

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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Two young Danes suggest

A parallel megacity

Casper and Rasmus, two senior students of architecture and town planning from Denmark, who have been in Chennai for about 2½ months, exploring the City and neighbouring areas on a motor cycle, recently presented to a gathering of citizens a plan for a better Chennai. The only way is to plan and build an entirely new city of the scale of Chennai close enough to act as a real counter magnet, they advocated.

Their thesis was simple. Chennai, because of its population growth has a myriad problems in spite of years of investment in urban infrastructure. The City has always been chasing problems. The traditional way of planning has not helped us in coping with these problems, while the city has been expanding in its area. If we continue to address the situation in the same way, the new development will cover the entire metropolitan area in the next two decades, severely damaging the valuable natural elements and resources, such as river courses, the innumerable irrigation tanks and wet lands, good quality agricultural lands, ground water aquifers and beaches, to name but a few.

In terms of quality of life and environment, we will end up with highly polluted rivers and water bodies, severe air pollution and a proliferation of slums. Enormous investments will be required — with no direct financial returns — even to marginally improve these conditions.

The idea of building small satellite towns like Maraimalainagar has failed. They have been too small to make any impact. So, why not build a

new megacity nearby? Conceived and executed on the right lines, this city will provide opportunities to generate high economic returns and yet promote sustainable development. With the globalisation of the economy, there can be no dearth of foreign capital and improved technology.

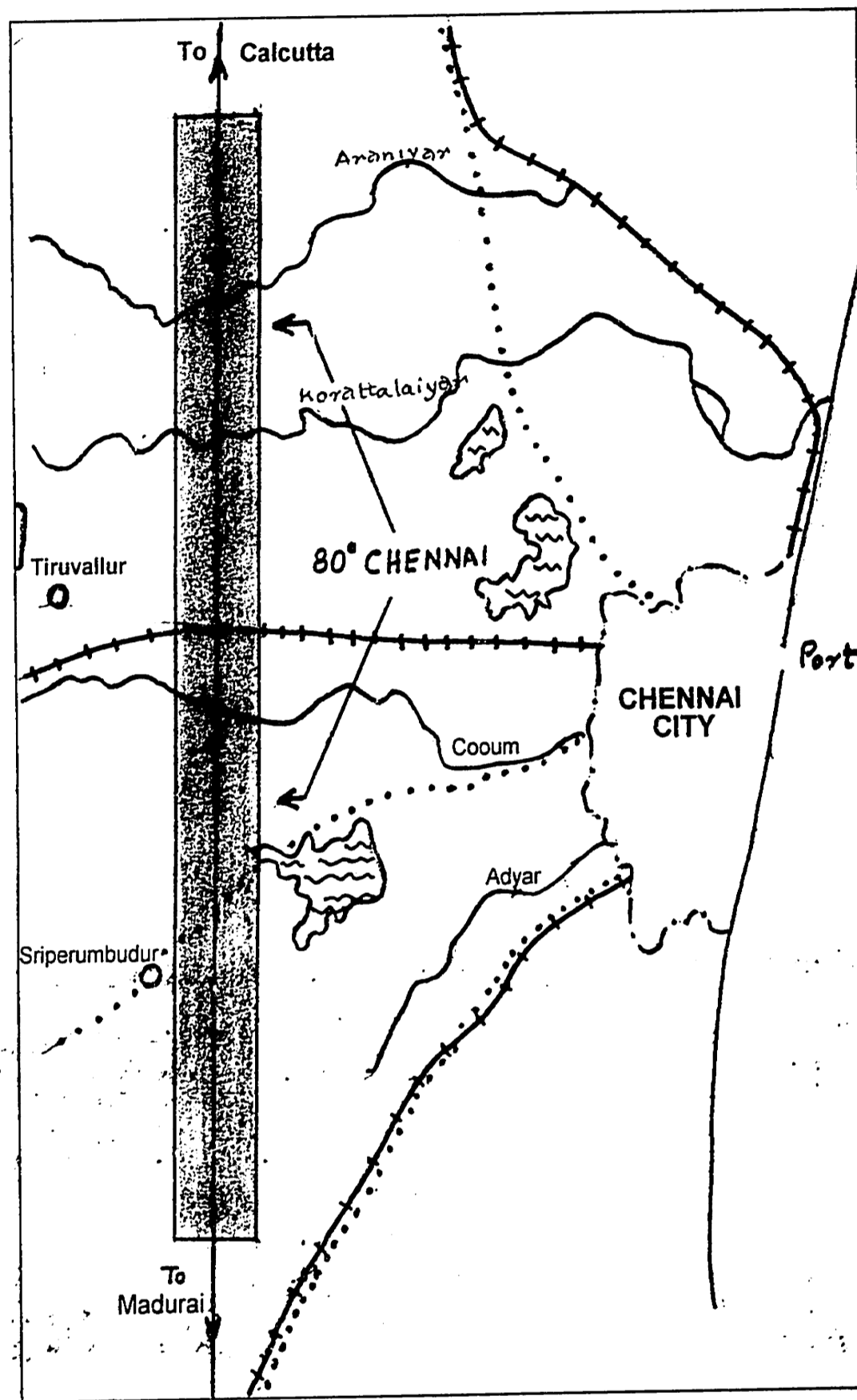
Their idea for a new Chennai of 10 million people in the next few decades is straightforward. The new city will straddle a high intensity traffic corridor with rapid rail and road facilities. This corridor will also house other major utilities such as power, telephone and water lines. This corridor will be on the 80 degree longitude. To give it a global image, call this 'Chennai 80'.

The corridor connecting the rail-lines from the south and north near Chengalpattu and Gummidipoondi (see sketch), will be about 60 km long with one sq. km blocks, three deep on each side, giving the City an extent of 360 sq.km, which is less than the area of the present Chennai urban agglomeration.

The blocks close to the traffic corridor should be developed at very high densities, say in 30-40 storey blocks with high Floor Area Ratios. The blocks next to these laterally should be developed at high densities in 4-20 storey blocks.

The last line of blocks should be developed as low-rise high density areas with institutional areas within them. These blocks will house colleges, research and vocational institutions, appropriate manufacturing plants, waste recycling plants and high intensity agriculture, horticulture, floriculture,

(Continued on page 4)



The location of the parallel megacity that two young Danes have suggested

Chennai looks at the Surat way...

(By A Special Correspondent)

Is Chennai planning to go the Surat way and challenge it for the title of "the cleanest city in India"? That plans are underway to this end, was stated at a recent workshop in the City targeted at creating a better Chennai.

A senior Corporation official announced that he had been deputed by the Mayor to study Surat's magic formula and his suggestions were with His Worship.

Mayor Stalin, he stated, was determined to make Chennai as clean as Surat, if not cleaner. Hear! Hear! But when is the action to begin?

Miracle of Surat possible here

Your Worship,

I have three specific suggestions for improving Chennai. My first suggestion is for better traffic movement. I have just come from Surat, "Rao's wonder city", and, believe me, it is a miracle. The traffic moves much better. The once-plague-ridden city is much cleaner. Can't you, sir, get TVS and Spencers to build pedestrian flyovers in return for ad space at Spencer and TVS to ease the four-lane traffic on Anna Salai?

Pedestrian lanes all over the city will make life better for both the people and the motorists. Another small change that will smoothen traffic is indented bus stops. At least, bus stops must be pushed back from the road. A common sight on your

roads is two buses standing in a row blocking all traffic. Is the road supposed to be the bus stop?

The erstwhile AIADMK regime's major contribution to Chennai was the beautification, lighting up and cleaning of Marina Beach. Can't the Corporation maintain better this haven for the masses? Perhaps you could go a step further and hand over dilapidated children's playgrounds to the private sector to be maintained. That way, the common man will be assured, no matter which government comes, that the fishermen do not encroach and spoil what is one of the finest, straightest beaches in the world.

When I was at the Gold Flake Open, I couldn't help but

admire the tennis stadium. The football stadium and swimming pool are world class and definitely among the positive things that the erstwhile C.M. achieved. Please, your worship, don't neglect the stadia, but have trained in them the best talent of Chennai. Also bring world class tournaments to these venues.

As one who has seen the transformation of a city like Surat, I believe that with the right kind of will, the right kind of changes are possible. Your Worship, you can make those changes.

Yours truly,

Anita Nanavati Varghese
104 Marshalls Road,
Egmore, Chennai 600 008.

