

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

- Portents in a demolition
- Life with a political meeting
- 'Emden Vakil's' diary
- Musing by a memorial
- Veterans' fortnight in League

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FREE ISSUE

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Our offer was "Buy a ticket and fly with your companion". We didn't promise a separate seat for her!

Buy one – Get one free

Well, yes, that's not a new term, certainly. But as far as I knew, it's always been associated with soaps, oils, shampoos, flour and clothes sales, perhaps – but airline tickets?!

That's right – Air Fare is the latest entrant in this game of customer-grabbing.

And the schemes offered reflect the swift and ruthless manner in which this game is conducted between fellow players and competitors.

"Come to us; you get to stay in the best hotels anywhere you like," whispers one airline seductively.

"Huh," says the other contemptuously. "We will let you fly now and pay later. We just want you to be happy...money has nothing to do with it."

Some airlines have floated ingenious (or is it 'ingenuous?') schemes offering free tickets to "companions", betraying a rather touching innocence and trust in their customers, with little idea of the shenanigans they might just be unleashing in the process.

The customer, of course, never had it so good, although the flip side to all this enthusiasm is that you could sometimes fail to read the small print, overlooking the fact that most temptations come with catches.

Not everyone is happy though. Rumour has it that the railways are a miffed group, and trains have been overheard grumbling to one another about 'poaching practices'.

Which just proves that there's no pleasing everybody at the same time.

Ranjitha Ashok

Towards a greener Chennai

Maram valarppom, Mazhai peruvom! ('Raise trees, and receive rains') chant a group of high school children in a local Corporation School, as they prepare the ground for a tree planting ceremony. Their enthusiasm is infectious. But will it last, I wonder, as I survey the progress that has been made on the greening of Chennai and other urban areas.

"The mushrooming of concrete buildings, and ever-increasing vehicular traffic have considerably increased air and noise pollution. A massive scheme to plant taller seedlings

ernment can only be a facilitator; it is the community that must get itself involved," he points out and adds, "We also need a person in the rank of District Forest Officer who is empowered to prosecute any violation of the city's trees under the Tamil Nadu City Tree Protection Act, and facilitate the tree-growing culture among the urban population, assisted by a Green Squad."

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department was the first in the country to engage in Social Forestry, back in 1960, embarking on large-scale planting of trees

• Shobha Menon

under the urban forestry schemes is essential," says Dr. G. Kumaravelu, Chief Conservator of Forests, Research & Training, whose pioneering technique of perfecting the growth of tall seedlings has been utilised successfully in 11 cities in the country. In Chennai itself, over 1,25,000 tall saplings have been planted between 2000 and 2002. The Forest Department is ready to provide knowledge about species (tree design, architecture), seed sources, the practice for raising seedlings etc. he states as he looks to the future. "But Gov-

outside forest areas — in eris, riverbanks, tanks, foreshores, canal banks etc. In 1981, the II phase extension programme was taken over by the Rural Development Department. In 2000-2001, action on the I phase for urban areas was taken up by the Corporations of Chennai, Coimbatore, Tirunelveli and Madurai when the Central Government sanctioned funds for Tamil Nadu, through the Central Pollution Control Board, under the Development of Green Belt for

(Continued on Page 7)



Daredevils try to race up the narrow access space left by the excavators. Those more careful, push their vehicles up a treacherous slope that has even pedestrians sliding. And all of them, on vehicle or on foot, have to negotiate



stagnant pools of water that are cesspits — and water troughs for a variety of cattle, many of them not particularly friendly to humans they think might be challenging for their space. These pictures by R. EASWARAJ are of the unfinished subway off one of the better areas in the city, Harrington Road — and it has remained in this sorry state for several months now, no one quite sure what the problems are in completing it and making movement easier for all possible.



A call to get together in the cause of civil society

(By A Special Correspondent)

It is recorded that Solon, the famous Greek lawgiver, speaking in 500 B.C. on 'the best city to live in' said, "that city in which those who are not wronged, no less than those who are wronged, exert themselves to punish the wrongdoer". Emphasising this was the Citizens' Meeting that was held recently by the Catalyst Trust in order to find ways of addressing

the menace of attacks on NGO activists by anti-social elements. It was organised by the Trust-initiated Citizens' Action Network (CAN) to express solidarity from within the community.

The sharing of their experiences by a few activists — V. Santhanam, President, Federation of Residents' Associations, Pallavaram who, on May 27th, was threatened and griev-

ously assaulted by four persons in his drawing room; A. Ramaswamy, General Secretary, Federation of Residents' Associations, West Velachery, whose motorcycle was burnt outside his house by miscreants; and P. Lucie, Advocate, Gingee, who was assaulted and threatened by a crowd because she filed an FIR (which has still not been accepted at the local police sta-

tion) against two youths who raped a young girl in Gingee — was the highpoint of the meeting. In a heartening reiteration of their commitment to civil society, all of them unanimously emphasised their determination to continue the good work, in spite of all odds.

(Continued on Page 6
and also see Page 4)

The portents in a demolition

The magnificent two-mile long Marina is a promenade along one of the world's longest and broadest beaches. The Marina beach is everybody's playground — and also many an organisation's venue for public meetings. And it was here that Seerani Arangam, a platform for speakers, disappeared in a 45-minute demolition operation on a Saturday night. While we are not exactly unhappy over the demolition of Seerani Arangam and the consequent banning of public meetings and constructions on the beach, as part of the efforts to keep the Marina and beach clean, we fail to understand the need for all the secrecy and lack of transparency.

Before the construction of the Arangam, the area was called Tilakar Thidal or Tilakar Sathukam, after Bal Gangadhar Tilak had spoken from a makeshift stage on the beach at this site. Gandhiji, Bipin Chandra Pal and Subramania Bharati were others who have addressed mammoth gatherings here. However, there was no permanent construction of any kind at this historic site in those days.

In 1968, a group of volunteers, the Seerani Force, raised Seerani Arangam during the regime of C.N. Annadurai, but over the years, it has become an eyesore, untended and getting more dilapidated by the day, marring the beauty of the Marina. But, worse, the numerous meetings held at the site have posed an environmental threat to the Marina, traffic congestion has worsened, and there have also been many instances of hooliganism let loose on the unwary beachgoer during such meetings, not all of them political. Anti-social activities in the shadow of the Arangam have also thrived, we understand.

Not so long ago, the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) Heritage Committee, and the Save the Marina Committee, in both of which there was non-governmental and private sector participation, had agreed that Seerani Arangam should be demolished. As we understand it, the suggestion to demolish Seerani Arangam at the meetings was pushed by the non-Governmental participants. Obviously no one felt very strongly about Seerani Arangam. What then was necessary for the demolition exercise at midnight, with no journalist or photographer allowed to even get close to the scene of action? Given the non-governmental suggestion to pull down Seerani Arangam as a part of cleaning up the Marina, surely this provided the Government an excellent opportunity for transparency in action. Instead, by act-

ing 'stealthily', it has only helped create a furore.

