

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Sustaining sustainability
- Banking growth
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- Libraries, old & new
- Forgotten Dhronacharya

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## What's wrong with Chennai?

(By the Editor)

What's right? everyone seems to ask at all public fora and private gatherings except those who take out those full page advertisements proclaiming annual achievements.

Madras Musings has had a spate of letters recently stating that we are not paying enough attention to certain aspects of this fast-deteriorating city. At a few private gatherings your Editor attended recently, much of the talk was about the sorry state of Chennai! "See how clean Bangalore is. See how

clean Hyderabad and even Calcutta have become. They too are Indian cities — and they work, in comparative terms; why doesn't Chennai?" And almost as homage to Harry Miller, the major newspapers have begun to regularly publish pictures that reflect his 'City of Neglect' series and are in no position to add to his occasional 'City of Attempt' ones.

The burden of all this disgust with Chennai is the filthy state the city is in. Garbage is piling up everywhere and clear-

ing it is a desultory affair. Roads and pavements are public toilets. The rivers, canals and drains are clogged, sewers open to the heavens. And every form of pollution thrives. The city STINKS — and pests thrive. It is a wonder that the public health problem in the city is not worse than it is! What has gone wrong in the city in the last couple of years? It used to be bad, in fact it's been worsening over the last sixty years, but

(Continued on Page 7)

## A marsh under study

(By A Staff Reporter)

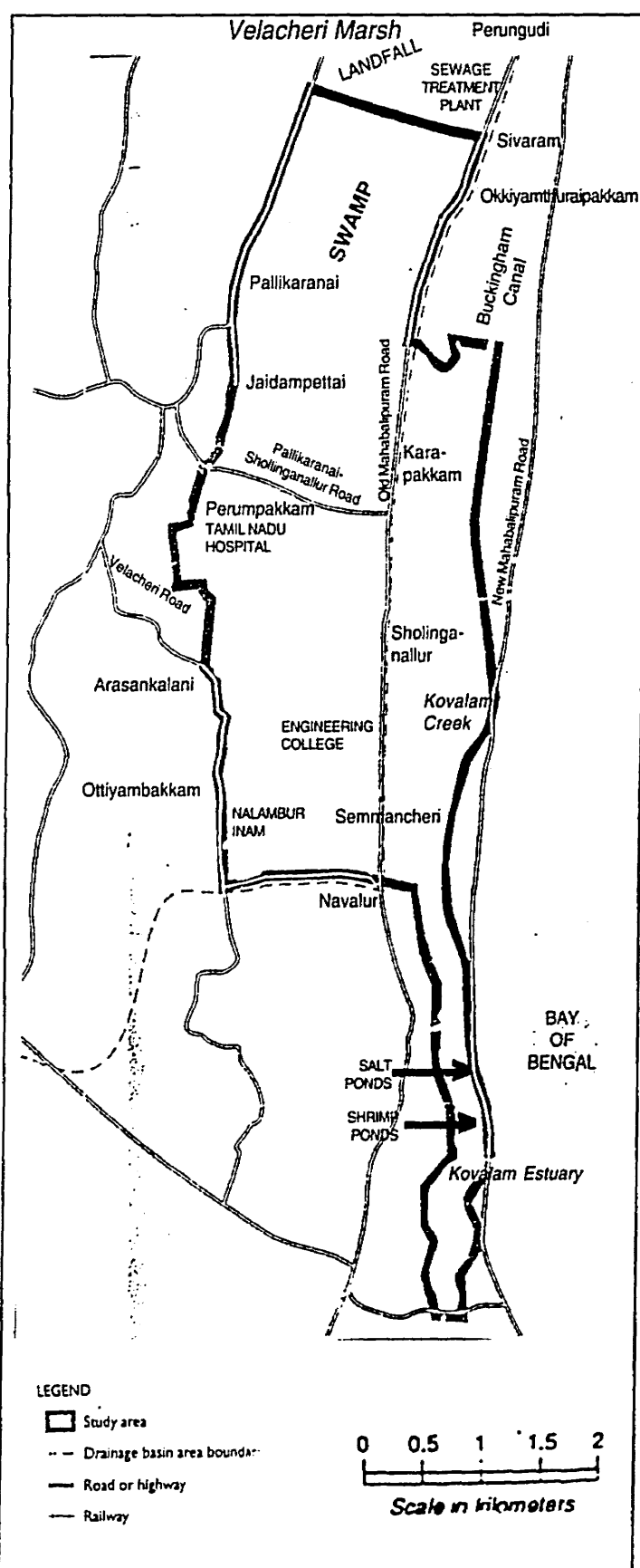
The Madras Naturalists' Society has expressed its distress once again over Government's plan to develop an industrial park in a substantial part of the Pallikaranai Marsh. The Society hopes "good sense will prevail and this area will be spared the proposed development". The Marsh, the Society significantly points out, "helps in recharging the groundwater in south Chennai as it holds water all through the year".

The MNS is also concerned with the increased dumping of garbage by the authorities in the Pallikaranai-Velacherry area. Considerable resettlement of slum-dwellers in the most insanitary conditions here is also a matter of concern.

All these activities of Government threaten the thousands of migrant birds which flock to the extensive reedbeds in the swamp. Apart from the migrant birds, the MNS estimates there over 100 species resident in the swamp area.

The swamp area and its extension, as demarcated in the map alongside, are now the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment by the National Environmental Research Institute, Nagpur. This is a Government organisation, but it is to be hoped that it will interact more sympathetically with NGOs like the MNS and institutions like the IIT, Chennai, which have done much work in this area, before passing judgement on one of the few large acreages of wetland left in the city and suburbs.

With areas like Maraimalai Nagar, Sriperumbudur and Gummidipoondi being opened up for industrial development, an industrial estate in any of those inland areas would make better sense. But Sholinganallur is also one of the areas the CMDA is planning to develop as a satellite industrial town. Therefore, no doubt, this thought of establishing an industrial estate somewhere nearby. But must a wetland be considered, EIA or not?



## Looking back, looking forward

When *The Mail*, a paper that truly cared for the city and which is now, alas, only a distant memory, celebrated its centenary in 1968, it published a special supplement. And in an article in it by Allan Taylor, who worked with it thirty years and was its last English Editor, was this passage:

Another name well remembered was that of S Satyamurthi, an astute politician, Congress leader, and some 25 years ago (about 1943) the Mayor of Madras. At the Centre, he will be particularly recalled for his questions which often caused embarrassment to the Government, and in Madras city for his slogan "Madras, the City Beautiful", an ideal he promised to work for during his term of office as Mayor, and a slogan which has been adopted by many of his successors, but with little in the way of achievement. There are today many eyesores that have existed over the years; in some areas the position has in fact deteriorated, and its reputation for cleanliness has undoubtedly been tarnished by, it would seem, a slipshod lackadaisicalness on the part of the authorities and the servants of the City Council.

A quarter of a century ago there was a compactness about Madras, which markedly compares with the present agglomeration of scattered areas, now incorporated in the city, but suffering from a lack of the ordinary amenities of normal life. The City Fathers, for long, would appear to have been animated by a spirit of grandiloquence, a desire to achieve a distinction for Madras by reason of its size being an indication of its importance. This was stimulated, naturally, by the large expansion of industry on its perimeter, and even within its original confines, and expansion was achieved before the municipal organisation was really ready to handle the new problems which resulted. The position has been further aggravated by the steady, and continual influx of people from the countryside, particularly of people seeking work in new industrial organisations. Haphazard growth was permitted without adequate planning, and everywhere within the confines of the city there has been a vast expansion of slum conditions.

In the context of the 'Singara Chennai' slogan of the 1996/97, the two paragraphs are not without significance. There is nothing new under the sun — which is why a little bit of looking back always helps. History is not without its assets.

— The Editor

## A quest For Sustainability

(By A Special Correspondent)

The Sustainable Chennai Project (SCP) sponsored by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and implemented for its partner, the Government of Tamil Nadu, by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, has come to the end of its two-year preparatory phase and three-year run. The aim of the Project was to ensure through people's participation the sustainability of civic projects

ability of the Project has now become an issue.

