

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

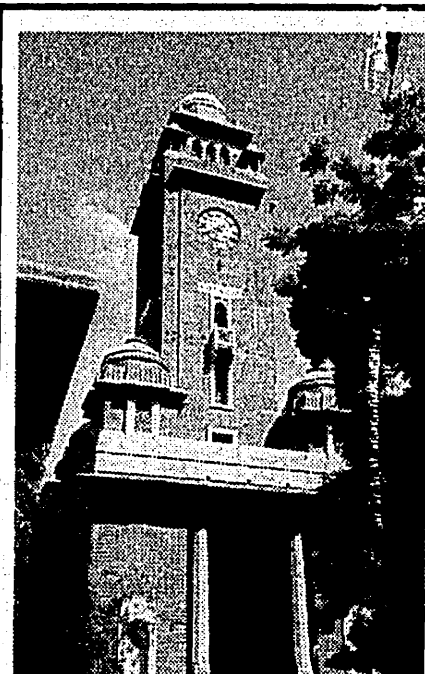
INSIDE

- A look at our democracy
- Lessons from Mumbai beaches
- Two pages of letters
- If no one came to the show
- Dravid: Silencing sceptics

Vol. IX No. 6

FREE ISSUE

July 1-15, 1999



### Time without chimes marches on at Varsity

● For 15 years time had stood still at the University of Madras. Now it's up and running again, with the University's clock tower getting a new electrical movement clock to replace the old.

The old clock had stopped running 15 years ago, said S Velmani, service-in-charge of P Orr and Sons. This unique chiming clock was manufactured by Croyston London, in 1839. The weight driven system had to be wound every eight days and it struck and chimed every 30 minutes for 20 seconds. At 12 o' clock there would be both striking and chiming. I wonder how many readers will recall the chiming of this clock. Non-maintenance led to the old clock stopping — and nothing was done to change that situation during the last 15 years.

The new electrical movement clock has been installed at a cost of Rs. 3 lakh. The four-faced eight feet diameter clock in the 120-foot tower will have four separate movements with one master movement. The broken glass dial has been replaced, rust-proof hands for the original faces and a 24-hour battery have been provided. Its lights will come on automatically at dusk. There will, however, be no striking or chiming.

A board beneath the clock, naming the firm that has undertaken to maintain the clock, however, rather mars the elegance of University Tower.

Rajind N Christy

## How do we tackle these...?

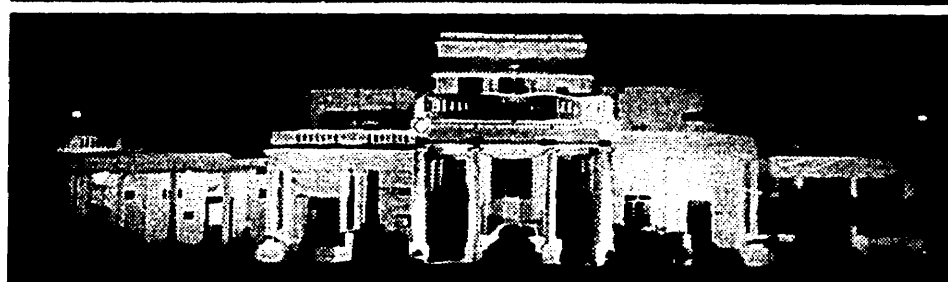
(By A Special Correspondent)

At a recent meeting of the Citizen, Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG), the following issues were raised and the question asked: "How do we tackle these problems?" Unfortunately, citizens had few answers to civic clout and reticence. But maybe there will come a day when the civic authorities will have to be answerable. Meanwhile the problems:

- The MRTS is planning to chop down 6000 trees in a nine km stretch to help construction. The loss of these trees will surely prove detrimental to the city. Legally,

no tree can be felled in Chennai without the written permission of the Corporation Commissioner. Yet only about 20-25 cases are registered in a year, when in reality the actual number of trees felled are much more. Is the Commissioner being free with his permission?

(Continued on Page 7)



The restoration of Police Headquarters, the DGP Building, and the facelift to Government House, when the DGP was in temporary occupancy and which his officers do not now wish to give up, has enthused the Police to pay a little more attention to several other handsome properties it owns. The latest to be given a facelift — and allowed to glow by floodlight — is the Office of the Joint Commissioner of Police, Traffic (North) on Poonamallee High Road.

Once one of P. Venkatachellum's 75 'garden houses' in the City, it became the office of the motor vehicle and driving licence issuing authority when the Police handled these duties and before the RTOs came into being. Its huge garden has a traffic park for children which was opened in 1965 and maintained by Bharat Petroleum. That too has been spruced up — and awaits more frequent use by schools wishing to train children in the rules of the road.

(Also see page 7 for details of what else is being done here to brighten the place — as seen below.)



## Discovering it's no different in Gujarat

(By A Staff Reporter)

When R. Desikan, consumer activist and Trustee, CONCERT, wrote to Jaspal Singh, I.P.S. (RETD.), who is now the Minister Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Gujarat, about the steps CONCERT has been taking to help focus on the adulteration of petroleum products in Tamil Nadu, the Minister, who was once considered an 'activist' as a policeman, replied,

"In Gujarat, the main issues for us with respect to petroleum products are,

- (a) adulteration in petrol and diesel by mixing solvents (in petrol) and kerosene (in diesel);
- (b) diversion of kerosene meant for the public distribution system for adulteration and for industrial and commercial purposes;

(c) use of kerosene as a fuel in auto-rickshaws;

(d) cheating the motorists at the petrol pumps through short-delivery by adjusting the meters.

What's new?!

Some steps taken in Gujarat to tackle these malpractices might be of interest to Tamil Nadu. They are:

— As departmental action and filing complaints against the offenders in a court of law under the Essential Commodities Act are time consuming, and it is very difficult to get a conviction, the Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980 (PBM Act) are being used to detain for up to six months

persons committing serious malpractices. This (nearly about a hundred detentions to date), the minister states, has had a salutary effect on habitual and serious offenders.

— The State Government is considering helping the Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC), Ahmedabad, to set up a laboratory for the testing of petroleum products.

— Computerised totalisers and metering units have been developed by software and hardware engineers in the private sector. These are tamper-proof. The Gujarat Government is trying to persuade the oil companies to install as many of these machines as possible

on the dispensing units, so that the customers can be assured of the right quantity of fuel at the right price. These machines are cost-effective, too, it is stated.

— A list of petrol pumps that "have changed hands illegally, and in most instances at a mind-boggling consideration, obviously (with) the intention of indulging in malpractices" has been prepared by the Government. But the oil companies have been slow to react, even when the information is given to them by the State government, the Minister states.

Where, then, do we go from here? That, it would appear, is what each State is asking the other. But the problem remains.



# Taking a look at Indian democracy

Much as *The Man From Madras Musings* would like to avoid the political scene, it is virtually impossible to do so in the Indian context. The other day, for instance, MMM met a reporter interested in the traffic scenario in the City and was astounded to hear him say that the recent looks *Madras Musings* and several of its readers had taken at this flyover business had been "politically motivated"! Apparently anyone disagreeing with persons of one political persuasion must be sympathetic to those of other political persuasions; it can't just be as simple as *Madras Musings* and some of its readers disagreeing with the Mayor and his traffic advisors! What a state we've come to!

No wonder well-known journalist T.J.S. George was the other day tempted to call down a pox on all political houses! George, Advisor to the Indian Express (South) Group and one of the most popular political columnists in the country, was speaking at the Madras Book Club on the 'Pitfalls of Democracy' and found there was little to choose from among the country's plethora of political parties, each of whose leaders seemed more concerned with 'What's in it for me, Jack?' than with their voters, leave alone the rest of the population.

George's talk was no talk at all. Instead, he suggested the Socratic approach: You ask and I'll try and answer. And what a success the evening was, with close on 40 questions and frank answers given to each and every one of them! It was only the moderator's insistence on closing shop for the evening that brought to an end the flow of questions.

For all George's trenchant criticism of the political situation in the country — with all those involved in it equally responsible for its sorry state — we still have a vibrant democracy, he was convinced. But while being brutally frank and forthright on many of India's political albatrosses, he was less certain on what needed to be done to cleanse our political system to make our democracy more meaningful than it is. As the debate went around in circles, we kept coming back to the same answer: Time alone will provide an answer.

Meanwhile, we will have to look at even a tragic situation like Kargil being politicised in a game of one-upmanship by every single political party. Calling for a session of the Rajya Sabha will only focus attention on the fact that even in times of a national crisis India speaks in many voices and shows itself as a fragmented polity unable to pull together, George regretted. One day, all this may change — and for that to happen, substantial constitutional and electoral reforms will both be necessary, MMM interpreted George's conclusion.