Of course, in the light of what followed, we think it was possible the Government was making it clear that the non-governmental and private sectors just had no part to play in its scheme of things. We are constrained to lean towards this view because the newly constituted State Beach Management Authority, with the Chief Minister as the chairperson, a Chennai Metropolitan Beach Committee with jurisdiction over the Marina, San Thomé, Elliot's and Tiruvanmiyur beaches in Chennai, as well as Neelankarai on the city's outskirts, and District Beach Committees to function in Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Pudukkottai, Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram and Kanniyakumari, do not have any representation from non-governmental and private sector organisations. Yet, in the case of the Marina and Elliot's beaches, it is these sectors that have long been in the van of struggling to keep them clean. Why have they been totally ignored in this new initiative? Surely it is essential for the people to be involved in government planning if it is to be a real success — or are we to take it that all planning will from now on be only top down?

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Pluses and Minuses

It is good to hear that Tamil Nadu's 2001 Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.657 is not just higher than the national average of 0.571 but is also comparatively better than the HDIs of countries like Pakistan (0.508), Nepal (0.463), Bhutan (0.454) and Bangladesh (0.440). The State has also scored on the Gender Development Index (GDI), a summary measure found useful in comparing stages of gender development; the GDI for Tamil Nadu is 0.654 against a national value of 0.560.

Districtwise, we are delighted to find Chennai (0.757), Kancheepuram (0.712), Kanniyakumari (0.711) and Tuticorin (0.703) way ahead of the national HDI average. The position is the same for GDI, the same four districts leading the field again 0.766, 0.710, 0.708, 0.703. But of concern is that Dharmapuri, Villupuram and Perambalur are barely better than the national average on both counts. Obviously much more Governmental effort is needed in these three districts than in others — which themselves need more attention to reach the Chennai mark.

The Human Development Report for Tamil Nadu is a first and a welcome effort by the State Planning Commission, which has arrived at the Human Develop-

ment Index using the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) methodology that takes into account inter-district variations in terms of per capita income, literacy rate, combined gross education enrolment ratio, and life expectancy at birth.

Kancheepuram, Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Tuticorin top the per capita income list, while Thanjavur, Tiruvavur, Sivagangai, Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram are the bottom five. Literacy rates are highest in Kanniyakumari, Chennai, Tuticorin, Trichy and Madurai, and are lowest in Perambalur, Erode, Salem, Villupuram and Dharmapuri. Chennai, Tuticorin, Madurai, Kanniyakumari and Theni head the education list, while Virudhunagar, Kancheepuram, Pudukkottai, Villupuram and Dharmapuri are at the bottom of the heap. And life expectancy at birth is highest in Chennai, Kanniyakumari, Coimbatore, Kancheepuram and Nilgiris as high faring districts and Dharmapuri, Perambalur, Villupuram, Pudukkottai and Tiruvannamalai as low faring districts.

to be achieved if some solution is not immediately found to halt the number of school dropouts — the Report mentions that there are 1.5 million dropouts in the 9-15 year age group each year!

Stating that agriculture should be developed through systematic and cost-effective watershed approaches with people's participation, the Human Development Report calls for promoting a strategy that will encourage agricultural labour to be absorbed in other sectors, resulting in increased labour productivity.

Attainment of education, health, life expectancy, access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities are true indicators of all-round economic growth. The State Government must now focus on getting Tamil Nadu to the No. 1 position in South Asia, a place that is now occupied by Sri Lanka with an HDI value of 0.721 (Maldives is second with an HDI index of 0.716). Only then can the State feel that it is getting somewhere.

Army heritage

Once again we hear from Delhi that the Army is planning to take a greater interest in its heritage properties. At a recent workshop on Conservation of Command Heritage Assets, Central Command, organised by the Army teaming with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, the GOC-in-C, Central Command, declared that concerted efforts to preserve and nurture heritage for posterity were required and recommended bringing heritage aspects within the scope of the reconstituted Central Command Ecology, Environment and Heritage Committee. He stated that Ranikhet and Lansdowne are to be made the first heritage cantonments in India. Both have several old buildings of historical and architectural significance. The Officers' Mess at Ranikhet, for instance, was once the residence of Lord Mayo in 1869. INTACH representatives pointed out that more than 60 buildings and churches in the region were over a century old. Located in extensive wooded areas, the cantonments are also of ecological importance, it was stated.

'Operation Hariyal', as the ecology-heritage protection exercise has been called (with the Army commander as Patron-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff as Patron), is not to be limited to Uttaranchal; it will be extended to six other states that come under the Central Command — Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. Nearly half of the 62 cantonments in India lie within the Central Command area. Such a heritage protection exercise is possible because the GOC-in-C of a Command is empowered to frame heritage regulations under

Section 181-A of the Cantonment Act of 1924.

We are, however, disappointed that no such initiative has been taken in the South, where the Indian Army was born. And it is time Government and INTACH urged the Southern Command to at least make a start on heritage and environment protection in its command area. Maintaining neat and clean cantonments and buildings is not all that is needed, restoration of heritage properties is as important.

— CHENNAI HERITAGE

- Rs. 100: Chidambara Kumarasamy, Dr. K.; Krishnamurthy, P.B.; Natana Kasinathan; Lakshminarayanan, S.; Santhanam, G. (I.A.S.); Krishnama Chary, J.; Sreenivasan, P.K.; Ganesan, J.A.L.; Krishnaveni, Dr. M.; Venkatachopathy, Dr. A.V.; Raghunathan, M.P.; Rao, Dr. H.K. Lakshman; Murugaiyan, K.; Sundaram, G.; Kannabiran, G.; Mulley, Rev. Philip K.; Sadasivam, T.D.; Venkatachalam, T.D.; Vijayakumar, R.; Isaac, Dr. A.; Parekh, Arun Khushaldas; Venkataraman, N.; Radhakrishnan, A.; Manikandan, K.
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- Rs. 500: Ramanathan, N.; Kalam, Dr.M.A.; Studio Palazzo; Subramanian, Usha ;
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We point to the Central Command initiative today, because we recall that it was over two years ago when INTACH, Tamil Nadu, had several rounds of meetings with the Army in Fort St. George to discuss the restoring, as first steps, of King's Barracks and the Moat, nothing has happened since. Surely it is time for the Army to accept the help offered by INTACH-TN in restoring King's Barracks, the largest army barracks in India in its day and one dating back to the 17th Century. And as for cleaning up the moat and parkland around, surely that can be more easily done and a recreational area created for the public. We remember when both soldiers and the public used to fish in the moat.

A.S.R.

