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MUSINGS

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Still awaiting a Heritage Act

hennai still awaits its Heri-∠tage Act. It also awaits a revision of the list of heritage buildings prepared by the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority, many of the 42 historical buildings listed relating to a newer political heritage than an older historical or architectural one.

Meanwhile, Calcutta continues following the pace set by Mumbai. After a newspaper, The Telegraph, had pointed out that the list of 72 heritage buildings prepared by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority early last year was "incomplete" and that several buildings that should have been on it, but were not. were endangered, the Municipal Affairs Minister, Ashok Bhattacharya, instructed the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) to set up a Heritage Committee "to prepare an exhaustive list of buildings to be preserved, since the list of 72 prepared by the CMDA was found unsatisfactory".

The CMC has just announced that the five-man committee set up last October had, till the end of last year, identified 30 more buildings in different parts of the city as 'architectural marvels', in addition to the 72 listed.

A recent report in The Telegraph adds:

The municipal architect and town planner, Dipankar Sinha, said the number of "heritage buildings" in the city may actually touch the 150-mark.

In its draft report, the Committee on the preservation of heritage buildings has recommended creation of three categories for the purpose. First, no structural change will be allowed in the buildings and the lands surrounding them. The Victoria Memorial Hall is a case in point. Second, buildings like the Old Currency Office in BBD Bagh will be allowed certain minimal internal changes. But their owners will have a lot of explaining to do if they try to change the facade. Third, an owner can change a large portion of the structure, but only after ensuring that the 'heritage' aspect is not compromised.

The civic commissioner, Asim Barman, said he would soon place the report before the Municipal Affairs Minister for a decision on the enactment of legislation to protect such buildings.

G C Mondol, the city architect, said that for maintenance of heritage buildings, the transfer of the development rights had been suggested in the draft guidelines. He said that by this scheme, owners of a heritage building will be allowed to enjoy the same covered area benefits elsewhere if they hand them over for commercial use.

The purchaser, on the other hand, he said, will be given permission for change of use without having to pay an extra charge. But it will be binding upon the purchaser not to change the basic external character of the building.

Barman announced that a number of NGOs had expressed willingness to join the drive to preserve the city's heritage.

There are several in Chennai too willing to help the Chennai Corporation and the Tamil Nadu Government not only identify heritage buildings in the city but also with their preservation and care. When will our Corporation and Government respond to the numerous pleas by NGOs and in these columns? The Editor

(Also see page 2)





A 'hammocked' resting place in a tree on Graeme's (Greame's) Road, created with strong tapes by 'auto'drivers who consider the area their 'stand'. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY of an unusual scene of creativity spurred by necessity).

More & more young runaways

(By A Staff Reporter)

ccording to recent estimates, there are about 44,000 street children and young rag-pickers in Chennai. And at least ten new entrants joint this community every day at the Central railway station alone, says an NGO worker. Almost all of them have run away from their rural homes.

Most of these children are found in the age group 12-15 and have chosen this lifestyle due to ill-treatment at home or seeing no future with their parents or in the rural areas. Some become rag-pickers, some beggars, while others become antisocial elements.

Most of these boys have not crossed even the elementary school level of education. So their struggle is harder.

Several NGOs are working with these street children, offering them shelter, food and rehabilitation. Some have succeeded in returning children after reconciliation with their parents. Others have arranged for jobs, like headload workers, paper-pickers and auto drivers, for the boys. And training is offered to make them good citizens. But the few NGOs are unable to tackle the growing numbers.

A 'Cabinet' in search of a better society

The indefatigable R. Desi-L kan, Chairman of the Federation of Consumer Organisations —Tamil Nadu, continues the good fight for a better society.

As Managing Trustee of the newly-formed Catalyst Trust, he states its aims in these questions the Trust asks:

Can we light a candle, instead of cursing the dark-

Can we help promote norms of probity, propriety, accountability and transparency on the part of all democratic institutions, without becoming part of any political party?

Can we function as Catalysts — fully involved to help constructive change and yet remain unattached and unchanged ourselves?

Can we arrest the decline in values and reverse the trend?

The Trust has appointed a Cabinet of Sevakas consisting of experts in different fields of activity. This Cabinet will monitor and constantly suggest improvement to Government policies and their implementation in Tamil Nadu.

The Cabinet comprises of:

B.S. Raghavan — Chairman of the Citizens' Assembly.

Dr. A.L.Mudaliar — Industries.

Dr. Easo John -- Agriculture.

Dr. S. Krishnaswamy — Culture, Communications and Media.

V.R. Lakshminarayan — Home, Police, Law and Order

K. Ravindran — Transport

S.S. Narayanan — Rural Development

Dr. Kannabiran Health.

More portfolios will be added from time to time.

A Citizens' Assembly of about 120 members, drawn from all the districts of Tamil Nadu, will help the Sevakas by disseminating the message of the expert group to the public at large, and by being an important feedback mechanism to in-

(Continued on P6)

Is more heritage now threatened?

onservationists have cause for concern if some of the stories doing the rounds are even partly true. The first story The Man From Madras Musings has heard has to do with a wish to add to the sole sore thumb in Fort St George, presumably to make it a full

Government, these stories have it, is looking for more space for its burgeoning personnel in the Fort. And so, so the stories go, it would like the Army to move out and hand over its buildings for demolition and reconstruction as modern tower blocks. MMM has never understood why the Archaeological Survey of India did not declare the ENTIRE Fort as a Protected Historical Monument, choosing instead to declare only individual buildings, 16 of them, as protected. But he is happy to hear that the ASI plans to stand firm on protecting the 16 and to not permit any new building near them.

Pressure, however, is being brought on the Army authorities to surrender some of their buildings — possibly even move out of the Fort — MMM is told. Whereupon, no doubt, the new civil 'tenants' will draw up plans to replace these 'old' buildings with new ones. MMM wishes that Government would announce that all this IS NOT TRUE, that even if it took over 'old' buildings it would only renovate them and

use them. Better still, MMM would be glad if Government would move several of its departments out of the Fort to towns in the mofussil — as has often been recommended — and thereby decongest Fort St George and bring some relief to the City. That may be asking too much of the Government at present, when heritage is still not an important issue in Tamil Nadu, but the least MMM asks is that the Fort be left alone, with the ASI, the Army, the Government and the Vestry of St Mary's-in-the-Fort each determining to do its bit to restore and renovate what in fact are priceless reminders of the historical development of this nation of ours.

In the Estuary

Another story doing the rounds is that the Taj Group's St James' Court, London, has signed a long lease for land in the Adyar Estuary. The Man From Madras Musings is told that the St. James' Court, now managed by an old Taj hand from Madras, will develop this property as a multistorey luxury apartment complex and hotel for short-term NRI and expatriate residents.

Please, someone, tell MMM that this IS NOT SO, at least that the Taj Group's development plans do not include land in the protected Adyar Estuary area and its surrounds. The Taj Group,

which has done excellent work in the past in several heritage buildings and locations throughout the country, recently ran afoul of environmentalists when it sought to build a jungle lodge in Nagarhole (Karnataka). Plans to develop environmentally sensitive areas always run such risks; MMM wonders why the Taj Group just doesn't avoid such locations, especially when any attention has been drawn to the sensi-

tive nature of the areas. In this context, MMM needs to once again point out that even 'stories' would not arise if there was a Heritage Act in place. An Act drawn up in consultation with conservationists, protectionists and environmentalists would ensure that heritage buildings and areas, as well as our natural heritage, are legally protected and that any restoration, ren vation or development could be only in terms of the Act. Meanwhile, what surprises The Man From Madras Musings is that despite all the softly-spoken oral commitment to heritage, few of these issues are taken up by the NGO groups committed to conservation of both our manmade and natural heritage. When do we see them stand up to be counted, except on the occasional issue of the Pleasant Stay Hotel and the

What's happening!