## The reforms needed

Suggestions on those reforms were more clearly spelt out a few

days later when C Subramaniam released a Macmillan publication, *Principles, Power and Politics*, under the auspices of the Madras Management Association and the Satyamurti Centre for Democratic Studies. This book is a compilation of presentations that were made on the subject at an Indo-German workshop sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. While the book looks at several Indian and German experiences with some of the major issues of democracy, namely fundamentalism, corruption, federalism, electoral reform, the independence of the judiciary and adult suffrage, the elder statesman was clear that India's ills lay rooted in two aspects of the Constitution that have come to the fore only in the last 15-20 years. Rajendra Prasad had spotted them in the drafting stage itself, recalled Subramaniam, but in the over-enthusiasm that prevailed during the first flush of freedom, no one had paid any attention to his warnings, he regretted.

The two things NOT laid down in the Constitution — and which are a matter of regret today — are:

- No qualifications are necessary at all to stand for election to a State legislature or the national Parliament and, consequently, to be a Minister; and
- No rules or regulations govern the establishment of a political party. Whereas societies etc. need to register themselves and follow such rules as having a constitution, holding regular elections, submitting annual accounts etc., none of these apply to political parties. No wonder we have 170-plus political parties with 42 in Parliament — all speaking in different voices!

The sooner electoral reforms are introduced to alter this sad state of affairs, the better it will be for the country; as things are, "the parliamentary system is in shambles" and this is responsible for the sorry state we are in.

*The Man From Madras Musings* noted with some satisfaction not only this call for immediate electoral reform but also CS's call to political parties to TRAIN the talented among their cadres and prepare them for leadership. At present, he said, many a Minister is led by his PA; if the parties had trained promising cadres for ministerial positions and leadership, taking them up the ladder of seniority step by step, this would not be happening.

Given the present scenario of political chaos, who will listen to such wisdom, wonders MMM.

## Mylapore memories

What was Mylapore like a hundred years ago? How has it developed since? *The Man From Madras Musings* did NOT find out when he attended a recent lecture on '100 years of Mylapore'. What he did hear were a number of twice-told tales about a few of the legal eagles who comprised that elite that was called the 'Mylapore Brahmin' and very

interesting they were, narrated as they were in his inimitable, audience-grabbing style by Randor Guy, but of what else there was in Mylapore from 1899 there was precious little mention.

The lecture was the first in a series being organised by the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation as its 'Countdown to the Millennium'. A sentence in the note announcing the series grabbed MMM's attention and that was that "The Foundation is situated on the outskirts of Mylapore, the oldest part of Chennai (which should have been named Mylapore!)". MMM wonders whether that parenthesised clause is the first salvo to getting Madras to go back to roots. And will the second salvo be the 'History of Mylapore' that was mooted by Randor Guy and which Dr. Nanditha Krishna, head of the Foundation, welcomed and felt should be undertaken. But such a history will have to look at not the last 100 or 300 years which are reason-

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

ably well recorded but at the 2000 years through which Mylapore traces some of its history. And that's a task MMM envies no one! Especially as it will mean going through at least the solid documentation of the last 500 years.

But if it ever gets done, MMM hopes it will go beyond a few of the legal eagles. In fact, he hopes it will go even beyond the area that is NOW called Mylapore. Old Mylapore comprised all the area from the San Thomé Beach to the Road to the Mount, upto the Adyar in the south and Triplicane (some include Triplicane in Mylapore) in the north. It would also need much more reference — after research — to people from here who contributed to the City over the years, like, to name a few, Buchi Babu (whose contribution to Indian sport deserves a memorial), Anantharamakrishnan (the pioneer of Indian corporate culture in the south), Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar (as legislator and statesman) and going back to Sullivan and Moubay and other sahibs who developed the area from field and forest into one of the major residential areas of a metropolis.

A book even of 500 years of Mylapore will have much to tell of the story of Madras. MMM looks forward to that book.

## Thatha remembered

Speaking of Sir C.P. — as he was always referred to — there was another occasion to remember him just a few days after Randor Guy reminisced about a few of Mylapore's famed sons. That was the release of a memoir

— Sir C.P. Remembered — written by Shakunthala Jagannathan. No biography this, these are the reminiscences of many collated by his granddaughter — and they often make a person who appeared to many as austere and autocratic seem warmly human.

Sir C.P. was a controversial figure through much of his career and his granddaughter's brief mention of several of the issues which gave rise to controversy sees the issues through his eyes. That too is a view that needs recording. *The Man From Madras Musings* feels. There is no doubt that Sir C.P.'s actions were what HE thought were best for the state or the country; that others thought differently should not be reason to question his bona fides. His commitment to what he believed was right and his principles are what his granddaughter attempts to convey in this slim volume which ranges from mundane re-telling of the facts to warm recollections of Thatha.

Typical of both Sir C.P.'s hauteur as well as his principles is a delightful little anecdote in the book. He was still a young man but a successful advocate when he was offered a Judgeship of the Madras High Court. In a classic reply to the Chief Justice he wrote, "I prefer, Mr. Chief Justice, to talk nonsense for a few hours each day than to hear nonsense every day and all day long". That was the first time, it is said, a judgeship was refused by a member of the Madras Bar. Only Sir C.P. could have done it in those words, many have told MMM.

MMM was glad to hear that a biography of Sir C.P. by an academic and a compilation of his papers under the title *Sir C.P.'s Travancore Journal* by a former Civilian of the Kerala cadre are almost complete and will be published in the next 12 months. MMM only hopes that the former will humanise the man as his granddaughter has done while looking at his public actions even-handedly. As for the *Journal*, an analysis of his actions in hindsight will, MMM hopes, be an integral part of the compilation. All said and done, he was a pioneer in several fields that affected the lives of thousands of people, often to their benefit. Those actions need to be looked at more objectively in retrospect, long after the heat of the moment.

## In brief

★ Going against every grain of heritage conservation is the recent announcement by the Union Railways Minister that the Nilgiris Mountain Railways will be saved AND will be electrified. That's looking at the problems of the NMR like a businessman — and heritage conservation is not, regrettably, a successful business proposition many a time, *The Man From Madras Musings* admits. If the NMR is being saved and allowed to continue running as a part of

the Railways' commitment to heritage conservation, then the century-old method of climbing the ascent — or descending the incline — using steam locomotives specially equipped for the journey must continue. Modernising the journey through electrification is not conservation, MMM is certain. On the other hand, the high cost of the steam locomotives should not stand in the way of conservation; the losses will not break the Railways, but if the conservation project is sufficiently publicised, it could earn it enormous goodwill and maybe even an increased payload.

★ Speaking of heritage, another bit of curious public sector planning in this regard that *The Man From Madras Musings* recently spotted was a call for a consultancy on housing the State Bank of India's archives in two floors of a new tower block it has raised in Calcutta. The empanelment notice reads in part, "The interior decor to be designed should be aesthetically pleasing and retaining the appropriate period ambience (19th-early 20th centuries) to the extent feasible, using the artefacts in the Bank's possession." When the Bank has a building going back to its roots and which needs only restoration to suit the present purpose to a T, MMM finds it difficult to understand this quest. MMM refers to the Madras Main Branch of the Bank at Rajaji Salai which was built as the headquarters of the Bank of Madras, the first modern banking institution in the country and which was absorbed by the Imperial Bank which, in turn, became the SBI. When built, that Indo-Saracenic building by Henry Irwin had the most magnificent banking hall in India — and if the present clutter is cleared, MMM is convinced you'll find that classicism of the past again. With such a building available, the present quest of the Bank seems to MMM rather unimaginative and lacking in understanding of both archiving and conservation.

★ Gujarat, *The Man From Madras Musings* notes, is now talking of Vision 2010 which will push the State into the global class. At the same time, the State encourages such activities as shipbreaking, no matter how environment unfriendly it is, so long as there is some money in the business for the State. *The Man From Madras Musings* now hears that Tamil Nadu is also planning to get into such an environment-unfriendly business. A Rs.175 crore project will establish 50 shipbreaking yards at Vallinokkam, 50 km. from Ramanathapuram, at which minor port the breaking up of small ships has been going on since 1987 in six yards. MMM hears that a Mumbai-based firm has already bought over 200 acres of land near here to set up a major ship-breaking yard. What MMM wonders is whether any Environment Impact Assessment has been carried out for the existing operations as well as for the proposed project. Or are we once again ignoring all environmental concerns?