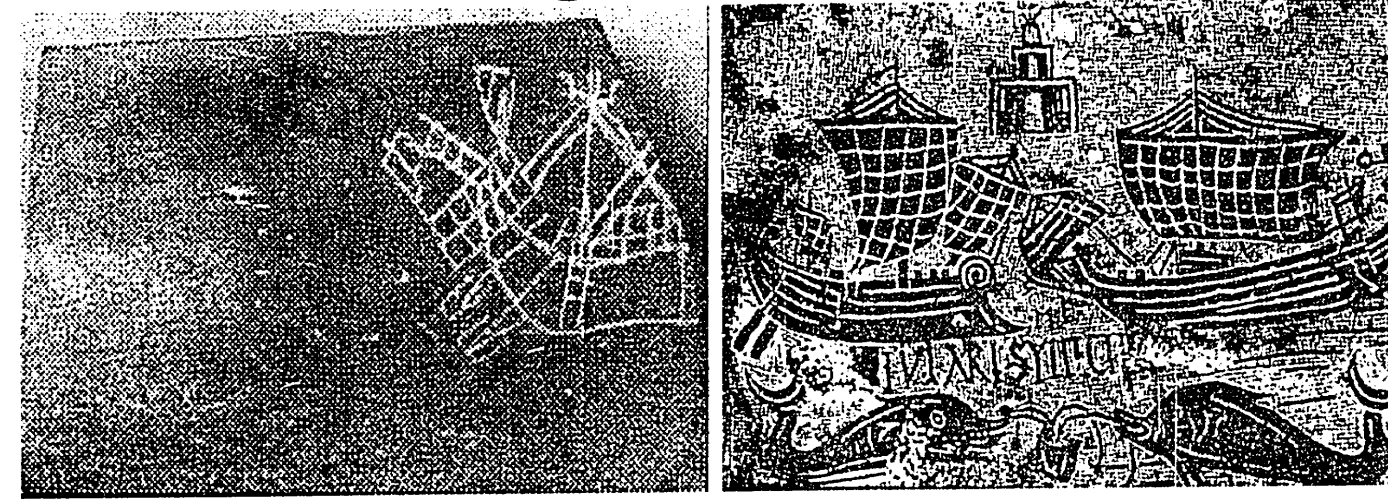
Some thinking on a heritage act

Several conservationists and heritage enthusiasts have been meeting in Delhi from time to time over the past year and have come up with a 'Draft Regulation for Conservation of Heritage Buildings, Heritage Precincts and Natural Features Within Municipal Areas/Other Legally Designated Urban Areas'. Since for some reason this exercise was conducted by the Ministry of Environment it was only natural that Dr Nanditha Krishna of the C P R Environmental Education Centre should represent Madras. And, in several conversations he has had with her, *The Man From Madras Musings* has found her committed to getting urban authorities to introduce a Heritage Act, either this one as modified or one they'd like to draw up.

To discuss the draft Act, Dr Nanditha had organised an all-day workshop recently and, at the end of it, she hoped to submit the Act with the suggested modifications, if any, both to the Ministry of Environment as well as to local authorities in the State who could find ways and means to take it from there. MMM regretted to note the total absence of architects and builders, as well as an almost total absence of NGOs and individuals interested in conservation and our heritage. Only officialdom, past and present, as usual, and a few environmentalists were present. All the same, Dr Nanditha must have been pleased at the numbers present if she had paused a while to look back on those days nearly 25 years ago when what was possibly the country's first conservation-oriented NGO, EPOCH, was born. At that time, apart from Dr Nanditha, the only others present would be Balasubramanian and Dattatri of the MMDA, Prof. Raj of the School of Architecture, and Abraham Eraly and MMM of *Aside*. They were great fun those sessions and all of us improved our knowledge, but we can't say we got much done. It was, however, a beginning, especially when we got the public interested in the threat to Moore Market. The fire appeared to put EPOCH out of existence as well!

At the recent meeting, Ms Jayanthi, Vice-Chairman, CMDA, was in the Chair — and she showed a great deal of interest in the Act; she looked forward to receiving the final draft after the inputs from various parts of the country had been collated at the Ministry and discussed. She felt that including the provisions of this Heritage Act in the State's Town and Country Planning Act was entirely possible. She pointed out that the MMDA had already listed in the master plan 42 buildings that needed to be conserved and saw no reason why, after debate, more could not be protected.

The act, as drawn up, MMM was pleased to note, provided for



The graffiti of a ship found in an archaeological 'dig' in Tamil Nadu (left) and its possible Roman model as shown in an ancient Roman mosaic

the convening of an expert committee to draw up a list of man-made and natural urban features that needed to be conserved, and provided for advertising this list so that debate, if any, may be entered into before any building, precinct or natural feature is deemed protected as a bit of our heritage. But even before the Act has been formalised, the arguments have started, with those claiming to be devil's advocates in the forefront.

As usual, the two major points made were the likely subjectivity in arriving at any list of buildings, precincts and natural resources to be protected, and that these, when protected, would be a hurdle in the way of

progress. There are no real answers to these posers but history has shown that a country without a heritage has not progressed very far.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

progress. There are no real answers to these posers but history has shown that a country without a heritage has not progressed very far.

Police image

The image of the Police is bad, candidly admitted C V Narasimhan, veteran police officer who had in his time headed the State Police force and the national CBI. But there were likely to be more good eggs than bad eggs in most police baskets, he told the Madras Book Club. Despite that, the question of police image was a serious one and a beginning on improving its tarnished image could be made only if the National Police Commission's report, which has been gathering dust for years, is implemented, he felt.

In an entertaining talk, Narasimhan narrated several of the tales he had included in his recently released book, *The Third Eye*, published in Tamil, and pointed out the moral to be drawn from each. *The Man From Madras Musings'* favourite story from among those Narasimhan retold was 'The Case of the 12" Letter-Opener'. It occurred during the Emergency, when every minion of the law felt taller than ten feet. This particular constable at Delhi Airport got an English scientist in transit to Pakistan to open his hand-luggage. And, lo and behold, there, in it, was a 12-inch

sword, sharp enough to be lethal. The law says it is a criminal offence to possess a knife longer than ten inches! All the visitor's pleas that it was only a paper-knife, that he had bought it in a State tourism emporium during a stopover in Calcutta, and that, here, there's a State government bill, did not move the policeman who bundled the British scientist into a van, took him to the *thana* lock-up and kept him there overnight before producing him in court the next morning. In court, he was found guilty, his paper-knife was confiscated and he was forced to pay a fine in lieu of imprisonment.

Back in England, he wrote a strong letter on Indian boorish-

ness to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who immediately asked Narasimhan to look into it. Narasimhan duly informed her that the Indian Police were at fault and we should apologise. She told him to draft the letter and take all necessary action in the case. And the action he took was to get the Delhi Police to appeal the sentence and, thereby, have both sentence and record cancelled. He then had the letter-opener brought to him and he handed it over with his draft apology to the Prime Minister. She didn't change a word, had it typed for her signature and instructed that both letter and paper-knife should be personally delivered to the scientist by a senior diplomat from the High Commission in the UK with an expression of the Prime Minister's apologies.

That the Police at times don't act like boors was the lesson MMM drew from that droll narration. Hurray!

Tamil ships

What did ancient Chola, Chera and Pandya ships which crossed the ocean look like, is a question *The Man From Madras Musings* has asked in this column several times, not having found any sculptural representation anywhere in India. Then the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology came up with a 'find' in Alagankulam: a "rouletted sherds" with a graffiti

concludes, "The graffiti may well be a portrayal of one such ship that an artist saw in an India port".

So that leaves MMM with no picture still of an ancient Tamil ship and the Department still looking for proof of what the graffiti they found was. Which only goes to show how we have erased our past by valuing history so little.

French interest

Paying more interest to our history and archaeology is the EFEO Centre for History and Archaeology, Pondicherry, supported by the French Government and educational institutions and museums. Its work in Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram in cooperation with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, was featured in *Madras Musings* not so long ago.

The Man from Madras Musings is pleased to hear that the Centre's attention now is on the "Senji fortifications and city". The walls of the Gingee Fort, spread over several hills, the fortifications within and the Fort's buildings are, in MMM's view, part of what was the finest fort in the South, having received architectural contributions from several Indian 'nations' and a few countries across the seas. Certainly this fort deserves better at our hands, but since we've done so little, MMM

is thankful the French might at least leave us a pictorial record. Other projects the centre is working on are *agharams* in the Kaveri delta and the influence of colonial and Tamil houses on each other in Pondicherry. May there be many more such projects. Can't we, in this strain, also get the Portuguese interested in San Thomé and the Dutch in Pulicat?

The Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient (EFEO) was founded in Vietnam in 1898, MMM learns and was, at first, only involved with archaeological, linguistic and cultural studies of the former French Indochina, but it has, since, expanded its aims to include scientific research on Asian civilisations, from India to Japan, and their interaction.

The EFEO is under the French Ministry of Education. In Pondicherry, the EFEO Centre for History and Archaeology and the EFEO Centre for Indology are closely linked with the French Institute (IFP).