When the Project was structured and developed, it invited various working groups to consider and suggest projects the city needed and these were further discussed at larger fora. That the real public, the majority in the city, did not participate in these deliberations in any way did not worry anyone. Nevertheless, three areas to focus on were identified and fur-

Typically, the very sustain-

(Continued on Page 7)



# How do we ensure sustainability of the passion?

Speaking at the Madras Book Club recently on *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium*, A P J Abdul Kalam's perfect vision of India's future, B S Raghavan, the former Chief Secretary of West Bengal and now a retired Civilian busy with writing and lecturing, eloquently described how moved he was by the book. This was a book to stir every Indian and get him to contribute to making India great; India needed a person like Abdul Kalam for Prime Minister to lead the country to that future, it was said at the meeting. It was a book to ignite minds, Raghavan said in a piece of oratory that brought to the mind those speakers out of Madras' past who made a fine art of public speaking. Certainly this was the finest bit of oratory the Club had heard in many a year and it certainly conveyed the passion of India's top scientist who came out of a Rameswaram fishing village to reach a scientific peak with hard work and dreams, not loaded with academic accomplishments.

Raghavan, however, did point out that while two-thirds of the book was in this positive strain, the last third, which talked about India's glorious scientific past and its scientific strength, did not offer many answers. Tippoo's rockets and developing a beryllium substitute (when the US prevented us getting the original for our space programme) is all very well — and achievements to be proud of — but how is a 20-20 India to be developed by 2020? Apparently it is to be done by a Golden Triangle of people.

Another former Civilian, Geethakrishnan, who summed up the lecture and offered his viewpoint, pointed out that the golden triangle demanded dedicated government servants, dedicated politicians and dedicated people willing to making sacrifices. Finding them, he remarked, echoing a Russian story at the World Bank, would be like looking for a black cat in a dark room in which there was no cat!

## Why no sustainability?

To MMM, that humorous note, not only sounded like a cry of despair, but it appeared to echo several recent conversations MMM had had in recent weeks with several people in Chennai. No one seemed to have answers to the main theme of those conversations: Whereas Indian thinking and planning, and presentation of both as projects or laws, were second to none, why did Indians fail thereafter, failing in both implementation as well as ensuring sustainability?

For every Sundram Fasteners and TVS-Suzuki who not only win international honours for their quality but keep on winning them, there are dozens of companies and organisations that fail by the wayside. In all of them, the Total

Quality Management exercises are successful only so long as it is necessary to gain some International Standard recognition or other. Then they're unconsciously forgotten or allowed to sag until the next inspection turns up. What is it that makes Indians unable to sustain excellence or implement laws, plans and schedules on a day-to-day basis?

No one seemed to have an answer. Least of all to: Why if a couple of organisations could do it, the others can't?

India, as Kalam says, may have everything: natural resources, manpower, a favourable climate, a well-developed administrative system. Yet, as most see it, it fails every time on implementation and sustainability. Kalam appears to have no answer to that fundamental weakness, to judge from what Raghavan had to say about the scientist's vision.

## Sruti at 15

Congratulations to *Sruti*, the only Indian magazine devoted to classical music and dance, on its turning 15. May the journal have many more years ahead of it, years when it will continue to make a contribution to the music and dance scene in this country.

Like *Madras Musings*, *Sruti* has found keeping going a struggle. And like *Madras Musings* it

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

has made it through the unstinted support of a few Chennai-based organisations who have felt that journals such as these, journals seeking to improve the quality of life, needed to be sustained. Long may that support continue.

*Sruti* said 'thank you' to its well-wishers with a celebration held recently in the Music Academy. The Academy's President T T Vasu, who presided, paid tribute to the contribution that *Sruti* had made to the Indian cultural scene, but he also pointed out that the magazine's 'Whispering Gallery' column was an unnecessary blot on the magazine's fine record.

*The Man from Madras Musings* too found a minor uncalled for blemish at the celebratory proceedings. Revathi Sankaran's *harikatha* on *Sruti* was a brilliant effort and her mimicry is becoming more enjoyable by the day, but was it necessary to use *Jana Gana Mana* as a melody for parody? National Anthems and National Flags are not meant to be objects of fun, no matter how good-natured the fun.

Be that as it may, the best news of the evening was *Sruti* Editor-in-Chief N Pattabhi Raman's announcement that the magazine planned to start an archives,

Samudri, for music and dance. This is indeed a cause worthy of support — and dancer Dhananjayan's spontaneous contribution of Rs. 10,000 was an auspicious beginning. MMM hopes a venture like archiving gets the further support it deserves.

## Say it plain

Chris Maher, who started the Plain English Campaign with a paper-shredder working hard on different pieces of legislation opposite Parliament House in London about 20 years ago, recently sent her son George and colleague John Wild to carry the message to India. The PEC, it strikes *The Man from Madras Musings*, is a tad late on the Indian scene; Martin Cutts, who had been with the Mahers on that paper-shredding venture and had decided to go his own way a few years later, has already visited India a couple of times in the last five years. But if his experience is anything to go by, Plain English — or Plain Language — still has many years ahead of it before it can make an impress in convention-bound, status-conscious India.

But while the Plain English gossellers struggle to make their voices heard in India, they do provide considerable entertainment in their introductory lectures and workshops. During the PEC's visit, John Wild did the honours at the British Council introduc-

tion, Maher opting out because he thought his Liverpoolian accent would make Plain English anything but plain.

Starting out with British headlines like "British Left waffles on Falkland Islands" and "23 year friendship ends at altar", Wild moved on to English variants that might not be understood elsewhere, like the Indian 'biodata' (which the British know by the Latin c.v.) and the time he asked an American matron in London where the nearest store was where he could get 'fags'! America provided other examples — like 'fiscal underachievers' for 'the poor' and 'vocationally relocated' for 'fired' — that enabled Wild to say "Think of the trees that died for them"! And then there was British MP who said in Parliament, "It is a myth that women get pregnant in order to have children".

All this certainly brought the house down. But looking at the audience at the 'curtain raiser' and the media persons at the workshop, MMM was not quite convinced we were going to have any plainer English or more careful use of words as a result of all this gosselling. More's the pity!

## In brief

★ When The Bookpoint, Orient Longman's bookshop, rather belatedly honoured V Abdulla, whose translation work from the Malayalam won the Yatra Award for Literature, 1996, *The Man from Madras Musings* noted Abdulla, who headed Longman's in Madras, was joined at the head table by Sujit Mukherjee, who once headed Longman's publishing programme from the company's Hyderabad headquarters. Together they had pioneered as English paperbacks, under Longman's Sangam imprint, translations of vernacular novels. But, as Abdulla pointed out, he wondered whether any translator in those days got royalties of more than three figures in the Seventies! Today, he paid tribute, Mini Krishnan of Macmillan's — who had started with Longman's — had "created history" with her translation series that was earning handsome royalties for authors. But leading Malayalam novelist MT Vasudevan Nair had the last word. Malayalam translations from other languages had commenced from 1922 and till now over 7000 Indian and foreign works had been translated into Malayalam, with translators earning substantial royalties. Why, MMM wonders, are Tamil publishers unable to make that kind of headway?

★ Madras Naturalists' Society's Dr V Shantharam, *The Man from Madras Musings* is happy to find, is making life interesting at the KFI's Rishi Valley Education Centre near Madanapalle. The RVEC not only has a unique Department of Bird Studies, Ecology and Natural History, it is also offering short-term courses in one of Shantharam's favourite subjects, Ornithology. A home study course in Ornithology (intermediate level) is being offered to promote "Environmental Education with birds as basis". Amongst the targeted 'students' are housewives who will learn about avian biology, saving endangered birds, habitat preservation and field ornithology.

★ Chennai's well-known author and film producer Tim Murari tells *The Man from Madras Musings* that when he was in England recently (in connection with trying to make his second full-length feature film), he ran into an old friend at the British Film Institute who has an enormous archives of cricket films going back to the first days cricket was filmed. He asked Tim to look around in India for any early cricket film — friendlies, household games,

matches... in fact, ANY cricket footage at all from the early years of filming cricket. And Tim Murari (Tel : 6422617) would be glad to hear from anyone who has any such footage, amateur or professional.

★ The Forest Department, *The Man from Madras Musings* is told, has brought out a booklet on the Guindy National Park, with historical material as well as descriptions of the Park's wealth. Copies are available at the Wildlife Warden's Office in the DMS compound — itself an endangered location. MMM hopes that the next such effort will be a booklet on the reserves and potential sanctuaries of the Department's Madras Circle — places like the threatened Adyar Creek Reserve and the Nannangalam Reserve Forest.