A big 'Thank You' to 43 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 8.7.03 and 8.8.03, added to the support Madras Musings has already received. We thank all of them for their support for the causes Madras Musings espouses.

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A.S.R.

OUR READERS WRITE



'Heritage' roads

I think you are unfair in accusing our Government for their indifference in maintaining individual buildings of heritage value.

The city today is not the one when several villages slowly merged with one another. Shouldn't the heritage value of the whole city be maintained and not individual buildings or places?

Look at the roads in the city (beyond the arterial roads). Do they not retain their village charm? People driving their vehicles (whether two-wheelers or four wheelers) dread them.

A bullock cart ride would be more comfortable. Shouldn't these roads be saved?

T.S. Sriram
11/4 (5/5), 4th Main Road
Gandhi Nagar, Adyar
Chennai 600 020.

Request 'no noise'

My letter on noise pollution (MM, July 16th) brought a response from a reader who has not given me his postal address. I therefore respond to him here. He wrote that I should consider talking to the management of a mosque situated near his house in Triplicane. Apparently, this mosque has loudspeakers fitted on its roof that makes loud announcements before sunrise and through the day, naturally disturbing him.

As a common citizen who has also suffered from noise being made in the open areas, I completely and unconditionally sympathise with him and his family. My sympathies are deeper in cases where unsolicited noise disturbs sick/convalesc-

ing patients and old people who badly need rest and already have difficulty in sleeping.

However, I don't think the solution to the problem lies with my addressing the people at that mosque. Even if one of his Muslim friends should speak to a person at the mosque, there may be others at the mosque who may not be considerate enough to switch off the speakers and abide by the law.

Maybe the solution in the short term lies in his and his neighbours in the area making a friendly representation to the mosque and making the authorities there aware of the disturbance, irrelevance of the call (since most people have watches/alarms these days) and the law that forbids the use of cone speakers.

In the long term it could be writing to the President of India showing support to a civil code that treats all of us as Indians equally — irrespective of who we are born to. (This was once again suggested by the Supreme Court just a few days ago.)

Navaz Nazimali
2/157, Karrikattu Kupam
Muttukadu Village
Chennai 603 112

Dutch in 'Negapatam'

The Dutch Cemetery in Nagapattinam (Negapatam, Archa), which is on the Tamil Nadu Archaeologies Department's 'protected' list (MM, June 16th) has several well-carved tombs in black granite and marble arranged and well looked after even now by the Dutch Embassy in India.

Besides the cemetery, there are a flagstaff, boatyard and jetty built

The hooligan crows

The bird shown in MM, July 16th, is a White-breasted Waterhen. It is usually seen in Chennai around even small undisturbed waterbodies. Nice to know that it is seen in North Chennai. It is not surprising that crows chased it around. I was glad to note that it might have possibly escaped.

Here's a letter that was published in the last issue of the Newsletter for Birdwatchers (published from Bangalore). It may be of interest in this context.

A. Rajaram

C-2, 29, 4th Seaward Road, Valmiki Nagar, Chennai 600 041.

When I joined the Army in 1949, we were taught that indications of a lack of hygiene and sanitation in an army unit or establishment were the presence of crows, kites and stray dogs. I am sure these norms apply equally even today to any village, town or city. Let me demonstrate what I have stated by taking the example of Mercara (Madikeri), my hometown.

All records from the 1830s commented on the rarity or near absence of crows in Coorg, and Mercara in particular. Alas, this does not hold anymore. With a very large influx of population and a breakdown of discipline and utter lack of hygiene and sanitation, the crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) population has exploded. This explosion of the crow population has proved a grave threat to almost all other species of birds.

Gangs of crows, like armed hooligans, are now on the rampage around Mercara, attacking and killing adult birds, eating their eggs and fledglings. Their numbers seem to give them the edge over all other species. They even attack raptors, but appear wary of the Bonelli's hawk eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*).

On September 20, 2002 the havoc the crows are playing on the bird population was demonstrated in our backyard, leaving us helpless spectators.

A grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) had been a winter visitor to our garden since 1997. It had given us great watching pleasure and had increasingly become less and less shy, almost tame. It was this lovely bird that a crow attacked and killed that day.

We saw a flurry of feathers and heard the sounds of a scuffle outside the window and rushed to see what was happening but we were too late to save the wagtail from the crow.

On October 15, 2002, exactly 14 days later, we had five grey wagtails in our garden. They came that one day and have not been back since. Was it a wake? Did they come to share our sorrow? Perhaps another wagtail will make his winter home in our garden. In the meantime crows are *persona non grata* around our home. I do believe that their population should be controlled before the damage they do becomes irreversible.

Lt. Gen. B.C. Nanda

Hebbetegin, K. Nidugane Post, Madikeri, Kodagu Dist.
Karnataka 571 201

Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Oxford University Press was what helped me identify the bird.

K.A. Verghese
Pushpamangalam,
"Kochiyil Enclave"
Thiruvalla 689 103

The 'Strange Guest' - II

The 'Strange Guest' (MM, July 16th) is an Indian Moorhen. Salim Ali's *Book of Indian Birds* describes it so:

A slate grey and brown marsh bird with white edges to the closed wings and conspicuous white under tail-covers. Forehead (frontal shield) and base of greenish bill bright red. Longish green legs and large ungainly feet.

I think this describes the bird exactly as shown in your photograph.

Cecilia Pillai
H-1 MIG Flats
Foreshore Estate
Chennai 600 028

Fervour & fastidious

The changing face of the Indian classical musician (MM, August 1st) generally deals with the North Indian musician. The South Indian musician would not dream of *pan chwing* (on the dias), spittoon using etc., either then or now, or 'clambering on to the platform clumsily, looking scruffy and unkempt'. Our musicians were well-noted for their fastidiousness in regard to their appearance on the dais, what with

their impeccable attire, their perfumes (like, once, *Aragaja, Puvu, Javvaadu* etc.) that heralded their arrival, and their diamond *kadukkan*

Of course, the reduced duration of performances is only to be expected. How well I remember, in the 1940s when World War II was fought and the strict laws regarding blackout were meticulously observed a performance by Ariyakudi (from 5.30 to 9.30 p.m.) in Kumbakonam and thereafter by Madurai Mani Iyer (from 9.45 p.m. onwards). I, who was in the front row, could not contain myself from attending the toilet when it was 1.30 a.m. and pitch dark outside, and could not go back to the auditorium on account of the extraordinary crowding and had to return home shivering all the way with fear as the roads were pitch dark. Such was the fervour those days. Can we expect that today?

T.M. Sundaraman
19, Nallappan Street
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.

PLEASE NOTE

- All letters for The Editor's attention should be addressed to The Editor, c/o Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63, Greaves Road, Chennai 600 006.
- All business correspondence should be addressed to The Director, Chennai Heritage, 260-A, 4TK Road, Chennai 600 018.
- Madras Musings does not accept letters by e-mail.

