

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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The champs remember the forgotten 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, captured the story of the founding imaginatively and had many thinking about how we had forgotten the founders. Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

The founders remembered

(By S Muthiah)

Call 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 re-enactment 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 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

One small step

— towards heritage awareness

(By A Special Correspondent)

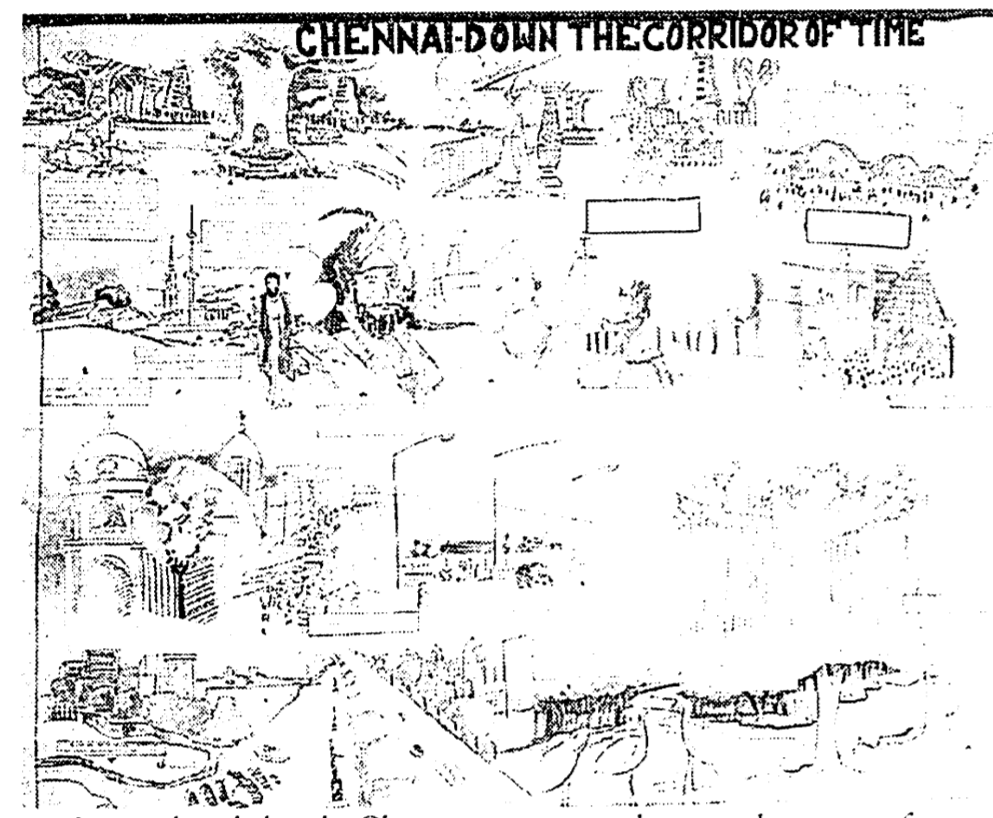
The heritage of every district in the State needs to be taught in the schools of the respective district. The heritage of the State needs to be subsequently taught in the same school. That alone will create an awareness of our heritage as well as engender a sense of responsibility that will ensure conservation 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,

civic irresponsibility, tourism and a whole range of other areas — a name like Indian Heritage Trust or something along those broader lines might be more appropriate. A reflection of the dilemma over the name was the

individuals make for a nice-looking exhibition, but served on this occasion only as the first step of a long journey. Hopes of a citywide participation were belied.

