WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

THE A THE A THE MUSINGS

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The champs remember the prootten founders of Madras... from left to right, dubash Beri Thimmappa, Venkatadri Nayak who granted the strip of sand to the East India Company, and Francis Day, Factor at Armagon, who accepted it, little realising what would develop from those small beginnings. These young children from Kavi Bharathi Vidyalaya, Tiruvottriyur, coursed the story of the founding imaginatively and had many thinking about how we had forgotten the founders. Hotograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

The founders recorded the founders of the foun

(By S Muthiah)

Tall it Madras, after the Madeiros or Madra family, or Chennai, after Chennakesava Nayak. But whatever you call it, the chances are that you, like the authorities from the time of John Company, have forgotten the founders. Not a building, not a park, not a road, not even an alley in the City is named after Francis Day or Beri Thimmappa or Andrew Cogan! Yet, without them, and that fortified warehouse they built and named Fort St George in 1640, there would have been no Madras. Nor Chennai!

Which is why I was delighted when what I thought was the best entry, at 'The Heritage of Chennai' competition and exhibition recently organised by INTACH proved to be a reenactment of the founding of the City and featured that forgotten trio. It was a brilliant little playlet, well costumed, by children in the 8-12 age group, and the star of the whole exhibition — by unanimous vote — was little dubash Beri Thimmappa, an eight-year-old from Class 4. That this tiny star was a girl came as a surprise, but what wowed everyone was

the poise with which she ran the show. If there were missed lines, she came in with the right cues. If there was confusion over the positions, she was there to fill the empty spaces. And if someone did not know what to do, she was on hand to tell them. I can well imagine dubash Thimmappa having had to play the same role when he introduced Francis Day to the fisherman Madarasen or to Venkatadri Nayak, prompting him at every step into a display of just the right form.

But apart from the dubash, the slickness of the production and the imaginative playing of alien roles by such young children, what makes me suggest that this little playlet should be staged by this group at every school in the city is the fact that here was a school that realised if you are going to talk about the heritage of a city, the first thing that you should show respect for is to its founding and its founders. By doing just this at INTACH's exhibition, the school showed all of us up, all of us, including the State's leadership of whatever political

hue, who have never bothered to respect the founders and never thought of celebrating a Founding Day. Would that what these children did sow the seeds for a greater recognition of the Founding and the Founders. Meanwhile, who will sponsor them on such a tour?

The school which proved a winner was a school I'd never heard of — nor had most others. Kavi Bharathi Vidyalaya, Tiruvottriyur, is only eight years old and has been adding a class every year since it started in an old, disused cinema theatre. But what didn't come as a surprise was the fact that those involved with its founding are the Boses of Royapuram who had helped establish the Ramanujan Museum. There obviously is a greater interest in heritage shown by the Boses than by most other people in the city, including the leadership. Would that there were more people like the Boses.

That 'The Founding of Madras' was not a one-off achievement was amply demonstrated by the fact that what I thought was the second best entry in the competition

Call for tougher traffic laws

Recalling a few vintage photographs of Mount Road depicting traffic, Deputy Commissioner, Traffic, P. Baskaran, told an audience at the British Council recently that the vehicular traffic has increased many times since those pictures had been taken, but the width of the road, had not.

Today, about 11 lakh vehicles ply the City's roads and another 1.5 lakh fall under the category 'floating population'. With the existing infrastructure, motorists have to spend more time on the road. And this leads to stress and frayed tempers, with even the best educated found wanting on the count of 'good behaviour', he pointed out.

Baskaran stressed the need for the public to cooperate with the law enforcers and learn to respect lights. But he also advocated amending the present Motor Vehicles Act to bring about a sense of responsibility and fear amongst drivers to ensure better traffic discipline. He added that about 8700 lives were lost on the roads in 1997. In 1998 the figure had risen by another 300. Something had to be done fast.

was Kavi Bharathi's entry for the model competition. Showing Madras in 1914, it cleverly focussed on the High Court wall that had crumbled under the shells from the German raider Emden. A tiny little piece of the City's history that may have been, but the Kavi Bharathi teachers had spotted it and got their wards interested in doing something about it. That it did not win a prize was due only to a bit of carelessness by the school — somebody goofed up on the size, and the model exceeded the permitted specifications, thereby qualifying only for special mention.

That mundane lapse apart, here is a school which has got its concepts of heritage right. Now it needs to build on that foundation.

(Also see pages 4 and 5)

The police, he stated, did not extend any concessions to the State Transport Corporation. Over 600 notices had been issued to the transport authority drivers for various traffic violations.

The police, he said, were, however, unable to take any action against autorickshaws, cyclerickshaws, school buses and vans overpacked with children. Stopping these vehicles would lead to the school children being stranded or delayed for school. He requested the parents and heads of institutions to ensure safer transport for the children by preventing overcrowding of vehicles.

Switching off automatic signals during peak hours and resorting to the manual mode was to ensure speedy and smooth flow of traffic, he explained. Synchronisation of signals on a stretch in Mount Road was being experimented with and this would follow on the other arterial roads if successful.

A new computerised plastic driving licence with provision for punching in traffic violations had been introduced. Those who have all five points punched would have their driving licences suspended for certain periods.

Long-term and short-term strategies have been envisaged to combat the ever-increasing traffic demand. The long-term plan includes construction of by-pass roads and flyovers while the short-term measures would include installation of signals, widening of roads, reducing the size of traffic islands, and making roads one-way.

A video film on traffic enforcement by the London Police was screened and it showed the traffic engineers making use of computer eyes installed at busy intersections for better traffic management. Introduction of these computer eyes on our roads could well help in ensuring traffic discipline.

- Rajind N Christy

We're still talking about the Cooum

of conversation in Madras! Governor Pitt in the 17th Century was talking about how its stench affected users of the Great Walk he had developed on The Island. In later centuries, Governors seemed to be unaffected when they went by boat to the grand river gate of the College of Fort St George (now the DPI campus) for Convocations, visitors who stayed with Justice Benson in Doveton House (now part of the WCC campus) went into raptures over the river, and Pachaiappa Mudaliar, that great benefactor of Madras, took a daily dip with his friends in the Cooum in the Harris Road area before he went for his prayers. In more recent years, it has been stated that the development of the harbour at the beginning of this century had played its part in making worse the condition of the Cooum. And there are several other reports to be found in the records of the centuries, each presenting a sity is going to improve facilities in different facet of the river.

If only someone collates all those reports, one thing there is sure to emerge is a pattern accounting for the state of the Cooum. Such a pattern might shed a lot of light on what can be done with the Cooum and whether it has a future that could be tied up with Chennai's.

This was one thought that occurred to The Man From Madras Musings on catching up with the latest plans for the river. Not satisfied with the three (or is it four?) reports prepared on the waterways of Madras by highants, not to mention project reports of its own engineers, and studies by educational institutions, Government apparently proposes to call for worldwide bids in order to choose someone who'll prepare yet another report so that the Rs. 300-plus crore waterways improvement can be got underway. Meanwhile, Martin Bunch of the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, and the Geography Department of the University of Madras have been these past few years working on their own agenda to save the be ensured given the track record Cooum: The Cooum River of successive governments in the Environmental Management Research Programme, a programme for the exploration of alternative management scenarios for the Cooum River. And for a week at February end, they workshopped to find their own answers. What those answers are likely to be only new encroachments have put MMM has no idea, but one thing that has been significant about the approach of Bunch and Dr. Subbiah of Madras University has been the participatory element they have introduced into their exercise. In the latest workshop and the one held a year ago, there was a wide cross-section of interested stakeholders, ranging from the official to the unofficial in all their variety. That may have

resulted in a lot of divergent views

being expressed, but the Bunch-

In fact, for well over 300 years Subbiah report may well come up delighted to hear one planner with an answer more acceptable to all than the ones suggested by the international consultants over the last couple of decades.