'Out for dinner' maths explained

As I struggled with my current drawing the other day, I pondered over the problem posed in "Out for dinner maths" (MM, July 16th). The problem was amusing, the way it was presented and the end had a surprise element. As I continued to draw, I figured out the maths which is more middle-school maths than bizarre. The problem can be defined as $(2x+5)50+1753 = 100x+250+1753 = 100x+2003$ which has a variable and a constant, an equation for a straight line, actually. As the constant here happens to be the current year, subtracting a person's year of birth, say, 1961, from this year will give his or her age, 42. As x is an integer between 1 and 9, 100x will be in multiples of hundred. If x is, say, 3, 100x is 300. Adding this, 42 becomes 342, retaining the value of x in the first digit and the age in the second and third digits.

In the maths there are two multiplicand numbers, 2 and 50, and two additive numbers, 5 and 1753. The multiplicand set could also be 1 and 100, 4 and 25, 5 and 20 as well as 10 and 10. There are an infinite (not literally but mathematically) number of sets for the additive numbers — minus infinity to zero to plus infinity. Here are a few examples, giving the same result:

$$(25x+16)4+1939=100x+64+1939=100x+2003$$

$$(5x+200)20-1997=100x+4000-1997=100x+2003$$

$$(10x-10)10+2103=100x-100+2103=100x+2003$$

Similar maths could be set for next year or any year, BC or AD! Only, the equation would not work for Bob Hope during the last days of his life!

Manohar Devados
1, Kangayarpuram, Papanasa Sivan Road
San. Thomé, Chennai 600 004.

(The Man From Madras Musings is on holiday. His column will be resumed on his return.)

• An editor speaks out on...

The threat to activists

The Adyar bridge has short dramas to offer those who have the time to stop and stare.

Every now and then, you get to see a motley group of people leaning over the bridge, to satisfy their curiosity.

The river isn't a great natural sight any more (though watching from the bridge, sunset in the west is a nice experience). But this is the place where a young man who has been beaten by frustration ends his life. Or, cornered thieves jump into the shallow waters when the police give a chase. A place where contractors bring in gigantic machines to clean up the muck.

Or where the fire service would be trying hard, using crude accessories, to save a drowning drunk.

For passersby, this is a reality show.

So when a crowd gathered near our office building recently, I didn't have to join the curious onlookers to find out what the drama was all about. Our local policemen were providing some security to a group of workmen who were knocking down a tea shop that had found a cosy and free nook to do business beside the local Aavin milk vending booth.

The removal of the tea *kadai* was some diversion for people beaten down by the 42-degree heat.

What beats me though is the pattern of selective measures that are taken to remove encroachments.

That is, the Corporation and the police act fast when they decide that Aavin milk vending booths must be free from encroachers. But the same officials will never be bothered when shops encroach on all the space meant to be a pavement on the same road.

Pointing out such astonishing lapses may be best left to community activists. But even such admirable people are finding themselves targeted with violence now.

You must have read about the fate of V. Santhanam of Chromepet, who is one such community activist. Santhanam actively pursues local issues. Improper drains, tannery pollution, unfinished flyovers, official apathy and social insecurity in

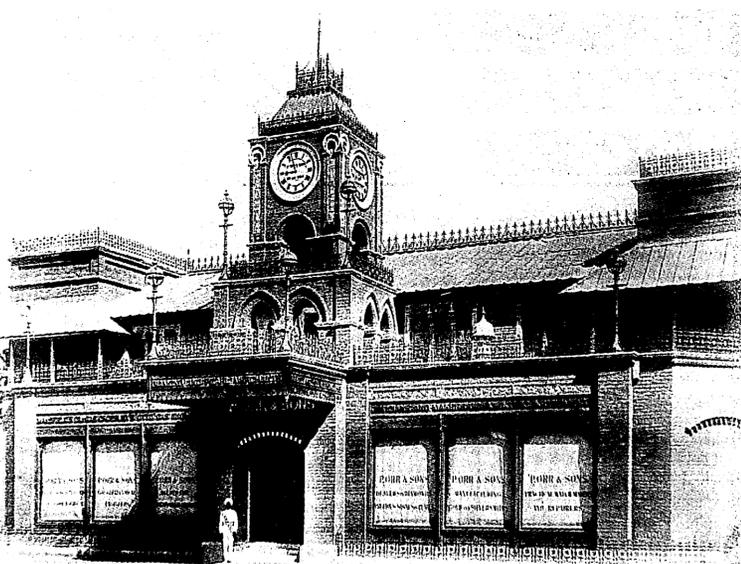
the suburbs where he lives - in Pallavaram and Chromepet, where life is still a drudge.

Recently, a group walked into Santhanam's house, pulled out knives and stabbed him, obviously piqued by one of his campaigns that must have hurt them.

Clearly, we have reached a stage where those who stand up for community issues, may have to face the wrath of *goondas*, local politicians and dirty moneybags.

At *Adyar Times* and similar newspapers, we have a few people who write on small local issues that affect people a lot - on encroachments in a colony, on inefficient officials in local offices, and on a gang that illegally chops down avenue trees. I, for one, am not very comfortable when it comes to publishing the complete address of the letter-writer, fearing retribution from parties who are on the firing line. Reason why we have to withhold the names and addresses of some letter-writers.

(Continued on Page 6)



Our OLD is of the splendid showroom on Mount Road that Robert Chisholm completed for P. Orr & Sons in 1879.

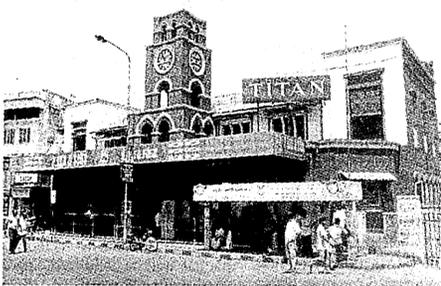
THE OLD...

The firm, established on the same site by Peter Orr in 1844, had by the 1870s become the leading jewellers and silversmiths in the South and needed a showroom worthy of its princely and aristocratic clientele. And, so, Chisholm designed for it a 60 feet by 30 feet showroom with a floor shinningly tiled, embellished walls

that bore the coats of arms of British and Indian royalty and nobility, ornate chandeliers and punkahs, and gleaming polished rosewood showcases. It was described as "a veritable art gallery" displaying the treasures that it did. Behind the

showroom was a vast expanse of horological and jewellery workshops and silver and gold smithies. But more of a landmark in Madras than the huge showroom itself was its tower with a clock that was connected to the Madras Observatory and struck Indian Standard Time for this busy area.