In brief

★ The latest friend of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam appears to be Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray. *The Man From Madras Musings* has heard that the Mumbai Tiger told newsmen that India should "use the manpower and militancy of the LTTE to do in Pakistan what Pakistan's ISI is doing here". Surely there are enough guns for hire in Mumbai, MMM would think, to judge by all the gang wars that are reported from there, without seeking Tigers from abroad. Meanwhile, MMM is told that many who fought with the LTTE in the 80s but went on to become members of rival groups, and hence fell prey to the Tigers, are now happily settled in Malkangiri in Orissa. There are over 200 of them there now, several married to Oriya girls, and demonstrating to the Oriyas around why the hardworking Jaffna farmer has always been considered a success story.

In brief

★ With the Chennai Traffic Police looking for ways and means to reduce traffic violations in the City, it might consider a Calcutta proposal *The Man From Madras Musings* has heard about. The Police, under this proposal, will distribute complaint cards to "responsible citizens", such as members of the various Chambers of Commerce, leading NGOs and the Traffic Advisory Committee. When a violation is spotted the watchdog citizen is expected to fill in all details in the card and post it to the Police who will hold an inquiry and take action if justified. The beauty of this system, MMM feels, is that even if the case against an errant driver cannot be proved, the inconvenience of the trip for the inquiry will slow him down in the future.

Not one letter, but several did I receive on this subject from the American Biographical Institute Inc. One was an 'Exclusive' inaugural invitation to the Board of Governors of the Biographical Institute Research Association (ABIRA) "to assume the highest seat of consideration in the ABI Research Association... You have been nominated for the position of Deputy Governor, and, as such, will be permitted to take a seat on the Board of Governors." The inauguration was slated for April 1997.

The message listed all the advantages accruing to a Deputy Governor. They include a resplendent wall plaque proclaiming "the individual's authoritative standing with the ABIRA and his or her in-

auguration to the Board". The names of Deputy Governors will also be indelibly imprinted on the official stationery, to promote them as the "power behind the power".

Advantages are accompanied by 'privileges', all thirteen of them. One of them is that members of this chosen tribe may use the initials 'D.G.' following their names. And the ABIRA will address them as "The Honourable". How delightful to be addressed as "The Honourable Dr. D.A., D.G.!"

In the fine print on the last page of the folder, it said, almost imperceptibly, "Lifetime fee U.S. \$925 plus \$95 for extra Degree of declaration". All this, I reckon, with my rusty arithmetic would add up to a tidy sum of almost Rs. 40,000 in Indian money. Sadly, I have no helpful nephews in the U.S. Now, I am hoping against hope that the new Finance Minister at the Centre, whoever it might be, will come to my aid with a grant of at least a thousand dollars, on compassionate grounds. Or maybe a powerful politician will recommend an unsecured loan of a lakh of rupees from a Nationalised Bank.

Perhaps even more horrible than that was the report that an unknown number of

Five of them were already dead, and it is only because one survived that we know why they did such a dreadful thing. Those six girls had not failed any exams: they had decided to commit suicide only because they were afraid they were going to fail.

What is there about the psyche that causes young people to throw away their lives so casually? When it became known that MGR was dying, no fewer than 22 young men and boys, between the ages of 18 and 20, in various parts of Tamil Nadu, soaked themselves with kerosene and burned themselves alive.

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OUR READERS WRITE

'Tale' of a comet

Recently, while I was in Rajasthan, I happened to glance at the night sky from a small hamlet, on a couple of occasions. And, to my surprise, the clarity with which I could observe it was astonishingly unbelievable. Never have I seen the starry night twinkling like this ever before. And staring right into my eyes was the flashy Hale-Bopp with its magnificent tail flowing majestically in the vast empty space.

The two factors, which I presume, may have made the big difference between Harry Miller's observation (MM, May 1) and those of mine could be (1) the time of spotting the comet and (2) more importantly, the vast stretches of clear, unpolluted, pitch dark skies. I hardly think these conditions are possible in any of the industrialised cities we live in today. I believe, these are the main reasons we are unable to view the spectacular comet in its totality.

Hemant M. Nahar

'Nahar Nivas',
13/1 Habibullah Road,
T Nagar, Chennai 600 017.

Tantalising honour

I refer to Harry Miller's piece, 'The man who wasn't there' (MM, April 1st). I am tickled to claim I too have been similarly honoured by the "AB-American Biographical Institute Inc. of Raleigh, North Carolina, USA".

The fulsome strain of the epistle signed by the Chief Executive Officer made me blush. It didn't seem to be a case of mistaken identity. My name (a tongue-twister for many friends) was there, visible large and clear. But, it also made me think. Who knows, I might have arrived, after all. Better late than never! Have I not been guilty of producing any number of biographical articles, as also perpetrating a few biographies in book form? I went on to imagine that my notoriety in this field might have crossed the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic and other waters to reach the shores of North America. Maybe, as the author of a slim booklet on *The Art of Biography*, I might have a thing or two to teach American biographers of today.

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To be — or not to be?

My sad picture today shows the body of a fourteen-year-old schoolboy who learned that he had failed his S.S.L.C. and drowned himself in the well out of fear of what his parents would say when he told them.

Suicides of this kind are not at all uncommon. Perhaps the most bizarre of all was reported in *The Indian Express* of January 23, 1967. In a village outside Madurai, six schoolgirls made a suicide pact. They tied their pigtails together and jumped down a well. The commotion attracted a passing boy, who screamed for help and workers in adjoining fields pulled the girls out of the water.

Five of them were already dead, and it is only because one survived that we know why they did such a dreadful thing. Those six girls had not failed any exams: they had decided to commit suicide only because they were afraid they were going to fail.

What is there about the psyche that causes young people to throw away their lives so casually? When it became known that MGR was dying, no fewer than 22 young men and boys, between the ages of 18 and 20, in various parts of Tamil Nadu, soaked themselves with kerosene and burned themselves alive.

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The boy who found an exam too much...

Half Yearly Examination 1985
VIII Std ENGLISH I PAPER Time: 1½ Hours
Marks: 100

I. Answer the following: 24

- Who followed Lear when he left Regan's palace?
- How do you know that the peasant led a contented life?
- What did the peasant do with his excess grain?
- Who was Socrates?
- What do you know about Socrates' parents?
- Write two sentences about the military service of Socrates to his country.
- Where does the rain fall?
- What does the wind sometimes bring?

II. Quote from memory: 15

How beautiful is the rain — the window pane.

III. Fill in the blanks with suitable words taken from those given in brackets: 12

(Forget, remember, agree, disagree, believe, doubt)

- Do you ———— Men's address.
- Don't ———— to post that letter.
- If you have any ———— I will clear it.
- The Headmaster did not ———— the words of the mischievous boy.
- I don't ———— with you in this matter.
- He had ———— to my proposal.

IV. Rewrite as directed: 10

- He cleaned the blackboard with a duster. Then he wrote the rhyme on it. (Join the sentences using 'After')
- He left home early. But he reached the playground late. (Join the sentences using 'Although')
- The conductor gave a signal. The bus started. (Join the sentences using 'When')
- David worked hard. He wanted to get good marks. (Join the sentences using 'in order to')
- Babu is looking at Ravi. Ravi is looking at Babu. (Join the sentences using 'each other')

(P.T.O.)

2

V. Choose the right words and fill in the blanks: 12

- Meera looked at ——— in the mirror (she, her, herself)
- Chandran knows ——— the supermarket is. (what, where, why)
- It is time for Kala ——— to bed (to, go, goes, cry)
- is waiting for you. Go and see him. (No one, Any one, Some one)
- India became independent ——— it became a republic. (first, before, when)
- The house ——— offly two years ago. (built, was built, is built)

VI. Fill in the blanks with the opposites of the BOLD words: 10

- He was a **Cruel** man. He never spoke to any one **using** ——— words.
- He wanted to **continue** his studies in a college. But he had to ——— his studies because of his ill health.
- Mala walked slowly to the butterfly and caught it ———.
- Only some of these books will be useful to you. The others are ———.
- The Chief Minister was not present at the function. The other Ministers were also ———.

VII. Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions given below: 12

The peasant was sorry to lose his breakfast but he did not lose his temper. "After all I shall not die of hunger," said he. "No doubt, who ever took the bread needed it. May it do him good."

Questions:

- What was the peasant sorry for?
- Did he lose his temper?
- Will he die of hunger?
- What did he say to himself?

VIII. Rewrite the following passage using capital letters and punctuation marks wherever necessary: 5

Please wait for what is going to happen to them in a few minutes said the mg.

... and the front and back of the exam paper that drove him to suicide (Photograph and exam paper from HARRY MILLER'S files.)

other boys had attempted the same thing and failed. What do they look like today, I wonder?