I houghts of rehab.

Management of the Cooum environment most effectively may be the end result that this Indo-Canadian partnership seeks, but you cannot get away from the first steps, the rehabilitation of the Cooum. And that is what the latest workshop focussed on. Unfortunately. The Man From Madras Musings couldn't make it to all the sessions — so, as he writes these lines, he looks forward to the concluding session where a summary, he hopes, will emerge. As for the sessions he attended, the noise that percolated into what is called the Seminar Room of the University of Madras and the terrible acoustics of the room put paid to hearing it all as clearly as needed to be. When the Univermore of its 'public rooms' than the present one or two, MMM does not know. But to ask visiting speakers and audiences, not to mention students and faculty, to suffer these conditions is a sin!

Just as MMM hopes something will happen about these University facilities, he hopes something will suggest that the slumdwellers should not be moved, that model homes should be developed for them in the environment they best knew, the banks of the Cooum, and that they should be made responsible for keeping the Cooum and its environs beautiful. The only thing MMM wondered about was what prevented the pretty homes the planner had sketched from suffering the same fate as the Foreshore fishermen's

flats: we'd then have an eysore worse than even the present. To bring about more responsibility and a commitment to a cleaner, better kept city sustaining whatever bright inputs are made, there is a crying need to do something we have not done all these years. Namely, educate the public in a totally different way from what is being done at present. The entire school curriculum must acquire a different focus: that of how to sustain our heritage and a clean environment. We might need a couple of generations to succeed in doing that and developing the discipline necessary for it, but that can only be done if we start now, MMM feels. Unless such education goes hand in hand with workshops such as these, the Cooum will be destined to remain as it is even if it gets improved from time to made the point that if all Sinhalese were strongly anti-Tamil, how was it that the Sinhalese insurgents, the JVP, who had the strength to do so, never attacked the Sri Lankan Tamils in either insurrection. He sees the ethnic problem as being entirely a consequence of Sinhalese political oneupmanship.

But if that be the case, could there ever be a solution when what is needed is the two major Sinhala political parties getting together to work as one on the ethnic issue? There will come a day when that would happen, he felt. There are already straws in the wind — and in stating that he appeared to hint of India gently nudging the two parties closer together, meeting as it does more often than usual with the Leader of the Opposition UNP. If the two parties agreed on the terms of devolution, the monks were not force enough to prevent an accord, he was confident. MMM couldn't help but wonder how there could not be a religious angle to the problem if the monks, weak or strong, felt they had a role to play in its resolution.

The Sri Lankan devolution terms, he pointed out, went further than India's Constitution. There was no Article 356 and the

caught up with record how some of the City's leading Marathi. Guiarati and Urdu medium schools have been starting English medium streams or have started to strengthen their English inputs. These comments from those connected with the managements of these schools are significant:

- We have seen that students who are fluent in English have a definite advantage over those who are not. Parents too have realised this advantages. Our new English medium is only catering to this demand.

— Times are changing, and unless we change, we might just become extinct. The demand for an English-medium instruction is so great that language schools are closing down all over the city. By acceding to the popular demand for English, we, apart from surviving, can also continue to impart the values and traditions our school stands for, which would otherwise be totally lost.

— Our English-medium wing was started some years ago because we realised that children who were taught completely in Urdu faced difficulties in communicating when they reached college. Despite knowing everything, they'd end up feeling shy because they were not fluent in English. This also gives children an inferiority

— Today English has virtually become the official language of India as well as the global language of communication. Everything from governance to business to communication is in English... Managements who have taken such decisions are keeping in

On the broader trade, cultural

George's Hospital in London.

★ The Tamil Nadu Government's plans to include the Segur and Singara forest ranges in the Mudumalai Sanctuary have been stayed by a Court. These two ranges are part of the corridor along which elephants move from the Eastern Ghats to Mudumalai-Bandipur and back. If the corridor is not protected, these animal migrations and the animals themselves will be badly affected, The Man From Madras Musings was told by the Madras Naturalists' Society. Their dismay has been conveyed to the Government and

OUR READERS WRITE

Renovation begun

This refers to the article in MM, **▲** February 1st about *Ice House* (now known as Vivekananda House or Vivekanandar Illam). You will be pleased to know that we have since commenced the renovation work for setting up a permanent exhibition on the theme 'High Marks of Indian Culture and Swami Vivekananda's Life and Message'.

Swami Gautamananda President, Sri Ramakrishna Math Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Over-bridge needed

I urge the authorities to construct In long over-bridge from Chennai Central to Parry's Corner via Evening Bazaar and N.S.C. Bose Road. All the vehicular traffic from Central, Mount Road and Poonamallee High Road can fly over the bridge straight to Parry's Corner. This will not only save traffic time but also minimise traffic iams and accidents.

Though this will involve great expenditure, it is a must to meet the needs of the swelling traffic in Chennai - 2000.

Heritage preservation

Madras Musings readers form a so-

ciety to achieve this goal.

S.S. Ramanathan R-12, 65th Street, 10th Sector

K.K. Nagar West, Chennai 600 078 The suggestion given by 1 losephine Felton of the U.K. to form a society to preserve the heritage of Madras should be welcomed by all Chennai lovers. Let all

tion and they are all that is left of

The Neill Statue

the Battle of Wandiwash.

T. Kamarai had an opportunity to meet Gandhiji in September 1927 in Madras when he was staying as the guest of S. Srinivasa Ivengar and obtained permission for a non-violent demonstration demanding the removal of the statue of General Neill on Mount Road. (Page 44: K. Kamaraj — A Socio-Political Study by M S Muthuswami).

C.R. Reddy observed soon after the 1935 elections to the Madras Legislative Council/Assembly: 'In India, everyone who asked for special representation generally got it. Perhaps it would not be too long before the country would be divided in between spectacled and nonspectacled.

Eventually, the Neill Statue was ordered to be removed to the Fort Museum in 1937, when CR formed the first Congress Ministry in the old Madras Presidency.

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

Punarvasu A tree problem

recent news item reported That a "40-year old exotic tree (Darkia biglandolusa), a native of Malaysia, is on the chopping block" in Kottur Gardens. "The owner of the house by the side of the mammoth tree had been requesting them (the Corporation) for nearly a decade to cut the tree as it had damaged the compound wall of his house and that the roots were likely

Disappearing trogs toretell danger

read an article on L the disappearance of frogs and toads. It is generally believed that their disappearance is a warning to mankind. I don't know whether there has been any study conducted in India about this phenomenon.

I give below excerpts from the article for the information of readers:

One morning in August 995, eight middle-school students went for a nature walk with their teacher near Henderson, Minnesota, U.S.A. First, one of the children found a northern leopard frog with a deformed leg. Then someone found another malformed frog. And another. And another. In all, the children caught 22 frogs — half of them grossly deformed with missing, extra, withered, or fused legs, or with shrunken eyes. The teacher contacted the state wildlife authorities, and soon Minnesota seemed overrun with deformed frogs — officials found them in two-thirds of its counties. At some ponds, 75 per cent of the frogs were affected.

Before long, people from Canada to Japan — and from 32 American States — were reporting the discovery of deformed amphibians. One frog had nine legs. Another had three eyes one of them in its throat. Some had legs poking out from the middle of their bodies. Others suffered from internal abnormalities. Biologists in The Netherlands found frogs that were orange, blue, yellow, and even pink instead of their normal green or

From rain forest to desert and mountain to prairie, many of the

world's frogs and toads are disappearing. Soon people began to wonder if the disappearances and the deformities might be linked. Some researchers believe that the two phenomena are part of the same sweeping problem: the global decline of an entire class of animals.