DGP Building?

Speaking of the DGP Building, The Man From Madras Musings was most pleased to hear a few months ago the Chief Minister's commitment to heritage and his consequent determination to save the DGP Building, have it restored and renovated, and incorporate it with any new buildings the Police might need — which buildings, he made clear, must be environment-friendly and blend with the renovated Police Headquarters! That was the first time a Chief Minister in Tamil Nadu had said anything so positive on heritage and conservation.

Since then, MMM has been looking out for activity of some sort at the DGP Building — not to mention the drafting of a Heritage Act. Sadly, neither has been forthcoming. In the case of the former, the stay order of the High Court has to be ruled on. MMM is unable to understand why both parties to the case don't approach the Court for a date and a ruling so that planning might proceed apace on a model DGP headquarters complex developed around the centrepiece of a renovated DGP Building. In the case of the latter, MMM looks forward to Government calling all those concerned for a discussion on a draft Heritage Act. Such a discussion was initiated by the previous government but dropped after one

meeting. Perhaps with the Chief Minister's commitment to heritage now, a new meeting can be called soon.

T Tsha Krishna, the new

Chairwoman of the

Women's view

Ladies' Wing of FICCI (FLO), is not only an industrialist in her own right but is keen to encourage women's entrepreneurship. The Man From Madras Musings notes with pleasure that she has been focussing on these plans in all recent interviews. To provide guidance to women entrepreneurs, to equip women with the skills which will make them independent and significant contributors to the economy, and to help women

realise their full potential.. these are the laudable goals she has set for FLO.

And at the first programme

of her term, where four women achievers spoke on their experiences, MMM was pleased to note that Kiran Mazumdar, the country's first woman brewmaster and now a successful entrepreneur in the biotechnology industry, reflected positively the ideas the Chairwoman has for women. What was needed more and more in women qualifying from our universities, she said, was a commitment to put their education to good use, not work for a short while and quit in favour of marriage. The committed woman who progresses will find, she was categorical, no gender bias in the workplace, in those she has to deal with in industry, or in professional and commercial membership bodies. "It was a grind to get there," she said. "But once my ability and industrial knowhow were recognised, I've always been treated as an equal," she emphasised. What a happy change this was from what the other speakers had to say.

Iayanthi Natarajan, MP, and Sheela Rani Chunkath, IAS, both got rather carried away with the usual subjects of sexual harassment, snideness and gossip, and male chauvinism. And actress and activist Revathi Menon sought more women activists who would make their voices heard on public issues as well as on such domestic issues as sharing the making of that first coffee. All three agreed on Parliamentary and Legislative reservations for women, though Menon qualified it with a 20-year limit. None of this shed any light on how to become a woman achiever. And since much of it was a rather eloquent repetition of clichés, it wasn't surprising that there were only a few left in the audience to hear Mazumdar bring the subject back into focus.

For the dreams of Usha Krishna and Kiran Mazumdar to inspire women, an exclusive social club is not the venue and a society crowd in their Sunday best not the best audience, it struck MMM. Their message needs to go out to the colleges and professional institutions where women are now occupying more and more seats, but not sure where they are headed

In brief

★ Outside text-books and reference books, what is India's largest-selling, Indian-authored, English-language book ever? The Man from Madras Musings does not have an answer to that, but he would not be surprised if it is Rajaji's

Ramayana or Mahabharata, published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. The 500,000th copy of each book was re-

cently released — and if that

isn't a record, what is? ★ The hawkers are not back on the pavements of NSC Bose Road as yet, but they are, in many other parts of the City from where they had been cleared. The return of hawkers and the encroachments caused by them is the result of intervention by politicians, The Man From Madras Musings is told. When are our politicians ever going to learn that there is more to life than votes? That this country will never progress unless discipline becomes a part of our way of life?

★ The Man From Madras Musings is looking forward to Free Ads, Chennai's newest journal. To be launched on February 15th, the weekly will carry classified advertising free of cost and display advertising at a price. Copies are being priced at Rs.3 each by the publishers, M & N Publications Ltd of the Delhi-based Tej Bandhu Group. The Chennai launch, with 10,000 copies, follows launches in Delhi and Bangalore. The publishers feel they can get a Rs.15 crore turnover from each centre ten

★ While the bulk of printing in India still remains in the Age of Gutenberg, pockets are emerging where technology is on a par with the best abroad. Being unable to afford it has been one of the biggest restricting factors, The Man From Madras Musings is well aware of. Among the biggest sufferers on this count are printing educational institutions who find it difficult to purchase even consumables like paper and ink. But, occasionally, a Santa Claus comes along.

years from now, MMM is told.

The Santa who turned up at Anna University, where the first degree course in printing

technology was establised a dozen years ago, was burly Douglas Ryder, Chairman of Advent Publishing Systems Ltd, UK. The 3B2 publishing software that he PRE-SENTED the University's printing technology department is said to be what the biggest publishers in the world use, is the latest in the field and costs £20,000! Offering to train students in its use was S G Wasani, of Scientific Publishing Services, Madras, which has a link with Springer Verlag of Germany, whose typesetting they do. The million rupee gift will also ensure SPS a steady supply of trained technicians, MMM is inclined

* The Residency, Chennai, The Man From Madras Musings finds, has for the third time in a row won the national award for the Best Economy Business Hotel. When its Coimbatore clone opens later this year, will it find a challenger in the newcomer, wonders MMM.

Business briefs

- * An NRI-owned conglomerate in Indonesia is looking at the possibility of acquiring the troubled Best & Crompton Group, The Man From Madras Musings hears. The Hongkong Bank has been commissioned to do a feasibility study, MMM is told.
- ★ Pond's, successful these past six years with growing mushrooms in Ooty for export to the US, is now to look at the Indian market, The Man From Madras Musings is told. They're to be branded too and Kissan, hitherto probably India's best-known name in the canned and bottled food products range, will launch the mushrooms, its first FRESH food products.
- ★ Looking for foreign liquor, chocolates, perfumes, electronic goods etc.? 'Customs Notified Shops' may soon be also-rans for many imported items if the India Tourism Development Corporation's plans materialise. The Man From Madras Musings understands that ITDC will shortly be allowed to open duty-free shops in the metros, Chennai being one of the four centres selected for the first phase of the operation. Ten other cities will follow before long, MMM is told.
- ★ The Sanmar fleet is fastgrowing, The Man From Madras Musings finds. Apart from the two 50,000-tonne tankers acquired for about \$45 million last year, Sanmar Shipping Corporation how has five 40,000-tonne bulk carriers acquired for about \$65 million. Four of the latter will concentrate on the growing coastal trade, while the fifth vessel has been contracted to the Tamil Nadu Government for coal carriage.

MMM

Bullock power at Padi

The Hasselblad may be the **I** most expensive camera of its kind in the world, and the one chosen for the astronauts who were the first men on the moon, but even the Hasselblad has its limits, as every piece of technical equipment does. It certainly wasn't the ideal camera to have with me one morning in 1961 when I was driving from my village, Thirumullaivayal, half way between Ambattur and Avadi, to my office in the city.

Not that there was anything wrong with the camera itself, but it was fitted with a 'normal' lens, and, surprisingly perhaps, a so-called normal lens, one that gives an angle of view roughly equivalent to that of the human eye, is not ideal equipment for a photo-journalist. With a wide angle lens, such as my Nikon cameras are usually fitted with as I travel around Madras and its environs, I would have got a much better shot of those twelve big bullocks seen in my picture here today. I could have stood further back in the road so that the pair nearest the cart would have been more clearly seen.