I am among those who believe that the examination system should be abolished altogether. Some years ago I visited a Corporation Tamil medium school in Madras where I was shown the examination paper for English studies. The questions asked began with Shakespeare. I do not believe that children of any kind anywhere in the world can appreciate Shakespeare, let alone Tamil

medium boys in Tamil Nadu schools — and no doubt elsewhere in India. Moreover, the play selected was *King Lear*, probably the most difficult of Shakespeare's plays; and whoever set the examination could not even handle the English language properly (see portions of the photos reproduced).

But that's nothing to what followed. I have tried the following two questions on successive Directors of the British Council in Madras, always with the same result: they refuse to

believe I'm serious. The two questions were — and this for Tamil boys mind! — "What do you know about Socrates?" and then, unbelievably, "What do you know about Socrates' parents?"

Who are the dotty people who ask Tamil kids questions like that? If that's the sort of thing students sitting for their S.S.L.C. face, no wonder they jump down wells.

Picture and notes by Harry Miller

An agenda for Singara Chennai - 1

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet

SHAKESPEARE:
Romeo & Juliet

Several cities in the world can boast of having a waterway. The Thames in London, the Seine in Paris, the Danube in Vienna, the Nile in Cairo, and the list goes on till we come to Chennai, which can proudly claim not one, but THREE waterways — the Adyar River, the Buckingham Canal, and the River Cooum.

A waterway enhances the personality of a city, but only if the waterway is truly one. For those of us who live in Chennai, the City stinks — and it's the waterways that are primarily responsible for this. They have ceased to be waterways in the real sense, existing only as carriers of flood waters and sewage. This condition is not peculiar to our city alone. If it is any consolation, the Thames had become 'dead' some time back, but through concerted efforts and action it was revived, and one day, to the delight of Londoners, salmon were seen swimming in the river.

The Worshipful and youthful Mayor of our city deserves support for the efforts he is taking to make the City beautiful, with the assistance of the State Government. But the waterways that are an eyesore should figure higher on his agenda of creating the 'City Beautiful'. If nothing else was done except the clean-up of the waterways, the residents of Chennai would be eternally grateful.

It must be remembered that in his earliest stint in the Government, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi had initiated action to improve the Cooum, in fact, making it navigable and introducing boating etc. The piers and other structures can

still be seen along the banks of the Cooum. Unfortunately, subsequent governments abandoned any attempt to make improvements to the Cooum. It is widely believed that 'Cooum Improvement', like its cousin, the striking *Valuvar Kottam*, (also conceived by Chief Minister Karunanidhi), became a political 'untouchable'. As a result, no significant improvements nor maintenance were undertaken over the years, resulting in today's sorry state. This is a matter of serious concern, since, of the three waterways, the Cooum is of strategic

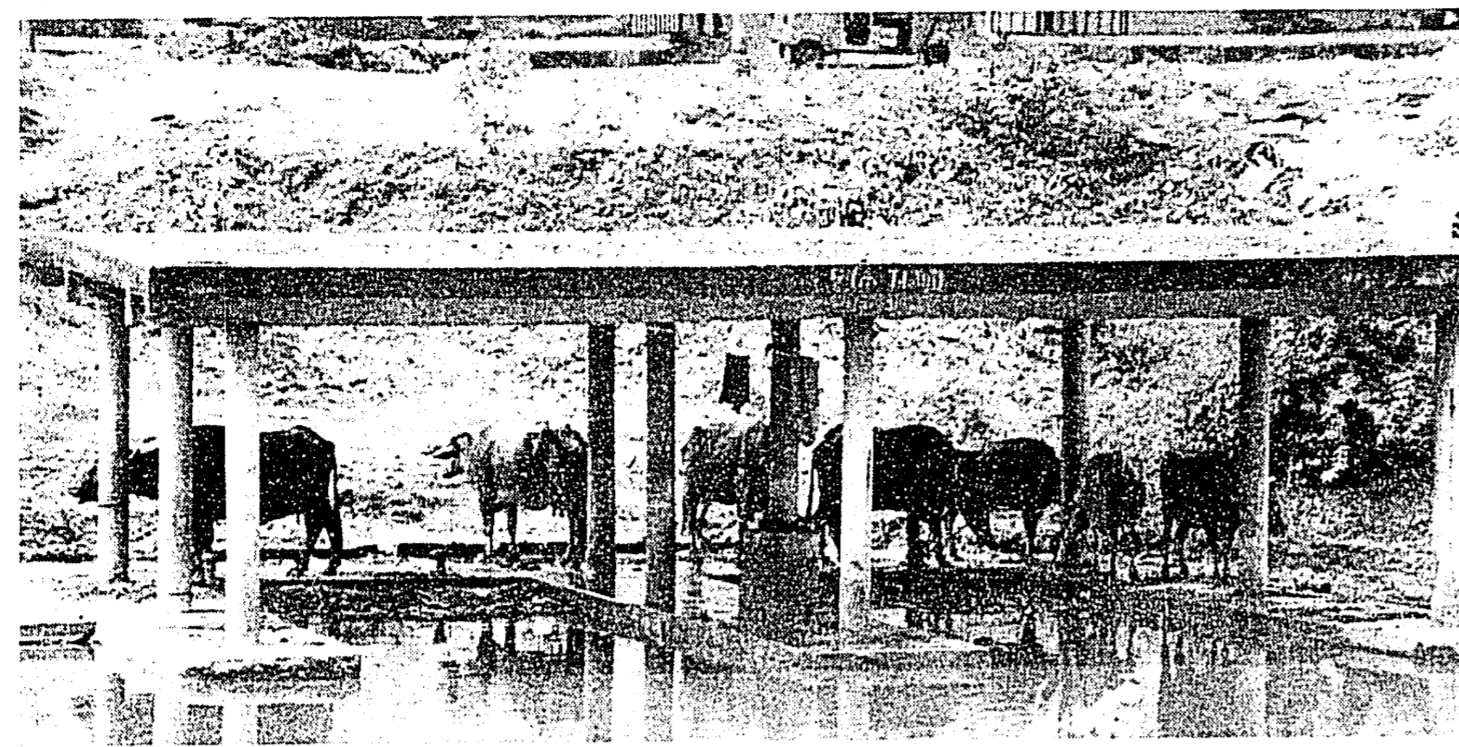
Let's bring life to waterways again

importance, flowing as it does through the central areas of the city.

The question of improving the waterways has been under discussion since 1988, when a UK-based consulting firm, experienced in water management, was inducted, through a timely UK Government grant, to study the problem and make suitable recommendations for action on the different aspects affecting the waterways, if the important findings of the consultants are recapitulated.

After studying the practices in the city for sewage treatment, maintenance of the sewer lines, stormwater drains, etc., the Consultants formulated their recommendations, the thrust of which was to ensure that discharge of raw and untreated sewage into the waterways is eliminated. 206 points of direct discharge, involving the following types of Institutions/Estab-

THE NEW ...



When Chief Minister Karunanidhi in an earlier term in office decided to clean up the Cooum, he not only did so, but he made boating on it possible again and had piers built in several places to make river travel, initially for pleasure, feasible. Today, the Cooum is un-navigable again and the piers have been taken over as cattle sheds by those who dwell on the river banks. (Photograph by V.S. RAGHAVAN.)

lishments, were identified: (a) public buildings, (b) private properties, (c) industries, (d) unsewered colonies and private streets, (e) pumping stations and treatment works, and (f) slum tenements. In addition, there is the problem of stormwater drains.

Suffice it for our purpose to discuss the impact of some of the above establishments, only by way of illustrating the problems associated with improving the waterways. In respect of public buildings and establishments, it is understood that the practice of discharging raw sewage into the waterways still continues. Similarly, the small and diverse industrial units also discharge their untreated trade effluents into the water course. However, a redeeming feature, is the fact that the Corporation of Chennai has embarked on a phased programme of constructing stormwater drains for

about half the length of the roads in the city. This will ensure that the sewer system is not used as a flood carrier. The Metrowater also discourages the interconnection of surface water flows with sewer manholes. But in periods of very heavy rain and stagnation, it is inevitable that the manhole covers are opened to enable the stagnant water to flow. This calls for proper and periodic flushing and maintenance of sewers, which is being done with the latest, jetting equipment.

Any programme to upgrade the city waterways should first address itself to the problems posed by the slums situated along the banks. In 1990, it was estimated that there were approximately 20,000 families living along the banks of the waterways. A practical scheme of rehabilitation of these families, which would obviously pro-

vide for relocation, protection of their employment interests, future sustainability of the new areas, and other associated aspects is required. Any scheme will only succeed if the affected persons are assured that their economic interests are protected. This would call for the intervention of social service workers, responsible NGOs, environmental experts, and of course, government leadership. In 1990 a proposal to develop about 30,000 sites for rehabilitation was estimated to cost about Rs.120 crore. It will be more now, and, with delay, the figure will only rise.