Frogs and toads are probably most important to humans as a 'sentinel' species. Their unprotected, permeable skin (one frog's internal organs are even visible through its skin) make them extremely sensitive to their surroundings.

Their disappearance is an important indicator of general environmental health and may provide early warnings of deteriorating environments. Amphibians are often the first affected when there is a change in the environment. Ecologists point out that reptiles and amphibians are beneficial to humans in a number of ways, including controlling insect populations that spread disease and destroy crops. India has banned the export of frog's legs because excess harvesting allowed insect numbers to explode, necessitating the use of insecticides. Some local instances of the decline in frog and toad populations can be attributed to predators, drought and human destruction of habitat. Habitat loss alone, however, cannot account for the problem, as anurans (frogs and toads are collectively called 'anurans') are disappearing even in remote and wild areas.

among amphibians? The short answer is that no one knows for sure. But researchers do have a few theories, which mostly boil down

been demolished and replaced by

flats and commercial buildings that

occupy almost the entire compound.

around a building. In many cases,

the developers have spared the

trees in the periphery. But here is a

problem. Some of the buildings are

dangerously close to big trees. The

residents and occupants of these

buildings cannot take it for granted

that the trees will not damage their

structures. This is a serious issue

that is not getting the attention it

deserves, perhaps due to ignorance.

unfortunate event of a tree having

to be cut? They must view the issue

objectively and dispassionately. Af-

ter shedding a few tears, they must

plant ten saplings each. Even if they

do not enjoy the benefits, their chil-

V/ith reference to K.N.

trams' in MM (February 16th).

'Round Tana' was very much in ex-

istence even in the 1960s. There

was a water fountain, a car park and

an underground public conven-

ience. If I remember correct, Gov-

VV Prabhu's 'Remembering

B. Gautham

122 Wallajah Road

Chennai 600 002.

dren and grandchildren will.

Tramway memories

What can tree lovers do in the

Only a small periphery is left all

ping arcade and subsequently settled for only the subway. This was the first subway to be built in the City and other subways followed.

to three possibilities. One theory

blames the thinning of atmos-

pheric ozone. Another possible

culprit is chemical pollution —

pesticides, herbicides, fertilisers,

manufacturing effluents, or acci-

dental discharges released into

the water, air or both. The last

theory holds that natural afflic-

tions may be causing the prob-

lems. Researchers have docu-

mented lethal disease outbreaks

in Costa Rica, England and Israel.

Autopsies of dead frogs and toads

from Australia, Panama and the

United States found a single fun-

gus thought to be responsible for

that no single cause of any type

seems capable of wreaking the

havoc that has been recorded.

Scientists have yet to determine

the significance of these studies

caged canaries with them into the

tunnels. The birds perished

quickly if exposed to poisonous

gas, a danger the men might not

otherwise immediately detect.

When a canary died, the miners

scrambled out of the tunnels. Bi-

ologists often speak of amphibians

as a modern miner's canary —

creatures we can look to for warn-

ings about environmental hazards

that could kill us. But says David

Wake, Professor of Biology at the

In decades past, miners carried

and how they impact humans.

Virtually all researchers agree

their deaths.

Tramways went into liquidation in 1956, but the rails on the roads were allowed to remain as the cost of their removal was found to be more than their value! After a few

Triplicane High Road used to be cost of a season ticket from Egmore to Parry's was Rs. 1.25 a month and Station to Elephant Gate was half an anna, *i.e.*, 3 paise.

T.M. Sundararaman No.19, Nallappan Street

The road from Ayyappa Temple/

■ MRC Nagar leading to San Thomé suddenly narrows down to two lanes from a possible four and at the junction of Kutchery Road — Santhomé High Road, it is very congested, as there are eight schools in that area. This street is made one-way for certain hours, in the morning/evening but that doesn't help. Can the authorities find a solution to the traffic congestion here?

Leith Castle Road San Thomé, Chennai 600 028

SNAPPY SHORT 'N'

echoing the official Government etc from Class 9! We'll still have view, was beautification of the our engineers, doctors, accounriver and its banks by ensuring perennially flowing water and the development of treeshaded parks and walks. With the kind of commitment Government has made. such a beautification scheme shouldn't be too difficult, though it will have to do something about the stench that can be overpowering at times (no solutions were provided to that little problem). What concerned MMM about this solution, however, was how sustainability of the beauty was to State. The last time the Cooum was even partially beautified. boating made possible and landing jetties built, the river did look inviting. Look at it today; every landing jetty is a cattle shed and the trees no longer exist. In fact, down roots!

The need to move the slumdwellers to pastures new to make beautification possible also cropped up. No doubt "large extents" of wetlands, like Palliakeranai and the fringes of Thoraippakkam, will be found for their resettlement, after substantial landfill is arranged to everyone's satisfaction. The new settlers will then be left to the mercies of the weather as much as to the lack of infrastructure. But MMM was tants, MMM is sure.

Sri Lankan view

Moonesingha a political figure and enjoying a political appointment, he was in a better position than Foreign Service personnel to more candidly project the Sri Lankan view on a variety of subjects. And he did so the other day at a talk at the University of Madras's Department of South and Southeast Asia Studies. The Man From Madras Musings might not have agreed with all he said, but a lot of it made good listening.

Starting by speaking of Sri Lanka's Indian connection from origin, he went on to stress the South India connection, that ranged from founder Vijaya and his nobles seeking brides from Madurai to the last dynasty to survive, the Kandyan Kingdom, seeking a ruler and then wives from among the Nayaks of Thanjavur. But while skipping over why in those circumstances those could not have been closer ties with the Tamils — like his (his wife is a Tamil) — he did make a point that MMM appreciated. There is no conflict on religious grounds in Sri Lanka; the is-

sue is race, not religion. He also

emerge from the suggestions time. Let's start with these Centre could only intervene on expressed at the Bunch-Subbiah subjects and supplement them one of two grounds; if the Provworkshop. A dominant suggestion, with maths, science, commerce ince WANTED the Centre's intry, he appeared to ask.

W7ith Sri Lankan High **W** Commissioner Mangala

tervention or if the Province planned to secede. What more mind the future of the child in can be offered in a unitary coun-mind.

and tourism front, he hoped a regional partnership could be forged by the southern States with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. For a couple of years now MMM has been hearing of a southern alliance acronymed PAKKT — Pondicherry, Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. For some reason or another, the southern states are unable to make this an official reality. But make it come about they must, feels MMM. And if they do that, there's no reason why the hand of friendship and cooperation could not be extended further to

Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The High Commissioner has floated the suggestion. Perhaps he needs to visit the South more often to not only broker the international alliance but even to bring about the local one!

schools, elsewhere in the country English seems to be the most ports from Mumbai that The Man From Madras Musings

English wanted

V Thile Tamil Nadu is talking **W** of increasing the amount of courses taught in Tamil in its popular introduction. Recent re-

★ Going in for diversification is that heart-speciality hospital, the Madras Medical Mission. The Man From Madras Musings hears. By mid-March, MMM is told, it will open its Institute of Reproductive Medicine and Women's Health. Its first director will be Dr Thankam Rama Varma, who has 40 years of experience in the field of Reproductive Medicine and has long been connected with St.

a 'greener' approach has been

sought from the courts.

— MMM

Give us a chance!

Plot No.25, Metha Nagar This refers to the little photo-Selaiyur Post, Chennai 600 073 Editor's Note: The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Tamil Nadu Chapter, is dedicated to this. Anyone wishing to help save or consee RED. serve Chennai's heritage may contact P.T. Krishnan, 3, IInd Street,

R. Krishnan

Gremlins at work

034, Tel: 8271759.