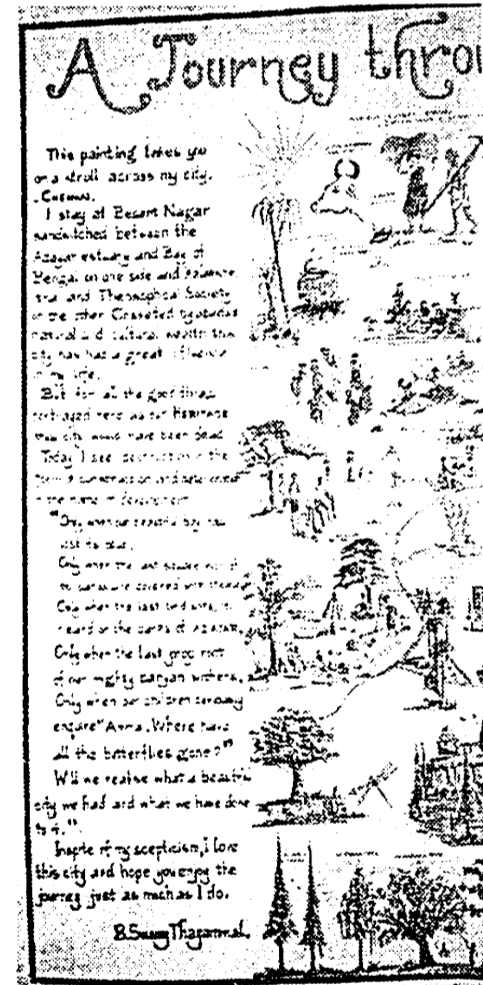
True, there were several



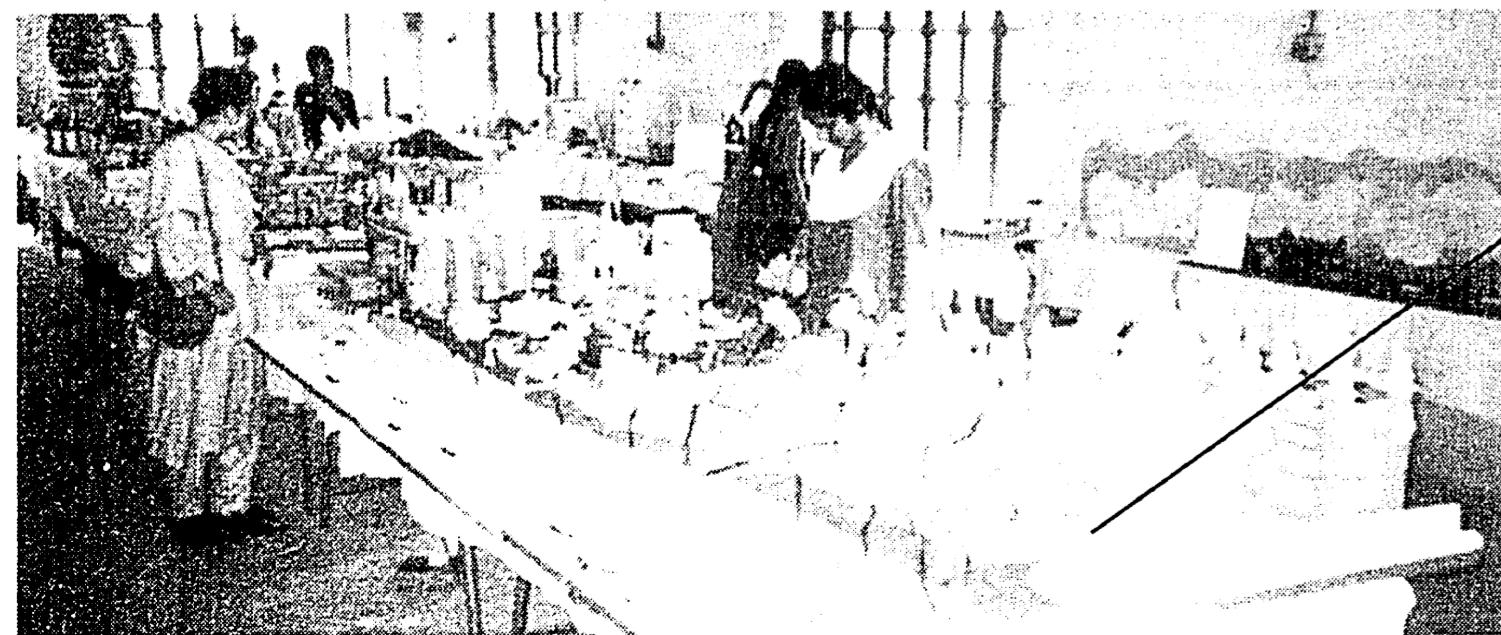
In word and sketch, Chennai seen over the years by a team from St. John's School, Alwarthirunagar.

felt need to discover what those to be taught heritage as a subject thought was heritage. And so INTACH decided to hold 'The Heritage of Chennai' competition for schools, colleges, institutions and individuals, exhibit the entries and, hopefully, learn from the experience.