It is clear that before work to restore the waterways is taken up, there are a number of issues impacting on them which need attention first. The waterways themselves throw up problems which are of a technical, social, economic, and financial nature. Under the present arrangements, there are a multiplicity of agencies and government departments involved with the waterways in one way or another. It is good strategy to segregate all the issues into two categories. The first would be those issues which are external, but have a bearing on the waterways. These should receive high priority and get resolved through the existing mechanisms. The second are those actions and strategies which impact directly on the waterways. Any strategy for improvement should conceptualise a permanent solution that should be sustainable and multi-dimensional.

Keeping all this in mind it is strongly urged that: — An autonomous City Waterways Authority be constituted, with a professional as its Head/Chairman. The Head should be one with wide experience and a capacity to conceptualise the future of the waterways on a broad front. The Board should comprise representatives of government, private

G. Dattatri

Continued on page 5

...& THE OLD



...OLD is a scene along the Buckingham Canal in the Forties. The Canal used to be navigable in those days and was an important transport system as the accompanying two-part feature narrates. And controlling the flow of water were locks like this one. Of such locks none are left... and the Canal is, if anything, worse than even today's Cooum!

An eyesore — when it wasn't

The Buckingham Canal is a navigation canal which runs through the States of Madras and Andhra Pradesh. To the citizens of Madras, the Cooum and the Buckingham Canal are more a nuisance than useful waterways. The bad odour emanating from them has made people look upon them as a curse on the metropolis. However, it is gratifying to note that the Government are taking steps to improve the conditions of the canal through a 'Cooum Improvement Scheme'.

In Tamil it is known as *Uppu Vaikal* meaning salt-water canal. It attained its present standards in 1897. It runs almost parallel to the Coromandel Coast, within a limit of 3 miles from the coast. In many reaches it runs within half a mile of the sea. It joins up a series of natural backwaters and connects all the coastal districts from Guntur to South Arcot. It is 1961 miles long north of Madras City and 62 miles long south of Madras which stretches for the sake of convenience, are called North Canal and South Canal. Its northern end is Peddaganjam in Krishna District where, through the local Commamur Canal, it joins with the Krishna Delta high-level canals and thence with the irrigation and navigation canals of the Godavari Delta system and opens up traffic with the sea port of Kakinada in the Godavari District. Its southern most terminus is the Marakanam backwater in South Arcot District. Thus, through the navigable waterway now existing between the Godavari Delta, the Krishna Delta and the Buckingham Canal System, a total mileage of 462 miles from Marakanam to Kakinada can be covered.

With the separation of

Andhra State, the stretch of the North Canal lying in Madras State is about 36 miles. The length of the Canal course is about 12 miles within the city limits. The Canal plays an important role in the movement of goods in and out of the City.

North Canal

The North Canal is at present maintained to a bed width of 20' in closed reaches and 30' in open reaches. To provide berthing space for boats, a 60' width of canal is maintained at the wharves. A minimum draft of 3' is maintained in the Canal and ruling bed levels varying from 16.0' to 17.5' are fixed with reference to M.S.L. 20' to suit the various lowest recorded tide levels. At the site of the river crossings, sand bars are being formed by the tidal action of the sea and these bars have to be kept open especially during the rainy season, to prevent flooding of Madras City. When the bars are kept open, there is also fluctuation in the depth of water available for navigation within the Canal, depending upon the level of the tide in the sea.

To mitigate the effects of the

tides and minimise silting of the Canal due to floods in the river and to maintain a steady water level, locks are provided at five places.

The River Courtalliyar crosses the Canal at the Ennore backwaters.

South Canal

The navigation line of the South Buckingham Canal starts in the open reach of the River Cooum-south arm, meanders through the city, crosses the River Adyar and then runs south to the tail end.

• With plans being once again drawn up to make something of our waterways, a look at the Buckingham Canal would not be out of place, particularly as this year marks the centenary of the completion of the final work on this waterway.

The entire South Canal is maintained to a bed width of 20' in close reaches and 30' in open reaches. The minimum draft maintained is 2'. There are numerous river crossings across the Canal and suitable locks are provided at seven places.

History

The Canal has a chequered

history. The originator of the idea was Mr. Stephen Popham (1778-1795), Secretary to Sir John Day, Advocate-General of Bengal and subsequently an enterprising, public-spirited barrister of Madras. The plan formulated by him in 1782 for the establishment of Police etc., for the better government and regulation of Madras Town envisaged, among other things, the excavation of a navigable canal: "Fish might be brought to Madras from Cattavorum River (Ennore backwater) as well as from the road and if a navigable canal was made from Moodu Kistnah's Choultry to the Black Town, and to be continued on the west side till it meets the two streams which form the island South of Fort St. George, fish and other articles might be brought from different parts of the country which are on the borders of Polycott lake at an easy expense".

It was left to a private individual by name Basil Cochrane to implement the scheme of Mr. Popham by cutting through the strip of sand and shallow backwaters from Madras northwards to Ennore lake, thus forming a navigable canal for small craft. The work was completed by 1806. The Canal was 11 miles long and was officially called Lord Clive's Canal after the then Governor, though it was more popularly known as Cochrane's Canal after its builder. The Canal was soon extended to Pulicat Lake thus opening up navigation to a distance of 25 miles north of Madras.

In 1837, the Canal was taken over by the Government which paved the way for its ex-

ension in both directions in slow degrees. By 1857 it was extended to Dugarazapatam 69 miles north of Madras by means of excavated cuts joining backwaters together. It had by then acquired the name of East Coast Canal, a title which it retained till 1878 when it was finally named after the Governor of Madras, the Duke of Buck-

ingham and Chandos, as Buckingham Canal. By this time, an entirely new canal had also been excavated on the same principle of joining backwaters together from the Adyar River to Sadras, a total length of 35 miles. There was, however, neither then, nor for twenty years to come, any connecting link between the Cochrane's Canal and the Canal south of the Adyar. By 1876 the Canal was extended from Dugarazapatam to Krishnapatnam 92 miles north of Madras, thereby placing Madras in communication with the important town of Nellore, a short stretch of road between Krishnapatnam and Nellore rounding off the connection. It may be stated here that until the laying of the railway line to Nellore which took place many years later, the Canal continued to be the only principal means of communication both for passengers and goods between Madras and Nellore.

The Great Famine of 1877 accelerated the extension of the Canal more as a famine relief measure. The end of 1878 saw the extension of the Canal to its existing northern limits and the excavation of a connecting link between the Cooum and the Adyar Rivers, known as 'Junction Canal', five miles long right through the heart of Madras. The extension work did not stop at this stage. By 1882 the Canal south of Madras was cut right through from Sadras to its existing southern limit in the Marakanam backwater. Substantial improvements were carried out to the Canal between 1892 and 1897 to boost its efficiency. The fold flood gates were converted into locks, several new locks built, new openings to the sea made, and long surplus escapes formed in the east bank of the Canal.

Regulation of water into and out of the Buckingham Canal with the aid of locks reduces the bad odour emanating from the Canal and the Cooum River to a certain extent. Locks also shut out river floods (but admit high tides into the Canal) and maintain the depth of water in the Canal required for navigation.

(To be concluded next fortnight)

LIFE FOR OUR WATERWAYS AGAIN

Continued from page 4

sector experts in various disciplines, and stake holders. — The Authority be mandated to examine improvements to the three waterways and implement a phased programme of improvement, which should be sustainable. — The Authority to have the power to devise policies for raising resources and spending them on capital improvement and maintenance. For

example, the Authority can float long-term bonds to be subscribed to by stakeholders. — A Policy Review Body be constituted under the Chief Minister and meet, at least once every six months, to clear bottlenecks that the Authority might encounter in its initial years, and to give it more muscle. — An in-depth study be done

of the waterways abroad, like the Thames or the systems in Amsterdam.

— The Regulatory Bodies concerned with the maintenance of water quality to monitor the waterways effectively and with unfailing regularity.

Chennai's waterways have long languished for want of care and attention. There are, indeed, on-going efforts, but it is

wise to remember that the "first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts". Bold, imaginative, and catalytic intervention by Government is the need of the hour, if these waterways are to be restored to health; to be used and not abused; and to enhance and not diminish the quality of life.