Our NEW shows how the showroom has changed and, more significantly, how the tower was altered in more recent times. Chisholm's characteristic 'Kerala' cap over the tower was replaced by a taller and more pointed 'cap'. Not far from here, a smaller showroom has been built by the present owners of P. Orr's, replicating the tower in the changed style. Whether a move into this showroom is planned or not is not known, but what is certain is that P. Orr's is no longer a jewellery firm; watches and clocks have been its focus since Indianisation.



...& THE NEW

Living with a political meeting

Living in an independent bungalow that is close to a teeming 'Housing Board Estate', two *kalyana mantapams* and a traffic intersection, one side of which is earmarked as 'one way', I have now acquired, quite unwillingly, an expertise on how political meetings are organised.

Posters are stuck on the walls of all neighbouring compound walls, bus shelters, electric junction posts and milk kiosks announcing that a meeting organised by one of the many political parties condemning some atrocity or the other, will be held on a particular date at (where else!!) the traffic signal. The recent announcement by the Corporation that sticking posters on walls will attract punishment is applicable to certain walls only. Certainly my compound wall enjoys a certain diplomatic immunity, for it is used by all political parties.

On the day of the event, all residents of the neighbourhood are awakened by 4.30 in the morn-

ing to the sound of nails being hammered on wooden planks. A huge stage is in the process of coming into existence. A gathering of the unemployed from the neighbouring housing board tenements hangs around to witness the birth of this work of art, soon to be covered with multi-coloured posters of the beloved leader. A small group of policemen look on with a certain *advaitic* detachment at the de-

As the day progresses, the sidewalks (yes, our area does have these luxuries) are dug up at intervals of six feet or so. Casuarina poles are fixed in these pits and tube lights, with connections drawn from the local junction box, are installed on each of them. The stage itself is bathed in strobe lighting, with electric supply gratis from the (you guessed it!) local transformer. At every street intersec-

By this time, the more enthusiastic *thondars* of the party have climbed the trees on the road and inside the gardens of the houses. None can stop them, for have they not, being meek, inherited this earth? Having dislodged many birds and squirrels, they occupy themselves in hanging across the street festoons and bunting bearing (what else!) pictures of the beloved leader. There was a time when these were made of paper. But now they are coated with plastic. The advantage being that no weather phenomenon can damage them. The problem comes much later. After the meeting, nobody bothers to remove them and they slowly fall one by one on the road from where they go into the drainage and, once there, block all flow. The Corporation sends its men after repeated complaints and they then enthusiastically dig up the road to find the blockage. Then they fish out the bunting which,

velopments. There was a time when some of us, young and naive that we were, thought that we could approach these policemen and complain about the nuisance. But these philosophers advised us to be stoic and bear the problem. They extolled the virtues of a live-and-let-live policy and assured us that the problem was not insurmountable, that the next day there would be peace.

tion, giant scaffoldings have come up, which have lights illuminating the profile of the beloved leader. The Corporation, in recognition of this altruistic attempt at beautification, deputes its local workers, who mark the sidewalks with dabs of bleaching powder. Some of them draw straight lines while the more artistically inclined draw small round dots at periodic intervals.

• by V. Sriram

(Continued on Page 7)

• From the pages of a 1939-1945 diary

'Congress affairs in a mess'

1939

Sunday January 1

In the afternoon T.T.K. insists on me and R.Viswam attending Balasaraswathi's Dance at the Music Academy and we all go there to witness a pleasant performance - whatever the critics may say. The music is high class and the girl has a fine manner.

Tuesday January 17

Sir Shanmukham Chetty calls in the evening to consult me about the compromise proposed by K.Srinivasan of the Hindu re. anti Hindi agitation. He has seen E.V.R.Naicker who has given him a *carte blanche*. Sir S himself is agreeable to terms which are very favourable - complete withdrawal of agitation - constitutional representation to Govt - making Hindi optional from next academic year with freedom to Govt to encourage voluntary Hindi in every way. The whole thing is such an opportunity for the Madras ministry - but I fear they will not rise to the occasion.

Friday January 20

The Madras Premier rejects the offer of mediation in the anti Hindi agitation matter which the Hindu Editor, Sir S, T.T.K. and myself tried to bring about.

Friday February 17

Chatting till late at night with Viswam. What matters for success in the (legal) profession, he assures me, is not that you know law, but that clients know that you know it and come to you in large numbers.

Sunday February 26

Evening, attended a music performance at Rasika Ranjini Sabha - Semmangudi Srinivasier vocal, Rajamanickam violin and Palghat Mani mridangam. It was good in parts, but I am now unable to enjoy all this roughness and speed. S.Y.K. says it is a permanent twist in my tastes and I have lost the capacity for catholic enjoyment.

Friday March 3

Club in the evening - Sir Shanmukham is come. And we have an interesting conversation on the proposed Madras Sales Tax. That it will greatly increase the cost of living of even the poor classes seems to

be evident on the slightest examination.

Saturday March 25

The affairs of the Congress have got into a mess and it is quite obvious that there is less harm in Gandhiji running it than it Subhas absolutely ruining it.

Saturday May 27

Visited the Gaiety talks to see 'Thyagabhoomi' - an absolutely fifth rate film in which the only tolerable patch of acting was by K.J.Mahadevan.

Thursday June 1

We touched 110.3° - which is a record since 1910 when

never enjoyed pure and absolutely bewitching music as this night - and strangest of all, the volume in his voice, the facility of movement, the perfection of *sruti*, the great beauty of his musical ideas and the absolute mastery of the science - in all these he excelled, leaving other musicians miles behind.

1940

Monday January 1

To the Khadi & Industrial exhibition in the Congress House - a collection of bazaars and more a fair than an exhibition. I compare this with the standards of the exhibition I

• by N.D. Varadachariar

Madras is said to have experienced 112.9°.

Monday June 5

More of the "new technique" - if Gandhiji proceeds to apply this further to the Indo-British relations, conquering the Gods of Whitehall and Downing Street with his love, what is to become of the Indian freedom movement?

Saturday September 2

Visited the Ranade Library in the evening - it has become exceedingly popular - over a hundred and fifty people there every day and over a hundred periodicals.

Sunday October 1

(Quoting an I.C.S. officer remarking in a private conversation,) "When we read certain judgments of 3rd class magistrates, we know at once that the blokes have taken a bribe; the notes of some of the ministers leave the same impression".

Monday November 6

The unveiling ceremony of Dr Rangachari's statue at the General Hospital by the Governor - where very warm speeches are made. The statue commands the best situation of any in Madras.

Thursday December 29

(At T.T.K.'s where Tiger Varadachari sang after dinner). This man is a great genius. I

saw in Osaka (Japan) in May 1932 - & the difference!

Tuesday January 2

Saw the tragic fire in the exhibition in Congress House in Royapettah - the entire number of stalls & the Congress house itself gutted.