Alas, as all photographers learn sooner or later, you seldom have the right camera or the right lens appropriate for the surprise occasion, and this one certainly was a surprise. In the forty years I have lived in Tamil Nadu I have never before or since seen more than two bullocks pulling a single cart, and here, on this early July morning in 1961, were no less than twelve of them straining to haul along the Avadi road a single cart bearing a tall crate. was told that it contained an electrical transformer, presumably shipped from abroad and landed in Madras harbour.

Since those days, the Heavy Electricals at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, has been established and no doubt such equipment can be obtained within the country, but at the time the TVS people, in association with Lucas and other foreign firms were establishing their new factories at Padi and had to import

When the Queen drives out of Buckingham Palace in London in the State Coach, on the most elaborate ceremonial occasions, the coach is pulled by four pairs of white horses, and a groom sits on one of each of the pairs. So it was with my six pairs of bullocks on the Avadi road, with the difference, as my photograph shows, that the 'grooms' faced backwards: I know now why.

The bullock cart drivers were delighted when I got out to photograph them, and perhaps in the excitement of the moment they were a little less cautious than they might have been. Just beyond the point where this picture was taken, they had to turn off the road to a deserted field, where the factory was to be built, and to get there they had to cross a shallow but wide ditch, on the far

Madras -**HARRY** MILLER'S

side of which were telegraph poles bearing wires that communicated with Bangalore. I knew those poles and wires bitterly and well, for, further along, the ugly things marched through my beautiful grounds and mango orchard at Thirumullaivayal, and for years I had been unsuccessfully trying to get them moved.

My new bullock-cart driver friends were not to know they

In spite of modern mechanisation, the day of the Indian bullock cart is by no means over. If you drive along the road from Mysore in Karnataka on the way to Ooty you will see bullock carts with solid wheels — places where they have not

Have you ever seen a cart pulled by SIX pairs of bulls? This picture, taken by HARRY MILLER near Padi, is from

reader who has.

Yet the scene shown in my

photograph cannot be unique,

for when I asked the drivers

why they were facing back-

wards not forwards they told me

that was always the custom

when more than one pair of

bullocks were used. So, evi-

dently, the use of multiple pairs

of bullocks was familiar to

thing as intelligent as that! So

you can see what they've done?

All day long our communica-

tions with Bangalore have been

broken down, and of course,

everyone has been blaming us.

where the fault was, anyway,

and when we get here what do

we find? Only that every single

line had been swept away by idi-

otic coolies with some machin-

dishonestly. Dreadful people,

said, absolutely dreadful. The

trouble caused by ignorant

people like that! I didn't tell

him it was probably all my fault.

I didn't mention that it might

well have been the excitement

of having their photographs

taken that caused my bullock-

cart drivers to overlook the

telegraph wires. I had a grudge

against the Telegraphs people

anyway, for not moving their

ugly poles and wires from my

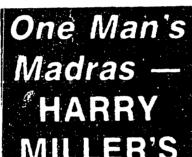
I didn't mention that either.

compound.

I tut-tutted sympathetically,

ery on a bullock cart!"

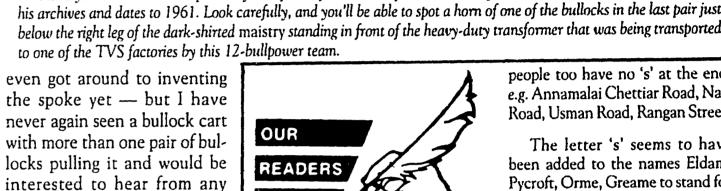
"It took us hours to discover



Nor does the story end there. Around six that evening on my way back home, I passed the same place to find a squad of telegraph department workmen busy repairing the broken telegraph wires. In charge was a young man of obvious seniority. stopped and asked him what had happened. "Some idiots this morning," he answered angrily. "Couldn't they have asked us? Couldn't they have notified the Department? Oh no, they couldn't be bothered to do any-

were doing me a favour when, with whoops and cries of fervour and encouragement, they turned the train of bullocks off the road, down the slope of the ditch and as fast as they could up the other side, hoping that their momentum would help drag up the heavy load more easily. It did, but they had not taken into account the height of the crate, which brought those telegraph wires crashing down in a clutter of crackling wires and snapping

The drivers were now thoroughly scared, thinking they had brought down electrical power lines, and were in grave danger of electrocution. I reassured them and picked up some of the wires to show they were harmless.



Who's a scholar?

WRITE

owe a reply to Messrs Anjaneyulu and Ranganathan. It is true that there have been scholar-statesmen in England and elsewhere. In fact, that is what I had myself said. The point I was making was about the claim to scholarship by those people. Those people will not go about addressing all kinds of conferences, telling people what they should do, etc. Scholarship is a whole-time profession; anyone making that claim should be a whole-time scholar. When Radhakrishnan was appointed as India's Ambassador to Soviet Russia, he made it a condition that for six months every year he would be allowed to go to the University in England where he was for many years a Professor. Nehru promptly accepted this suggestion.

Some other points. Scholarship is in some way different from learning and also from creativity. I am not suggesting that any one quality is superior to any other, and in fact all three — scholarship, learning and creativity - often overlap each other.

I think someone must try to define a scholar; I am not able to do that because I am myself not one.

> D.K. Oza 1 First Cross Street, Indira Nagar, Chennai - 600 020

Why the 'S'?

Quite a few streets in Madras City named after Englishmen (who, perhaps, were British administrators) are spelt with a final 's', - Eldams Road, Pycrofts Road, Ormes Road, Greames Road, for nstance.

Original records might show it these names are similar in form to James, Keats, Jenkins, Reynolds, Hopkins and so on. If these names are not spelt with 's' at the end in the records, the street names under reference should read Eldam Road, Pycroft Road etc. on the analogy of Montieth Road, Boag Road, Conran Smith Road, Warren Road etc. Streets named after local

people too have no 's' at the end, e.g. Annamalai Chettiar Road, Nair Road, Usman Road, Rangan Street.

The letter 's' seems to have been added to the names Eldam, Pycroft, Orme, Greame to stand for the sign of the apostrophe and 's'. (The apostrophe mark is often found missing on the name plates.) But 's carries the idea of belonging or possession. Eldam's property. however, is different in meaning from Eldam's Road. So why not drop the s, if it is an addition?

By the same token, Queen Mary's College and Pachaiappah's College should be Queen Mary College and Pachaiappah College, like Stanley (not Stanley's) Medical College, Alagappa College, Anna University, Mother Teresa University.

> S. Jagadisan 48, A, III Street, Tarachand Nagar, Chennai - 600 092.

Neglected pedestrians

t is heartening to learn that a **Citizens' Group in our city is highlighting the miserable plight of hapless pedestrians and bus passengers. Pedestrians are not at all taken into account by the authorities, particularly the Traffic Police in Chennai. Even at busy junctions, where zebra crossings are provided the constables ensure smooth flow of vehicles only, and pedestrians have to fend for themselves.

At almost all intersections, free left turns are allowed for vehicles and they move in a continuous stream, never caring to stop for pedestrians to cross. In Mumbai and Delhi, where there are more vehicles, all vehicular traffic is stopped allowing sufficient time for pedestrians to cross the road safely.

Women, children and senior citizens who walk on Chennai roads find this an extremely harrowing experience at present. Blaring of air horns also scares them. Pavements are not fit for walking. Let us fervently hope that the report in MM, Sept. 1, will receive the attention of the authorities con-

> K.M. Balagopalan 335/2 Galaxy Apartments Ann Nagar II Avenue Chennai 600 040.