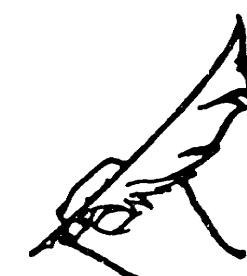
## Business briefs

★ *The Man from Madras Musings* was fascinated by the juxtaposition of two stories in a local newspaper recently. One story was headlined "Government to call for fresh tender for canal clean-up" and the story just below it was headlined "TTDC to go in for 'franchise' system". In the case of the first story, it was reported that TWO YEARS after plans for the cleaning up of nine waterways of extent 83 km had been formulated, the Government had, after two tenders, still not been able to decide on a consultant for the project! MMM wonders whether franchising six TTDC properties will be done faster. In the case of the canal clean-up, certificates of previous experience in such a consultancy was sought; MMM hopes that they will be insisted on in the case of those bidding for the TTDC franchises. If that top-of-the-scale experience is not available, the six properties will remain as they are: as badly maintained as all TTDC properties.

★ One IITian who did not go abroad is M.S. Srinivasan, Secretary, Industries. This engineer from IIT, Madras, who chose to become a Civilian, is the man responsible, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears, for pushing Tamil Nadu ahead in the Information Technology race. The TIDEL information technology park, the Government's decision to make the State 100% computer literate, the setting up of cyber stations in 1000 villages in the next few years are all believed to be the result of Srinivasan's interaction with the Chief Minister. Together, MMM hears, they aim to make the State the No. 1 Information Technology centre in the country. At the moment, Chennai has 51 of the country's 430 top software companies, trailing Mumbai's 115, Bangalore's 87, and Delhi and environs' 70. Hyderabad has 37, with Chandrababu Naidu determined to change that. But Tamil Nadu now appears committed to going into top gear.

— MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Why Round Tana?

How did Round Tana derive its name? Was there a police outpost there at some point of time? The name has stuck so much so even in the southern most districts of Tamil Nadu that any roundabout is referred to as a Rot nd Tana.

S. Rajan  
D-3, Nand Coop Soc  
Old Padra Road  
Vadodra 390 020.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I'm stumped, but perhaps another reader has an answer. May we look forward to it?

### The biggest slum?

The article by Hiramalini Seshadri (MM, October 1st) on the city losing its lustre was revealing.

Years ago was predicted by some that Madras would be the biggest slum in the world by 2000 AD. We are not very far from that.

I have been living in T Nagar for more than 40 years. But for rescue operations by organisations like Exnora, for whose services the house owners have to pay, we would have been drowned by garbage by now.

Our once wonderful Marina Beach is being converted into a graveyard. If only some of our MLAs bring forth a resolution in the State Assembly that there should be a permanent ban on erecting memorials for VIPs on the Marina we would be achieving something to boast of.

K. Krishnaswami  
31, Vaidyarama Street  
T Nagar  
Chennai 600 017.

### Wonderful restoration

I was thrilled to see the beautiful photograph of the restored DGP's Office (Police Headquarters) glorying in the blaze of lights at night (MM, September 16th). The picture by photographer Rajind N Christy was simply superb.

I am sure I shall be voicing the feelings of many of your readers when I say that but for your initiative and sustained interest in the restoration of the historic buildings

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

● Requests for copies of *Madras Musings* and all intimations about changes of address should be addressed to the Circulation Dept., *Madras Musings*, c/o M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, MADRAS-600 006.

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.....

Note: Overseas postage extra. Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Gulf: Rs. 375/year. US & Europe: Rs 425/year. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

*Madras Musings* is now also on the web at  
[www.lokavani-hallmark.com](http://www.lokavani-hallmark.com)

# Further shock — Madras

This is complementary and supplementary to 'Future Shock — Madras (MM, October 1st).

ROADS: All roads bearing foreign names will be 'Tamilised'. Pantheon Road will be called, 'Paruthi Kythari Salai' (Cotton Handloom Road), Coats Road, 'Male Sattai Salai' (Upper Clothing Road), etc.

POLITICAL PARTIES: Several parties taking processions out in different parts in the city will be a daily affair. There will be scores of political parties and whom to believe, whom to disbelieve, will be a public dilemma.

VEHICULAR TRAFFIC: With lorries nonchalantly speeding and autos zig-zagging through crowded routes, scooter riders

will require not only helmets, but also body armour. Chain snatchers will be using metal-melting gadgets against this armour. Traffic signals will not apply to government owned buses and the density of vehicular traffic will ensure a speed limit of 2kph.

MAKE UP FOR MARINA: It will be modernised as a crematorium for all political leaders. That will also be recorded in the *Guiness Book of Records*.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: The moment a woman discovers she is pregnant, she and her husband will rush not to the doctor but to several schools to register their child for pre-LKG classes.

TV SHOWS: To enhance the so-called 'entertainment' as-

Calm, cool and collected, the wise think and act. That is a lesson to all.

N. Rajagopalan, I.A.S., (RTD.)  
No.3, 24th Cross St  
Indira Nagar  
Chennai 600 020.

### Gay in a way!

The piece on the GAY Professor correctly pictures today's educational scene. May I add more hilarity to that scene with these true incidents?

A Professor in his welcome speech was praising the VC who was visiting the college. "Today is a Red Light Day," he exclaimed! The other shocking episode was when I was interviewing postgraduates. I suddenly found one interviewee was only a graduate. When I asked him how was it that he had applied for the post, part came his reply, "Sir, I am also a P.G. — a Postal Graduate (Correspondence Graduate)".

Such is the present calibre of faculty and staff. My only concern is that the calibre will grow worse in the years to come.

K. Venkatasubramanian  
"Mira House"  
5, Subramania Nagar Cross St  
Rengarajapuram  
Kodambakkam  
Chennai 600 024

### More nostalgia

I found the 'nostalgia' piece in *MM* October 16th, very informative. This feature should appear more regularly and should feature places like Triplicane, Mylapore, Adayar, T Nagar, Saidapet, Parry's, Royapuram and Moore Market which have vanished.

This will enable older readers, wherever they reside now, to recall those memorable days they had spent elsewhere and will also enable the present generation to know about the fascinating past of Madras.

Abdul Jameel  
19, I Floor, R.O.B. 6th St  
Royapettah, Chennai 600 014

### Exempt Senior Citizens

Senior citizens, generally those above 65 or 70 years, either due to physical infirmities or lack of proper assistance, need a telephone to communicate with their family doctor or the pharmacist, or a friend or a relative. To them, a telephone is an essential part of life.

They deserve exemption from the proposed hike in the telephone tariff.

P.V. Rama Rau  
2, Crescent Street  
Seethamma Colony  
Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018

### A blind eye

Having travelled the length and breadth of our country, I have found conditions in almost all cities no different from what we see in Madras. We expect miracles to take place in our city and fail to see the degree of improvements that have come to stay. Ask anyone from any other city — and he will say the same thing that we say of our city.

Mentality-wise, we take pride in degrading our city more than others in other cities.

Edwin Sundaram  
"Susheel Kunj"  
Plot no. 81/82, New Thillai Nagar  
Maruthamalai Road  
P.N. Pudur Post  
Coimbatore 641 041

### Cleaning up after...

To the pertinent suggestions in *MM* for improving our city, I would like to add one more.

During my daily early morning walks I find many dog-lovers taking their pets out to allow the dogs to relieve themselves on the road, often in front of other houses. It is not fair for owners to allow their pets to defecate on a neighbour's door steps on the roads, leaving a stink and related health hazards.

A nephew visiting from New York says that it is mandatory there that the dirt must be cleared by the owner then and there and deposited in the nearest protected bin.

This will enable older readers, wherever they reside now, to recall those memorable days they had spent elsewhere and will also enable the present generation to know about the fascinating past of Madras.

K. Muthuswami  
14, Vijaya Raghava Road  
1st Street, T. Nagar  
Chennai 600 017.

### 'Knowing your roots'

The views contained in 'Let there be light' (MM August 16th) are commendable. If the suggestion is taken up seriously and implemented faithfully, it will certainly create an awareness and

pride about our cultural heritage etc in students. But highly informative and interesting books on Districts, States etc. would have to be written by experts. Naturally it will take time to implement the good suggestion.

In the meantime, Doordarshan through its various regional centres and with all the facilities at its command, can embark upon a project: "Know your city/town/district/state country etc". Considering the wide range of the mass/visual media and its influence on the impressionable younger generation, the dream of the Editor of *MM* in regard to educating our younger generation about our cultural heritage etc. can be realised sooner this way.