Monday January 8

Dinner at T.T.K.'s with Sir T.V; later Mr. C. Rajagopalachari also joins. He discussed Madras Secretariat personalities with frankness; and on the general issues displayed incapacity of comprehension. For instance he could not follow my argument that acting under S-93, Governor could not reverse the policy of ex-Ministers until he dissolves the legislature.

Saturday January 13

I am definitely not in politics - nor shall ever be unless I can foot my own bill - for only then can it be honest politics.

Monday January 22

To Klein & Payerl to order an enlargement of C.V. for my presentation to Presidency College on the centenary celebration day. There, John, the Proprietor told me that he has married my nurse Sarah Chacko - they did it without an invite to me!

Thursday January 25

Reading the Income Tax

'The Emden Vakil'

A fascinating document that came our way recently comprises snippets from the diary of N.D. Varadachariar, 'Kasi' to his friends: An outstanding lawyer, he was still a young man when he was called "The Emden Vakil" for his legal expertise. Varadachariar's death in 1945, while in his early 40s, was a loss not only to the Bar but also to the intellectual and political scene, where many of the Southern leaders benefited much from their interaction with him, particularly on constitutional matters and White Papers. A man as much interested in music and dance and films as he was in Indian politics and the international scene, he made notes every day in his diary of the life that swirled around him. His children recently discovered the richness of those diaries, when one of them, one of the first women graduates of the University of Madras, decided it was never too late to do a doctorate and began to peruse the diaries in the course of her research on the music scene.

What she found was a treasure-trove of information supported by scintillating and perceptive comment. To mark Varadachariar's death anniversary on August 2 in the year of his birth centenary, she and her brother recently brought out a compilation of excerpts for the period 1939-45. Meant for private circulation, *Madras Musings* was privileged to be in the list to receive the excerpts, which were pithy but fascinating accounts of World War II and the Quit India campaign, besides a look at the performing arts scene. We offer readers over the next few weeks a sampling from the excerpts.

— The Editor

Act, a most difficult statute which has been drafted to increase its obscurity. So carelessly worded.

Sunday January 28

A vacancy in the (University) Senate for which there is a bye-election. I decide to contest it.

Monday January 29

After all I may succeed - and why not?

Monday February 11

Viswam telephones from University offices at 1 pm - I am successful.

Saturday February 24

(Election to the Senate) It is obvious that wealth and advertisement alone can win opportunity of service! Good intentions and private equipment are not to the point.

Thursday April 4

(On Cosmopolitan Club) Plenty of money and a dilettante interest in gossip and public affairs and often in the personal affairs of other people, this is the staple of the youthful crowd that infests the front-hall of the club.

Sunday May 19

The rains - so unusual for May in Madras - have cooled the place splendidly and we have today what might be a November day.

Sunday June 9

Khasa Subba Rao (editor) of the *Indian Express* was here this morning. He promised to give full editorial support to my idea of compulsory military training for students in all arms.

Friday June 28

B.B.C. announces in the morning that the Soviet sent an ultimatum to Roumania demanding Bessarabia yesterday and that the Roumanian cabi-

net has resigned. The new cabinet has agreed to the Soviet demand. Later in the evening we heard that Soviet troops had started marching in. The extraordinary rapidity of it all!

To the Roxy theatre (with friends) to witness three wrestling fights, Korocenko, King Kong and Ghulam Hussain, and several others. They gave the impression that they were doing sham fights for the gallery.

India Emergency Bill passed into law.

Thursday August 8

Senate special meeting. There was considerable opposition to my motion on compulsory military and nurses' training for University students from members of the teaching profession - mostly university professors. The resolution was passed.

Friday August 30

C. Rajagopalachari says that he would not mind conceding Pakistan if after the War, when the permanent constitution is drawn up, the people concerned desired it. The real point is that even if a large number of Punjabis etc. want it, Pakistan cannot be agreed to as it amounts to dismemberment of the nation as a whole. Self-determination is subject to the minimum requirements of the nation in territory and integrity.

Tuesday December 31

In the night at T.T.K.'s, S.Y.K. arranged Mahalingam's flute performance with Papa violin and a mridangam. Superb performance, the youngster excelling beyond my expectation. A truly gifted boy. If he lives and progresses, he will perhaps be the master musician of the future. The old year passed in a glorious burst of music and we hailed the new with enchantingly rendered behag.

(To be continued)



(Current Affairs questions are from the period July 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. What feat did Austrian stuntman Felix Baumgartner achieve on July 31st?
2. Name the influential, nonagenarian architect of the movement for construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya who passed away recently.
3. Which two Indians won the Magsaysay Award this year?
4. How is the legendary Hindi film comedian Badruddin Jamaluddin Kazi, who breathed his last on July 29th, better known as?
5. Whom did Lance Armstrong emulate by winning his fifth straight Tour de France cycle race title recently?
6. Name the National Award winners for Best Film, Best Actor and Best Actress.
7. By winning which title did East Bengal become the first Indian club to win any Asian-level football tournament?
8. Name the Indian appointed the CEO of the world's largest mobile phone company, Vodafone.
9. The loading of the exact digital facsimile of a landmark 15th Century European publication was finished on the Net on July 23rd on the site www.hrc.utexas.edu?
10. A simple one to round off with. Name the two sons of Saddam Hussein killed by U.S. forces in Baghdad recently.

* * *

11. What distinction is Rettai Keni Thangal Lake in Sholinganallur all set to achieve?
12. Name the man described as a noted gangster in the Marina area who was killed in an encounter on July 27th.
13. Name Madras' first major theatre company founded by Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar in July 1891.
14. What institution on Mount Road was once housed at Club House in Moore's Garden, Nungambakkam?
15. One for the aficionados of Madras cricket. Who captained Madras in the first-ever Ranji Trophy match, played against Mysore in 1934, which the former won in a day?
16. Who from the State has won the Best Child Artist (shared) and Best Supporting Actor awards?
17. Which publication, launched by G. Subramania Aiyer, the founder-editor of *The Hindu*, became the first Tamil daily in 1899?
18. What distinction has Meenakshi Vijaykumar, along with Priya of Salem, achieved with her appointment to a public service recently?
19. Where in Chennai is the southern region's and, arguably, the country's first-ever 'disabled-friendly' petrol bunk commissioned on July 26th?
20. What is common to the following castes: Kannada Saineegar, Kannadiyar and Dasapalanjika?

(Answers on Page 7)

Musing at Barton-on-Sea

There could be nothing more English than this Hampshire village set on shallow cliffs that are little more than raised beaches but with a clear view across Christchurch Bay towards the Needles on the Isle of Wight. Scores of minute white sails indicate a yacht race in progress somewhere off Bournemouth, while, closer to hand, a half a dozen jet skis carve white lines of wake across the bay.

It's a sunny day and the nearby cafe is doing brisk trade in cups of tea and icecream cones. Down below the cliffs, on the gravelly beach, the tiny figures of children leap in and out of the gentle surf.