Vour gremlins have been at work again. In my article on the battle of Vandavasi, the final sentences were abruptly curtailed in mid-phrase and, in addition, two sketch-maps were inexplicably conflated with the result that the battlefield had shifted miles away from its probable site!

Wallace Gardens, Chennai 600

Is this, I ask myself, an act of revenge by the shades of Dupleix, Lally and Bussy?

> Jaspar Utley The British Council, Chennai

Editor's Note: The latter, Jaspar, is what happens when we offer only a 'sight' of the 'site'! Missed that one did you, Jaspar?! As for the abrupt curtailment, that final para, readers, should have read:

In modern Vandavasi, close by a temple wall and partially hidden hehind some railing usually draped with washing, there are a cannon and plaque commemorating the acgreen light for pedestrians is not cies' of trees are 'dangerous'? What timed properly

. item on traffic signals in Chennai (MM, February 16th). Obviously the advice RELAX is tendered by the Chennai traffic police to the motorists when they

As a pedestrian, when I cross on the zebra crossing at many a junction in the city, I am under great stress. The signals for the pedestrians don't work; even if they do, the green for the pedestrians flashes only for a couple of seconds and turns red even as they, walking at normal speed, are less than half way through. The traffic police to whom I have spoken admit that the

to spread to affect the building soon. However a few residents of the area are against cutting down the tree." The news further stated that "another tree in the same area was felled a few days ago, again the reason being damage to the compound wall." A picture published along with the news item clearly showed a crack in the compound

What must be done in such situations? Must we allow giant trees to be cut merely because they damage a compound wall or could possibly damage a building? Let us not underestimate the power of a tree. Its root can spread far and wide.

This writer has seen a tree (of

The traffic police would do well to look into this and ensure that the green signal for pedestrians is on till they are safely across, even if they should walk across at a very brisk

> A5, Madhurima 20-21, Conran Smith Road Gopalapuram, Chennai 600 086

Editor's Note: At the Chamiers' Road-Cenotaph Road Junction, the lights for pedestrians and traffic headed towards Gandhi Mandapam change from green to red before three cars can cross the junction! How can anyone have a chance

3-4 inch diameter) grow in the wall of an old building (yes, that's right — in the wall). The plaster has fallen off, the bricks have been literally thrust outwards, there is a big bulge in the wall and a vertical crack reveals the tree ensconced in the brickwork. You have to see the sight to believe it.

In another instance, the flooring of the first floor of an old building had to be ripped open and redone because the roots of a close. by tree had penetrated the floor. (This is no exaggeration. The building is located close to the Alwarpet signal.)

To get back to the question of whether a tree should be cut or not,

U.S. University of California at Berkeley, there is one important difference: 'If a miner saw a dying canary, he got out of the mine immediately. If we see dead and dying frogs where are we supposed What is wreaking havoc Dr. N. Subramanian

191, North Usman Road T. Nagar, Chennai 600 017 what is needed is accurate, scien- ernment originally planned to have tific information. What kinds 'spe-an underground subway and a shop-

is 'safe'? What is likely to damage a building? What will not? That information seems to be lacking. Today, many old buildings have

years, they were removed.

called 'Tramroad'; Mylapore tank was a terminus for the trams. The the cost of a ticket from Central

Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Congested roads

Flat No.1, Sea View Apartments

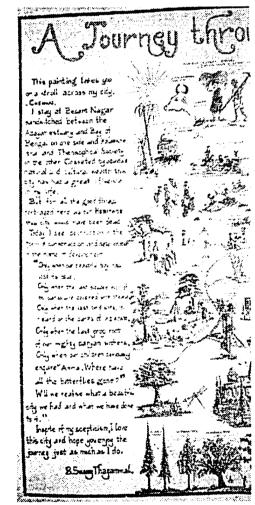
One small step

— towards heritage awareness

(By A Special Correspondent)

The heritage of every district taught in the schools of the respective district. The heritage of the State needs to be subsequently taught in the same school. That alone will create an awareness of our heritage as well as engender a sense of responsibility that will ensure conservation of that heritage. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Tamil Nadu chapter, appears to have bought that view. But what the syllabus should include INTACH was not very clear about.

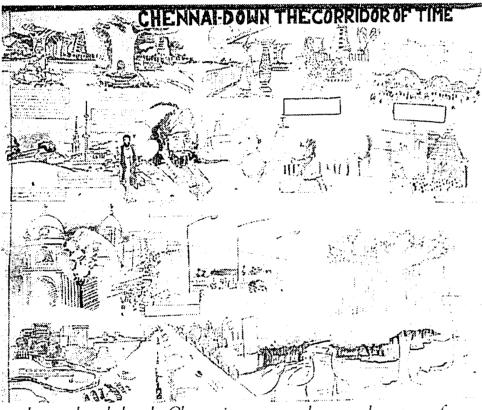
In fact, INTACH's own name seems inappropriate. Given the fields it often deals with - man-made heritage, natural heritage, history, culture, the arts, food, handicrafts,



The words that Swami Thavammal used to express her feelings about the aspects of Chennai that she cherished and depicted in her poster.

civic irresponsibility, tourism viduals make for a nice-looking and a whole range of other areas exhibition, but served on this — a name like Indian Heritage occasion only as the first step of Trust or something along those a long journey. Hopes of a broader lines might be more ap- citywide participation were bepropriate. A reflection of the di- lied. lemma over the name was the

True, there were several



In word and sketch, Chennai seen over the years by a team from St. John's School, Alwarthirunagar.

learn from the experience.

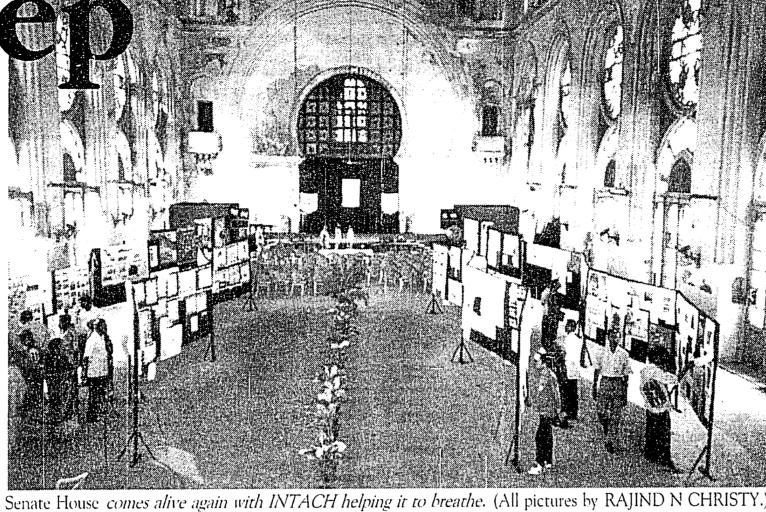
Whether any learning emerged from the exercise is still to Asia, Doveton, Lady Bentinck's, certainly generated considerable Guindy Engineering, the oldest enthusiasm among the competi- engineering school outside Eutors. A look at the entries — rope, the School of Architection of a certain degree of awareness. Unfortunately it did not spread enough. Five hundred entries from about 80 schools, colleges, institutions and indi-

felt need to discover what those lesser-known schools participatto be taught heritage as a sub- ing, but absent was many a iect thought was heritage. And school and institution that so INTACH decided to hold should have shown the way as 'The Heritage of Chennai' com- well as most of the century-andpetition for schools, colleges, in- more-old schools whose own stitutions and individuals, ex- heritage included stories that hibit the entries and, hopefully, deserved to be told. Where were schools like St. George's, the oldest Western-style school in be debated, but the competition—the Madarasa etc.? Where were whether the written word, illus- ture, the University of Madras trations, models or live perform- etc? And where were the Corances — did show that the ef-poration and government forts put in reflected the crea-schools — despite the offer of

The result of the smaller parappear to be an awareness wide- ticipation, however, had one positive affect. It enabled rather more attention to be paid to the sorry state of Senate House.