SINGARA CHENNAI: We'll continue to speak about it from every street corner.

K.S. Sampath  
51A, Sir RK Shanmugam Road  
KK Nagar, Chennai 600 078.

pride about our cultural heritage etc in students. But highly informative and interesting books on Districts, States etc. would have to be written by experts. Naturally it will take time to implement the good suggestion.

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T.M. Sundararaman  
No. 19, Nallappan Street  
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.

### Foreign mail rates

Isn't it surprising that the foreign mail postal rates have not been increased during the last two financial years, whereas the inland postal rates have been increased enormously this financial year?

C.A. Reddi  
57, Rundalls Road  
Vepery, Chennai 600 007.

### More of the old

I am a regular reader of *Madras Musings*. It is really informative about 'Chennai', its past and present. Please provide more space in every issue for photographs of Old Madras (say, before Independence) and information about the city in those days.

R. Kumaran  
3/1, Kaveri Street  
Besant Nagar Extn.  
Chennai 600 090.

### MTC failures

Palavakkam is one of many areas which MTC does not serve properly. Even with a small suitcase to go to Central or Egmore station we are left at the mercy of auto rickshaws. Don't the MTC want to meet the public's demands for better transport facilities? If they cannot improve the services, then let them candidly admit their failure and open the routes to private transport operators.

Bharat Hiteshi  
Off. Periyar Street  
3/4A, Gandhi Nagar  
Palavakkam, Chennai 600 041.



# Banking scene reflects industry growth

*But is credit adequate criterion to claim a rosy scene?*

Historically, Tamil Nadu has been in the forefront of banking development in India. Since the establishment of the Bank of Madras in 1843, a large number of banks, big and small have been established in various parts of the state. One distinct feature of banking development in the state was the emergence of small nidhis in towns and cities far from the capital. Though many of them perished, they developed banking habits especially among small traders and middle class families. That these habits have survived is evident.

states like West Bengal where 79 per cent of the credit is deployed in Calcutta alone and no other centre outside Calcutta figures in the top 100 list.

Coimbatore, the second important industrial centre in the state, has a total credit level of Rs. 2768 crore. Textiles, textile machinery and other light engineering industries have earned for Coimbatore a prominent place in the industrial map of the state.

## Geography of credit expansion

A study of the relationship between the geophysical features of different regions and the flow of bank credit would

Of the top 100 banking centres in India, Tamil Nadu has 13 centres, including Chennai. This is a remarkable achievement indicating balanced industrial development

● by **N.K. Thingalaya**  
(former MD, Syndicate Bank)

and good spatial dispersion of banking business in the state. The state has made rapid strides in industrial development and one of its redeeming features is the emergence of many growth centres outside Chennai.

Chennai ranks third among the top 100 with 708 branches and an outstanding credit level of Rs.20,749 crore as on March 1998. There is heavy concentration of bank credit in the capital city as it accounts for 55 per cent of the total credit lent in the entire state. It may be noted that the credit deployment scenario in this state is much better than that of other

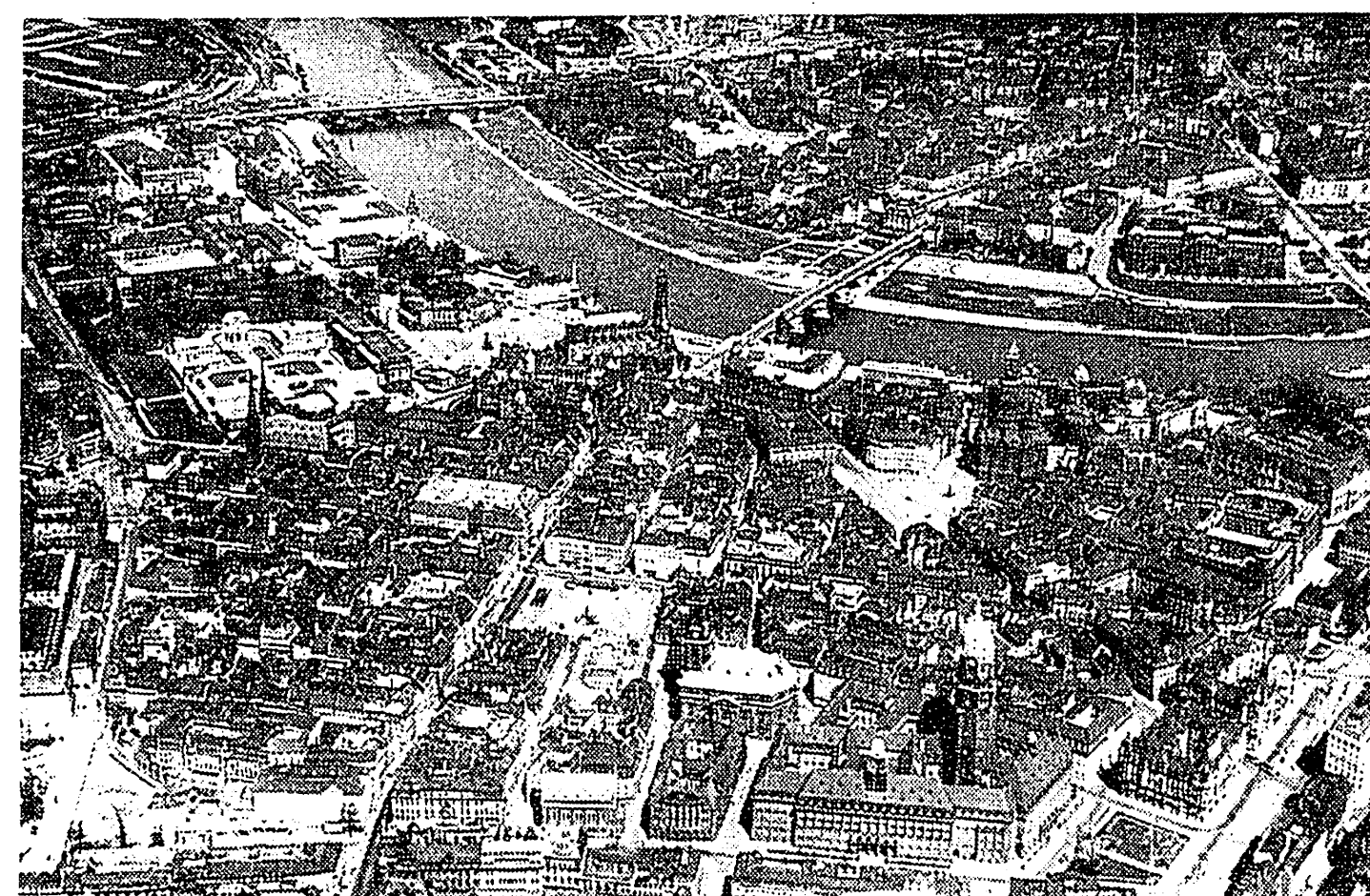
be fascinating. It may be of immense use to planners, entrepreneurs and bankers.

Of the 13 in the top 100 Tamil Nadu centres, as many as nine are textile centres with a predominance of power loom and agro-based industries.

Tirupur, the small hosiery town not far from Coimbatore, has catapulted into prominence in recent years. Ranked 17, it has overtaken other bigger textile centres in the state like Madurai, Salem or Erode. With only 47 branches, the banks operating here have lent Rs. 1430 crore, enabling Tirupur to achieve remarkable progress on the export front.

## Prominent banking centres in Tamil Nadu as on March 1998

Name of the Centre	Rank among Top 100	Credit outstanding (Rs. in crore)	Branches
Chennai	3	20749	708
Coimbatore	10	2768	167
Tirupur	17	1430	47
Madurai	28	828	113
Salem	36	639	69
Tiruchirappalli	51	456	90
Erode	57	416	42
Tuticorin	83	263	39
Dindigul	86	250	28
Rajapalayam	90	241	17
Indunagar	93	234	1
Sivakasi	96	228	15
Karur	97	226	27



For the first time since Madras Musings started nearly eight years ago, our OLD and NEW are from abroad. There are, naturally, Chennai connections. The pictures were sent to us by City Planner Hilmar v. Lojewski, who played a major role in the seminar on 'Sustainable Urban Development' held recently at the Max Mueller Bhavan, Chennai. At it, he caught up with both the OLD and NEW as well as with your Editor's book, Madras — Its Past and Its Present. And most important of all, the pictures demonstrate how the OLD can be preserved in the NEW if there is a will. Therein lies a lesson for all of us in Chennai. Remember, Dresden, seen in our OLD taken pre-World War II and in our NEW today, was virtually flattened in the worst air raids of World War II — and out of those ashes, phoenix-like, it rose, restoring faithfully many of its old buildings, which may be seen clearly if these pictures get the close examination they deserve.