As I say, all very English.

Yet almost ninety years ago, these same cliffs were covered with lines of huts. Inside the huts lived soldiers convalescing after being wounded in the Great War. Not just any old soldiers but Indian soldiers fighting for the King Emperor, George V. Little remains to show they were here, save a small stone obelisk a few yards away from the sea. On two sides, in English and Urdu, it says,

"This memorial is created to commemorate the establishment at Barton-on-Sea in 1914 of the convalescent depot for Indian troops who fought in Europe during the Great War and was subscribed for by members of staff."

On a third side, it says, simply,

"Lt. Col. J. Chaytor White,
LMS, GMG
Commandant
Lt. Col. W.A. Mawson, IMS
Assistant Commandant."

That is all. The depot itself was based inside Barton Court Hotel on the cliff top; the hotel itself is, as the cliffs are eroded, slipping slowly into the sea.

Until recently, very few British people were aware of the great contribution made by troops from what was then the British Empire towards the dreadful conflict that was World War I.

In November 2002, the Queen opened memorial gates in honour of more than four million men and women from the Empire who volunteered for service during both the World Wars. Until then, their sacrifices had largely been ignored. Now, that situation has been put right.

Even with the memorial, it is probable that most British people are still unaware of what happened, in any depth: why should they? It was a long time ago; the British, French, Ger-

man, Austrian, Russian and Ottoman Empires have all long since vanished and, as the Arabs say, it is all very well to look back at the past, but one shouldn't stare.

Probably more people from India are aware of the many Indian soldiers who fought and died in the trenches of the Western Front or in Mesopotamia in the first war and elsewhere in the second. (There is an area of Baghdad, Arasat al-Hindi, whose name still alludes to the Indian soldiers who were billeted there after the British conquest of Iraq in World War I.) However, even if people in India do remember that the soldiers who volunteered to fight in both World Wars, they would prefer not to think about it.

A letter from Britain from JASPAR UTLEY

Kohima and Kut are as much a part of India's history as is the British Empire itself? When will it see that both the INA and those in the British Army were Indians fighting for what they believed in and that they should all be honoured? Present political circumstances cannot last for ever and, sooner or later, we have to break the uneasy silence and recognise the valour and sacrifices of those Indians who died overseas or at home, albeit for foreign masters. For, let us never forget that it was one foreign country that, no matter what less worthy gifts it bequeathed to modern India, also left the legacy of one of the finest and proudest armies in the world. Their dead lie in graves around the world. Should not old enmities be allowed to slip into the sea, like the hotel in Barton-on-Sea? Only India's dead soldiers remain. Let us honour and remember them.

A similar situation has until recently existed in the Republic of Ireland, uncomfortable with the knowledge that thousands of its citizens volunteered to fight for the traditional British enemy against the forces of Fascism and Nazism. Only this year were they honoured in the annual service of remembrance. And, in France, the general population has yet to come to terms with the fact that more French soldiers fought against the Allies than they did with them.

So, in Britain, ignorance, and, in India, a blind eye.

There comes a time, in India as in Ireland, when you have to turn and face the realities of history. When will it recognise, for example, that the battles of

A call to get together...

(Continued from Page 1)

Justice T.S. Arunachalam, former Chief Justice, Madras High Court, presiding over the meeting, spoke of a situation "where a citizen is afraid to take up an issue even at the local police station". But, he added, "It is not right to blame only the Police, in a situation true of all Government Departments. In spite of well-meaning higher officials, the working at the lower levels leaves much to be desired. That 20% of the Judiciary itself is corrupt has been remarked upon by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. For politicians who should really help the people, we need citizens who believe in casting their vote to choose the right leader".

In an echo of this, Inspector General of Police Mahendran, Law and Order, Chennai, candidly admitted that the Police

do have their faults, but they could not be totally blamed for the present situation. He pointed out that both the citizenry and police needed to work together to bring about social change. He and the Superintendent of Police, Chengalpattu East, Sankar, indicated that the Police would consider having a quarterly meeting at the SP level with citizens' groups in their areas to address the problems they both faced.

Seetha Ravi, Editor, *Kalki*, said, "The truth that the concept of voluntary service itself has begun to instil fear among citizens is the biggest curse on society. Nevertheless, opportunities for voluntary service among youth must be encouraged."

Nagashaila, President, Madras District Branch, P.U.C.L., emphasised the need for "encouragement and support to be

THREAT TO ACTIVISTS

(Continued from page 4)

Time and again, in recent years, community activists have been targeted.

A man in Velachery who questioned the extreme monopoly practice of the local cable TV operator found strangers had set fire to his vehicle.

Terrorism of this kind at the community level is gaining ground.

We even have Councillors who threaten residents who take it on themselves to repre-

sent community issues with state services agencies.

It will not be easy for Santhanam, when he recovers from his surgery, to go out on to the streets of Chromepet.

The days of verbal threats are a thing of the past. Community activists now have to face physical terror.

So if someone in your neighbourhood is standing up for a local issue, support him or her. Don't lock your door and sit back to watch *Annamalai*.

Vincent D' Souza

Towards a greener Chennai

(Continued from Page 1)

Abatement of Pollution. Of the projected 1,25,000 tree saplings, about 95,000 were planted within Greater Chennai limits, 50,000 trees within Corporation limits and others in eight municipalities. The II phase was in 2001-2002.

Wildlife Warden, K.S.V. V.P. Reddy, who was in charge of the project says, "The Forest Department's job was to plan, plant and maintain the tall tree saplings in fairly big pits — with adequate, improved biofertilisers, azospyrillum to help in nitrogen fixation, fungi to help in adsorption of phosphorus and vermicasting — for a period of six months and then hand them over to the local bodies. But there were some casualties, because the local bodies could not provide sufficient aftercare— watching over the saplings, physical condition, maintaining the protective thorny fence, erecting a pole if the plant bent over and so on. The II phase therefore focussed on a modified plan with planting done in secure areas like school compounds, universities or residen-

Former Urban Planner in the Tamil Nadu Government, G. Dattatri, feels, "Appointment of civic wardens from local bodies is the only solution to protect trees in urban areas. Empower responsible citizens to act as liaison officers to coordinate with the Departments involved in the project. Give them responsibilities and recognise their services. Only then can we bring about positive changes."