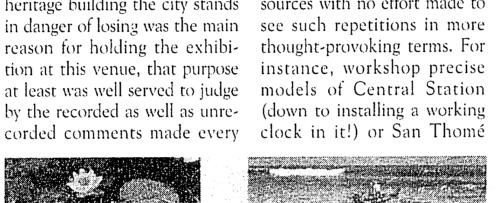


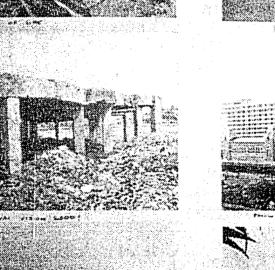
Kavi Bharathi Vidvalaya's giant model of the shelling of Madras by the German raider Emden in 1914. The crumbled wall is seen better in the close-up.

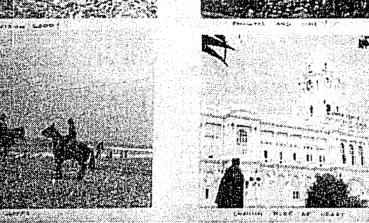


And since getting the public to many were mere restatements from the standard reference

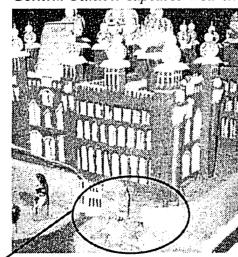
pay a little more attention to a heritage building the city stands sources with no effort made to in danger of losing was the main reason for holding the exhibiby the recorded as well as unre-







Snappy captions for well-taken pictures. The photograph of Central Station captures well the new extension.



day. In fact, a concern for Sen*ate House* was the winner throughout the exhibition.

Which, of course, makes it sound as though the competition entries were the losers. That was not quite the case. There were several outstanding entries — and the Editor of this journal appeared to think that at least a couple deserved to be a part of his front page. But too

Basilica showed little beyond mechanical skills. In the case of new wing in the old style was an opportunity lost; either the adhave to tell in heritage terms? A sity of Madras gave one sympaposition, no matter how good. may have saved itself from the larly of the sympathetic con-

of Guindy National Park and its wealth was a presentation over which a lot of trouble had been taken in terms of the quest for content; it was undoubtedly an awareness-creator. Even better was Swami Thayammal's massive poster-like representation of the things she cherished in Chennai — with the accompanying words demonstrating great sensitivity to the whole subject. A horticulturist, she abounded — and a stark presen- be said that these entries cernatural features and cultural and religious aspects depicted. And then there was St. John's School's large-size word-andsketch attempt to look at Chennai down the corridor of time, catching the eye as much by its size as by the talented sketching and clever weaving of the narrative. Even among the non-prize winners there were efforts to be commended, like the Central Station, leaving out the eight-year-old who saw in four rectangles the different aspects of heritage that needed to be dition had not been noticed or looked at, the engineering colits significance was missed. In lege that attempted to comment the case of the Basilica, the op- on the heritage scene using phoportunity to look at the Thomas tographs with appropriate caplegend as part of Chennai's her- tions (I liked the picture of an itage was given a miss. A rather unfinished structure with rubble similar view can be taken of by it and the caption 'Chennai putting on a Bharata Natyam Vision 2000'!), the Valentine's performance. What story did it Day 'Heart Attack' the Univerprize-winning folk-dance com- thetic entrant, and the photographs and captions (particusame criticism perhaps only due struction underway at Napier's to the words of the accompany- Bridge) by Choolaimedu Corporation School, the only school Contrast these efforts with where photography is taught as those of many of the winners. a Vocational Subject and where

Kavi Bharathi's re-creation of

the founding of Madras or the

Children's Garden School's ex-

cellent harikatha rendering of

the contributions made by Sister

Subbalakshmi and school-

founder Ellen Sharma demon-

strated clearly a discovery, un-

derstanding and appreciation of

a part of our heritage. The

AMM School's pictorial collage

Looking at Senate House... June and Mike Carpenter, Suffolk Joseph Thomas and Parimala United Kingdom: It is very sad to Rao: Great exhibition and Exhibition in *Senate House* itself is

protection and renovation.

wonderful idea to have it in this

building, itself urgently in need of

apart with decay and lack of love. Please do something. Vijay K: See to it that renovation is done in such a way that the original structure and

see such magnificent buildings fall

beauty is not destroyed. Lakshmi Rajagoapal: Rent it to companies to use for their AGM's, also as a concert hall. Tout the heritage aspect.

M.L. Mahalingham: I am really sorry about keeping this hall in such a bad condition. The authorities of the university should

Nandagopan and P Raviraman: Senate House is an architectural beauty to be preserved and held in high esteem for the future. Please save the building like the old DGP Jenifer Durairaj, student of

Architecture: The exhibits were damn neat, but I think the venue needs to be taken care of first. Prashob Ravi, student of

venue first, please. B. Natraj: One day we the

citizens of Madras may even restore this building.

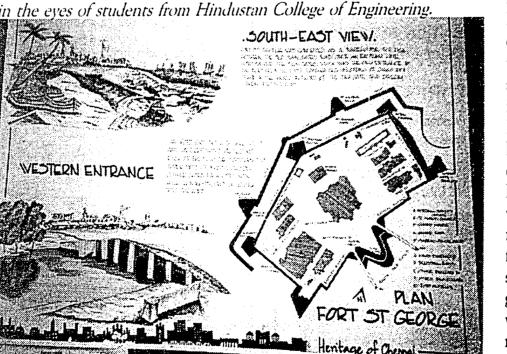
there appears to be much young

imaginative efforts than the en- like this. And that perhaps regineering precise drawings, the flects the reasons why INTACH militaristic lay-out and the re- organised the contest: To find statement of the record that answers. But the answers do not prize-winning Hindustan Engi- appear to have been easily forthneering submitted. Excellent coming except in the case of a drawings — even if errors few entries. Yet, while it might nuances of heritage, were lost. yourself in difficulties. Indeed, the judges as much as

even detailed the trees of tation certainly captured attent tainly provided some of the an-Chennai midst the buildings, tion, but the imaginativeness, swers sought, just try and pin the greater appreciation of the down the answers and you find In which case, is creating organisers and participants were—awareness alone by providing MADRAS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



Madras in the 19th Century... the Fort was about all, it would seem,



Kavi Bharathi Vidyalaya:

so suitable. Priya, Nirupa and Jarung, Department of Biotechnology, Madras University: It is a symbol of status for the Madras University and its renovation is very

Mr. and Mrs. S M Davies (United Kingdom): A most commendable exhibition. Pity the setting has been allowed to deteriorate.

... and the exhibition

M Bhuvaeswari: Thoughtprovoking exhibition. Could have been intimated to more number of colleges and other institutions.

Sanjay Ramachandran: A good insight into what Madras was and what Chennai is.

K. Venkatraman: Is this city alive or dying? Dying, one would say... but dying for a tribute such as

L. Susitha: I got very angry when I came to know that our city is losing its beauty and natural G.E. Hari Govinda Thilak,

Senior Executive, TAFE: Having Architecture: Conservation of the come to this place by accident, I am really impressed with the

extraordinary work these children have done in making us realise the need to preserve our monuments in rather at sea when it came to

deciding on how heritage should All these were certainly more be looked at in a competition

new experience for me. Mrs. Visalakshi: Heritage of Chennai is excellent, but you

any shape and form. It was really a

didn't recognise the children's effort. You didn't categorise the children like age 5-8, 9-12, 12-16

B. Mohan Kumaran: Good to see students remembering their past. If this continues we will definitely have a good culture following us.