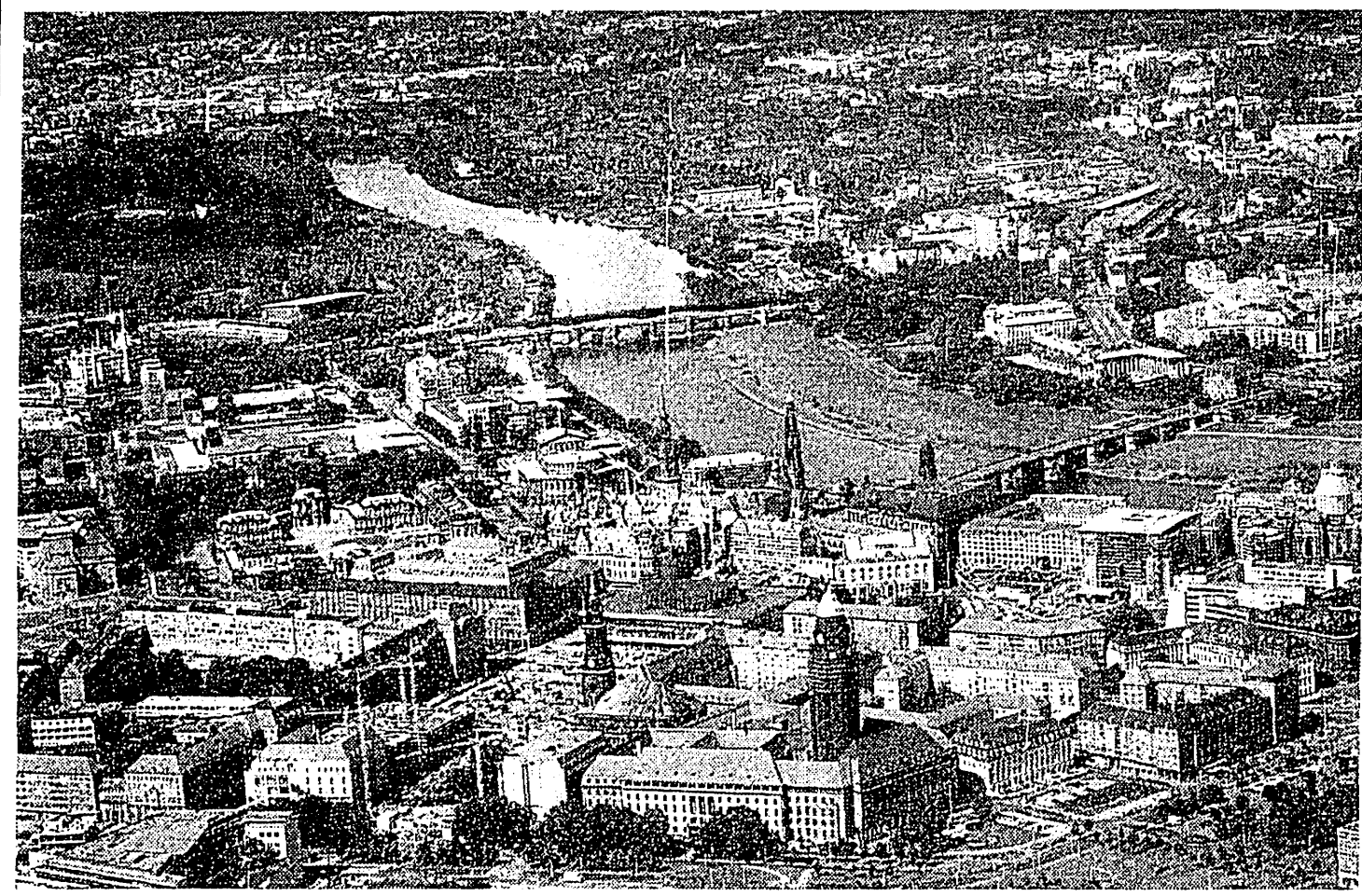
## THE OLD... & THE NEW

Writes Hilmar Lojewski, "The juxtaposition of photographs (as in Madras — Its Past and its Present) is a technique we applied in Kathmandu where we organised in 1993 the country's best-visited photo exhibition (more than 25,000 visitors including His Majesty) and lifted the issue of conservation from the discussion level of some expat-experts to the local public. We exhibited pictures taken with the same technique as described so precisely by Harry Miller.

"After returning to Dresden I can only express my best wishes for Madras safeguarding her characteristic urban landscape and architectural heritage."

Will someone follow-up on the suggestion and organise a 'Madras — Its Past and its Present' exhibition and seek a crowd of not 25,000 but 100,000 — including the Chief Minister? Will INTACH? Held in Senate House, it might even generate some funds for the restoration of that building?

— The Editor



Salem at 36, has besides the traditional textile industries, the public sector steel plant. Madurai has a surplus of bank branches — 113 in number. Ranked 28th, it has received Rs. 828 crore of advances. The temple city, also an important trading centre, has Rs. 1155 crore of bank deposits.

Tiruchirappalli has the advantage of having a heavy industry of the public sector besides traditional small scale industries. Rajapalayam, procuring cotton from Gujarat and elsewhere, has expanded its spindleage, partly with Japanese collaboration. Opulence amidst poor basic amenities

can be seen here as in other similar towns.

Karur, at 97, is producing finer varieties of textile products for the export market. Two of the well-managed private sector banks are located in this town.

Sivakasi is a splendid example of small enterprises becoming big. Cottage industries like safety matches, fire crackers and offset printing have thrived in this sleepy town. Tuticorin, the port town, has advances of Rs. 263 crore.

It must however, be pointed out that there has been a quantitative assessment without looking into the qualitative as-

pects of credit disbursement. The prevalence of non-performing assets in the total outstanding credit is likely to vitiate the ranking of centres. The available data are not amenable for taking up a detailed qualitative assessment of credit disbursement.

Regarding the availability credit for industrial development in Tamil Nadu, the role played by the omnipresent non-bank financial companies has to be recognised. These have played a complementary role in assisting the private enterprises to grow.

— (Courtesy: Industrial Economist)

## When the rains come

# Harvest water, end scarcity

A major problem, and a perpetual one, in Chennai, nay, Tamil Nadu and the rest of the country, is scarcity of water. If the Government really thought about the people it represents, rainwater harvesting would be given utmost importance to solve this problem.

Rainwater harvesting will not only provide an answer to the drinking water problem but also enhance the fertility of the soil. In fact, rainwater harvesting should be made obligatory while constructing new houses and buildings and its implementation encouraged in existing constructions. Each and every member elected to the Assembly should also ensure that water management programmes are implemented in his or her constituency.

## Methods to be adopted in cities

— Percolation pits should be constructed.  
— Stormwater drains should be designed with two separate segments, one to accommodate water from houses, the other, water

from the roads. The segment on the side of the road should be covered with perforated slabs and have percolation pits (their depth depending on the soil condition) at regular intervals.  
— The run-off water, in a particular area, during the monsoon, can be utilised for groundwater recharging by diverting it into suitably designed recharge structures in public parks, playgrounds, stadiums, airports, railway stations, temple tanks etc.

## Methods to be adopted in villages

— Construction of percolation pits in agricultural lands for gradual percolation.  
— Construction of small bunds on slope areas, to slow down the run-off water and help easy percolation.  
— Run-off to be diverted into a large well through a baby well and filtering tank (to avoid silt depositing in the well). Run-off water can also

be diverted to nearby ponds and lakes. A percolation well can be constructed nearby to tap the water recharged.

— Making use of defunct wells, bores and hand pumps as artificial rechargers. Water harvesting through a ditch and furrow system can be used where the recharged water contains high loads of suspended sediments. In this system, water is distributed to a series of ditches and furrows which are closely spaced to obtain maximum contact area. Ditch and furrow systems can be designed to suit the topographic and geological conditions that exist at a potential artificial recharge site.  
— Construction of bandharas on river beds. Bandharas are walls of concrete or impermeable soil, built across a river, but below the riverbed, at regular intervals. They create underground reservoirs and recharge the surrounding area.