I try is anxiously watching the market leader and pioneer, Chennai-based Sterling Holiday Resorts (India) Ltd., to see how it will manage its present predicament. It was Sterling Holiday which withstood the rigours of the market in the initial days and gained the investors' confidence in the industry when several of its ilk downed shutters. If Sterling Holiday now fails to meet the challenge facing it, there'll be an adverse impact on the entire industry, with investors becoming sceptical about the time share con-

From a Rs. 38 lakh negative networth and zero sales in 1986-87, Sterling Holiday's growth over the last decade is nothing but stupendous. With 11 operational resorts, the com-

> Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at

pany closed 1995-96 with sales of Rs.128.73 crore and a networth of Rs. 113.37 crore. Unfortunately, this once cashrich company today finds itself strapped for cash, with time share sales down. The result is a slowing down of all construction activity, which in turn will delay completion of eight resorts that are already in business and six new resorts, and the temporary shelving of a couple of other projects.

All these years, selling 60 per

cent in resorts under the time share concept and the balance 40 per cent let out on daily tariff basis (in other words, 100 per cent of the construction cost was collected in advance from the time share holders), it was always a win-win situation for the Chennai company. What, then, went wrong, leading to

P.N.Mohan, Managing Director, cites the general liquidity crisis in the economy, but other leisure experts feel that Sterling's problems have been due to not following the age-old business strategy of growthconsolidation-growth, instead always planning for grand expansion.

Sterling Holiday's expansion plans, without consolidation of existing activities, have started to take their toll. These plans include setting up a massive integrated sports-cum-resort complex in Greater NOIDA, near New Delhi. Spread ever 437 acres, the Rs.440 crore project, called Sterling Grand, will have two 18-hole golf links

residential apartments. The first phase of the project will have 500 time share apartments, a golf links, a sports club and a family centre. Sterling Crown (luxury time share priced at Rs.1.25 lakheach), meant for discerning corporates, is another high profile project underway. Concentration on both these appear to be at the expense of normal time share resorts, many of which are delayed. The sales team has also tended to concentrate on these projects rather than the

the Company some time last year, has also hurt. As Vice President (Marketing), he and his team had taken 200 time shares a year to 2000 a month!

THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE

the present cash crisis?

normal resorts. The departure of Ramesh Ramanathan, the President of

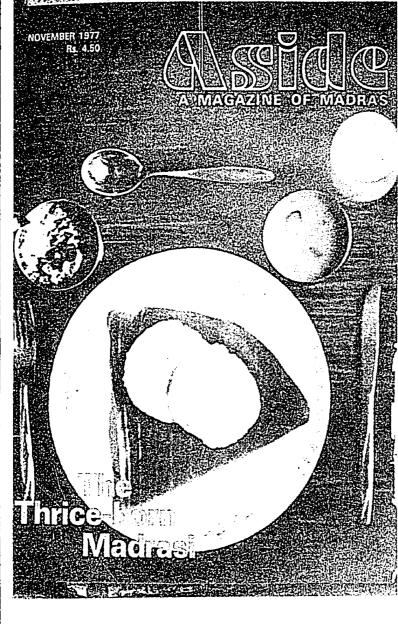
1997 issue. When Ramanathan was promoted as President, his concentration remained on marketing. Differences of opinion between him and Mohan, who gained total control of the company when R. Subramaniam and VN Pai decided to look after the Maxworth Group and Sterling Tree Magnum respectively, led to Ramanathan leaving Sterling Holiday. Since then, the slot of President has been lying vacant, except for a short interim, and Mohan, the promoter, has been doubling up as Managing

Other problems are rooted in the sales operations. According to reliable sources, most of Sterling's recent time share sales have been under the instalment scheme and several instalments are due on those. Given the present cash crunch the company is not able to cancel such bookings, refund the balance and scout for new parties, since that would involve cash outflow initially.

* * *

Also, with sales executives holding Sterling Holiday to ransom, by demanding greater incentives for collecting instalment dues and making sales, the company gave marching orders to scores of them and enlisted the services of individual agents. This, despite reducing the overheads, has disadvantages, particularly in commit-

To ease the pressure on it, Sterling Holiday has restructured itself. Its 'Heritage India' division — which builds resorts



Madras: communities here live in separate and sterilised compartments in benign "tolerance by exclusion". This prevents social tension. Unfortunately, it also prevents social interaction. Madras therefore does not have a distinctive ethos as a city, unlike Calcutta or Bombay or even Delhi. In Madras, it is the different communities that have flavour, not the city itelf. And no community dominates Madras.

From the outside, of course, Madras appears to be a unique cultural entity — the term Madrasi seems to mean something. But what? There was at one time a dominant Brahmin culture in Madras, but this is rapidly fading into the background, in the face of the changing socio-political

Madras needs to develop a new ethos out of its contemporary reality. Aside, hopefully, is a contribution towards that — to give the city an awareness of itself.

Ours is a quiet voice. An aside. We subscribe to no dogma of Positive Truth. Aside is an open magazine. All views are welcome. The only requirements are sensitivity and intelligence.

SITA ERALY

Feb. 1-15, 1997

It is sad that Aside's race is run, a little short of its 20th birthday. But the writing on the wall was there for several years, from when it stopped being 'A Magazine of Madras' and decided to compete in the southern, then national marketplace. The end came suddenly, in fact, after an issue had been readied for print. In retrospect, our NEW, that last cover, ironically, truly represented Finis'. And curiously, it was also a stage-managed one like our OLD, the first cover of Aside.

Vale, Aside. It was a good race that was run for a

— The Editor

THE OLD...

... & THE NEW

Our OLD and NEW this fortnight are something out of the ordinary. They are a tribute to a journal that called itself 'A Magazine of Madras' when it started publication in November 1977 and lost its way in seeking a national audience, leading to it closing shop with its January 15,

Your Editor, who was associated with Aside from its beginnings, remembers how Sita and Abraham Eraly struggled over that first cover, which featured Raghavendra Rao's photograph symbolising the lifestyle of 'The Thrice-born Madrasi'. They also struggled every day with what was the first of the city magazines in India, a journal focussing more closely on the local community than anything else around. When the magazine, supported till then by sympathetic local advertising, began to search for a wider audience, it lost its focus... and its days were numbered. But following its first footsteps emerged Madras Musings in 1991, almost a clone in content but not in format. What Sita Eraly wrote in the last two paragraphs of her first 'Letter from the Publisher' in Aside, graphs of her first 'Letter from the Publisher' in Aside, Volume 1, Number 1, Madras Musings is still trying to do, in part. But then as now, your Editor never agreed with much of the viewpoint expressed in her first two para-

As tribute to what Aside set out to be, we publish below that first 'Letter':

- (It is said of Madras that we are just a bloated village, not a city. In a sense this is true. Social fluidity, a chief characteristic of urban life, is not much evident in

in religious and historical places

and hotels catering exclusively

for foreign tourists — has been

formed into a separate com-

pany, Sterling Holiday Resorts

International Ltd. Its home

products division, manufactur-

ing dietary fibre supplements

and marketing orthopaedic

support systems, has become a

new company, Sterling Health

Care Ltd. Sterling Holiday will

now concentrate only on its

core business, viz., time share,

and golf and sports resort com-

changing the company's focus

drastically. I would like to make

the company the number one

integrated tourism corporate in

the country. We'll get there in

stages." Expanding on this he

says, "When we started the

Mohan says, "I am not



company back in 1984, the middle class didn't know of the holiday time share concept. When we succeeded in getting their attention, we decided to cater to the up-market segment and, so, we offered Sterling. Crown. Then we looked further afield and arrived at Sterling Grand, the NOIDA project. Investment in this will now be in

On the charge of change of focus (by entering the real estate business, the hotel business etc.), Mohan explains, "It is not a change in focus. The primary aim is to promote resorts. The construction of residential apartments is incidental. As regards the 400-room hotel in the NOIDA project, it will be our last priority. But in Coimbatore

we are building a 180-room three-star hotel at an outlay of Rs.30 crore. We have not stopped construction elsewhere. We are going slow on some projects till the liquidity position improves. Meanwhile, we are concentrating on selling plots in Mercara instead of resorts as orginally planned, to tide over the cash problem."