Sashi Prem: I have not seen the like of this exhibition before. It's really worth more.

Francis J.: Wish that more schools participate next time.

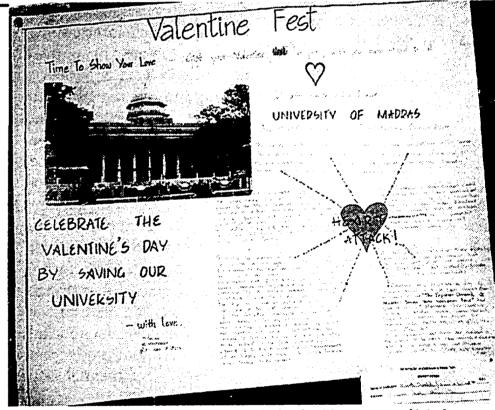
Kannal Achutan and Vanitha T.: We appreciate the fact that even in today's hectic pace of life, heritage and culture is not devalued. Hats off to INTACH! Good work. B. Nataraj: Hope you can

preserve all the wonderful exhibits Shanthi Paul: Very informative. Feel I know something about the city I live in now.

A.R. Doss, Chief Planner, CMDA: Government departments also could have been brought into this excellent effort.

N. Paul: An excellent attempt to remind the old things of our city. Educating the people to preserve the city's tradition should be made on a large scale.

Pauline and David, Indian Bank, Besant Nagar Branch: Hope many schools and colleges visit, to get an idea of Chennai. I wish officials and Ministers visit the exhibition to improve our Chennai.



This heart attack is an appeal to help the University of Madras.

detailed documentation enough at a time, projects like the Buckingham Canal and the Adyar Estuary. Rather detailed studies have been made and some students I spoke to had an immense knowledge on the projects they most in the majority of entries at INTACH hopes. the exhibition.

As all agreed, however, this for a curriculum? Partly, I am was just the first step. Many inclined to say - provided it is wanted this to be an annual supplemented with project work competition. INTACH itself that involves considerable re- would like to have district comsearch and activity on the part petitions. All this would, in the of the student. One school that first place, need funding. But does this but which did not put more important, INTACH its efforts on display was The would have to look at its ground KFI School. There there are rules more closely and devise children working on several en- ways to ensure greater field invironmental projects for months volvement before results are produced for exhibition. Having got the ball rolling well, how it should be guided to gain greater momentum is the task before INTACH's core organisers of the exhibition: Yamuna Prabhu, were working on, certainly Sushila Natarajan, Indira much more knowledge than Narayanan, Prema Kasturi and found in the conventional Anna George. Out of their efsources. This was knowledge forts will emerge some ideas for garnered by field work. And it a syllabus that the Government was a lack of field work that I felt can be persuaded to look at,

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

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

- 1. C-Dac recently launched India's first free Internet-based Indian language e-mail service. What is it called?
- 2. What famous method of communication used globally officially went out of use for ships in distress from February 1st?
- 3. Who is FIFA's 'World Player of the Year' for 1998?
- 4. Name the media baron and head of The Times of India group who passed away recently.
- 5. 'Tubby', one of the most successful captains, called it a day from international cricket. Who? 6. Who is the new Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commis-
- 7. Name the influential and popular ruler of a West Asian kingdom who died on February
- 8. Whose and what feat did Indian leg-spinner Anil Kumble emulate in New Delhi on February 7th?
- 9. Name the former Indian Army Chief who passed away recently. 10. 'A girl's best friend' turned 40 recently. Who or what?
- 11. One of the foremost authors of 20th Century British literature and author of such books as The Red and the Green and The Black Prince passed away re-
- 12. The Madhya Pradesh Government's prestigious Lata Mangeshkar Puraskar was awarded recently to?
- 13. One of the oldest exotic tricks was performed by Padmarajan in Kochi on February 10. What was this rare aspect of
- 14. Where was the G-15 Summit held recently?
- 15. The new Chief Minister of Orissa is....?
- 16. The First International Tamil Internet Conference was held in the city. What was it called? 17. Who was presented with the
- Madras Management Association's coveted 'Business Leadership Award' on February 9th in Chennai?
- 18. 'Samudri', an NGO set up by Sruti Foundation to safeguard archival materials and undertake development and dissemination of research material in fine arts, was inaugurated recently. Expand 'Samudri'.
- 19. Where were the city's third and fourth Mass Mailing Centres or 'Business Post' facilities inaugurated recently?
- 20. In which appropriate location did INTACH inaugurate a 'Heritage of Chennai' competition display on February 15th? (Answers on Page 8)

Law firm earns ISO 9002

— By going hi-tech and setting standards

clients?

Curana & Surana, interna- eral law firms have got quality Otional attorneys, a certifications from leading Chennai-headquartered law firm, is the first law firm in Asia to go in for quality certification. By obtaining ISO 9002 certification it has, thus, defined the standards and procedures that a model law firm needs to follow. For a law firm to opt for ISO 9002 is unique, says P.S. Das, Director General, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

eral Korean companies, includ-

ing the Hyundai group, that

have established themselves in

language without an experi-

enced teacher in this part of

the world? Says Vinod, "We

had to evolve the procedures

and set the standards/bench-

How did his firm learn the

puters and updated on a daily basis. Lawyer assignments for cases are also systematised. "As Explains Vinod of Surana & a result, a client can get the Surana, "This is an offshoot of globalisation and the liberalisamost recent status of his case tion of economy. ISO certificafrom anyone in our office,' tion is a universal management Vinod says. In the most effilanguage which international cient traditional style law oflaw firms too are talking these fice, it takes at least a day for days." For Surana & Surana, a lawyers to locate the case papers of a long-drawn-out litigaleading firm on the corporate and commercial side, it was imtion and give a status report to a client. "Earlier, we were perative to speak the internadriven by the clients. But now, tional language. Not only bethe push is from within to keep cause it has representative offices in the US and Germany. him satisfied," says P.S. Surana, but also because it needs to deal with several MNCs that are setting up shops in India. Surana 20 areas of operation, from the & Surana has, for instance, been the guiding light for sev-

The BIS certification is for time of accepting a client's brief till a decision is handed down by the court. For example, phone queries from clients are taped and the advice rendered/ action taken is subsequently documented.

How does a Rs.15 lakh in-

vestment in equipment, sys-

tems and procedures and all

the effort put into getting the

BIS quality certificate help with

firm are loaded into the com-

All the cases handled by the

A visitor could easily mistake the firm's office for a corporate set-up; it comes with wood-panelled walls, tidy cubicles, is fully networked by commarks afresh". In other words, puters, and has hi-tech facili-Surana & Surana had to invent_ ties like video conferencing the wheel, so that other law and ISDN lines. "Lawyers of firms in Asia can drive today have to be conversant smoothly hereafter. But there with corporate management, were inputs from Australia, Eu- information technology, acrope and the USA where sev- countancy etc., as competition

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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Going global after first step in Italy

first Indian lawyer in the post-Independence era to have argued a case in an Italian court.

Recalling the details and circumstances of the case, Surana narrates, "It was a suit filed against my client, a leather exporter, by his Italian buyer. The Italian party, after taking delivery of goods valued around Rs.8 lakh sent on credit, filed a case against the Indian exporter for nonpayment of commissions on sales made during the earlier years. There was no written agreement as to the payment of commission nor was it a trade practice. The main aim of the Italian party was to defraud my client of his dues."

So, off went Surana and his wife, Leelavati Surana, to Italy along with their client. Their initial plan was to hire a local lawyer, make a token appearance and ask for more time to file a counter, the normal Indian practice. To their shock and

is hotting up, what with consultants like Arthur Andersen and McKinsey, also rendering legal advice", explains Vinod.