P.M. Belliappa
(Retired Civil Servant and currently an Environment Consultant)

A PARALLEL MEGACITY

Continued from Page 1

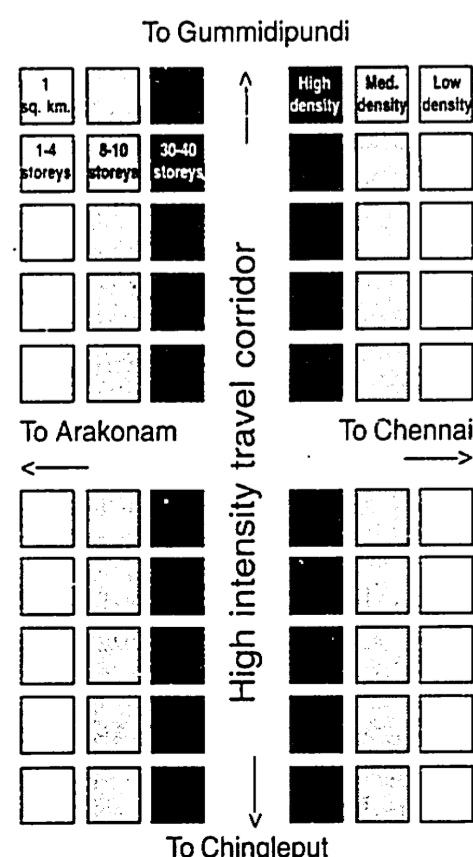
ture, dairy farms and handicraft centres. This line will act as the green boundary of the city.

Each one sq.km block will be planned and designed as an integrated city sector, with residences, workplaces, shopping, banking and all other requirements needed to ensure a good quality of life.

Some salient features of such a city would be:

- Quick North-South movement along the rapid rail/bus systems
- Residents could cycle or walk to work. No motorised vehicles would be needed for internal city traffic — and hence no air pollution.
- The countryside would be within 3 km of any resident for recreation.

- High quality, uninterrupted power and communication systems.
 - Opportunities for international companies to invest in infrastructure construction and building and manufacturing plants.
 - Economy in infrastructure, because of compactness.
 - Affordable housing for all through internal cross subsidies.
 - Individual blocks capable of being developed taking note of natural elements.
 - Use of eco-friendly applications for recycling all categories of wastes.
- Above all the natural resources in the Chennai region would be freed for future generations for their sustainable



The arrangement of the blocks and green belts in the suggested megacity

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN's questions are from the period April 16th to 30th. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.)

1. Which Oscar-winning Hollywood legend has been named the Ambassador of Bahamas to Japan?
2. Name the veteran leader of the Janata Dal and the Grand Old Man of Orissa politics who passed away recently.
3. Where in Asia is the world's tallest tower, at a height of 550 metres, going to come up?
4. Sony recently apologised to the VHP for an 'offensive' music album cover, a cover showing Krishna in a distorted manner. Name the album and group.
5. Simple. I.K. Gujral is the... Prime Minister of India?
6. Former Indian cricketing greats Kapil Dev and Gavaskar are to study the legality of which Indian bowler's action, following ICC and BCCI decisions?
7. Which snooker player scored the maximum break of 147 in a record 5 minutes and 20 seconds?
8. Some remains of Gene Roddenberry, the creator of *Star Trek* were given a unique funeral recently. How?
9. The 'sacred soil' collected after the cremation of three Indian martyrs on March 30, 1931, was given to the National Archives recently. Name the three.
10. In which South American country was a 126-day hostage crisis ended by the storming of an embassy building by its special police forces?
11. The 'Brylcreem Boy', one of the greatest batsmen of all time, passed away recently. Name him.
12. Which Indian has been chosen to head the United Nations' Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space?
13. Which ex-bureaucrat has decided to contest the Presidential election as an independent candidate?
14. The Ilyushin Il-96T, a transport aircraft, was recently presented in Moscow. In what way is it a first?
15. Name the former Governor of the RBI who passed away recently.

16. A pioneering lung transplantation, the first in the country, was performed in the city on April 25. Where?
17. Who is the joint director of the Chennai-based SIT inquiring into the Rajiv Gandhi assassination?
18. Chennai-based industrialist N. Kumar of the Sanmar Group has been elected as the new president of which apex business body?
19. The sale of which beverage has been permitted by the Tamil Nadu Government in the City's five-star hotels?
20. Where in the city was a cattle pen demolished, after a public outcry, to make way for a community hall?

Answers on page 7

Estates to help industry

Development of integrated industrial estates is a prerequisite for rapid industrialisation of developing economies like India, where infrastructure facilities are not uniformly spread throughout the country.

After announcing unmatched tax incentives for projects of size Rs. 1000 crore and above, and in the process luring a couple of mega projects like Ford and Hyundai, the Tamil Nadu Government is now focussing its energies on developing industrial estates/complexes. To this end it has geared its three industrial promotion outfits, the Tamil Nadu Industries Development Corporation Ltd (TIDCO), State Industries Promotion Corporation of India Ltd (SIPCO) and Tamil Nadu Corporation for Industrial Infrastructure Development Ltd (TACID) for the purpose.

The Government is, in fact planning to infuse an additional capital of Rs. 50 crore in TACID to enable quick development of estates. After the additional capital, TACID's total equity will go up to Rs 90 crore.

TACID, formed last year to develop industrial estates in the State, has acquired lands in Perundurai (2800 acre), Gangaikondan (2000 acre) Nilakottai (400 acre) and Bargur (1000 acre). The Corporation is also in the process of acquiring land in Uthukottai and has identified sites in South Arcot and Chengai Anna Districts and plans to develop estates at Mamandur (313 hectare), Sunguvarchattiram (1000 ha) and Siperumbudur (983 ha).

TACID sources, speaking about the outlay and the progress made in establishing industrial complexes in Perundurai (Rs 100 crore), Gangaikondan (Rs 40 crore), Nulakottai (Rs 15 crore) and Bargur

(Rs 40 crore), state that the projects will be executed in two phases, with the first phase requiring 50 to 60 per cent of the total cost.

TACID is also involved in the Rs1313 crore infrastructural development project in Tiruppur. The project includes provision of drinking water (Rs 253 cr), laying of comprehensive underground municipal lines and setting up of a common effluent treatment plant (Rs 303.6 cr), roads improvement (Rs 32.7 cr), improving the communication network (Rs 64.5 cr) and area development (Rs 660 cr). The project

opened plots, unlike SIPCOT which hitherto used to hawk its plots on cost to cost basis. This, according to officials, would enable TACID to have sufficient funds to maintain the estates later.

SIPCOT, on its part, is developing estates in Cheyyar (1350 acre) and in Coimbatore. The organisation will also promote three industrial complexes and a township in Sriperumbudur (1829 acre).

Apart from these two agencies, whose primary job is establishment of estates/complexes, the State Government, in order to hasten the process of

acre) in association with the Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) and the other in Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District. The latter will have a foreign partner and is expected to industrialise the southern district at a quick pace. An exclusive industrial enclave (5000 acre) with self-contained facilities for major industries near Chennai, with TIDCO partnering a foreign outlet, is also planned. The Corporation has also initiated a feasibility study to set up a floriculture park (250 acre) in Hosur, with cold storage chains and flower auction centres, at an outlay of Rs 75 crore.

In line with the Rakesh Mohan Committee on infrastructure development, the State Government has recently introduced a bill in the Assembly to form the Tamil Nadu Industrial Township Area Development Authority to administer, develop and maintain industrial townships in the State.

industrialisation, has involved TIDCO on the job.

TIDCO is to promote a petrochemical park in about 7000 acres in Ennore, where several petrochemical projects, like Norsk Hydro's PVC project, the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal, a power station etc., are to come up.

With several automobile and ancillary projects having chosen the State as base, and with the State declaring the automobile industry as its 'thrust industry', TIDCO has proposed an auto ancillary park near the City.

The park, which will have the potential to attract investment upto Rs 2000 crore, is promoted by TIDCO (11% stake) in a joint venture with Mahindra Real Estates Infrastructural Developers Ltd (40%) and IL&FS (30%). TIDCO is also planning to set up two hi-tech parks—one in Chennai (30

acre) in association with the Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) and the other in Tirunelveli-Kattabomman District. The latter will have a foreign partner and is expected to industrialise the southern district at a quick pace. An exclusive industrial enclave (5000 acre) with self-contained facilities for major industries near Chennai, with TIDCO partnering a foreign outlet, is also planned. The Corporation has also initiated a feasibility study to set up a floriculture park (250 acre) in Hosur, with cold storage chains and flower auction centres, at an outlay of Rs 75 crore.



Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE

is to be operated on the Build Operate, Own and Transfer (BOOT) basis. TACID has chipped in with Rs 10 crore as its equity contribution in the new company, New Tiruppur Area Development Corporation Ltd, for this purpose. The other participants in the Rs 79 crore equity of the company are the Government of India (Rs 10 crore) IL&FS, and other financial institutions (Rs 33 crore), Tiruppur Exporters' Association (Rs 10 crore) and the private operator to be selected (Rs 16 crore). According to sources, four consortia, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bi Water International, UK, Hume Industries, Malaysia, and Kukdong Engineering, South Korea, have been shortlisted and one amongst them will be chosen as the BOOT operator.