Leisure experts say that this is a temporary phase and things will improve, as the market for time share resorts has not saturated. On the contrary, it is likely to explode in the years to come, with the growth of an Indian middle class with disposable income. In fact, Sterling Holiday itself has plans to develop 30 resorts with over 5000 operational rooms by 2000 AD.

Restoration that never took place

C pencer's, founded in 1863, Owill, on July 1st this year, celebrate 100 years as a public limited company, Spencer and Company Ltd. In these 100 years it has suffered only two major mishaps. In 1944, the Bombay Dock explosion destroyed its godown there. And on Friday the 13th February 1981, 16 years ago this fortnight, its magnificent showroom, designed by N.R. Pogson and opened for business on December 2, 1895, was ravaged by

Spencer's reported the day after the disaster that the fire was contained more or less within the main hall of the showroom, that all other operations, including its factories and the Connemara Hotel, were "completely spared", that no employee was hurt and "no documents or records of any importance damaged" and that loss of stocks and damage to the building were fully covered by. insurance. From the very next morning, the staff of the depart-

Compiled 1 Staff Reporter

ment store worked day and night and performed "the incredible feat" of putting the Retail Department Store back into operation on the seventh day after the fire.

A Spencer's publication to mark the fact that "....some traditions cannot be burnt out" went on to record the tragedy in these words:

It was a perfectly normal evening for Spencer's. The usual late customer sauntered in just when the doors of the showroom were about to be closed. He was received and his requirements supplied — not emergency medicines, but a few tins of gulab jamuns. Not for a moment did he imagine that that was to be the last sale from this historic and ancient show-

No one knows for sure whether a Friday falling on the 13th of a month brings misfortune. The evening of Friday the 13th February 1981, however, did start on an ominous note. Around 7.00 p.m., an Indian Airlines flight with a full load of passengers took off from Madras to Calcutta. Minutes afterwards, the pilot discovered some snag in the undercarriage and decided to return and make

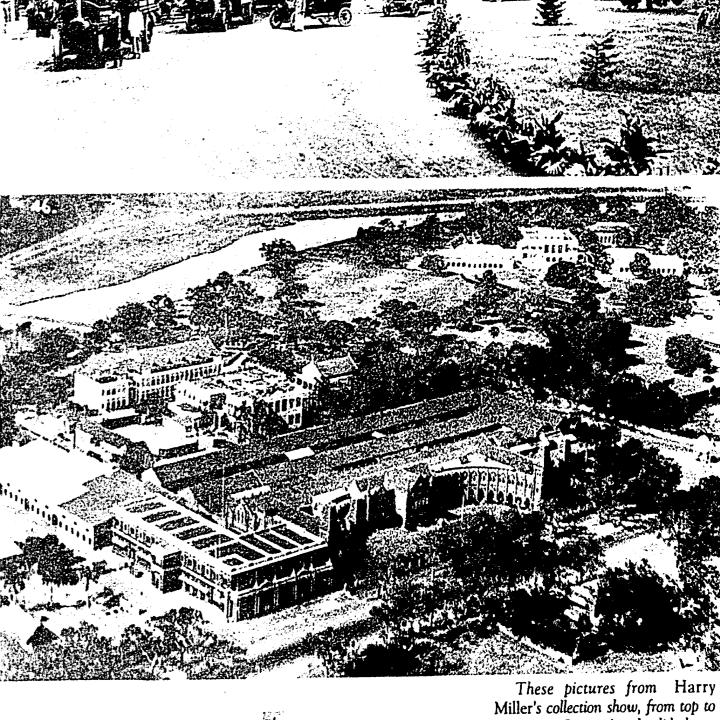
an emergency landing. Considering the risk of a crash landing, he circled over the city for over 3 1/2 hours to empty the fuel. A hundred-odd passengers sitting in the aircraft with bated breath and holding on for dear life were tensely watching another disaster taking place down below. What they saw was the second major fire in the entire history of Madras. The first one had destroyed a modern multistoried building years ago. The second one was ruthlessly devouring an 85-year-old building so dear to the citizens of Madras and so much a part of their lives.

The news of the fire spread indeed, faster than the fire. Within 15 to 30 minutes, vast crowds gathered around the building — more out of distress than out of curiosity. Hundreds of Spencer's employees had already come rushing. The assistant who had

rushed to the spot leaving his

wife just recovering from a major operation; the frenzied and bewildered look on the face of the aged employee who had to be restrained by four people from rushing into his office which was already in flames; the clerks who had recklessly run upstairs in a bid to save documents and who had to be forcibly brought down with the aid of the firemen; the supervisor who was pulled back at the last moment from under a collapsing roof which, however, did not spare a fireman; those who broke down and cried uncontrollably; those who kept their cool, doing their best to guide, salvage and protect, in the dark surroundings, the building, lit up now and then only by the leaping flames from the fire; and, lastly, the foreign guests in the Connemara Hotel next door, who, after being moved to a place of safety, were hugging and kissing the hotel staff for all their courtesy and attention in the face of a calamity hardly a few yards away; all this was just a part of the tremendous human drama which was unfolding in the harsh imelight of the fire.

For the showroom staff, the Spencer's building became a virtual home during the following six days. Working round the clock, they restored the Department Store — every bit of it from the pin to the refrigerator - and put it back at the service of the customers in exactly six days after the night of the fire. In a simple ceremony held



bottom: • Spencer's splendid showroom which was opened on Mount Road at the end of 1895; even though steam-powered vehicles are seen in this picture, the various motorised vans date the picture to around 1910. • The aerial view of Spencer's and its factories probably dates to the 1920s when flying had become more commonplace. Certainly it was taken before 1934-36, when work went on, on changing the face of the Connemara Hotel (seen, with its bachelor block, in the background in the picture). • The third picture by Harry Miller was taken the day after the disaster, and shows what state the building was left in by the fire of 13.2.1981.

employees in the showroom. Whilst the public of Madras fully shared and rejoiced in this achievement, a foreign passenger who had watched the fire from the troubled Calcutta flight on the 13th February 1981, came personally on the 20th to check for himself the incredible restoration of the department store. Spencer's carried a sign outside their premises saying — 'ONE WEEK WAS TOO LONG WITH-OUT YOU — OUR DEPART-MENT STORE BACK AT YOUR SERVICE NOW'.

Even before the embers had cooled, the management took a hard decision — a decision to restore the ancient showroom (Continued on P6)

in the early hours of the mornthe new department store was inaugurated by the two oldest ing of the 20th February 1981

puram and having spent her

early years in Kenya, Somalia.

England and our own

Panchgani, Rau, after marriage

and moving to Madras, took to

freelancing, copy-writing, and

playing the role of a model co-

ordinator for a while. But out of

her conviction that it is impor-

tant to educate as much as it is

Theatre was born.

to be educated. The Little

Although it costs Rs.1.10

lakh to conduct workshops at a

Corporation School for one

academic year, the task of find-

ing sponsors on a continuous

basis does not dampen Rau's

enthusiasm. The poor children

need the workshops as much as

the rich kids do (The Little

Theatre also runs workshops at

the Alliance Française, where

most of the children who enrol

↑ bout 160 children in

A Classes 7 and 8 of the

Corporation Middle School,

Chetput, are benefitting from

creative workshops organised

by The Little Theatre,

Chennai, every Wednesday.