★ The Mumbai waterfront consists of a few sandy beaches interspersed largely with long rocky stretches at the reclaimed portions. The rocky stretches with paved promenades — Marine Drive, Worli Sea Face and Bandra-Bandstand — are in much better condition than the sandy stretches. As architect P.K. Das points out, of the 34-km waterfront stretch, only one-third is available to the public. The rest is private property — forming extended compounds of buildings, hotels, clubs and restaurants built plop on the beach, in the days before the CRZ. That some hotels have come up after the CRZ is another matter...

That almost every beach or waterfront has been adopted by local residents under committees with names like Save Versova Beach/Save Shivaji Park Beach or Save Juhu Beach Association, speaks for itself. Our beaches are an endangered species. The adopted stretches on the waterfront stand out: whether it is the clean sands of

MMM

# Lessons to learn

— From Mumbai's beaches

Mumbai might have a waterfront that's 34-km long. It might boast several beaches. But, forget sand and seashells. Mumbai's shoreline is matted with the consumerist project is sufficiently publicised, it could earn it enormous goodwill and maybe even an increased payload.

★ Speaking of heritage, another bit of curious public sector planning in this regard that *The Man From Madras Musings* recently spotted was a call for a consultancy on housing the State Bank of India's archives in two floors of a new tower block it has raised in Calcutta. The empanelment notice reads in part, "The interior decor to be designed should be aesthetically pleasing and retaining the appropriate period ambience (19th-early 20th centuries) to the extent feasible, using the artefacts in the Bank's possession." When the Bank has a building going back to its roots and which needs only restoration to suit the present purpose to a T, MMM finds it difficult to understand this quest. MMM refers to the Madras Main Branch of the Bank at Rajaji Salai which was built as the headquarters of the Bank of Madras, the first modern banking institution in the country and which was absorbed by the Imperial Bank which, in turn, became the SBI. When built, that Indo-Saracenic building by Henry Irwin had the most magnificent banking hall in India — and if the present clutter is cleared, MMM is convinced you'll find that classicism of the past again. With such a building available, the present quest of the Bank seems to MMM rather unimaginative and lacking in understanding of both archiving and conservation.

★ Speaking of heritage, another bit of curious public sector planning in this regard that *The Man From Madras Musings* recently spotted was a call for a consultancy on housing the State Bank of India's archives in two floors of a new tower block it has raised in Calcutta. The empanelment notice reads in part, "The interior decor to be designed should be aesthetically pleasing and retaining the appropriate period ambience (19th-early 20th centuries) to the extent feasible, using the artefacts in the Bank's possession." When the Bank has a building going back to its roots and which needs only restoration to suit the present purpose to a T, MMM finds it difficult to understand this quest. MMM refers to the Madras Main Branch of the Bank at Rajaji Salai which was built as the headquarters of the Bank of Madras, the first modern banking institution in the country and which was absorbed by the Imperial Bank which, in turn, became the SBI. When built, that Indo-Saracenic building by Henry Irwin had the most magnificent banking hall in India — and if the present clutter is cleared, MMM is convinced you'll find that classicism of the past again. With such a building available, the present quest of the Bank seems to MMM rather unimaginative and lacking in understanding of both archiving and conservation.

★ Speaking of heritage, another bit of curious public sector planning in this regard that *The Man From Madras Musings* recently spotted was a call for a consultancy on housing the State Bank of India's archives in two floors of a new tower block it has raised in Calcutta. The empanelment notice reads in part, "The interior decor to be designed should be aesthetically pleasing and retaining the appropriate period ambience (19th-early 20th centuries) to the extent feasible, using the artefacts in the Bank's possession." When the Bank has a building going back to its roots and which needs only restoration to suit the present purpose to a T, MMM finds it difficult to understand this quest. MMM refers to the Madras Main Branch of the Bank at Rajaji Salai which was built as the headquarters of the Bank of Madras, the first modern banking institution in the country and which was absorbed by the Imperial Bank which, in turn, became the SBI. When built, that Indo-Saracenic building by Henry Irwin had the most magnificent banking hall in India — and if the present clutter is cleared, MMM is convinced you'll find that classicism of the past again. With such a building available, the present quest of the Bank seems to MMM rather unimaginative and lacking in understanding of both archiving and conservation.

★ Speaking of heritage, another bit of curious public sector planning in this regard that *The Man From Madras Musings* recently spotted was a call for a consultancy on housing the State Bank of India's archives in two floors of a new tower block it has raised in Calcutta. The empanelment notice reads in part, "The interior decor to be designed should be aesthetically pleasing and retaining the appropriate period ambience (19th-early 20th centuries) to the extent feasible, using the artefacts in the Bank's possession." When the Bank has a building going back to its roots and which needs only restoration to suit the present purpose to a T, MMM finds it difficult to understand this quest. MMM refers to the Madras Main Branch of the Bank at Rajaji Salai which was built as the headquarters of the Bank of Madras, the first modern banking institution in the country and which was absorbed by the Imperial Bank which, in turn, became the SBI. When built, that Indo-Saracenic building by Henry Irwin had the most magnificent banking hall in India — and if the present clutter is cleared, MMM is convinced you'll find that classicism of the past again. With such a building available, the present quest of the Bank seems to MMM rather unimaginative and lacking in understanding of both archiving and conservation.

★ Speaking of heritage, another bit of curious public sector planning in this regard that *The Man From Madras Musings* recently spotted was a call for a consultancy on housing the State Bank of India's archives in two floors of a new tower block it has raised in Calcutta. The empanelment notice reads in part, "The interior decor to be designed should be aesthetically pleasing and retaining the appropriate period ambience (19th-early 20th centuries) to the extent feasible, using the artefacts in the Bank's possession." When the Bank has a building going back to its roots and which needs only restoration to suit the present purpose to a T, MMM finds it difficult to understand this quest. MMM refers to the Madras Main Branch of the Bank at Rajaji Salai which was built as the headquarters of the Bank of Madras, the first modern banking institution in the country and which was absorbed by the Imperial Bank which, in turn, became the SBI. When built, that Indo-Saracenic building by Henry Irwin had the most magnificent banking hall in India — and if the present clutter is cleared, MMM is convinced you'll find that classicism of the past again. With such a building available, the present quest of the Bank seems to MMM rather unimaginative and lacking in understanding of both archiving and conservation.

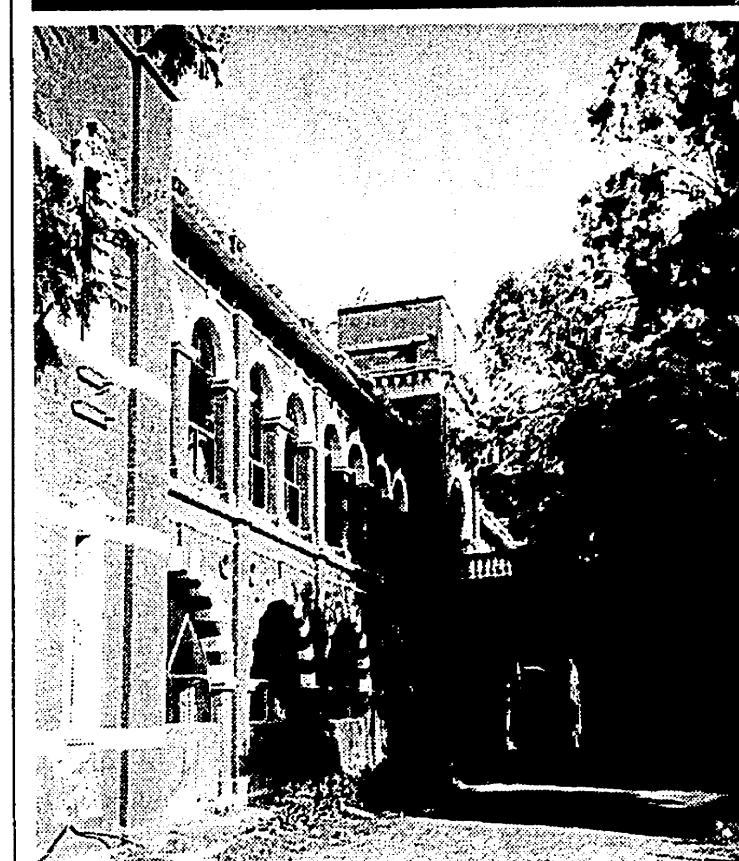
Chowpatty with a grinning Pramod Navalkar posing proudly with his Beach Patrol crew or Juhu beach where George Gopali's workers gather the day's litter, or a short patch of the Dadar-Shivaji Park beach which is remarkably clean. "We have a resident in our building who keeps a daily tab on the municipal clean-up tractor," says Gita Pardiwala, a resident whose flat overlooks the beach. "If it doesn't turn up, the ward office gets a call. So now they send the tractor regularly. It is only if residents fight for their beach, can it be saved."