● by  
**K R Gopinath**

# Making rainwater meet your needs

Even if only 2% of the Indian land area is used to collect rainwater, it would be adequate to meet the country's total needs, experts feel. The best possible methods for such collection and use are:

- Artificial recharge of groundwater
- Harvesting of rainwater
- Recycling used water
- Minimising wastage and usage
- Increasing the capacity of storage

## Artificial recharge

● Artificial recharge is the process of augmenting the underground water table by artificial infiltration of rainwater and surface run-off. This is made possible by digging percolation pits. These are 4' x 4' x 4' pits filled with small pebbles or brick jelly and river sand, covered with perforated

concrete slabs. One such percolation pit is necessary for every 250 sqft area.

Due to severe depletion of groundwater levels, many open wells, bore wells, and hand pumps have dried up. Instead of not using them, they can be developed as recharge wells. Run-off water can be diverted into them after filling them with pebbles and river sand. There should also be effective arrangements for desilting before diverting the water into these wells.

## Rainwater harvesting

● A house on a one ground plot gets about 700 litres of rainwater and in multistoreyed flats, where the effective space per resident may be around 50 sq.m., rainfall provides about 100 to 150 litres of water on a rainy day, according to the statistics available. How do we save this water.

Wherever the surface is paved, percolation pits must be made to allow more water to enter the aquifer, the water-retaining layer of rock or soil in the earth.

Water collecting on roofs can be drained into a well or a sump through a filtering tank connected by PVC pipe. A valve system incorporated above the ground level will enable the discharge of the initial dirty water. The ground level near the gate should be raised to retain as much water as possible inside the compound. Alternatively, construct a sloping gutter across the gate and direct the rushing water to percolation pit. The storm drains inside the premises should have 6" boundary walls and, wherever there is a slope, a dwarf wall should be built to a height of 1 ft.

(Continued on Page 7)



A terrace garden in Anna Nagar, showing plantain trees growing on the roof and new 'beds' being got ready (on the left). (Photograph by Rajind N Christy.)

# Gardens on the roofs

The terraces of Chennai houses can be described as 'hot, hotter, hottest'. So it comes as a surprise when one enterprising person puts his terrace to fruitful use, growing vegetables and fruit.

C Chellapan, a retired IAS Officer and a resident of Anna Nagar, started this unique garden a few years ago and has made a concrete jungle bloom. All the plants are grown neatly on his terrace in about 100 pots. Using natural manure, he gets good yields. His yield of vegetables is so good that he gets what he needs for the house and also supplies vegetables to his friends and neighbours. He says that every house should have a garden on

base for these plants. Water and shade (as the plants are grown on the terrace) are important for the plants and should be ensured for vegetables like tomatoes, brinjal, onion, lettuce, curry leaf and herbs.

If you are not interested in vegetables and you want more colour in your life, you could even grow flowers ... yes, flowering shrubs, climbers and even cacti can find a place on your terrace. Climbers if planted properly will project the plants. One piece of advice from the Horticulture Department is that the plants should be repotted once a year.

The month of Aadi (July-

● by **Jagannath Narayan**

the terrace, particularly to grow green leafy vegetables. The variety of vegetables he grows ranges from brinjals and snake gourds to spinach.

In addition, he has a traditional garden along the sides of his house. Here can be found a drumstick tree of Jaffna stock, yielding an abundant crop of very long and thick drumsticks. He has an Indian gooseberry tree in full yield and several coconut trees too.

With some care, anybody can have a rewarding 'kitchen garden' on the terrace, he says. According to the Assistant Director of Horticulture, Anna Nagar, "Where there is no space, plants can be grown only in pots made of clay or plastic, whichever is available, with holes to allow the water to drain. Good soil should be used for healthy plants with firm roots."

The soil should be loose and not clay-like, so that the roots get air. Red earth, compost manure or leaf mould form a good

August) is when you should start your terrace or conventional garden. The Horticulture Department offers seeds and garden material as well as advice. There are, however, in the city, even bigger terrace gardens than these 'home gardens'. The terrace of the Sanmar Group Headquarters at Cathedral Road has a rooftop lawn, which was laid in 1991. Sankar Prasad is the horticulturist who helped in the planning. The idea of a rooftop lawn cropped up when the air coolers that were jutting out had to be hidden. To waterproof the building, a special type of plastic sheet was used as the base with about 3 inches of soil. Mrs Chandra Sankar, wife of N Sankar, Chairman, Sarmar Group, says, "Any house or organisation can have a rooftop lawn provided the soil is heavy and properly laid. To ensure that this is done well, the architect has to be told earlier, so that the necessary provisions can be made."

(Continued on Page 8)



## Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Quizmaster V.V.RAMANAN'S questions are from the period October 16th to 31st. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.)

1. Why was Fatima Bi of Balva village, Kurnool District in the news recently?
2. What record did Everest mountaineer Kaji Sherpa set on October 17th?
3. The sixth centenary celebrations of which important Vaishnava math began on
4. Hamid Ali Khan, a popular hero turned villain of yesteryears passed away on October 20th. How is he better known?

5. Which 'spicy' pop singer was appointed the U.N. Population Fund's 'Goodwill Ambassador' recently?

6. What much anticipated financial decision as regards shares and stocks was announced by the Government recently?

7. Which England wicketkeeper, also an accomplished artist, hung up his gloves recently?

8. Who is the winner of the Booker Prize this year?

9. Name the former India captain and spinner who passed away on October 28th?

10. In what Olympiad did R. Mathew bag gold recently?

11. Who recently became the oldest astronaut to return to space?

12. Who has been awarded the prestigious Indira Gandhi National Integration award for this year?

13. The recitation of which Vedic hymn snowballed into a controversy?

14. Who headed the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa which released a highly critical report on October 19th?

15. Name the Delhi-based industrialist-politician arrested on October 20 as being Dawood Ibrahim's 'front man'

\* \* \*

16. A public service to help passengers who had been tobbed was inaugurated at Chennai Central on October 23rd what is it called?

17. Which Chennai-based bank recently celebrated its Silver Jubilee?

18. What new equipment to control unruly crowds was acquired by the Police recently?

19. What new learning laboratories for the differently able, set up by the C.P. Ramaswami Iyer Foundation's Saraswathi Learning Centre, was inaugurated by Ms. Maneka Gandhi recently?

20. The Government has given the go-ahead to introduce what new public transport in the City?

(Answers on Page 8)

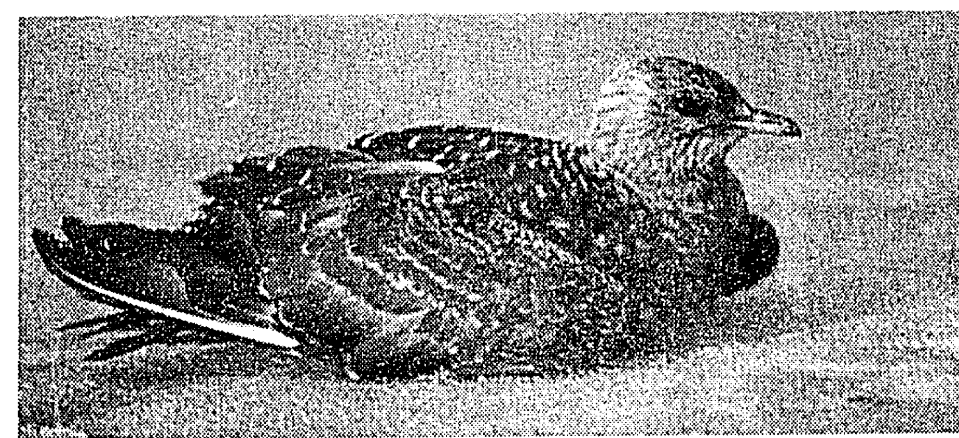
## Nature Corner

# Skua-watching on the Coromandel

At about 5 on a September afternoon in 1997, I was walking along the beach at Fisherman's Cove when I caught sight of an unusual bird. It was generally dark, a little smaller and superficially similar in plumage to a juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull, but showed a flash of white in its primaries. It was instantly recognisable as a skua species. The bird flew past me and landed on the beach where it was immediately harassed by House Crows. I walked up to the bird which was clearly exhausted; not only did it allow me to get within ten

feet but also put up little effort to see off the crows.