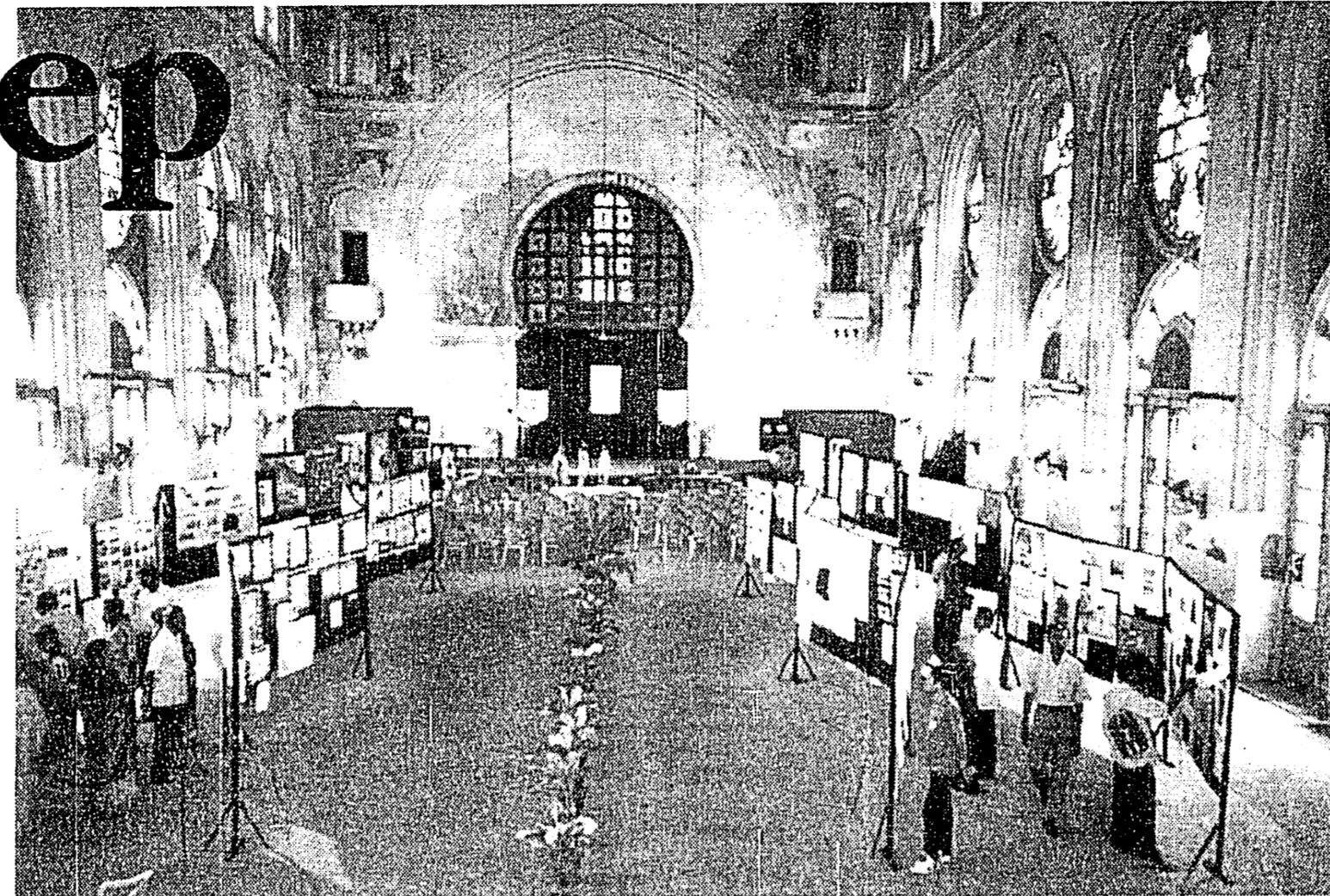
Whether any learning emerged from the exercise is still to be debated, but the competition certainly generated considerable enthusiasm among the competitors. A look at the entries — whether the written word, illustrations, models or live performances — did show that the efforts put in reflected the creation of a certain degree of awareness. Unfortunately it did not appear to be an awareness widespread enough. Five hundred entries from about 80 schools, colleges, institutions and indi-