The workshops, which started

the week after Pongal, will offer

the children instruction in

dance, drama, music, art, crafts,

Trustee, The Little Theatre,

feels that by working with these

children "we will be able to

identify the really talented and

academically brilliant and help

them to continue with their

studies. We hope that these

workshops will eventually help

In 1946, a small people's

movement in Gujarat — the

Kaira District Cooperative Milk

Producers' Union — paved the

way for India's most popular

dairy. Amul. The Amul India

Story (Tata McGraw Hill,

Rs 275) by Ruth Heredia is all

about Amul, and the men who

made it possible. Tribhuvandas

Parel. V Kurien and H M Dalya

spearheaded the movement

which made Sardar Vallabh-

bhai Patel's dream a reality.

Ruth's connection with Amul

dates back to the inauguration

of the dairy when she presented

a bouquet to Pandit Nehru, the

Indian Judiciary — A Tribute

(HarperCollins, Rs.395) by

Poornima Advani is a collec-

tion of articles based on inter-

views. The Foreword by the

noted advocate Ram Jethma-

lani and nine articles by out-

standing members of the Indian

legal system look at a variety of

subjects pertaining to the law.

* * *

proached a young lawyer. This

is the tale of the clash between

the lawyer and the powerful

companies. Harr took eight

* * *

years to finish this 'faction'.

chief guest.

Aysha Rau, Managing

and mime.

(Quizmaster V V RAMA-NAN's questions are from the fortnight January 1 to 15. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.)

1. Name the place in Tamil Nadu which may become only the third place in India to be called a 'World's best heritage site'.

2. Why is Vichaparu Ramakrishna Goud in the news?

3. Name the woman who is claiming that Pakistan's cricket heroturned-politician had fathered her child. Her claim is creating a stir in the ex-cricketer's country.

4. Who was elected the Congress Parliamentary Party chief on January 3rd?

5. Arvind Pandey is the new chairman of which public sector giant?

6. A miracle on a cinnamon bun in a coffeeshop in Tennessee, U.S.A., is drawing huge crowds. Whose image is seen on the folds of the baked wonder?

7. Name the former president of a SAARC country freed from prison after six years.

8. Baerenieiter Verlag, a German music publishing company, claims to have published the accurate and most original rendering of a Beethoven work. Name the opus. 9. Whose birthday will henceforth

10. What dubious distinction did tennis player Ignacio Truyol of Spain achieve?

be celebrated as Desh Prem Divas?

11. Purna Saikia died after a heart transplant by Assamese doctor Dhaniram Baruah. In what way has the surgery been controver-

12. On New Year's Day, Mumbai civic authorities introduced a civic code much needed in Indian cities. What?

13. In what way was January 15th significant to the Bombay Stock Exchange?

14. Recently, Wealthy 100, a book listing the richest Americans in the country's history, was released. Who tops the list and who is the only woman to make the grade?

15. A U.S. research team led by Indian Ramesh Narayan have discovered new evidence on 'Event Horizon', an intriguing phenomenon in astronomy. What?

* * *

16. What was special about certain buses introduced on PTC routes No. 18 and A18?

17. India's biggest-ever pop festival was held in the City recently. What was it called?

18. Who is the first recipient of the Chennai-based Anubhav Group's 'Environmentalist of the Year' award?

19. The 1997 Thiruvalluvar Award has been given to ...?

20. Name the four bus stops on Anna Salai where the queue system has been introduced.

(Answers on p.7)

Advertising must play fair with consumers

Have you seen the fifth Anniversary issue of Business Today (January 7-21)? The 300-plus-page glossy issue was sold at only Rs.10. Its theme was 'Managing customer value'. "The customer is queen. Finally," says Publisher-Editor Aroon Purie. That was the point that ASCI (the Advertising Standards Council of India)

and FEDCOT (the Federation

EGG PAKODA CURRY

(serves 6)

3 or 4 potatoes (medium size)

2 tbs cornflour

2 tbs thick curd

2 tbs thick cream

3 tbs oil or ghee

3 green chillies

2 tomatoes

 1^{1} tsp salt

2 onions

Method

keep aside.

2 tbs coriander leaves

1 tsp chopped ginger

1 tsp chopped garlic

1/, tsp garam masala powder

Boil potatoes and peel them.

Chop all vegetables. Grind into a

fine paste ginger, garlic, onion,

tomatoes, together with the

chilli, turmeric and garam masala

powders. Mash potatoes and mix

into it the egg yolks and whites,

two chopped chillies, one table-

spoon coriander leaves and half

teaspoon salt. Add cornflour and

knead into a smooth dough. Rol

into small balls, deep fry in oil till

golden brown in colour - and

kadai, add the ground masala and

the remaining green chillies and

fry till the oil starts floating on

top of the masala. Add curd little

by little, frying all the time, till

well incorporated. Pour in 1/, cup

of water and 3/2 teaspoon of salt

and simmer till the gravy is thick.

Add the pakodas, coriander

leaves and beaten cream. Simmer

for a couple of minutes. Serve

CHICKEN MANCHURIAN

(serves 6)

500 g boneless chicken pieces

10 flakes garlic

4 green chillies

11/2 tbs maida

1 tsp cornflour

3/, tsp salt

Method

Keep aside.

l the tomato sauce

', tsp pepper powder

2 drops red food colouring

Mix chicken pieces, food

colouring, salt, egg, pepper pow-

der and maida together. Deep fry

in plenty of oil, like pakodas, till

crisp and golden brown in colour.

Chop garlic and green chillies

into small bits. Heat the two

tablespoons of oil in a pan, add

tsp soya sauce

Pinch ajinamoto

1 egg

2 tbs oil

hot, with rice or rotis.

Heat 3 ths oil or ghee in a

1/2 tsp turmeric powder

1 tsp chilli powder

of Consumer Organisation of Tamil Nadu) were trying to emphasise in their recent workshop in the City on the theme 'Self-regulation in Advertising

R Desikan, consumer activist and chairman, FEDCOT, says this was an attempt to begin an interaction between trade organisations and consumer organisations which

ooking

Usha Bail

the garlic and green chillies and

fry till light gold in colour. Add

the fried chicken pieces, tomato

sauce and aiinamoto and fry for a

few minutes. Mix cornflour with

a tablespoon of water, add it to

the chicken, and fry till dry. Serve

CHICKEN BADAMI

(serves 6)

500 g boneless chicken pieces

1 tsp ginger-garlic paste

1 tsp chilli powder

/, tsp saffron

10 cashewnuts

1 slit green chilli

hot on tooth picks.

4 tbs ghee

1¹/₄ tsp salt

have traditionally viewed each other as antagonists. Consumer organisations help the trade to improve their quality; "litigation acts as a catalyst and is not to make them uncomfortable".

The workshop saw some lively debates, like the one between Amit Sarkar of the Tobacco Institute of India and U N R Rao, an advocate whose mission is running an anti-

Method

Peel almonds, chop half of them into small pieces, and keep aside. Grind the remaining al monds and cashewnuts into a smooth paste.

Beat curd, mix in chicken pieces, ginger-garlic paste, half teaspoon salt and chilli powder. Marinade for two hours. Fry the chicken and its marinade in two tablespoons of ghee in a kadai, till dry and well-roasted.