Established in 1971 by P.S. Surana and Mrs. Leelavathi Surana, Vinod's parents, Surana & Surana has grown over the years and is today one of the largest full service international law and consultancy firms in the South. With 24 associates and 10 consultants, Surana & Surana is the only South Indian law firm to be ranked among the leading law

S. Surana is probably the surprise, they were told to file the counter on the first date of the hearing. So the Chennai advocates pored over the numerous files during the next two days, prepared their counter, got it translated into Italian and filed it in the District Court of Pisa. Upon a written request from Surana that he be permitted to argue for his client, the District Judge, a woman, gave him special permission. With the help of an intrepreter, Surana argued his case successfully.

After winning the first case as a defendant, Surana filed suit on behalf of his client claiming payment of Rs.8 lakh, the value of the unpaid consignment. The Italian court decided in favour of the Indian party.

"And that is how Surana & Surana went global back in 1987. We haven't looked back," says the founder with a smile.

firms in the country by Legal Business, a London-based law magazine. As a member of Commercial Law Affiliates, USA, a body with more than 2000 members in over 70 countries, Surana & Surana can represent its Indian clients abroad and foreign clients in the Indian courts. Further, the firm has been recognised by a couple of foreign universities as a training ground for their students.

Venkatachari Jagannathan

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- 4. Mrs Ammukutty George 3930 Anna Nagar, Chennai 600 040 5. Mrs. Mary Punnose
- 110 Velacherry Road, Chennai 600 032 Ms. Susan Venglet 110 Velacherry Road, Chennai 600 032

I, Anu Verghese, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief

ANU VERGHESE Publisher

Framing rich-hued yesterdays

March 1-15, 1999



Dates 30

for Your

biary,

Till March 6: A photographic exhi-

bition marking 50 years of

Kalakshetra Publications. There

will be over 100 photographs of

Rukmini Devi as a young

Bharata Natyam dancer and over

200 photographs of her dance

dramas over the years, pictures

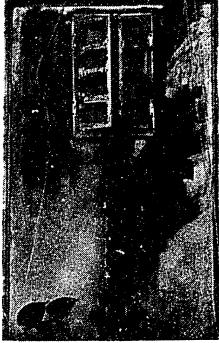
taken by Conard Woldring and

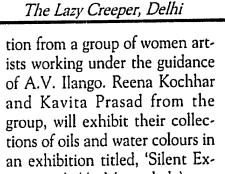
C. Nachiappan from 1937 to

1976. (At Rukmini Devi Cultural

Centre of the Koviloor Mutt, 34-

36 Kuppiah Chetty Street, West





March 4: Abhyaasa the Cleveland Cultural Alliance's latest production, will premiere at the Music Academy and thereafter visit 23 cities in North America in April-May. The production is under the guidance of Adyar K. Lakshmanan. Abhvaasa occurs in a gurukulam. It loosely reflects the art-related activities of a plausible day. The guru is a nonperforming expert in both music and dance and gives these complementary arts equal importance. The sishyas are advanced. having been at the gurukulam for many years. The day, however,

Our OLD this fortnight is off the Wesleyan Chapel, Broadway, copied

from an early 20th Century photograph. The NEW, taken nearly 90 years

later, shows all the windows of the facade and two of the three arched

doorways completely blocked in. The blocking in, however, took place a

few decades ago and was not part of the more recent refurbishing operation

The Chapel was built in 1822 by that pioneering Wesleyan missionary

lames Lynch and made the two-storied building it is today in 1844. The

Chapel has since then conducted worship on the first floor. The ground

floor was once used for mission work and a printing press too functioned

from there. Even the Christian Literature Society had a branch in the

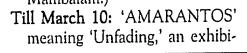
press premises. Today, the ground floor is a school. And alongside the walls

hawkers have a field day. (The NEW by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

rather Technicolour look: White, ...& THE

which has left the Chapel with a

Ochre, Crimson, Black and Blue

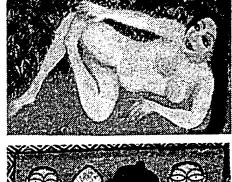


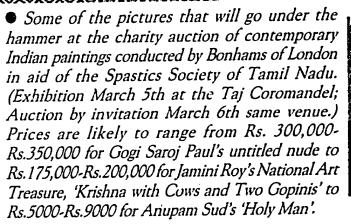
THE

OLD... Ochre, Crimson, -being teamed together.

starts with basic exercises, before progressing to advanced, interpretive pieces and culminating in a performance at the temple. The Cleveland Cultural Alliance, a non-profit organization,

was established in 1991 by Uma pressions'. (At Manasthala). Ganesan and R. Balu, to promote among American audiences, a deeper awareness and appreciation of India's classical arts. Since its inception, CCA has sponsored over eighty dance performances across North America. (At the Music Academy.)





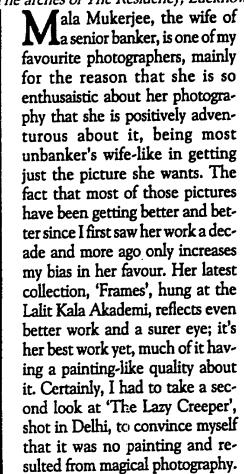
March 5-20: An exhibition of Seema Ghurraya's paintings.

Seema's work places her in the line of the abstractionists, who are stirred by the first principles of drawing... says a reviewer. (At Apparao Galleries.) March 6,7,11: The Malayalee Club will celebrate the birth anniversary of Maharajah Swati Tirunal this year from April 13th to 18th. The Club proposes to conduct a series of competitions as part of the Maharajah Swati Tirunal Music and Dance Festival.

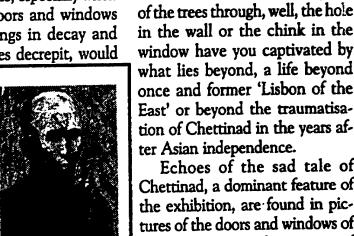
- Essay Competition in English on Swati Tirunal (for seniors only, age 15-20) at 10 a.m. on
- Music Competition (Juniors 11-14) *Keertanam* — 5 mts. on the 7th.
- Ragam, Niravel, Swaram (Seniors) — 15 mts — (Rare composition) on the 7th.
- Competitions in Mohini Attam and Bharata Natyam for professionals (Age 20-30 years) 25 minutes, on the



Sign of the Cross, Oxford



Here was an exhibition of photographic ART, with the artist focussing on doors, windows, what was seen around them and, occasionally, what was seen through a chink in them. Who would imagine such a theme, especially when most of the doors and windows were of buildings in decay and were themselves decrepit, would



All competitions at the Malavalee Club, 25 Club Road, Srinivasanagar, Chennai 600

March 12: Brian Finnegan on the flute. This is the fourth in the Indo British Young Musicians' concerts. Finnegan, originally from Armagh, Northern Ireland has a repertoire of traditional tunes from the UK as well as original compositions and tunes from further afield. An excellent flute and whistle player, he mainly concentrates on playing a bamboo flute or the Irish wooden flute, but is equally at home on the high and low whistles. (Music Academy, Mini Hall, 7.00 pm. Invitations from British Council, March 1, 1999.)

March 13: 'Guild of Service (Central)'s International Evening Fund Raising Programme' with entertainment. Tickets from Guild of Service (Central) 28, Casa Major Road, Egmore. Tel: 8261279, 8263685 & 8268328 at Taj Coromandel, 7 pm to 10 pm.