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

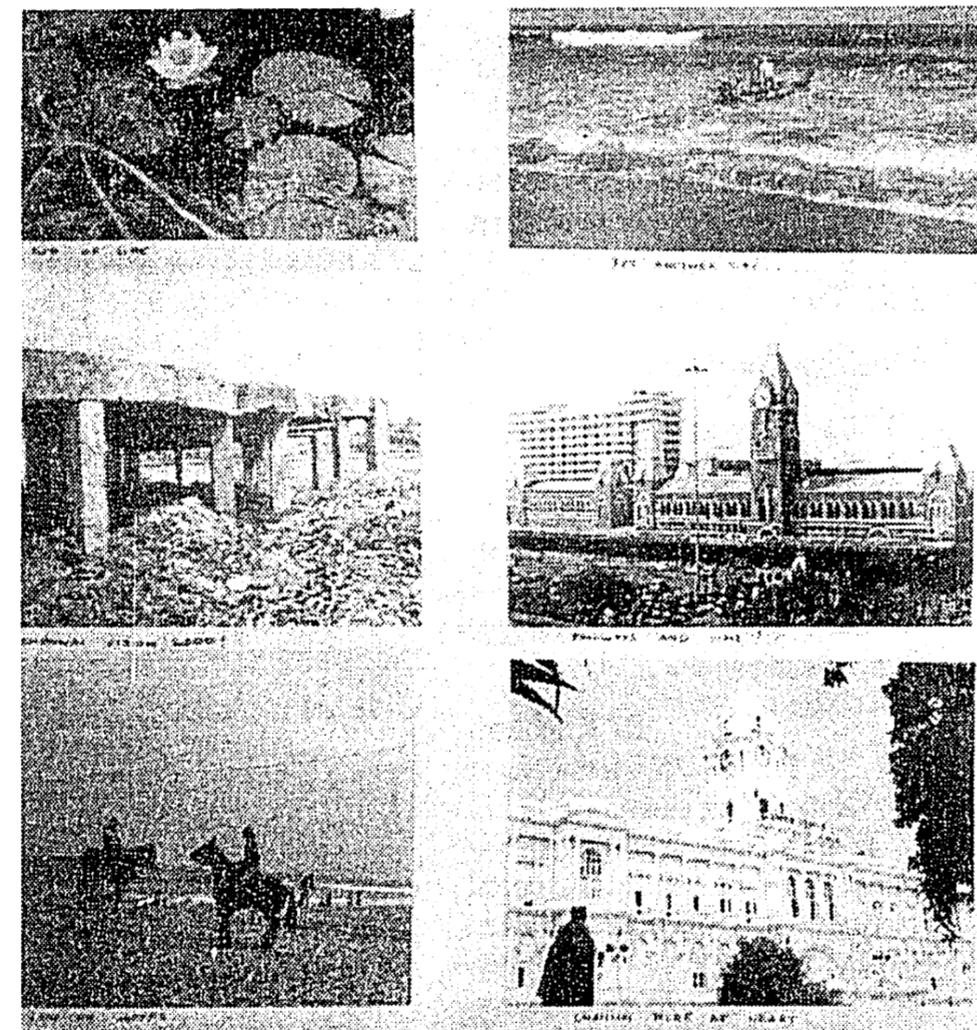


Kavi Bharathi Vidyalaya's giant model of the shelling of Madras by the German raider Emden in 1914. The crumbled wall is seen better in the close-up.