● Mumbai is buzzing with grand plans to reclaim the sea and embellish its shoreline. But why doesn't it make the most of what it already has, asks NINA MARTYRIS.

Mumbai's two success stories are Girgaon Chowpatty and Juhu Beach, which was rescued from the jaws of garbagedom and restored at great toil and expense, thanks to local vigilance. Families with their children have returned to these sands while camels and ponies have been banned from them.

At Chowpatty, the 23 striped "kenopees" are in great demand, priced at a reasonable Rs 15 per hour. We see beach-cleaners in distinctive red uniforms patrolling and scooping up the garbage. The concept of dustbins has finally sunk in: the canopies sport mesh bins with Use Me writ large. A police van keeps a strict watch and the hordes are turned out at midnight when powerful searchlights flush out those trying to stretch their Cinderella hour in the shadows...

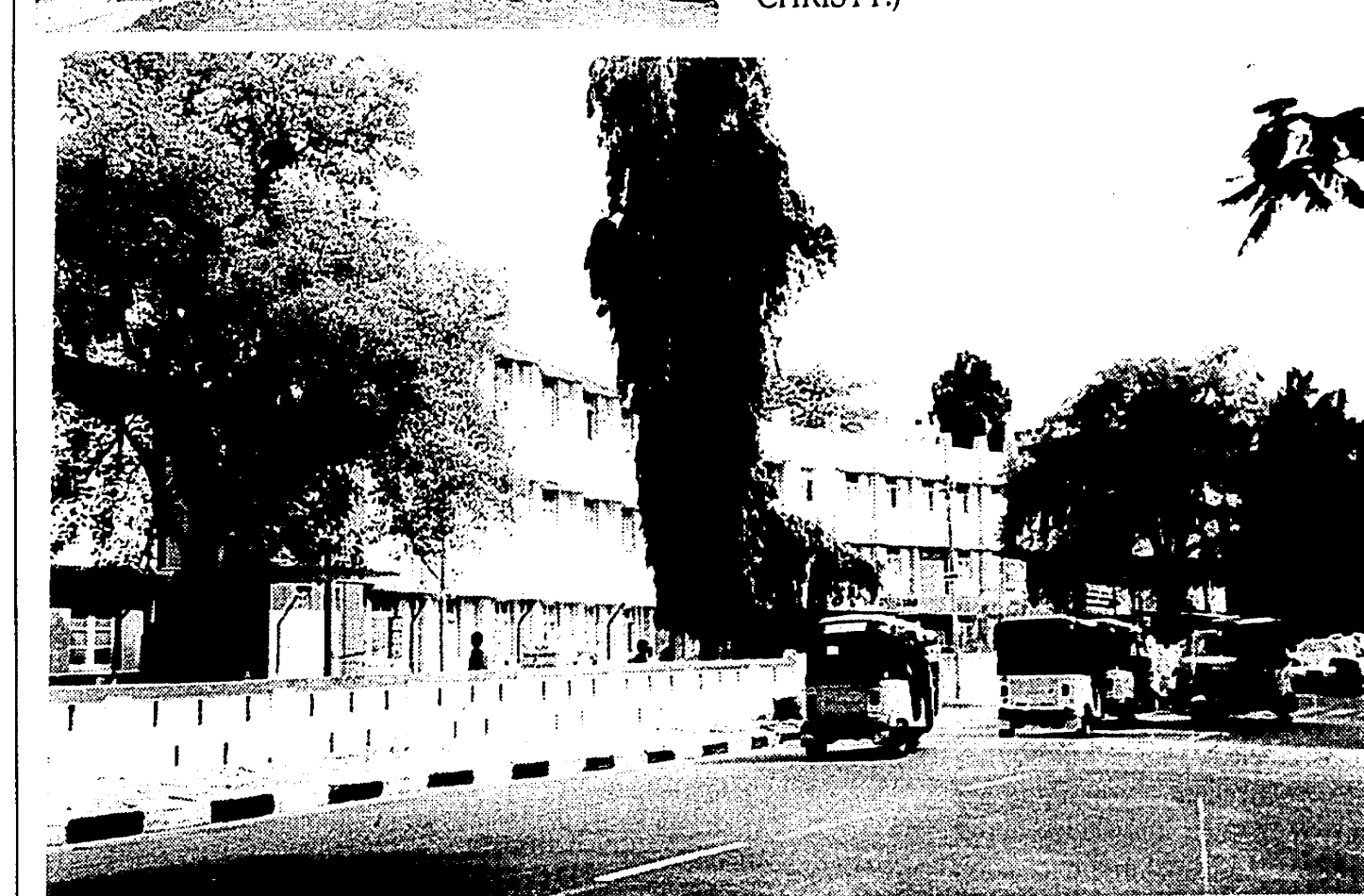
Compared to the beaches, the paved-up waterfronts are in better shape: the 3-km Marine Drive stretch despite its cratered surface, the 2-km Worli seaface and the Bandra waterfront (3 km in all), where emergency aid has been rushed not a moment too soon what with encroachments springing up on the rocks. At Worli, a Rs. three-crore



Our OLD shows two views of the main building (the Lady Lawley block) of the Government Ophthalmic Hospital that is little noticed on Marshall's Road. Founded as the Madras Eye Infirmary in 1819, on the model of famed Moorfields in London (1818), it was the first specialist eye hospital in Asia and the second in the world. It moved to its present location in 1884 and took its present name in 1886 around the time this building was built. Responsible

for this growth was Drake Brodeman, who was head of the Infirmary from

1873. From then it kept growing — and that growth in post-Independence caused the need for our NEW in 1969. While the NEW may be uninspired Government architecture but necessary, the OLD could do with restoration and greater visibility to remind the public of one more Madras 'first,' an institution called the Regional Ophthalmic Institute. (Photographs by RAJIND N. CHRISTY.)



project is on to renew the promenade which even boasts a mini-forest at one end. The beautification, however, ends with the seawall. Beyond, the filth takes over again; sewage-festooned waves and tufts of mangroves drooping with plastic bags...

Along the Bandra-Bandstand and Carter Road stretches, major restoration work is already in progress as part of the INTACH western waterfront development scheme. The work is being done by MHADA: Rajya Sabha MP Shabana Azmi has given Rs. 60 lakh from the

MP's fund towards the development. After the work here is completed, the Juhu Waterfront restoration will be taken up.

At his election rally, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray had declared in grandiose style that he would see to it that the beaches were cleaned up. The promise, like many others, has been dumped into the beleaguered waters of the Arabian. It will take more than mere rhetoric to clean Mumbai's beaches as they battle the might of effluent, encroachment, garbage, debris, oil slicks, sewage and promises as broken

as the bottles that regularly wash up. As one of the uniformed boys who cleans up Chowpatty says, "What is the point of spending the whole day cleaning up the beach when, with one monsoon storm, it is covered with a million plastic bags."

(Courtesy: Sunday Times of India, Mumbai)

Our Readers Write appears on Pages 4 & 5



## OUR READERS WRITE



### Woe unto pedestrians!

I refer to M.P. Paul's letter (MM, June 1st). The question he should have paid greater attention to is whether the flyovers are the most suitable option in the existing conditions.

No one disputes the fact that, all over the world, in all major cities, the most widely used and most effective medium to keep road traffic smooth is the flyover. Nor do we doubt the usefulness of the Gemini Flyover on our own Anna Salai.

The vital question that should have been kept in mind in the present context is whether there is sufficient space for the flyovers. Remember that the 23 flyovers will, in most cases, accept straight-going traffic. Vehicles taking turns will have to use ground-level roads. In the case of most of the flyovers under construction, ground-level traffic will, I daresay, use road space at the expense of the pedestrians. As it is, on several roads (e.g., Royapettah High Road) the pavement has virtually been removed and trees have been cut down — all to make way for vehicles! Pedestrians will be pushed to the extreme left, very near the row of shops where they will have goods stacked outside to manoeuvre past the shops or be threatened by fast-moving vehicles.

C. Kesi

A-5, Madhurima  
20-21 Conran Smith Road  
Gopalapuram  
Chennai 600 086.

### Better understanding

Every time I drove past the ditches and the rubble and all the time I waited till eternity in traffic jams (which have become a part of our lives), I used to wonder with anger and helplessness about the flyovers being constructed all over the city for us. Not any more, thanks to MM of May 1st. Watching the complex constructions process, it was difficult for a person like me to fathom from where to where the flyovers were going. Those with me were as clueless. *Madras Musings* has given an excellent account and left me with enough knowledge about the flyovers to hold a conversation with a lot of people with whom I come in contact.