Heat the remaining two tablespoons of ghee, the chopped onion and green chilli and fry till light gold in colour. Add the almond and cashewnut paste and fry well. Add the remaining 3/ teaspoon of salt, 1/2 cup of water and the chicken pieces. Simmer till the chicken is well-cooked and the gravy thick. Add saffron soaked in a tablespoon of milk and beaten cream. Simmer for a few minute. Serve hot, garnished with chopped almonds.

RESTORATION...

(Continued from Page 5)

to its former appearance in all its glory and detail. In a way it was the Divine Will also, because the fire had miraculously left intact the entire facade of the building, with its symmetrical wings curving out on either side, in all their beauty and elegance. Architects were immediately put on this gigantic project. Several hundreds of photographs were taken of the remnant relics. Other photographs taken from time to time were also feverishly collected. Plans are being drawn up expe-

(Continued from Page 1)

form the Trust of events, poli-

cies, implementations of Gov-

ernment schemes as well as re-

actions at the grassroots level.

The first Assembly members

have been drawn from

FEDCOT and the Makkal

The Catalyst Trust, the

Cabinet of Sevakas and the

Citizens' Assembly will remain

strictly non-political and secu-

lar, but will try to influence

Government policy and, when

Sakthi Iyakkam.

ditiously and with a careful eye for details. A citizens' committee is being formed to assist not only in the restoration of the Spencer's showroom, but also to suggest ways and means of averting any damage to other buildings in Madras as old and historic. It is expected now that the work on this project of Spencer's will commence before the year ends.

Sadly, that dream never came true. Perhaps the answer to why it didn't may be told one day.

necessary, ensure that its views

are carried onto the floors of

The Trustees include

Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali,

the Prince of Arcot (Chair-

man); R. Desikan; K. Ravin-

dran, former Director General

of Police, Tamil Nadu (Trea-

surer); Dr. S.Krishnaswamy,

documentary and TV-film pro-

ducer-director (Spokesman)

N.L. Rajah, Advocate (Secre-

the Assembly.

• by V.R. DEVIKA

Feb. 1-15, 1997

smoking campaign. Amit Sarkar tried to show that there is very little connection between ads and new smokers. Everyone disagreed; when machismo and high-flying status is associated with smoking in ads, young people are natually tempted to smoke. There were also 'touchy' moments, especially with Henri Tiphagne, lawyer and general secretary of FEDCOT, who became very

K G Rama of Stella Maris dents and everyone had said it commerce students felt it was a clever way of showing the

the call of the hour, as any control might mean hindrance to self-expression and creativity. N Murali (of The Hindu) pointed out that surrogate advertisements, especially for liquor, were backdoor sales

sumer is being increasingly spoilt with choice and can no longer be fooled by advertisements that entice and create a need where there is none.

College spoke about obscenity in advertisements. She had shown a shoe ad, which showed the knees of a young woman, to 200-plus professors and stuwas not acceptable at all. But

Geetha Ramaseshan, the advocate, felt self-regulation was

Can any event to do with advertising in Chennai do without R K Swamy? He was given an award by ASCI, but his dominating personality was missed; he was away at the Uppiliappan Temple. His son, who received the award on his behalf, said while it was bad news that R K Swamy was not there to receive the award, it was good news that everyone was spared a long speech of ac-

"ASCI is a toothless lion and cannot order anyone to remove an advertisment," agrees R Desikan, "but its views are respected by Industry. And," adds Desikan, "FICCI ASSOCHAM and CII have begun to view consumer groups as friendly groups now, which can only be a good sign. This trend must continue."

After all, the smart con-

tary); Dr. Easo John, manage-

ment consultant; Mrs. Lakshmi

Krishnamurthy, Chairman of

the Sathyamurti Foundation;

Ms. Nirmala Lakshmanan,

Deputy Editor of The Hindu;

Dr. A.L. Mudaliar, Chairman

of companies; S.S. Narayanan,

Regional Chairman of the

Khadi and Village Industries

Commission; and B.S. Ragha-

van, formerly an adviser to the

United Nations and Chief Sec-

retary, Government of Tripura.

onathan Harr's A Civil Action (Arrow, UK £2.95) is the true story of one of the most bitter battles fought in American legal history. Several fami-'Cabinet' in search... lies, who believed they had been poisoned by toxic wastes dumped by two companies, ap-

> India's best short stories pub-Llished in 1995-96, drawn from 11 languages, have been put together in the sixth volume of Katha Prize Stories (Katha, Rs 150). A muchawaited annual publication,

this year's collection has stories

by N S Madhavan, P Lankesh, Priya Tendulkar and P Vatsala, among others. Many of the stories reflect the social, political and cultural upheaval in the country.

and make a better life for them-

selves." Indeed, Rau's team pro-

vides ample motivation to the

students of not only Classes 7

and 8, but also Class 9 of the

Corporation School — the best

boy and girl students can expect

to have free education right

upto college, the costs borne by

The Little Theatre.

by Sashi Nair

Cour gruesome murders are L'committed on a college campus and Sara Morgan, a new graduate student, finds herself caught in the centre of the shocking events that occur in Superstitious (HarperCollins, UK £3.20) by R L Stine. The author is the most successful writer of children's horror stories in the US. His horror series, 'Goosebumps', has prompted children in the US to get back into the reading habit. The series has just recently been launched in India.

D anging from Alakwa soci-Lety and the Aztec civilisation to the Yoruba tribe and Zydeco music, The Dictionary of Global Culture (Knopf, \$29.75) provides information from across the globe. Edited by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., this compilation has more the 1,200 entries on a wide variety of topics, such as philosophy, literature, religious customs and personalities.

* * * Aartin Mayer's The Bank-VLers – The Next Generation (Dutton, \$23.95) is an updated version of his earlier novel, The Bankers, written 20 years ago. The focal point of any economy, banks have now become a major determining factor for businesses. In this book, Mayer looks at the dramatic changes in the banking industry with the advent of computers and the Internet.

Savitha Padmanabhan

To slum children, come from some of the elite with love homes in Chennai), she feels. Rau's deep feeling for the

underprivileged prompted The Little Theatre to present the dress rehearsal of its annual pantomime — it was Snow White and the Travelling Circus this year — to Corporation schoolchildren, whom the Commissioner of Corporation had very kindly 'bussed' to and from the venue. Free showings, ing trained by the Spastics Society of India and residents of Little Sisters of the Poor. The

emulate. And there's no greater joy for her than what she finds in the eyes of the children who wait for her team every Wednesday afternoon.

with guitarists Sudhin Prabha-

kar and Roshan Daniel, and

Prem Joseph drumming his

heart out. The very fanciful

make-up was done by Selvi

Rao, Anu Sethi and Harneet

Comparisons are odious, but

I certainly missed the fantastic

effects, underwater imagery and

attractive gimmickry of The

Little Mermaid. The lyrics too

could have done with a brush-

up, but the inclusion of a popu-

lar Tamil number was just the

right touch. All in all, it was a

delightful evening's entertain-

ment by children for children.

CHILDREN BRING JOY TO CHILDREN a creative high at the piano

It would seem Aysha Rau's ■ Christmas Pantomime has come to stay. Last December's Snow White and The Travelling Circus, which was presented, scripted and produced by Aysha Ray of The Little Theatre and directed by Alex, was delightful entertainment for all the family, with even the toddlers giggling hysterically at the antics of Hans Kaushik as Queen Ursla, Freddy Koikaran as Freddy the Food, and each of the seven dwarfs. The circus played as big a

role as Snow White and the dwarfs. The concept of using children as circus animals was brilliant and their costumes, by Megan Utley, were superb. Giving them a ringside view (they sat in the first row of Museum Theatre's ring when they were not on stage) kept them in view and out of mischief. It was the little acrobats, however, who were the darlings of the audiences, with their nimble cartwheels and somersaults. Suresh and Indira as Jack and Jill "Keepers of the Magic Mirror on the Wall", performed with verve, their half-painted faces and stiff movements enhancing their act. And the dwarfs were a delightful bunch.