TACID is targeting a rate of return of 14% on sale of devel-

Method

Mix all the ingredients. Set aside for a day. It can be served on the second day. Will keep for a week if refrigerated.

ICED LEMON CAKE

For the cake

2 cups flour
1 tsp grated rind of a lemon
1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
4 eggs
2 level tsp baking powder
1/2 cup milk
A pinch of salt

For the syrup

Juice of 2 lemons
Juice of 1 orange
3 oz. castor sugar

For the topping

4 oz. sieved icing sugar
A few drops of lemon essence
1 tbs milk
1/2 tbs water

Method

Sift the flour with salt and baking powder. Cream butter and sugar. Work in the eggs, beating one at a time, adding a little of the flour mixture. Repeat till all the ingredients for the cake are mixed together.

Pour into a rectangular greased pan, and bake in a moderately hot oven for 45 mins. While the cake is still warm, make small holes in it with a skewer.

Mix all the ingredients for the topping to form a spreadable mixture, adding more milk if necessary. Spread this on the cake.

Cut into 2" square pieces and serve topped with vanilla ice cream.

LEMON RASAM

1/4 cup greengram dhal
3 or 4 green chillies, chopped fine
1" piece ginger, peeled and grated
1/4 tsp turmeric powder

Salt to taste

2 tbs chopped coriander leaves
2 tbs lemon juice

For tempering

2 tsp ghee
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 red chilli halved
1/2 tsp black pepper powder
A few curry leaves

Method

Pressure cook the greengram dhal till done. Add two cups of water, salt and beat well. Add the chopped green chillies, grated ginger and turmeric powder and bring to a boil.

Heat ghee and add all the ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add to the rasam.

Remove from heat and add the lemon juice, garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

Chandra Padmanabhan

12.5.97, 10:48 PM

A classical revival

The Chennai Film Society is back with a bang. Judging from the response to the screening of the 1942 film *Bicycle Thief* at the Film Chamber theatre, the Society seems to be assured of a good run.

The Chennai Film Society was founded in 1984 to screen serious films for members. The founder presidents were Sivakumar, then a student at the Film Institute in Madras, and Sashikumar, now President of Asianet and at that time a newsreader on TV. Naidu, who has been associated with the Society from the beginning, and the film director Hariharan ran

by V.R. Devika

it for a while and are still associated actively with it. Hariharan these days is anchoring a T.V. series on serious films. The Chennai Film Society also used to run two-week-long courses on film appreciation. This was the first time such courses were run in Madras.

"The Chennai Film Society stands out as a serious society, as against the many other societies that are in existence," says Kalyanaraman, who has been Treasurer and Secretary at various times. In the Sixties and Seventies, film societies had a reputation for showing uncensored sex scenes and nudity in films and this became the reason for quite a few film societies spring up. But the CFS built up a reputation for being a society completely dedicated to the serious film. Films chosen for screening were of a high standard and the quite large membership appreciated the fare. Some extremely good films were shown. The film archives in Pune helped too. The various cultural organisations of the different consulates also showed an interest in collaborating with the Society. The re-

sult was that the work increased ten-fold and there was no fulltime person to concentrate on it. The Chennai Film Society had to wind up because its core members could not put in sufficient time to coordinate activities. They were all nearing forty and were in the serious business of making a living, having to give more time to their families and career. The boom in TV, which provided cinema at home in a variety of channels, also posed problems. In 1955, the CFS thought it had shown its last film. But many kept asking for its revival, especially as TV had become too monotonous for the serious-minded. So, when the CFS decided to restart, there was great enthusiasm. The theatre was house-full at 1.30 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon!

Answers to Quiz

1. Sir Sidney Poitier; 2. Biju Patnaik; 3. At Taiwan; 4. *Nine Lives* by Aerosmith; 5. The 12th Prime Minister of the country; 6. Rajesh Chauhan; 7. Ronnie O'Sullivan; 8. His ashes have been placed in orbit after a 'space funeral'; 9. Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev; 10. Peru; 11. Denis Compton; 12. Prof. U.R. Rao; 13. T.N. Seshan; 14. First U.S.-Russian aircraft; 15. R.M. Malhotra.

16. Madras Medical Mission; 17. R.M. Singh; 18. Confederation of Indian Industry; 19. Draught Beer; 20. Kasapet.

sult was that the work increased ten-fold and there was no fulltime person to concentrate on it.

The Chennai Film Society had to wind up because its core members could not put in sufficient time to coordinate activities. They were all nearing forty and were in the serious business of making a living, having to give more time to their families and career. The boom in TV, which provided cinema at home in a variety of channels, also posed problems. In 1955, the CFS thought it had shown its last film. But many kept asking for its revival, especially as TV had become too monotonous for the serious-minded. So, when the CFS decided to restart, there was great enthusiasm. The theatre was house-full at 1.30 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon!

"We have decided to show our films on Sundays and in the afternoons to allow people to reach home early in the evening," says Kalyanaraman. Some single women (not me) had complained that it was difficult to go back home late at night after a screening. (Actually Chennai is one of the safest cities in India for a single woman to reach home late at night).

Ajit Hari, a film buff and a fiery advocate of the serious cinema, who had founded the Campus Film Society to show serious films to students, had told me that the film *Bicycle Thief* was one of the greatest films ever made. "If there is one film you must see, I would recommend this," he had said. He was right. The film is not at all dated. Produced in post-World War II Italy, the film was shot outdoors for the most part, engaged non-professionals for leading roles, and managed fantastic cooperation from local crowds. The story is of a man whose bicycle is stolen and the agony he undergoes on account of it. He sets out with his little son to recover the bike and ends up become a thief himself. The child's subtle expressions are remarkable. Editing and lighting in the film are masterly.

More such films are promised by the Chennai Film Society. Watch out for its programmes, *Grapes of Wrath*, Satyajit Ray's *Devi*, The Hungarian film *My First Century* and *Late Seasons* have all been planned — for before August, in all probability. The membership fees are Rs.300 for individuals, Rs.500 for a couple, and Rs.100 for students with identification.

RUNNING for a social cause

Sports shoes in Saidapet market ... and in the Music Academy at a fusion concert ... and at an English play brought down by the British Council ... or at the beach, to sit around in and ogle the girls ... You see them almost everywhere, except at a sports event! Surely the exorbitant prices paid for them could be put to better use! And so a few individuals concerned with Chennai decided to form the Citizen's Run Trust to get the young and the old, the expensively shod and the barefoot runner, to put their money and energy into a more meaningful contribution to society at large.

'Citizens' Run' hopes to organise a cross-city 'relay' every year in Chennai, in which anyone may participate, provided he or she contributes something in cash or kind to the carefully chosen voluntary non-governmental organisation to which the lap he/she runs is dedicated. The idea is to use the instinct for sport to promote the citizens' awareness of social issues.

Members of the Trust have been going around the City and suburbs looking at various NGOs and individual initiatives to assess which are the most needy and most deserving of help. In the process, they have been quite aided by some extraordinary individuals.

Uma Dandapani, is in her forties, may be. She began to receive small donations when her story appeared in a Tamil magazine. She was a science teacher in a Central School. One of her



friends delivered a severely spastic child and was disowned by her in-laws. Uma accompanied her friend and got her son to build a small two-room building on it. There she began her free school for the retarded. She travels by train and auto every day to Pammal from T. Nagar and offers her services free. Her son's friends and her own friends give her small donations in cash and kind for the school. She now wants to start a vocation training cell.

Such small but intensely roving initiatives are those the Citizens' Run wants to support by raising funds from citizens running for a cause and from organisations backing the Run. Eric Prabhakar, the Olympian who has written a book on how to go about getting 'Athletic Gold' for India in the Olympics, Ranvir Shah, Uma Narayanan, Malavika Shivakumar, S Muthiah and myself have been working on getting Citizens' Run on the road in July. Eric Azoux, Director of the Alliance Francaise, who thought up the idea, is the most enthusiastic supporter — or is it The Chief Whip? — of the Trustees.

More, closer to the date of Citizens' Run.

— V R Devika



May 31: The Madras Players Theatre Club presents *Durang Durang*, an evening of Christopher Durang, directed by Mithran Devanesan.

Christopher Durang is the wild and wacky voice of off-Broadway, though many of his plays have gone mainstream and won awards. His plays are wickedly funny, wild and very New York. (At Museum Theatre, 7 p.m. Adults 18 and over only.)