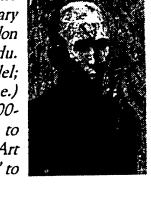


Hole in the Wall, Chettinad capture viewers to the extent that one would be tempted to say that at Rs. 3000 and Rs. 5000 a piece they are better value and more striking pictures for the walls of collectors than the work of most painters! Particularly noteworthy was the fact that though the theme of almost every picture was depressing, capturing as it did failure and the ruins that are the consequence, not a single picture itself was depressing to look at. For in the warm browns and oranges and brick reds, in the rich greens and the myriad subtle shades of creams and greys there is a heartfelt reflection of, and commitment to, heritage, enabling each picture to LIVE, not reflect death. That makes for splendid pictures than can but ADORN the walls on which they're hung. Many a time the usual theme

reflected, that there is life and it goes on unbowed, springs a surprise when there's shown life beyond the present. Pictures like 'Seascape' (Goa) and 'A Hole in the Wall' (Chettinad), capturing the blues of the sea or the green of the trees through, well, the hole in the wall or the chink in the window have you captivated by what lies beyond, a life beyond once and former 'Lisbon of the East' or beyond the traumatisation of Chettinad in the years at-

Chettinad, a dominant feature of the exhibition, are found in pictures of the doors and windows of Kalra and Agra and every one of them is as haunting as the next. What a stunning contrast is 'The Sign of the Cross' (Oxford): truly it glows with colour and light midst darkness. The pink of the cross and the rich yellow-orange of the tulip lamp lighting the darkness is truly a conveyor of that message Gandhiji always sang: "Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,/Lead thou me on." Creating a different beauty altogether are the Gothic arches of The Residency, Lucknow, brickwork exposed skeleton-like, but plant-life finding succor in the niches and creating renewal. Truly does Mala see wonder in stone and wood and metal and leaves, the wonder of a life beyond

Truly a beautiful exhibition. But I still think Mala gets her greatest kick from that world exclusive of her, the fall of the last wicket in that famous tied Test in Chennai when every other photographer was shocked into inaction. Mala alone clicked. And that instant reaction has still not deserted her; many of these pictures proudly attest to that.



A 'civvy' who shone in an Army sport

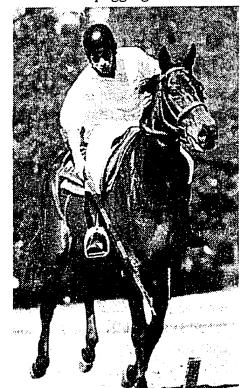
In an equestrian sport domi-Inated by the army and the other services, Kishore Futnani, a 47-year-old Chennaibased businessman, once made his mark. A former national champion in tent-pegging, he was at his peak in the early seventies. He, however, still participates in open tournaments with his sons.

The Futnanis are the only civilians in Chennai who practise tent-pegging seriously and compete in national competitions. "We cannot participate in all horse shows held countrywide as it requires a lot of money. But we do take part in competitions which are affordable and to which our horses can be transported without straining them," says Futnani.

In tent-pegging, a horseman gallops at a speed of 50 kmph between a time-start line and time-stop line of 40 metres on a 100m-track. While on the move, the rider picks up with his lance or sword, a peg made of wood or cardboard. The speed between the two points is timed and has to be under 7.50 seconds. Any slower speed than this is proportionately penalised. Points are awarded according to how successfully the peg is picked up and carried over a distance of 10m, in the case of a cardboard peg, and

16.25m in the case of a wooden peg, from the point where the peg had been placed. Points are docked if the peg is pierced but not picked and picked but not carried.

The International Equestrian Tent-pegging Association



Dhruv Futnani riding for the peg at practice.

prescribes the dimensions of the wooden peg: 30 cm long, 2.5 cm thick and between 3 cm and 6 cm wide.

Tent-pegging originated in the Indian Army in British times as a refinement of pigsticking. In the late 19th and early 20th century, mounted sportsmen armed with spears hunted wild boar for sport. Futnani, on the other hand,

says tent-pegging began to develop from the surprise attacks on enemy camps at night. The cavalry would remove the pegs to which the tent ropes were tied, burying the sleeping enemy under the tends, thus making the final attack easier. Often the cavalry followed this up by piercing the feet of the rival elephants. The elephants would run amok, screaming in pain, and crush their own camp.

When Futnani first took to the sport, the style of picking the pegs was different and there were always cries that went with the attempt and on achieving success. Bonus marks used to be awarded for the style, but today "points are only for piercing and carrying the peg. This eliminates any biased scoring by the adjudicators," he explains.

Apart from tent-pegging, Futnani also made a mark in polo. He played for army teams as well as the Madras Polo and Riding Club and the Officers' Training School in the early Seventies. He has over forty title wins riding with teams in national tournaments conducted by the Indian Polo Association. He has been on a winning Kolanka Cup team that's the tallest trophy in the world, standing about six feet — as well as on a winning Prince of Berar Cup team.

Equestrianism may be Kishore Futnani's first love, but he is a successful businessman and his love for poultry farming is not far behind. He set up the first broiler farm in Madras in the Seventies and opened the first breeding farm and hatchery in Tamil Nadu in 1979-80. In the eighties he



brought the world's best bred chickens, the Hyline brand from the USA to South India. He had to close down the business because of a recession in the business, but is now thinking of re-establishing it.

It was to concentrate on poultry farming that he quit equestrian sport in the mid Seventies. He returned to it ten years later, in 1985, to coach his sons, Manay and Dhruy. In 1989, with the support of M.A.M. Ramaswamy, Chairman of the Madras Race Club, he was among those who revived Gymkhana Races for

• by G. Krishnan

amateur riders after a lapse of nearly 15 years. He introduced several children to these races and, among them were Imran Khan, Ravinder Singh and Y Srini who became professional jockeys. Futnani trains with his wards at the Chennai Equestrian Academy, started a little over two years ago at Sholinganallur, just outside the city. He is the managing trustee of CEA. He also invites expert riders and coaches from abroad to help at the Academy and sends his wards abroad on exchange programmes.

With the number of horses limited, there are only ten trainees at the CEA. But expansion plans are on the anvil.

Manay, 20, and Dhruy, 18, have been riding for over a decade now. Manav came joint second in the tent-pegging

event, which was won by Dhruv, ahead of all the army men at the South India Horse show organised by the Equestrian Association of South India in the Nilgiris in 1996. In the 1997-98 Bangalore Nationals, the two finished seventh and eighth, respectively. Manav is now studying in the US while Dhruv is a first year architecture student in a local college.

Their mother, Shobha has been the driving force behind their success. A former rider herself, she has a perfect understanding with the horses and practises Pranic healing on them to cure them of ailments. She and her mother-in-law are experts in gardening and plant nurseries. She received the Governor's trophy for the best gardener in 1986.

A horse has to be specially trained for tent-pegging, particularly, to co-operate with its rider. It has to gallop along a straight track without being disturbed by the sight of the peg kept inside a white circle for easy identification by the rider. Also, it should not fear the lance. The skill of the rider also counts. He has to be careful in the follow-through after picking up the peg and has to ensure that the sword or lance does not hit or hurt the animal

Kishore and his wards also participate in show-jumping. He hopes they will one day make a mark in that sport too.

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ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. GIST-Mail; 2. Morse Code; 3. Zinedine Zidane of France; 4. Ashok Jain; 5. Australia's Mark Taylor; 6. K.P. Pant; 7. King Hussein of Jordan; 8. Jim Laker's feat of taking all 10 wickets in a Test match innings; 9. Gen. K. Sundarji; 10. Barbie; 11. Dame Iris Murdoch; 12. Ilayaraja; 13. The Indian Rope Trick; 14. Jamaica; 15. Giridhari Gomango.

16. TamilNet '99; 17. Narayanamurthy, CMD of Infosys; 18. Subbulakshmi-Sadasivam Music and Dance Research Institute; 19. Ambattur and the GP; 20. The Senate House of the University of

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