Dr. Shiv Kumar

'Mirshok'  
84, 8th Street  
A.K. Swamy Nagar  
Kellys  
Chennai 600 010.

### Sweeping statements

I admire the dedication of Kochery to the cause of our traditional fishermen. However, it is unfortunate that without proper study and analysis Kochery should make sweeping and unsubstantiated statements such as "... the country at present utilises only 30 to 40 per cent

of the capacities of the ports in existence... no need to construct new ports in the country for the next 100 years," etc.

T.V. Ranganathan

Madras Port Trust  
14, First Main Road  
Indira Nagar  
Chennai 600 020.

### The Fernandeses

With reference to MMM's, (MM June 1st), I am not sure whether Ossie Fernandes is George's

many significant buildings have additions constructed throughout their lives which form part of their history of development and also may contribute to their historic and/or social significance. We try to restore buildings to the period or dates when they were at their most significant form rather than necessarily the day they were opened. It is a subtle difference but if disregarded could cause the loss of substantial integrity and significant fabric.

Second, most buildings constructed with brick facades were originally a face brickwork finish (sometimes with a red brick wash on them) and were never meant to be painted (e.g., exterior of the *Senate House*). Buildings constructed of brick but having plaster/lime render finishes were often originally painted with white or coloured lime washes. By scraping small areas we can find the various layers of paint applied over the life of the building. Only

solved and explains why the Editor could only reply "Never heard of him".

Bruce Pettman

Principal Conservation Architect  
Sacon International  
Department for Administrative and  
Information Services  
Wakefield House  
30 Wakefield Street, Adelaide  
South Australia 5000.

### A Penny recall

Living Dangerously by P.E. Penny is said to authentically portray the life of a Mr. Lavelle, mine explorer, surveyor and daring adventurer. The story told the lives and living conditions of thousands of mine workers from Tamil Nadu who went west towards princely Mysore Samastan in search of work and a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

The novel is not to be found anywhere at present. If anybody has any

walks on footpaths? The MTC posts officials at bus stops to clear the roads. But passengers block half the road at bus stops. Then how can traffic be cleared?

We would not say our city is dirtier than other cities if we, the public, co-operated with the Corporation and the Government.

J. David

11, Hyder Garden IV Street  
Perambur Barracks P.O.,  
Chennai 600 012

### Property tax revision

The frequent increase in property tax by the Chennai Corporation will dampen the enthusiasm of house owners to let their houses for rent.

It is a known fact that the house owners get only 5-6 per cent return from their investment, if they build a house and let it out for rent. (For example, if a thousand square feet house/flat is let out for rent, it will fetch only Rs. 6000 to Rs. 7000, whereas the investment in it will be approximately Rs. 16-20 lakh). Even with bank interest, an investor can get 11 per cent interest. The property tax will erode this return still further. Hence the Corporation authorities should first understand that house owners are doing a service, by mitigating the housing shortage in our country, and should not harass them with frequent revisions in property tax.

Though the Corporation is interested in revising the property tax at frequent intervals, it is surprising to note that Government is not interested in revising the Rent Control Act to bring it on par with the Delhi Rent Control Act, which was implemented a few years ago (which allows the house owners to increase the rent by 10 per cent every two years in tune with inflation). By implementing this act, the Government will not only remove the hardship faced by many house owners but will also ease the situation in many courts which are flooded with unnecessary rent control law suits.

Dr. N Subramanian

191, North Usman Road  
Chennai 600 017.

### Defacing signboards

The Central and State Governments spend crores of rupees in putting up indication and direction signboards, displaying kilometers to the next town, to assist travellers.

Unfortunately, political parties have found these boards a convenient place to paste their posters.

Is there a provision in the law books to prosecute these lawbreakers who misuse these boards? They should be fined, without appeal to court, Rs.500 per board to cover at least the cost of repainting. Unless such drastic measures are taken, those involved will continue such practices.

Bharat Hiteshi

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

### Temple beauty

Considering the act that the Kapaleeswarar temple walls are not endowed with any sculptures, I would say that the embedding of marble slabs with holy hymns does

not mar the 'beauty' of the walls. But the attachment of marble slabs on the pillars of Sri Singaravelar Sannadhi looks a bit odd and grotesque as they protrude outside these pillars and hinder free movement.

The granite walls of the temple should be plastered at the joints which have been affected due to the sandblasting during renovation and have become an abode for insects and cockroaches. The temple authorities would do well to attend to this as early as possible.

The loudspeakers inside the temple interfere with the peaceful atmosphere of the temple and disturb the devotees and may therefore be removed. Or else the devotional music should be played very softly as to just waft through, not blare.

T.M. Sundararaman

19, Nallappan Street  
Mylapore  
Chennai 600 004.

### Evoking memories

Mention of Sir Archibald Nye (MM, May 1st), takes my mind back nearly 60 years when he presented me the Gold (colour) Chord honouring a First Class Scout. There were many other scouts of the Madras Presidency so honoured that day at the Pachappa playground behind Telephone Bhavan. That playground is no more. It is now Fruit Market and Bus terminus.

Dr. C.B. Hari Rao

Plot 63, Mahalakshmi Nagar  
Selaiyur  
Chennai 600 073.

### Beautiful blend

I had been to Central Station after a long long time. The frontage of the additional platform is a slightly smaller version of the main building with a taller tower on the west instead of the clock tower of the main building. It blends beautifully with the old. I must compliment the people concerned.

T.V. Krishnamurthy

70, Appar Street  
Kalakshetra Colony  
Chennai 600 090.

### Record their history

The names of a number of streets, roads and areas have been changed after independence. Some of these have memorable links with the freedom struggle; either great dignitaries lived or important events took place here. For the sake of posterity the identity of these places needs to be preserved. A commemorative tablet could be installed in such places. The expenses can easily be met from contributions from flat promoters who I am sure will be only too happy to participate in recording history.

S. Rajagopalan

14, Anandam Street  
Chennai 600 017.

### Clean air, when?

There is absolutely no improvement in the vehicular pollution scene in Chennai, unlike in other cities of India, where sincere and serious corrective measures have already been in place for the last few years. In Chennai, the half-baked measures have not even been implemented whole-heartedly.

# Some answers to our traffic users

With reference to M.P. Paul's letter in MM, June 1st, the point Mr. Paul is perhaps missing is that, in the case of Delhi, there was a larger exercise of city layout planning and road design carried out while constructing the several flyovers. This has not been the case with Madras. The functional as well as aesthetic aspects should have been considered but weren't. In fact, I feel the Gemini flyover itself could have done with better design.

I am inclined to agree that flyovers are a necessary evil, but, then should be constructed only if there is absolutely no other choice. Madras does have several other choices and these choices envisage activities which should precede construction of flyovers.

Most of the 23 flyovers (or is it 30?) coming up in Madras are definitely

- going to make the respective areas more congested and the traffic even more messy, as there is just no space for reasonably wide side roads,
- going to shift the traffic congestion to other bottlenecks in and around the area, and
- going to take away whatever little look the city has and make it look like some small town where they put up such flyovers in extremely narrow roads and congested areas.

Basically, I feel there is a lack of vision on the part of the powers that be for the city of Madras, notwithstanding the plethora of schemes with fancy names (*Vision 2000*, *Singara Chennai* etc.) that have been conjured up! Bringing in comparisons to cities abroad (Singapore is a favourite!) is another popular sport with our administrators. In this context, I think we need to go a long way before we can catch up with even some of the better administered cities in India.

The administration will do far better to spend a fraction of the amount being spent on flyovers on EDUCATING THE MOTORING AND CYCLING PUBLIC AND PEDESTRIANS on what their roles, responsibilities and do's and don'ts are, when they are a part of the traffic system.

For example, very few motorists in Madras look at their side rear view and rear view mirrors before starting to change the course of their vehicle. This is a standard practice in any mature traffic system where the responsibility of making sure that lane-switching is done smoothly rests on the person switching lanes and not on the person coming from behind. In Madras, on being confronted, the typical response from a motorist switching lanes without doing the necessary check, is, "Why didn't you horn?!" This is just one example of the gross illiteracy of the people in the traffic system. This has to be set right first, and without this even 100 flyovers will not be able to improve the traffic situation in Madras!