The music was led by the talented young Anil Srinivasan on

Aysha Rau of were also held for children be-The Little Theatre The Little Theatre was formed in May 1991 by the old-age home run by the Avsha Rau and a few friends. She believed that the educaproceeds from the ticket sales tional system was too stressful for the three scheduled shows, for youngsters and that they needed activities which would all sponsored, are to go towards allow them to air and develop running the workshops at the their creative talents. And Corporation School and on what better way to achieve this taking the children on excurthan by participating in workshops conducted by profes-Bringing joy to 160 children sionals in dance, drama, art, might be just a drop in the crafts, mime, music, pottery, ocean, as it were. But Rau has puppetry, magic, 3-D projects set an example for others to

The workshops are held at the Alliance Française on College Road. The children are also taken on excursions to interesting places.

Although in its first year, the Little Theatre enrolled 90 children in the 5-14 year age group as members, the membership was pruned to 60 from the second year as it was found that work with smaller numbers was more productive.

Making

a child's

life less

stressful

One of the highlights of the Chennai year is the pantomime show during the Christmas season nowadays. Presenting for children the traditional battle between the good and the bad, the British Council. with Aysha actively involved, staged Jack and The Beanstalk in 1991, Sleeping Beauty in 1992, Pinocchio in 1993, and Alladin, with Cinderella, in 1994. The Little Theatre then took over and staged The Little Mermaid in 1995, and last year Snow White and the Travelling Circus in which the hunter sold Snow White to a travelling cir-

The Little Theatre has now expanded its activities and helps underprivileged chil-

Rita Saldhana

1. The Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary in the Anamalai hills: 2. He claims to have married Priyanka Gandhi five years ago; 3. Sita White, a British heiress; 4. Sitaram Kesri; 5. SAIL; 6. Mother Teresa; 7. Md. Ershad of Bangladesh; 8. The 9th Symphony; 9. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose; 10. The first tennis star to be barred from competition for 'doping'; 11. He was reportedly given a pig's heart; 12. Spitting, smoking and throwing garbage in public places is a pun-

ishable offence; 13. It recorded the largest turnover for a day, a whopping Rs.1,129 crore; 14. John D. Rockfeller and Hetty Green respectively; 15. A definite clue on black holes. Event Horizon 'is' in effect the rim of a black hole.

16. They are double-decker and vestibule buses respectively; 17. 'Pop Pourri'; 18. Justice Kuldip Singh; 19. Dr. K. Mohanarasu of Madras University; 20. Simpson's, SIET, DMS and Saidapet.

* * *

Answers to Quiz

Regatta time again

The 130-year-old Madras Boat Club (MBC) hosts the 56th annual Amateur Rowing Association of the East (ARAE) Regatta from February 15th on the Adyar River. The MBC is one of the founder members of the ARAE, which came into being in 1933 and has a membership of 14 clubs from Karachi to Hong Kong.

The Calcutta Rowing Club, started in 1858, is the oldest rowing club east of Suez. In 1867, a few British rowing enthusiasts started the Madras Boat Club. At that time, the club used the CooumRiver and the Long Tank in Teynampet (where T' Nagar has now developed). Later, a regatta was held on the Adyar River and the Club started seriously considering the benefits of a move. In 1892, the Club shifted to its present location on the north bank of the Adyar River but racing alternated between the Long Tank and the Adyar River till 1904 when it was finally decided that the latter was a better venue. This area may officially be known as Raja Annamalaipuram, but to most people in Chennai it is the 'Boat Club Area'.

According to the earliest records of the club available — they date to 1874-1875 — there were at the time 32 Rowing Members and 24 Non-Rowing Members. Today, the strength of the club is 764; of these, 316 are Rowing Members.

In 1960, a vital decision was taken by the Club committee to admit Student Members. It is these Student Members who now keep racing alive in the Club and contribute substantially to its crews selected for wider competition.

During the Club centenary year, its crews made 1967 memorable by winning the Willingdon Trophy and the Hooghly Cup. The Willington Trophy is a challenge trophy for the 'Coxed Four Oared' race and is named after the nen Viceroy, the Earl of Willingdon, who presented it to the ARAE in 1935. The Hooghly Cup is a challenge cup for the same 'Coxed Four Oars' event, but is an additional cup for the overall team championships and was presented to the ARAE in 1935 by the Calcutta Rowing Club, though it had been instituted as early as 1872. The MBC has been figuring in the Hooghly Cup events right from 1872, the first race for the cup; it lost in the finals that year, but won the cup under the new rules in 1956, thus figuring in both its inaugural presentations.

However, 1973 was the MBC's most successful year. It was undefeated in all the interclub rowing events, winning the Madras-Colombo Challenge Trophy, the Ladies' Fours, the Willingdon Trophy, the Hooghly Cup, the Venables Bowl and, for the first time in its history, the Macklin Sculls.

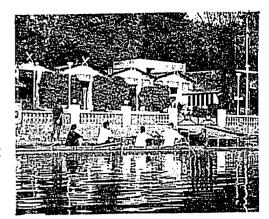
The Venables Bowl is a trophy for 'Paired Oars' and was presented in 1935 by A.V. Venables, then Chairman of the ARAE. That same year L.H. Macklin of the Calcutta Rowing Club presented the sculling trophy named after him. Macklin was the visionary who, dreaming of an Eastern Henley, conceived in 1929 the idea of an Amateur Rowing Association of the East.

This year, 11 clubs are taking part in the regatta. They are the Karachi Boat Club, Madras Boat Club, Bengal Rowing Club, Lake Club (Calcutta), Colombo Rowing Club, Trishna (Military Engineering, Ban-

galore), College of Military Engineering, Pune, Government Polytechnic Boat Club, Pune, College of Engineering, Pune, Royal Connaught Boat Club, Pune and Calcutta Rowing Club. There are to be five events — the Sculls, Coxed Four Oared, Coxless Four, Pairs, and the Ladies' Four. (Note: When you row, you are using a single oar grasped with both hands, when you scull you use two oars, one in each hand, and the cox is a kind of coach who helps you maintain a rowing rhythm).

Ever since the Asian Games in 1982, rowing has become a very competitive sport in India. Nowadays all the trophies are cornered by the clubs that have members of the Armed Forces representing them. These members from the Services put in long hours of practice, something amateurs like those representing the Madras Boat Club, cannot. So no one at the MBC is very hopeful of trophies this year. But trophies or not, the MBC membership will be there at the Club in their numbers to enjoy the sport and the club facilities.

The Madras Boat Club has been keeping pace with the



changing times. The old buildings of the Club have been replaced with new, more spacious ones. In 1966, the bar and clubhouse were completed. In the air-conditioned Dining Hall, old race records and trophies are to be seen on the walls. One name that figures often in the early records is F.H. Wilson, who won the Challenge Sculls in Madras year after year from 1901 to 1909. A Club boat is named after Wilson. Later, when Indians started taking part in the sport, names like Prabhakar Rao and Sanyal began to figure regularly in the records.

Since 1974, the Madras Boat Club has started building boats. The first boats manufactured were three coxless shell pairs and one shell scull. It has also built two junior fours for the Secunderabad Sailing Club. The MBC has also supplied boats to Singapore. But it is still looking for an international champion of the 90s.

Dhanya Gopinath

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