As I knew that skuas are rare birds in Indian waters I rushed back to the hotel to find my camera before the light faded. The bird was still on the beach when I returned, still being harassed by the crows. It allowed me to approach very closely again and I was able to take a number of photographs. The bird flew a short distance on a couple of occasions when it showed palish barred upper tail covers. It eventually flew another 50 meters to the north



The Arctic Skua spotted by the author on the beach at Fisherman's Cove. (Picture courtesy the author and Blackbuck.)

and I decided to leave it to its fate. There was no sign of the bird on the following morning.

The skua's bill had a pale lower and grey upper mandibles with a small sharp dark hook at the tip. Its head was pale brown and streaked, and showed only the slightest traces of a dark cap. Its eye was dark with a small dark spot to the front. Its upper part feathering was generally a warm brown. Its breast was streaked and similar in coloration to the head.

# A little warmth for a cobra

Ever since I can remember, my father (Harry Miller) had dined into my brother Robin's and my heads that snakes are more afraid of you than you are of them, and that they will only bite if provoked. He said, "Just stand absolutely still, and it will go away."

Since I was a tiny tot, Rom Whittaker, of the Madras Snake Park and the Crocodile Bank, has been a close family friend.

One day, when I was about nine, Robin, Daddy and I were standing in one of the snake pits at the Madras Snake Park. My father was showing a male to the crowd and explaining something about it, when suddenly I saw a cobra coming towards me.

Remembering Daddy's words of caution, I stood rock still. The

cobra came towards me, reached my feet, coiled itself comfortably around my ankles and then, after a while, moved away.

Snakes, being cold-blooded, love the feel of human warmth, which was why it had coiled itself around my ankles.

Even now, when I think of it, I think if it had not been for the countless times Daddy had explained the habits of snakes to my brother and me, I might have been killed. For, seeing the cobra, I might have got afraid, and started to run. That would have frightened it and it would have made its fatal strike.

— Nisha Miller

EDITOR'S NOTE: Coincidentally, Madras Musings found a postscript to this in an article by Harry Miller that appeared in the latest issue of Blackbuck, reproduced from the Indian Express of 11.9.76. Introducing an article on 'Killer Whales', Harry stated:

'Photographers — other than the studio variety — lead interesting, often glamorous lives, but sometimes perilous ones too. Through my work, I was at one time in such constant danger of being bitten by the cobras I was photographing that I was heavily insured against death, specifically by cobra bite, by Lloyds of London, who told me that next to film stars' legs and bosoms they could not recall issuing a more curious policy.'

# What's wrong with Chennai?

(Continued from Page 1)

the city has never been as filthy as it is today.

It is all well and good to talk of roads and bridges that are being widened, flyovers and subways that are being built, drainage that is being laid,

houses that are being constructed and schools that are being improved. All these very high profile activities are undoubtedly needed. But none of them cleans the city, reduces the stench or provides better public health. In fact, many of them only compound the problem. The snail's pace of completion only leads to accumulation of mud, new trenches that become receptacles for stagnant water when the temporary cover is washed away or eroded by overuse, and garbage landfill being redistributed over the neighbourhood as con-

struction over it takes its own time. You only have to see the area in front of the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, where roadbuilding has taken a few years, to see a living symbol of all this right under the eyes of Authority!

Privatisation of garbage collection and recycling have been mentioned as a solution for years. Are years needed to take a decision? If drains are laid or roads dug up, do you need a year or more to cover the trenches in a permanent manner? And if you think something should be done about the city's waterways and open drains, do you need half a dozen high-powered reports over the last 25 years and a year and more to assess the latest of them before saying 'No'? If this is really the way to go about things, then there is something rotten in the metropolis of

Chennai, from leadership to citizen's level. And that should be a matter of concern for all four million of us.

The answers to this sorry state of affairs are not, we feel, new construction or 'City of Neglect' pictures or horror stories. It is enforcing discipline, ensuring timebound implementation and making sustainability second nature. That can only come with a leadership committed to all three, watchdog citizens' groups, a Press concerned enough for its home city to monitor it on a daily basis and a citizenry that cares for the city and can get angry about its neglect. Will we ever get that combination? Even a little bit of each might put us on the road to achieving what Bangalore and Hyderabad have achieved.

John Aldridge,  
Bristol, England  
\* \* \*

Blackbuck Consulting Editor V. Santharam adds:

Skuas, possibly Arctic Skuas, were also seen by me on a voyage from Port Blair to Madras in March 1988. The nearest sighting was approximately 10 nautical miles from Madras.

(Courtesy: Blackbuck)

# Libraries, old & new, both splendid

A little known library in Tamil Nadu is the Pennington Public Library, which was established in Srivilliputtur in 1875. It may be located in the back of beyond, but it is one of the best libraries in the State.

It was named after J.B. Pennington, the then Collector of Tirunelveli. Some local philanthropic- and literary-minded men raised money through donations, bought a small site in the heart of the town and built some shops to let out. The rent collected from the shops was used for the upkeep of the library and an elementary school for girls.

Between 1936 and 1957, many blocks of shops were added and Pennington Market developed at a cost of Rs.5 lakh. The increased income from the shops was used to develop the library.

In response to the demand, the Management added an auditorium to the library to provide an opportunity to the public to attend lectures and seminars. The Pennington Auditorium was opened in 1962 by Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer.

In 1970, a new library building was constructed at a cost of Rs.1.5 lakh to accommodate the increasing stock and the promising number of readers. In 1975, the Centenary Building was added north of

the Sattur Road at a cost of Rs.2.5 lakh.

The library today has more than 30,000 books and 100 magazines. The reference section is considered to be one of the best in the South of Tamil Nadu. The library itself is a

● by  
A Staff Reporter

landmark in Srivilliputtur, a model to other small towns.

Yet another model library, but a library of today, is the library of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam. It is among the country's leading specialist libraries. And as befitting that status holds:

62,000 books, 26,000 back volumes of journals, 1,95,000 reports, 13,000 standards and 655 journals.

It provides On-line Public Access Catalogue and an Automated Circulation System.

Its CD-ROM Database collection includes INIS, ASTM Standards, Materials Science Citation Index, Current Contents etc.

It has a Multimedia Authoring and On-line Information Retrieval System, a Digital Library Initiative (DLI), Web Authoring and a translation service (French and German), apart from photography, binding and similar services.

URL: <http://www.icrar.ernet.in>

(Courtesy: MALA Newsletter)

# Rainwater to meet your needs

(Continued from Page 5)

to ensure that the rainwater stagnates for sometime and seeps into the soil.

Wherever there is open ground, the topsoil should be removed and replaced with river sand to allow percolation of rainwater. Ponds nearby can also be used as rechargers. Run-off water can be diverted into them. A production well can be sunk nearby to tap the recharged water.

Recycling used water

● Used water can be recycled to get the maximum out of it. Bath-

ing water, for instance, can be directed to a percolation pit or to trees near the house. But the connecting pipe should have a 'U' bend which will act as a water seal and prevent bad odour and insects coming into the bathroom. In flats, bathing water can be collected in an underground cistern, then pumped into a treatment plant and subsequently used for flushing toilets. Sewage water can be separated and reclaimed through the Soil Aquifer Treatment. This water can be used to recharge dry rivers and for irrigation purposes.

Minimising wastage

● RAINWATER HARVESTING SHOULD BE MADE MANDATORY IN HOUSES AND FLATS. Modern gadgets like air-assisted flushes, air-assisted showers, front-loading washing machines and flow-limiting taps must be used to lower wastage and maximise use of water.

Increasing storage capacity

● Nature is kind to us. The problem is that we are not responding to it in a matching manner. If we increase the storage capacity to save the rainwater in monsoons,

we won't have to search for water in the drought seasons. Artificial tanks should be created to retain water and allow slow percolation.

A personal note

● I applied water harvesting techniques in my house when we faced a water shortage. My neighbour followed suit and is a tension-free man as far as water is concerned. Rainwater harvesting is the best solution to overcome water problems, whether relating to drinking water or increasing soil fertility.

(For more information, K.R. Gopinath: 6267552, 6283831).