Design and planning of traffic flows is an area the administration should pay attention to. For example, the traffic flow design at the Gemini flyover junction is fundamentally wrong. The flaw is that the system makes a stream of traffic wait on the circumference of the roundabout. Vehicles coming from Cathedral Road and proceeding towards Safire Theatre are made to wait on the circumference of the

roundabout for the traffic stream proceeding from Nungambakkam High Road to Cathedral Road to get cleared and for the signal to change. This is rank bad design. In any well-designed traffic system, any stream of traffic will wait outside the circumference of the traffic island and, once it is given the green signal, has the right-of-way completely till it is out of the circumference of the traffic island. Applied in the context of the Gemini flyover, it would be far better if traffic coming from Cathedral Road were allowed to go completely out of the circumference of the traffic island once it gets a green signal.

Proper enforcement is another component of achieving smooth traffic. This is something *Madras Musings* has highlighted on several occasions. For this to happen, you need a motivated, suitably educated (with respect to traffic rules) and an alert, fair and fit (!) traffic police. I do not think the Madras police, which used to be the pride of the state prior to the 70s, will score even 20% on any of these attributes. Also, it is nonsensical for traffic policemen to expend most of their energies on either operating the traffic signal (putting switches on and off), or by standing in the middle of the road, furiously waving their arms in a comical attempt to regulate traffic flow. First of all, the city administrators should recognise that this is a metropolitan city and not a village. Organisation and automation are necessary components in any well-managed city where the population and traffic are of a very large magnitude. The traffic signals, therefore, need to be automated. The traffic police's focus should be on catching errant motorists.

Traffic rules should be simple and transparent, so that everyone knows them and follows them, and easy to enforce. For example, is it OK to drive with the headlights in the high-beam position, blinding motorists going in the opposite direction?

The position, consistency and clarity of signage are also very important. The signboards in Madras come in a variety of sizes and shapes, and are in many cases positioned at places and angles where they are virtually invisible. There is a really funny sign opposite the Connemara Hotel indicating that vehicles on Binny Road going towards the Arts College signal should not take a diagonal path to get into the entrance of Spencer's next to Connemara Hotel. This is really absurd as someone taking the diagonal path is fundamentally violating a basic rule by driving on the wrong side of the road, against the flow of the oncoming traffic. Where then is there the need for putting up this kind of signage?

Any metropolitan city should have a scientific, planned and design-oriented approach to managing traffic. It is not something which our councillors, bureaucracy or traffic police, are qualified or competent to do on their own. It is a professional discipline in its own right and is best left to organisations or institutions which have a reputation of successfully implementing good traffic systems elsewhere in India or the world.

B. Rabindranath

5, Srirangam Avenue  
53, Pantheon Road  
Chennai 600 008.

When do we get effective results and breathable quality clean air?

Mukesh Kumar

131 Broad  
P.B. 1586  
Madras 600 108.

### Urdu origin

In addition to certain Urdu words, which have crept into the Tamil language, as mentioned by Lodi in MM (March 16th), here are more Urdu words which have crept into the Tamil language and are used in day-to-day affairs: *bandh* (close), *tayyar* (ready), *khillady* (player), *sambhal* (manage), *parva illai* (never mind, an Urdu and Tamil combination), *tamasha* (display) etc.

As mentioned earlier, the list is endless.

Abdul Jameel

19, 1st Floor, R.O.B.  
6th Street, Royapettah  
Chennai 600 014.

### Remembering trams

A propos letter on trams I would like to add the following:

There was a tram service running through Triplicane High Road, past Ice House Police Station and after crossing Edward Elliot's Road (as Radhakrishnan Salai was called then) terminating Hamilton Bridge (corrupted in local parlance to

Ambattan bridge. I have seen this name displayed on the destination boards of the trams that plied on that route). This is the short tram service referred.

Opposite *Dare House*, near the High Court compound, there was a loop and a siding in the tramline so that trams could either turn back at Parry's Corner instead of proceeding to Harbour to Royapuram or stay in the siding for rest and then take the return direction. Because the track was narrow gauge, trams would often get derailed or would straddle two tracks, creating a fine spectacle but causing worry and strain to the Maintenance Staff setting right the situation!

In 1951, there was an island in the road junction opposite Elphinstone Cinema in which cars were parked. A circular public convenience existed in the middle of the island.

V. Narayanaswamy

Flat No.2E, Coral Arch  
5, East Mada Street  
Srinagar Colony,  
Chennai 600 015.

### Why charge extra?

The Cheran Express is more of ten than not late — late by almost an hour to reach Chennai or Coimbatore, yet passengers are being charged an extra 'super fast' charge on their tickets. Why charge more and earn the wrath of the passengers?

Of late, the train is mentionably dirty. In some compartments, the toilet floor is practically sinking; feel your feet going down once you step on the toilet floor. The western toilet is the worst — it is not totally western, in that there is no toilet paper, no cover and no hygienic conditions.

On one recent occasion passengers complained of bed bugs infestation of the berths in the Cheran Express. The authorities had to spray insecticides before letting the train proceed.

The travelling public deserve better.

P.S. Sundar,

"SKANDAM"  
Reilly Compound  
Coonoor 643 101  
Nilgiris.



## Quizzin' with Ram'n'an

(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN'S question are from the period June 1 to 15. Questions 10 to 12 pertain to Chennai and Questions 13 to 20 are trivia questions on Chennai and Tamil Nadu)

1. Which Asian king celebrated the silver jubilee of his ascension to the throne on June 2nd?
2. Name the Indian wheat scientist who has been awarded China's top award for a foreigner, the Friendship Meda.
3. Name the second indigenous-built guided missile destroyer, after *INS Delhi*, commissioned into the Navy on June 2nd.
4. The inventor of the Hovercraft passed away recently. Name him.
5. Whom did Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi beat to annex their first Grand Slam doubles title together at the French Open?
6. What publishing history did Australian photographer Helmut Newton's boom *Helmut Newton's Sino* create?
7. By winning the French Open singles title, what rare feat did Andre Agassi achieve for a male tennis player after 30 years?
8. On June 13th, Tamil Nadu had a first in Information Technology. What?
9. The centenary of which landmark of Coonoor was celebrated on June 15th?
10. Which multinational has sanctioned \$25,000 for the upliftment of Elliot's Beach?
11. Chennai Telephones has introduced the VCC recently. What is VCC?
12. Where was the foundation stone for an ultra-modern mofussil bus terminus laid by the Chief Minister on June 6th?
13. Which place in Chennai is Portuguese for 'light'?
14. Which temple in Tamil Nadu is supposed to show the manifestation of Lord Shiva as the element water?
15. What is the State animal of Tamil Nadu?
16. The sahibs jocularly called this place 'Snooty'. Which place?
17. What does B & C stand for in B & C Mills?
18. This popular newspaper was founded in 1868, ten years before *The Hindu*, but ceased to function from 1983. Name it.
19. In local cricket alone what is 'over-gaji'?
20. Which popular film-maker's production house has Tiruvalluvar as its logo?

(Answers on page 8)

## Tales from the Miller Menagerie

# Some snakes I knew

My father, Harry Miller, the photo-journalist and zoologist, maintained an extensive menagerie in our home at Tirumullaivayal. Peacocks — Percy and Prue (Prudence) — Malabar squirrels — Snooty and Nungu — Pythagoras the python and Goonda the ratel (a honey badger), various snakes and civets and mongoose were all part of it. By the way, Daddy Miller taught my brother and me that civets should not be called civet cats, as is often done. They do not belong to the cat family at all. Unlike members of the cat family, they have long sharp features, and they, together with mongooses and genets (which are a European kind of civet), belong to the family *Viverridae*, which, along with seven other families, come under the order *Carnivora*.

Another thing Daddy Miller taught us was that snakes don't usually bite, with perhaps, the exception of pythons. Snakes only bite when they are afraid or going for the kill.

Daddy Miller had a small fish tank on a ledge outside his study. In it, he once kept a

striped keelback (a snake). One day, he gave me the baby keelback and told me to go and show it to some visitors, who were in the sitting room. I took it — I must have been only six or seven — and showed it to them explaining that striped keelbacks don't bite, quoting Daddy Miller.

## • by Nisha Miller

As I said this, I noticed that the visitors were all looking at the keelback and laughing. When I looked down I saw that the baby keelback was earnestly chewing away at one of my fingers. Being a baby, however, its teeth weren't at all sharp, and so I hadn't felt a thing.

\* \* \*

This story is about a large, beautiful python Daddy Miller kept in a small pit in our garden.

One day, some guests had come from Chennai to see us and our animals. Father took the python out of the pit to show the visitors and put it around his neck, holding its

head in a special way so that it could not bite him. Generally snakes don't bite, but if you have the know-how to prevent something bad from happening, there's no harm in using it. And Daddy Miller did get bitten once by another python we had called Pythagoras. It was such a bad bite that his

finger, where Pythagoras had bitten him, remained stiff for years. Anyway, back to our story.