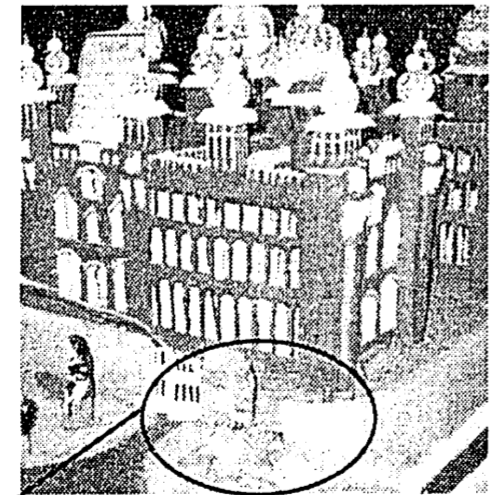


Senate House comes alive again with INTACH helping it to breathe. (All pictures by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

And since getting the public to pay a little more attention to a heritage building the city stands in danger of losing was the main reason for holding the exhibition at this venue, that purpose at least was well served to judge by the recorded as well as unrecorded comments made every



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



day. In fact, a concern for Senate 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

many were mere restatements from the standard reference sources with no effort made to see such repetitions in more thought-provoking terms. For instance, workshop precise models of Central Station (down to installing a working clock in it!) or San Thomé

Kavi Bharathi's re-creation of the founding of Madras or the Children's Garden School's excellent *harikatha* rendering of the contributions made by Sister Subbalakshmi and school-founder Ellen Sharma demonstrated clearly a discovery, understanding and appreciation of a part of our heritage. The AMM School's pictorial collage 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 Thavammal's massive poster-like representation of the things she cherished in Chennai — with the accompanying words demonstrating great sensitivity to the whole subject. A horticulturalist, she even detailed the trees of Chennai amidst the buildings, natural features and cultural and religious aspects depicted. And then there was St. John's School's large-size word-and-sketch 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 eight-year-old who saw in four rectangles the different aspects of heritage that needed to be looked at, the engineering college that attempted to comment on the heritage scene using photographs with appropriate captions (I liked the picture of an unfinished structure with rubble by it and the caption 'Chennai Vision 2000!'), the Valentine's Day 'Heart Attack' the University of Madras gave one sympathetic entrant, and the photographs and captions (particularly of the sympathetic construction underlay at Napier's Bridge) by Choolaimedu Corporation School, the only school where photography is taught as a Vocational Subject and where

Basilica showed little beyond mechanical skills. In the case of Central Station, leaving out the new wing in the old style was an opportunity lost; either the addition had not been noticed or its significance was missed. In the case of the Basilica, the opportunity to look at the Thomas legend as part of Chennai's heritage was given a miss. A rather similar view can be taken of putting on a Bharata Natyam performance. What story did it have to tell in heritage terms? A prize-winning folk-dance composition, no matter how good, may have saved itself from the same criticism perhaps only due to the words of the accompanying song.

Contrast these efforts with those of many of the winners.

Looking at Senate House...

June and Mike Carpenter, Suffolk, United Kingdom: It is very sad to see such magnificent buildings fall 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 beauty is not destroyed.

Lakshmi Rajagoopal: Rent it to companies to use for their AGMs, 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 take care.

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 building.

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 Architecture: Conservation of the venue first, please.

B. Natraj: One day we the citizens of Madras may even restore this building.

Joseph Thomas and Parimala Rao: Great exhibition and wonderful idea to have it in this building, itself urgently in need of protection and renovation.

Kavi Bharathi Vidyalaya: Exhibition in Senate House itself is 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 important.

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

M. Bhuvaneswari: Thought-provoking 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 this.

L. Susitha: I got very angry when I came to know that our city is losing its beauty and natural environment.

G.E. Hari Govinda Thilak, Senior Executive, TAFE: Having 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

any shape and form. It was really a new experience for me.

Mrs. Visalakshi: Heritage of Chennai is excellent, but you didn't recognise the children's effort. You didn't categorise the children like age 5-8, 9-12, 12-16 etc.

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.

