In the early 70's, his son Kannan joined him, after school in India, and he took over the running of the family restaurant. Many Tamils living in the U.S. make a beeline to Paru's as soon as they hear about it, and Tamil families living in California, away from LA, make it a point to visit Paru's as much as they do places like Universal Studios, Disneyland and the Paul Getty Museum.

Paru's is open seven days a week, 12 noon-9.00 p.m., and serves traditional Indian vegetarian dishes. There are *tandooris* and *biryanis*, but the star attraction of the restaurant is the *idli-sambar* cuisine. Per-

haps the most popular dish here is a South Indian *thali* which consists of a couple of *idlis*, *vadais*, *rava-uppma* and *masala dosai* with coconut chutney *podu* and oil, and of course, *sambar*. 'Madras Coffee', which means strong coffee with milk and sugar, follows. All these, and Kannan's laugh-a-minute company, costs only \$9 (I found that meant Rs.9 in America).

Paru's has a long list of VIP regulars, and the galaxy includes Hollywood names like Marlon Brando, Telly Savalas, Steven Spielberg, the Amrithraj brothers, Jag Mundhra and others. Marlon Brando seems to be particularly fond of crispy *vadais* which he orders by the dozen!

One of the daily visitors is a South Indian named Radhakrishnan Thambi, connoisseur of classical Carnatic Music. A Keralite by birth, he was a well-known journalist in India and worked for many leading publications in the country, All India Radio, and the Press Information Bureau. Deeply involved in the Delhi world of journalist-trade unionism, he made a mark as the stormy petrel of the press corps. Later, he migrated to Canada, where he worked on some newspapers

before shifting to television as a newsreel producer. He then moved on to Hollywood, where Radha, as he is known to his American friends, works as an executive in the Department of Film Preservation of the American Film Institute. Its offices in Hollywood are situated on a hilly rise in an old building which used to be a nunnery! And it still retains its cloistered atmosphere!

Radha, who speaks fluent Tamil, with just a trace of a Malayalam accent, dreams of the day when a movie will be made in India, with either of the Malayalam superstars, for the American market. Till then, there's Carnatic Music to keep him happy wherever he is.

Randor Guy

Neila

(Continued from Page 7)

verse instrumentalists, is conducted by Sathyalingam, who is also an alumnus of Kalakshetra and who obtained his 'Sangeetha Siromani' title from the University of Madras. Sathyalingam, now a Singapore exporter, gives free singing lessons in Singapore. They give me, he says, sustenance for the heart, as much as my business provides the food that sustains our bodies. Sathyalingam's father, C. Suntharalingam, was the Ceylon Tamil politician who coined the term 'Eelam'.

Neila, whom he met at Kalakshetra, received her post-graduate and teaching diplomas as well from Kalakshetra and taught there for several years. One of her students was Anita Ratnam, whose Arangham Trust, sponsored the visit of the Neila Sathyalingam-led Singapore troupe.



● WE REGRET that our Cookery and Sports features have had to be held over due to pressure on space. They will appear in our next issue.

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