Daddy Miller had this magnificent python around his neck and standing beside him was his assistant. Both were facing their audience and the assistant was explaining about pythons to the visitors, so he wasn't looking at father. Suddenly the python started to tighten itself around Daddy Miller's neck. The assistant, who was talking to the visitors, didn't see Father turning blue, till the visitors began pointing at their host. The assistant quickly unwound the python and took it away. And that is

# Memories of another day

In the late Fifties, General Thimmayya, the then Chief of Army Staff, was the guest of the Governor of Madras. It was the duty of the ADC to receive and see off all the guests. On the day of his departure, the convoy company pilot, escort etc., with their outsize red and white flags, were lined up and ready. When I got a call from the Governor I went into his room where the discussion about a little longer than I had expected. Consequently by the time I came out, the General and his convoy had left. I felt very bad that I had missed seeing off a great personality and sat in the ADC's room dejected.

Five minutes later I saw a car enter the main porch and General Thimmayya step out, climb up the steps and head straight for the ADC's room. I rushed out thinking he had forgotten something. Meeting him halfway, I apologised for not seeing him off, as I had been summoned by the Governor, and asked him if he had forgotten something.

"Yes, Menon," answered General Thimmayya, "I forgot to thank you and take leave of you. Thanks for everything." Then, after a hearty handshake, he got into his car and

sped away to rejoin the convoy waiting on the road. Imagine the Chief of Army Staff of the Indian Armed Forces stopping his escort on the road, turning back and returning to the Raj Bhavan just to say 'Thank you' and 'good bye' to a lowly ADC!

\* \* \*

It was as a Superintendent of Police in the early Sixties that I stood peering down a 100-ft nullah called Akasa took a little longer than I had expected. Consequently by the time I came out, the General and his convoy had left. I felt very bad that I had missed seeing off a great personality and sat in the ADC's room dejected.

It was the Ooty season and a number of cars were heading towards Ooty. Not a car cared to stop to ask what had happened.

Then, I saw one car stop some distance away. And out of it stepped General (as he was then) Cariappa, dressed as usual in his immaculate best. He headed straight to where I was and asked what had happened. I told him that a bus with 13 persons in it had gone down the nullah. Looking down, where the four tyres of the bus had scattered and its body resembled a crumpled matchbox, he asked "How many dead?" His face beamed

when I told him that none had died, and only one, a clerk in my office, had a fractured rib. "Miraculous — You're lucky. God bless," he said and moved off to his car where I thanked him and saw him off.

And as he sped away, the words of John Donne came to mind: "No man is an island entire of itself... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, It tolls for thee".

\* \* \*

Before the memory of the words of General Cariappa had faded, yet another horrible accident occurred near Ooty.

A busload of 75 children and staff from Mangalore were holidaying in the Nilgiris. One morning, I received a telephone call from Kallhaty that a bus was involved in a serious accident. Telephoning the Collector and the District Medical Officer to make available the maximum number of beds in the Government Hospital, I rushed to the spot and discovered to my horror that it was the very same spot — a treacherous stretch — where my car had very nearly gone off the road some time earlier. The

story of 'How Daddy turned blue'.

Boas and pythons have evolved the method of squeezing their prey to death because they only have unspecialised teeth and no poison. They wrap themselves around the animal and stop it from breathing. They constrict their prey.

\* \* \*

Pythagoras was a beautiful python. He lived in a large cage behind daddy's study. He was very big. One day daddy went and picked him up and as I have already narrated, got bitten, when Daddy Miller's grip of it just behind the jaw missed the mark.

We had a baby deer I was very fond of. One day it died. Daddy Miller put it in Pythagoras' cage.

Now, he had told us, pythons would only eat what they had freshly killed themselves. But to our amazement, Pythagoras ate the baby deer. He never told us about this till a few years ago. "I didn't tell you when you were little, Nishi," he said to me, "because I thought you'd get upset."

bus, after having made two somersaults, was standing on its four wheels two terraced fields below, a 15-foot drop from the road. What startled me was that there were no signs at all of any accident having happened. Where I had expected to see dead and injured children, the sight that met my eyes was unbelievable — it was one of the happiest moments of my life, watching the children running about the slope, chasing each other as well as butterflies. Children apparently are shock-proof.

Wanting to inspect the bus, I got into it, only to find a lonely girl, the only casualty. Seeing me, she raised the little finger of her hand and wailed, "Uncle, my finger is broken". Consoling her, I rushed back to office and sent wireless messages to the IGP Karnataka and to the Superintendent of Police, Mangalore that all in the bus were safe. To this day I cannot understand how in such an accident only one child was affected — and that too by a comparatively minor injury. I however keep recalling the General's words; 'Miraculous — you're lucky. God bless'.

K. Sreekumara Menon

# Suppose we give a show & no one came?!

I was recently in Bangalore where I had been invited by the Artistes' Repertory Theatre (ART) to conduct an 8-day workshop on theatre voice for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that has been invited to the Globe Theatre in London in July 2000. The response was so overwhelming that actors had to be screened for the limited places in the workshop.

Bangalore boasts of at least five English theatre groups that stage plays on a regular basis. Bangalore is also reputed to have the most number of unpublished playwrights writing in English. The British Council and the Madras Players are going to hold a workshop for play-

wrights here in Chennai in September, run by Sahitya Academy award winner Mahesh Dattani (from Bangalore), and we are wondering whether we can find ten people to attend it!!

What burns me is that despite Madras having a very high standard of theatre, audiences are a fickle lot, willing to cough up huge amounts to see some rubbish from Mumbai, but claim that Rs.100 a ticket is too high a price to pay for a play performed by a local group. Recently, S. Krishna Kumar staged *Medea* — an exciting new look at an old classic. Hardly 80 people turned up each night to see the show. *Magic Lantern* has been in rehearsal for seven months now and is yet to put on a performance for lack of sponsorship. The Madras Players' Theatre Club was started assuming that

Theatre in Chennai is a lot of blood, sweat and tears — the hunt for sponsors, a place to rehearse (we have rehearsed on people's terraces, lawns, garages and one of my early shows was rehearsed on the beach and the pavement), a place to build sets, the agony of pleading with shops to put up a poster — it goes on. But at the end it's all worth it when the show comes together, because a live stage show can be absolute magic.

Those of us who struggle against these odds wonder why Chennaites prefer to sit in front of the TV and watch mindless fare with an even heavier dose of mindless commercials. Is the second coming going to be the advent of the frozen TV dinner? Are we close to the day when we give a performance and nobody shows up?

## Want to muse with MUSINGS?

If you would like to be put on *Madras Musings'* mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, MADRAS-600 006.

Name .....  
Address .....  
.....  
.....

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



## Art to brighten Police walls

Not content with an office that gleams by day and glows by night, DCP, Traffic (North) Kamna Sagar recently turned his attention to the walls of his zonal traffic headquarters (see page 1). Enlisting the help of the faculty and students of the College of Arts and Crafts — 'neighbours' not too far down the road — he had the outside walls of his office complex painted with replications of the work of leading artists. The result has been that the public have an opportunity to pay a little more attention to modern art than to the ghastly poster art or electoral scrawls that deface most of the City's walls. Madras Musings wishes that there were more officers like DCP Kamna Sagar in the Government as well as the private sector who would pay greater attention to at least the buildings they sit in and their surrounds.

(All pictures above and on page 1 as well as both stories are by RAJIND N. CHRISTY.)

# HOW DO WE TACKLE THESE...?

(Continued from Page 1)

- The Supreme Court recently ruled that only private non-commercial vehicles which conform to the Euro-II standards would be registered in the National Capital Region from April 1st. Why shouldn't the whole of the country be brought under this directive? Do we have to wait till we reach Delhi's alarming levels of pollution before we act? Certainly prevention is better than cure.
- Government heavily subsidises the price of diesel to help sectors like farming etc. But, today, vehicle manufacturers seem bent on capturing the private non-commercial sector by manufacturing cars running on diesel and people prefer them for their low operational costs. Diesel in the market is far above (0.25 to 0.50%) the ideal standard of 0.05%.
- The Chennai Corporation plans to develop theme parks and shopping bazaars in the last few green areas left in the City. The Corporation is shirking its duty to provide citizens lung space

and green areas. The green signal for these theme parks and bazaars has been given without consulting the very people affected — the general public.