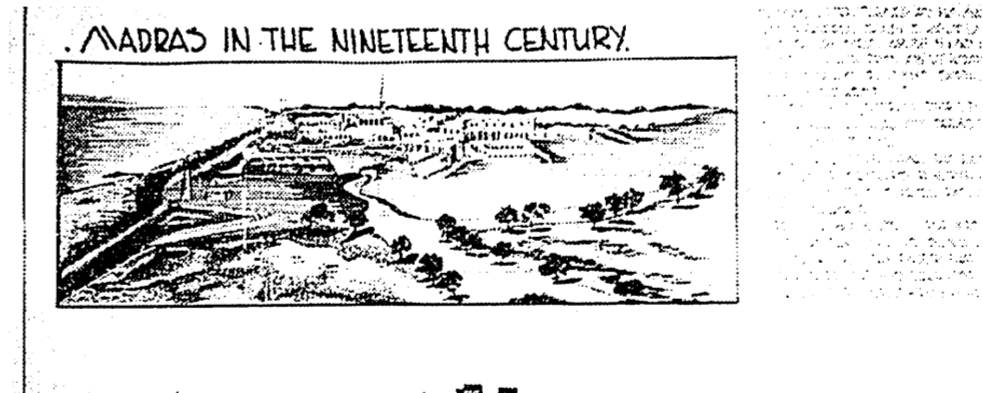
Pauline and David, Indian Bank, Besant Nagar Branch: Hope many schools and colleges visit, to get an idea of Chennai. I wish officials and Ministers visit the exhibition to improve our Chennai.

there appears to be much young talent.

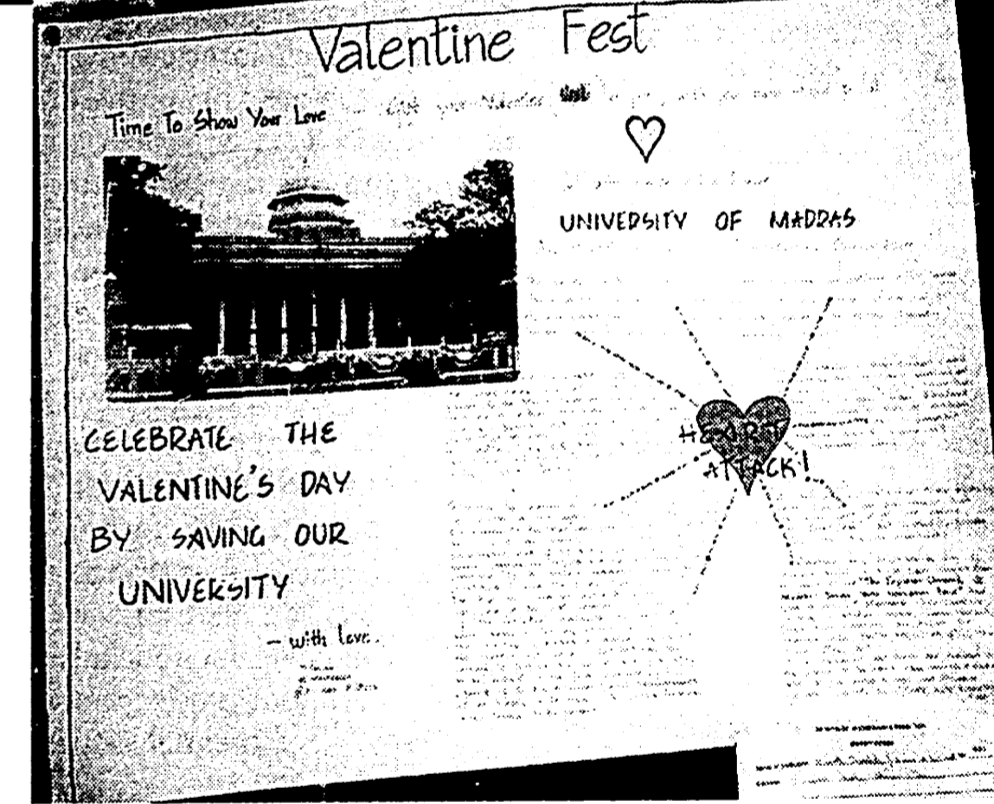
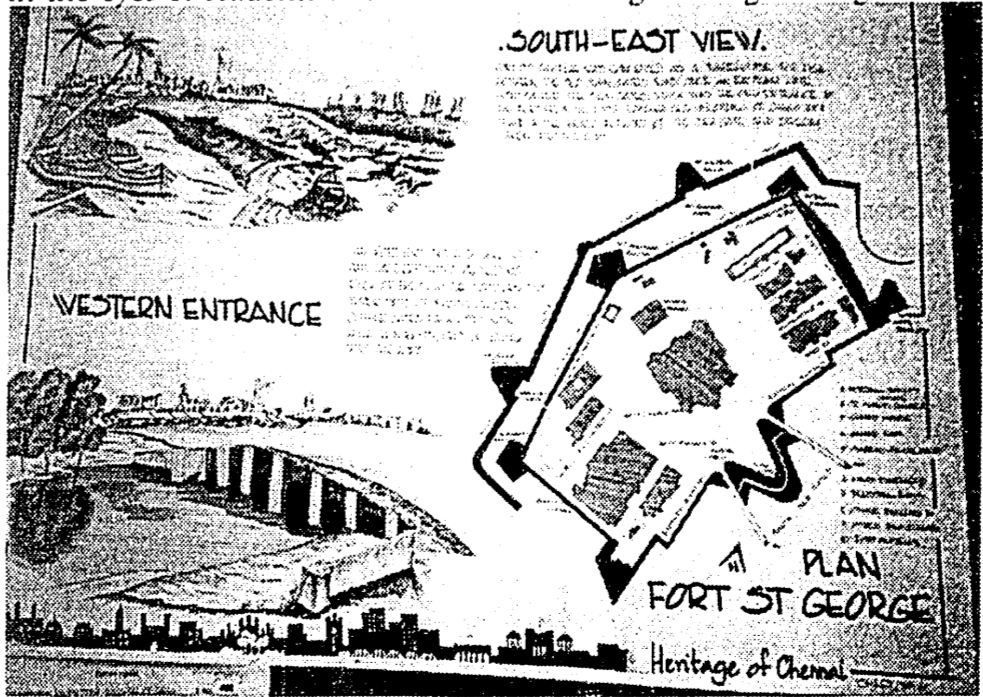
All these were certainly more imaginative efforts than the engineering precise drawings, the militaristic lay-out and the re-statement of the record that prize-winning Hindustan Engineering submitted. Excellent drawings — even if errors abounded — and a stark presentation certainly captured attention, but the imaginativeness, the greater appreciation of the nuances of heritage, were lost. Indeed, the judges as much as organisers and participants were