Programme		
May 20 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	Prahlada Charitamu
May 21 7.30 p.m.	Harikatha by	Kalaimamani, Harikathavani Smt.T.R. Kamala Murthi Sri Ranganath Yakshagana Mandali, Karnataka (Directed by Sri Dasachar Bhagavataru)
9 p.m.	Yakshaganam	Kamsa vadam
May 22 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	Harichandra Natakamu Part 1
May 23 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	Harichandra Natakamu Part 2
May 24 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	Kum.B.Bharati (from Sri Sarvaraya Harikatha Pathasala, AP).
May 25 7.30pm	Harikatha by	Nouka Charitram (geya natakam of Sri Saint Thyagaraja, choreographed & directed by Kalaimamani Bharatam S. Natarajan).
9 p.m.	Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Jayanti Bhagavata Mela Sangam artists pay homage to Saint Sri Thyagaraja	Rukmini Kalyanam
May 26 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	Sati Savitri (a new production)
May 27 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	Usha Parinayam
May 28 9 p.m.	Bhagavata Mela natakam	
May 29 9 p.m.	Tamil opera composed by eminent Tamil scholars	Valli Thinmanam
May 30 7 p.m.	Concluding rituals	Sri Anjaneya Aradhana and bhajan
9 p.m.	Kalaimamani, Kalakshepa Sironami, Thanjavur Sri Ramamurthy Bhagavatar	

Kumar is V.V. Good



V.V. Kumar,
dedicated to spin

The trim figure of a youthful-looking leg spinner with an easy, economical action, catches the eye of a visitor approaching the MAC Sports Foundation's Spin Academy at the Anna University campus in Guindy. Only at close quarters does he realise that the action belongs not to one of the school's wards but to the man in charge — Viswanathan Vaman Kumar, the Tamil Nadu 'great' with over 400 wickets to his credit in the Ranji Trophy. The 63-year-old chief coach of the academy still retains the enthusiasm for bowling with which he began his distinguished career more than four decades ago.

Not many of today's cricket followers may know that Kumar, like some of his contemporaries who never played for the country, was one of the finest exponents of leg spin bowling in the world, second only to Subhash Gupte, who was, according to Sir Garfield Sobers, the greatest of them all. 'V.V.', as he is known to friends and admirers, made but two Test appearances, both of which I happened to watch as a schoolboy. His debut against Pakistan at Delhi was the stuff fables are made of. He took seven wickets in the match, including five in the first innings. Earlier, touring Pakistan with the Indian Starlets, he had impressed one and all as the major wicket-taker among the visitors and his debut had been eagerly anticipated by all of us — his many, many admirers all over India, especially in Madras. Little did any of us realise that his next Test — against Dexter's Englishmen at Bombay — would be his last. Kumar had a poor match and I happened to be an unhappy spectator of that Test. Chandu Borde, with his effective slow bowling, top class batting and panther-like fielding, easily settled into the leg spinner's slot and, very soon, Chandrasekhar followed, as the specialist wrist spinner. Though Kumar continued to bag wickets by the dozen in domestic cricket, he was never again a serious contender for a place in the India eleven.

V.V., who was the complete master of his art, has perfect control over line, length and flight variations even today. The youngsters handpicked by the Spin Academy could not have asked for a better person to teach them the fundamentals and intricacies of spin. And how fortunate they are! Such sincere commitment as displayed by Kumar day after day, week after week, ever since the Academy was inaugurated in October '96, is rare. He is invariably the first one to arrive and the last one to leave, every morning and afternoon. In the mornings, he coaches the younger trainees,

aged 13 to 16, and in the afternoon, the over-16 category and the most promising of the younger lot. Among the seniors, the Academy has identified five promising bowlers who receive special attention, with intent to ready them for first class cricket in the shortest possible time — left armers Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan and Ramkumar, off spinners Abdul Malik and Ganesh, and leg spinner Vijay Sai Suri are the talented bowlers shortlisted. Looking at the efforts being put in by these boys under Kumar's watchful eye, I cannot help feeling a surge of hope for Tamil Nadu's spin bowling future.

"These boys get the kind of exposure normally not available to others of their age. Ranji and Test stars come and bat regularly in the nets. We also arrange a number of practice matches with first division teams, which means they get to bowl to senior cricketers all the time. Some of them are already good enough to play first division league cricket and, if they improve all aspects of their game, it won't be long before you hear of them as first class cricketers," says Kumar. His only worry is about their level of perseverance and determination. "All of them bowl very well in their first spell, but when they come back for a second, some of them tend to fall away. They seem to lack the kind of confidence that used to be so common in our generation of spinners." Yet, Kumar is confident that within a couple of years, the toughening and maturing process will have taken firm root, producing some outstanding bowlers for the state.

The Academy, which is at present confined to spotting and encouraging local talent, will soon be expanded to include young hopefuls from the other southern states. With S Vasudevan, former Tamil Nadu left arm spinner, assisting Kumar and taking charge administratively, and C Lakshman Swarup, a cricketer of yesteryear belonging to the famous Buchi Babu family, and a director of the foundation, responsible overall for the conduct of the Academy, the MAC group means business in its plans for the Academy. It is expected eventually to become an all India institution.

As I leave the Engineering ground satisfied that what I've just witnessed bodes well for the future of Tamil Nadu cricket, there is one bowler wheeling away in the nets, long after the others have shot their bolt. No prizes for guessing the identity of the bowler.

V.Ramnarayan

Whither TN cricket?

It has been a tumultuous season for Tamil Nadu Cricket, especially off the field. The on-field performances touched a nadir, the team going down to an unprecedented innings defeat against Railways. The batting was at best inconsistent, with established players proving rusty and unreliable and relative newcomers like the talented S Ramesh, batting with little application. The spin bowling was, for the most part, ineffective. The fielding was often times pathetic — a familiar sight throughout the season was that of slip fielders with hands on knees. Naturally, at least twice as many catches were dropped as were held in that position. A decade ago, the close-in cordon took some incredible catches during Tamil Nadu's march to its second title triumph.

Raman, Robin Singh and Sharath were lost to international cricket at different times, upsetting team balance, while one of the outstanding successes of the year, Hemang Badani, also made it into the India 'A' team in the SAARC competition in Bangladesh — that too, in his very first first class season. Raman, unfortunately, was found wanting as an opener in South Africa, while Robin has still to cement his place in the Indian one-day combination. Sharath has made a promising beginning playing for India 'A'.

To talk of the gains first, lefthanded S Sriram really arrived as a frontline batsman this season. His big hundred in the superleague stage of the Ranji Trophy confirmed his rising stature as a future Test prospect. Unfortunately, the same could not be said of his bowling, which has deteriorated to such an extent that he was called for chucking during the Railways encounter! Left arm fast medium Dev Anand made rapid strides and right arm medium pacer S Mahesh bowled consistently well. Mahesh also occasionally used the long handle to good effect. Leg spinner W D Balaji Rao showed some improvement over last year, bowling slightly slower through the air. In under-19 cricket he did reasonably well when touring Sri Lanka with the Indian team.

The selection of the Tamil Nadu team came in for criticism, though the committee, while making a couple of poor choices, was also responsible for bleeding an unprecedented number of promising players who came good. The main bone of contention was the omission of all rounder D Vasu, inarguably one of Tamil Nadu's most consistent performers. Ironically, some of the severest crit-

ics of the selectors were people who had been demanding the sacking of senior cricketers like Vasu and Sunil Subramaniam at the beginning of the season. The player himself wrote a fiery letter to the TNCA attributing motives to the Secretary, among other things. Vasu has enough talent in him to stage a comeback, but if and when he does, he must show the way to the youngsters.

A sad feature of Tamil Nadu cricket from time immemorial has been the regular "fixing" of

● by V.Ramnarayan

local matches. Teams in the running for the championship as well as those in danger of relegation indulge in this invidious practice.

The sorry part of the story is that some club officials who have made a fine art of fixing matches have gone on to become office-bearers of the TNCA, while players who consistently mastermind such unseemly "arrangements" have gone on to play for the State. Does it surprise anyone that

Tamil Nadu has not fared better than it has in the national championship?

Blatant bending of the rules or worse was in evidence last season when a First Division team imported players from other States to improve its chances of averting relegation and succeeded in its mission.

The TNCA has shown remarkable firmness in banning a 2nd Division league side found guilty of assaulting an umpire during a match. Terrorising umpires has become a near-regular feature of the league and has threatened to take Tamil Nadu cricket into the realm of horror stories. Here is a clear sign that there are in the executive arm of the TNCA men of conviction and principle. Corporate sponsors, who have done yeoman service to the game and are quite indispensable to its growth, also have a major role to play in cleansing the Augean stables and exercising a firmer control on teams. It is to these men that the cricket community looks for better days to come in Tamil Nadu cricket.

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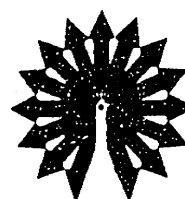
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