We have just 87 parks and 37 playgrounds for the entire city, most of them small, ill-kept and inconveniently located. The total area covered by these parks and playgrounds is 120 hectares, which works out to 0.03 ha/1000 person which is far below 2.8 ha/1000 people, the international standard for recreational open spaces.

The Corporation has already invited global tenders for the execution of 'BOT' projects in these parks as well as for the construction of musical fountains in Marina Beach. Do we need them?

To what extent will the planned flyovers help ease traffic congestion? The Corporation says that the flyovers will ease the traffic congestion in the city for the next twenty years. What will happen after twenty years?

Will building flyovers alone solve the city's traffic

problem? What about better management of traffic and improving the conditions of roads?

• The Government directive that all two wheelers, autorickshaws, cars, lorries, etc. will have to carry the Pollution Under Control Certificates, is doing little to help the cause to fight air pollution due to vehicles. One of the problems with the concept of PUCs is that the Government is attacking the problem of pollution from the wrong end. Instead of checking the emission of vehicles it could do better by ensuring better quality of fuel.

The PUC certificates are nothing but a deflection of the problem.

The check itself does not check pollution, for temporary adjustments of carburetors can easily be done. The fines are inadequate as coercive measures. And the decision of the MTC to permit its buses to ply without PUC certificates defeats the whole idea of PUC certificates.

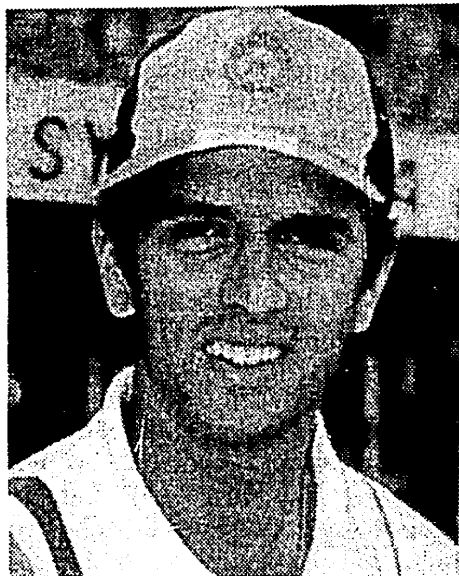


## ● *Rahul Dravid at bat*

# Silencing the sceptics

"We told you so," we at *Madras Musings* would be delighted to shout from the rooftop, except it's not our style. When the Indian selectors and many others wrote Rahul Dravid off as a non-starter in one-day cricket, we thought the young player was being given a raw deal and said so. We believed that the Karnataka batsman's problems in that form of cricket were temporary and eminently correctable, given his class and dedication. With India scheduled to play so few Test matches as compared to ODIs, we feared he would be out of international cricket for a protracted period of time, a state of affairs that could do no good to either Dravid or the Indian cricket team. It badly needed his substance and reliability.

Wiser counsel prevailed, Dravid was recalled, and he began to produce results in the shorter version of the game, starting with the New Zealand tour. Today, at the end of World Cup 1999 where he had



Rahul Dravid

the highest batting aggregate, he is being hailed as one of the world's best batsmen in both forms of cricket — by some of the greats of contemporary cricket. He is also being talked of — in hushed whispers, for sure — as captaincy material.

Chennai, with its preponderance of pundits, was slow to accept Dravid as a top-notch batsman when he first came here. Triplicane and Mylapore were rife with the speculation that his backlift was not all it should be. What if he scored tons of runs at every level of the

game, invariably putting his head down in the team's cause? As far as Chennai was concerned, his shot preparation offended the highly refined cricketing sensibilities of the city's legion of armchair critics of formidable lineage.

To their eternal credit, India Cements Limited (ICL) — its present captain V B Chandrasekhar and representatives of the management like T.V. Swaminathan, T.S. Raghupathy, Dr Natarajan and the Managing Director N Srinivasan himself — were convinced that in recruiting Dravid for their cricket team, they had hit pay dirt. They knew that Dravid's backlift notwithstanding, his bat was as straight as they come, but, more important, his heart was stout and his head was not only well-endowed with grey cells, but also attached to his shoulders in a marvel of commonsensical divine engineering. His feet were firmly planted on the ground but within him raged the burning desire to achieve excellence that is the hallmark of champions.

In the few years that he has played for India Cements, whether in local games or in outstation tournaments, the Karnataka captain has shown every bit of the fierce commitment that is so evident when he wears India colours. Whenever he is in India and free from his first class cricket commitments, he makes himself available for the matches of ICL or ICL-sponsored Vijay CC. He participates wholeheartedly in all their matches. When in Chennai, he stays in a comfortable but unobtrusive company flat along with some teammates and is almost invariably the first one to arrive for net practice at the well-maintained Guru Nanak College ground. Practice is serious business and fielding drills are an important part of it. He faces some quality bowlers in the nets — Gokula-



Rahul Dravid (fourth from left, seated) with the Vijay CC team that won the Palayampatti Trophy a couple of years ago. To his left are N. Srinivasan, Vice Chairman and Managing Director, India Cements, and the team's captain V.B. Chandrasekhar (with trophy).

krishnan, Dev Anand, L Sivaramakrishnan and Kartik Murali, to name a few. His teammates admire his commitment and enjoy his ready accessibility.

During last season's Buchi Babu tournament, Rahul played some important innings for ICL. It was a difficult period for him, as he was trying to re-establish himself as an India player in limited overs cricket. He was making a sincere effort to rotate the strike better and play more attacking shots. Though the bowling was not of international standard, it was obvious from some of the undue risks he was taking that the pressure of all the negative publicity was telling on the star batsman. Happily, he was not above consulting his teammates and captain on aspects of his batting that needed improvement as they saw it. He took their observations seriously and went about systematically reconstructing his approach to one-day batting. Soon the results were there for all to see.

The sceptics have been silenced, though the Carduses and Fingletons of Chennai will never approve Dravid's backlift, even if his deeds parallel Tendulkar's or Lara's. Though he is a Bangalore boy, he is employed by and plays regularly for ICL, Chennai. That is not the only reason why Tamil Nadu can bask in re-

flected glory, to go by the reports that appeared in the press a couple of years ago. According to these, Rahul's ancestors migrated northwards from the temple city of Chidambaram!

The surname Dravid was one that the locals of Vidarbha bestowed on this immigrant family from the South, according to the same sources. Rahul's father Sharad, who played cricket in his college days, eventually came to work with Kissan Food Products, Bangalore, from where he recently retired as a senior executive. His mother Pushpa, who has a Doctorate in Art, teaches art in a Bangalore College and has held several exhibitions of her paintings. Younger brother Vijay, an engineering graduate, has just gained admission to IIM Calcutta. Academics have always come first in the Dravid family which, quietly proud of Rahul's achievements, was ready to encourage his interest in the game through school and college — so long as he continued to do well in studies. According to Rahul, the fear of missing out on cricket, was sufficient incentive to try and achieve academic excellence. His cultured upbringing is evident in his gracious manners and intelligent conversation, something his many admirers in Chennai's cricket circles have come to appreciate.

— V. Ramnarayan

## ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. King Jigme Singe Wangchuk of Bhutan; 2. Dr. Sanjaya Rajaram; 3. INS Mysore; 4. Sir Christopher Cockerell; 5. Goran Ivanisevic and Jeff Tarango; 6. The most expensive book, being priced at 1510 Euros (\$1585); 7. Won all four Grand Slam singles title during his career; 8. The first language in the country to have a universally accepted keyboard and encoding system for use in IT; 9. Nilgiris Mountain Railway.

\* \* \*

10. Mobil Peeves; 11. Virtual Calling Card, a pre-paid card to make calls; 12. Koyembedu.

\* \* \*

13. Luz; 14. Tiruvanakkaval; 15. Nilgiri Tahr; 16. Ooty; 17. Buckingham and Carnatic; 18. The Mail; 19. An instance of a batsman taking a single off the last ball of the over to retain the strike; 20. K. Balachander's 'Kavithalaya'.



Amalgamations Group

**APCOM**

Apcom Computers Ltd.



Ashok Leyland



A V Thomas  
& Co. Ltd.



Bank of Madura Ltd.



Housing Development Finance Corp'n. Ltd. Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation

INDIA  
CEMENTS  
LTD.

KASTURI &  
SONS  
LTD.



Murugappa  
Group



Pond's



Rane Group



The Sanmar Group



Sundaram Finance  
Limited



Sundram Fasteners  
Limited



The Taj Group  
of Hotels



Thiru Arooran  
Sugars Ltd



TVS Suzuki  
Ltd.



WELCOMGROUP  
Park Sheraton  
Hotel & Towers

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations:

EIH ASSOCIATED  
HOTELS LTD.