rather at sea when it came to deciding on how heritage should be looked at in a competition like this. And that perhaps reflects the reasons why INTACH organised the contest: To find answers. But the answers do not appear to have been easily forthcoming except in the case of a few entries. Yet, while it might be said that these entries certainly provided some of the answers sought, just try and pin down the answers and you find yourself in difficulties.

In which case, is creating awareness alone by providing



Madras in the 19th Century... the Fort was about all, it would seem, in the eyes of students from Hindustan College of Engineering.



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

detailed documentation enough for a curriculum? Partly, I am inclined to say — provided it is supplemented with project work that involves considerable research and activity on the part of the student. One school that does this but which did not put its efforts on display was The KFI School. There there are children working on several environmental projects for months 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 were working on, certainly much more knowledge than found in the conventional sources. This was knowledge garnered by field work. And it was a lack of field work that I felt most in the majority of entries at the exhibition.

As all agreed, however, this was just the first step. Many wanted this to be an annual competition. INTACH itself would like to have district competitions. All this would, in the first place, need funding. But more important, INTACH would have to look at its ground rules more closely and devise ways to ensure greater field involvement 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, Sushila Natarajan, Indira Narayanan, Prema Kasturi and Anna George. Out of their efforts will emerge some ideas for a syllabus that the Government can be persuaded to look at, INTACH hopes.

A 'civvy' who shone in an Army sport

In an equestrian sport dominated by the army and the other services, Kishore Futnani, a 47-year-old Chennai-based 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 Futnani family are the only civilians in Chennai who practise tent-pegging seriously and compete in national competitions. "We cannot participate in all horse shows held country-wide 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 pig-sticking. 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 tents, 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 titles 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



The Futnani family, from left to right, Dhruv, Shobha, Kishore and Manav. 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, Manav and Dhruv. 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 Srinu 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.

Manav, 20, and Dhruv, 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 Pranik 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 runner.

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

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 Madras.



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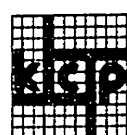
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