# For Sustainability

(Continued from Page 1)

ther workshops on them in followed. Small trial projects were identified to be carried out and a people's participatory approach introduced. Perhaps the projects were too small or it was just a case of that Indian malaise, the inability to sustain an effort, whatever the reason, the interest in the pilot projects waned and progress was desultory. Now the SCP itself has come to the end of its UN-sponsored mandate and what little interest there was in those projects is unlikely to be sustained.

Meanwhile, the CMDA has woken up to the fact that the Project is at an end, that while it existed the SCP did show some merit, and that therefore ways must be found to sustain it. One view of that end is that if the pilot projects had been bigger, sustained public partici-

pation might have been greater. With Government committed to the 'Cleaner Waterways' Project, a people's component could be added to it if further UN sponsorship and support were forthcoming. Another view is that this is something that the CMDA can do on its own and in the process demonstrate not only that it is more citizen friendly but also that it does not need external inputs to sustain a project of this nature, which is in effect an institutionalised process of regular dialogue between the people and officialdom.

While this debate continues, the final dotting of the i's and crossing of the t's of the SCP experience is underway. But all that will be wasted effort unless a means is discovered of sustaining a Project that was meant to sustain civic activity in Chennai.

— Umi Abdullah

# Cookery Corner

KOYIADA

Ingredients  
250g chicken breast  
1/2 tsp chilli powder  
1 big onion (chopped)  
1/2 tsp ginger paste  
1/4 tsp garam masala powder  
Oil for frying  
100g refined flour (maida)  
1/4 tsp turmeric powder  
4 green chillies (chopped)  
1/2 tsp garlic paste  
2 tbs chopped coriander leaves  
Salt to taste

Method

Cook the chicken with chilli powder, turmeric powder and salt. When cooked, remove the flesh and chop finely.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil and saute the onion and chillies till soft. Add ginger paste and garlic paste and stir well. Add the chopped chicken, coriander leaves and garam masala powder. Stir well and remove from fire.

Make a smooth dough with flour, salt and water. Keep aside for 15 minutes make small balls of dough and roll them out thinly. Cut ... out with a small round cutter (patty cutter). Place 2 teaspoons chicken fillong on one side and fold the other side to make it a half moon shape. Press the edges well and pinch to make an edge or press it with the back side of the fork. Finish all the *koyiada* the same way.

Deep fry in hot oil till light brown.

IRACHI PATHIL

Ingredients

400g wheat flour  
250g minced mutton  
2 big onions (sliced)  
1 tsp ginger paste  
2 tsp coriander powder  
1/4 tsp turmeric powder  
1 tsp garam masala powder  
Oil for frying  
100g maida  
2 hard boiled eggs  
4 green chillies (sliced)  
1 tsp garlic paste  
1/2 tsp chilli powder  
1 tbs chopped cashewnuts  
1 tsp aniseed powder  
4 tbs chopped coriander leaves  
Salt to taste



# A Dhronacharya but no award

(Continued from last fortnight)

"I always believed that whatever I did must be the best", the former Physical Director of Presidency College, P R Subramanian, still as active as ever at age 93, recently told me. And it wasn't long before I discovered that there was much he did. A multifaceted sports personality, Subbu, as he is called by everyone, excelled in hockey, boxing, athletics, swimming, rifle shooting and cricket, not only as a player but also as a trainer. He also became an expert in preparing cricket grounds, tennis courts, hockey fields and athletic tracks and introduced competitive sport at the college level in the 1930s.

In 1930, after assuming charge as the physical director of Presidency College, Subbu introduced competitive swimming among college students. There was only one annual competition in which about 30 to 40 participants lined up on the south bank of the Adyar River and competed in a 100 yards race, the distance not measured by tape but by an official walking the distance

along with the swimmers. He introduced a variety of strokes in local swimming circles and taught his wards freestyle, butterfly, breast stroke and back stroke.

Subbu was also the first to start boxing at college level. This too was in the thirties. He and Oxford Blue C V N Sastri coached boxers at the Presidency College and at Engineering College. "It was very difficult to rope in students for boxing, as they feared getting hurt.

● by G. Krishnan

Their parents too were against their children taking to boxing for they suffered from the same fear," recalls Subbu. It was largely due to Subbu's efforts that an annual boxing competition between Presidency college and Engineering college was held. There were no proper boxing rings and the college library and workshop tables were converted into rings.

The boxers practised at Fyson Park in the Presidency College premises.

The University Training Corps had parade on weekends and everyone dispersed after the parade, but I stayed back and watched the European soldiers boxing. One day, they were short of boxers and I was asked to fill in and straightaway I knocked down a British soldier," recalls the nonagenarian, who still keeps himself fit by walking, exercising and yoga. A Sergeant Keenan and private Lindsay immediately took him under their wing and coached him. Subbu was Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee of the 23rd National Amateur Boxing Championships, held in Madras in 1977.

Among the colourful feathers in his cap is one for the marking of a quarter mile track (400 m) at the Marina grounds. The surveying Instructor at the Engineering College, W C Old, and that in physical education expert H C Buck were requested to mark the quarter mile track at the Marina, but gave up stating that the ground was too small. Subbu took their failure as a challenge, measured two straight tracks, and two semicircles by himself and prepared a track measuring the required 440 yards. Such was his confidence that he never left any stone unturned, when given a challenge.

A good athlete himself Subbu concentrated on running the quarter mile and very nearly qualified for the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In the Trials, he paid the price for not heeding his coach H C Buck's advice. After a training session



P S Subramaniam, (Subbu) today... wearing the tie the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association presented him in recognition of his services to cricket in Madras from 1930 to 1980... a Golden Jubilee award.

one day, he stayed back much against his coach's wish and continued to jog and jump with a friend. A torn ligament in his left knee was the consequence and Subbu had to give up athletics for life.

It was Subbu who prepared the tennis courts for the Davis Cup ties against Australia and Mexico. The venue for the Indo-Australia Davis Cup match was the Island Grounds in Madras. The Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Tennis Association, P L Reddy, was instructed by the All India Tennis Association to use soil from Porbander in Gujarat in the preparation of the courts. Subbu, a member of the Grounds Committee, was informed of these instructions. Using his expertise in soil, he prepared the tennis courts with soil from Madras. "The soil must be of the right type, the right mix, whether it be from Madras or elsewhere," explains Subbu.

Subbu has the distinction of encouraging women to take to sports seriously. He coached girls at the Women's Christian College, Queen Mary's College and Lady Willingdon Training

College, but only Anglo-Indian girls showed any interest.

Awards and accolades have come his way, recognising his immense contribution to sport in Madras. Buck National Award for Physical Education and Sport (1980), the special award by Annamalai University for his outstanding contribution to the cause of physical education and sport, and the L V R Foundation award for being an educationist and a physical director of repute (1991) were among the prominent ones. The Rotary Club of Madras honoured him with the title "Dhronacharya of Modern Days". But the Dhronacharya award at the national level was not given to him. "It is for coaches who specialise in one particular sport, whereas I coached many athletes in a variety of games," Subbu explains it away. And adds, "No regrets."

Note: Subbu does not remember the dates or the years in which various events took place.

(concluded)

## GARDENS ON THE ROOF

(Continued from Page 5)

Horticulturist O T Ravindran echoes this thought. Architects need to plan their buildings properly for this, he says. Otherwise there will be seepage problems later. He also says that a factor that weighs heavily against rooftop gardens is the quality of cement. "It must be ensured that the cement conforms to the building specifications," he advises. "I did a rooftop garden for a couple of five star hotels about 15 years ago and I was satisfied with the results. But your architect must know what your plan is early and the right materials should be used", he warns.

## Answers to Quiz

1. An illiterate social worker, she was presented the coveted UN's 'Race against Poverty' Award by the Secretary General; 2. Fastest to climb Everest (in 20 hours, 24 minutes); 3. Ahobilam; 4. Ajit; 5. Geri Halliwell (formerly of Spice Girls); 6. Buy-back of shares; 7. Jack Russell; 8. Ian McEwan for Amsterdam; 9. Ghulam Ahmed; 10. International Astronomy Olympiad; 11. John Glenn; 12. Dr.

Abdul Kalam; 13. Saraswathi Vandan; 14. Nobel Laureate, Bishop Desmond Tutu; 15. Romesh Sharma.

\* \* \*

16. Global Angel; 17. Bharat Overseas Bank; 18. A water cannon costing Rs. 20 lakh; 19. Autism and Dyslexia laboratories; 20. The 'Vikram' autorickshaws designed to carry fire passengers.

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