The soon-to-be-passed Tree Protection Act will give the

Answers to Quiz

1. He became the first human to fly across the English Channel without the benefit of an aircraft; 2. Ramchandras Paramhans; 3. Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh and social worker Shantha Sinha; 4. Johnny Walker; 5. Miguel Indurain of Spain; 6. Budhadeb Dasgupta's *Mondo Meyer Upakhyan*, Ajay Devgan and Konkona Sen; 7. The ASEAN club football championship for the LG Cup; 8. Arun Sarin; 9. *The Gutenberg Bible*; 10. Qusay and Uday Hussein.
11. The biggest rainwater harvesting project in the State; 12. 'Ayodhyakuppam' K. Veeramani; 13. Suguna Vilas Sabha; 14. Cosmopolitan Club; 15. Conrad Powell Johnstone; 16. Keerthana and Chandrashekar respectively; 17. *Swadesamitran*; 18. She is the first ever woman Divisional Fire Officer in the entire country; 19. The BPCL bunk at Kodambakkam; 20. They are the latest from the State to be recommended for inclusion in the Central list of Other Backward Classes.

* * *

CHENNAI HERITAGE

260-A T.T.K. ROAD, ALWARPET, CHENNAI 600 018.

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.) / I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs.100/Rs. (Rupees.) payable to CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS, as token of my support of *Madras Musings* and the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that it espouses. Please put me on your mailing list.

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

Forest Department more powers to act against indiscriminate tree-felling, on private and government property. The Act is likely to make unapproved tree-felling a cognisable offence. This will have a special relevance to Chennai, where the honorary tree wardens appointed in 1999 were rendered redundant after the planting under the Green Belt for Abatement of Pollution Scheme. Tamil Nadu will become the fourth State, after Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, to enact the tree-friendly legislation. A newly created Urban Forestry Wing of the Chennai Corporation and its proactive measures are another of earnest official intentions to make tree-planting a success. Chennai Corporation Parks Superintendent, Jayapandian, who took over in May 2002, says, "Our next greening project will focus on planting a lakh of trees on city roads with the help of a private agency. We welcome public support. Unauthorised tree-cutting for flimsy reasons like obstructing vision, branches protruding into private compounds and so on should be immediately intimated to Corporation officers. The community can also help by safeguarding young saplings."

The Forest Department provides technological expertise for tree lovers. It also offers at nominal cost 2½ feet tall saplings at nurseries in Anna Nagar and Velachery — at Rs. 55 for a bag size of 45" x 30" and at Rs. 20 for a 13" x 25" bag. With the Central Government scheme that supported the supply of free saplings earlier no longer operational, the 2m tall saplings are being supplied now on a no-profit, no-loss basis. The few available free saplings are being rationed, even for those into social forestry, and can be collected on request from the DMS Wildlife Warden at the DMS Compound Building, Teynampet.

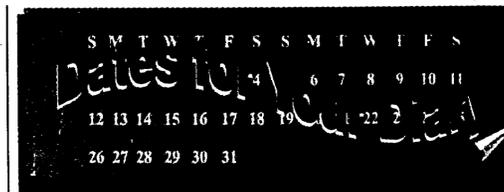
But, for now, adopting the 'Each one, Plant one (and ensure it grows too)' policy seems the best option for those who care, like the frail and unassuming senior citizen I met at the Wildlife Warden's office, who wished to re-create a sacred grove and re-generate the temple tank of an 850-year-old temple by planting trees all around. But in the end, whether Chennai will become greener, depends on each of us. Those who care to make a difference, that is.

At 7.30 p.m., chairs are placed on the stage. The speakers for the evening, barring the star invitee, are assembled. There are more people on the stage than off it. The street dogs make up the deficit. The speech-making begins. The longest part of the speech is the recognising of the rest of the special invitees. Each speaker does this in turn, so as to avoid disrespect to anyone. All of them keep repeating themselves. Some of the language used is unprintable. The neighbourhood has many school-

going children who, thanks to the public address system, pick up these words loud and clear. At 9.00 p.m., the star of the show arrives. He arrives, does not apologise for the delay, picks up the microphone, praises his leader and trashes the opposition, repeats himself over and over again and finally departs at 11.00 p.m. A full hour after the time allowed for such public meetings, in full view of the police — who helplessly stand by! Some of us, who at the end of the day, are returning late from work, are prevented from driving our cars into our own homes by the police personnel, who advise us that they will not be responsible for our safety if we insist, for such is the anger of the leader and his mob, when roused.

Silence finally descends on the area. The stage and its accompaniments vanish during the silent watches of the night. But the pits dug up for the poles, the electric wires, the aerated water bottles, the posters and other assorted debris remain. Time, the great healer, will take care of them. The festoons hang across the road. Some day, one end will come loose and will swing down, at times landing on the neck of a hapless two-wheeler user as he speeds along. The residents heave a sigh of relief and prepare to go to bed, fully aware that the following week, the other party, which was attacked during this meeting, will hold a meeting at the same venue, with the same speeches and the same side-effects.

Glory be to Singara Chennai.
Glory be to Ezhilmigu Chennai.



From August 19: Heritage exhibition of Ganesa (at CP Arts Centre).

From August 20: Paintings by Babu Xavier (at Artworld).

From August 22: Folk performances, demonstration by traditional craftsmen and mouth-watering Malayali delicacies to celebrate Onam (at Dakshina-Chitra).

August 22: Gita Wolf features in the *Travelogue* series. She is the founder of an out-of-the-ordinary publishing house, Tara Publishing (Alliance Francaise, 7.00 p.m.).

From August 23: Exhibition of

Ganesa in paintings and sculptures, by Vijayvelu and Gurudas Shenoy (at Vinyasa).

From August 24: Theatre arts workshop for Young Friends of DakshinaChitra (at Dakshina Chitra).

From August 27: CP Arts Centre, celebrates 25 years of service with 'Eternal India', showcasing India's heritage in history, arts, science, technology etc. A new and permanent gallery will open in *The Grove*, where prints of Ravi Varma's paintings, sketches and photos of old Madras, Kurumba paintings and Kota crafts, among others, will be displayed permanently (at C P Art Centre).

The political meeting

(Continued from Page 4)

amidst sewage and garbage, still bears the beaming face of the beloved leader, untarnished thanks to the plastic coating.

To come back to the meeting. It is now 5 in the evening. The most dreaded of all meeting apparatus, the public address system and the loudspeakers, have arrived. They are set up and soon the entire neighbourhood is rocked with the loudest of music. The local police force has assembled in full strength to enjoy the show. The duty-conscious ones among them divert the traffic so that the meeting can progress unhindered. The narrow one-way stretch becomes a two-way stretch. Of course, there are no warning signals anywhere on the approach roads to this stretch. So some people drive on assuming that it is a one-way, while those coming in the opposite direction think they have right of way. Complete chaos results. The police look on beatifically. After all, out of chaos came order.

At 7.30 p.m., chairs are placed on the stage. The speakers for the evening, barring the star invitee, are assembled. There are more people on the stage than off it. The street dogs make up the deficit. The speech-making begins. The longest part of the speech is the recognising of the rest of the special invitees. Each speaker does this in turn, so as to avoid disrespect to anyone. All of them keep repeating themselves. Some of the language used is unprintable. The neighbourhood has many school-

Veterans' fortnight in the League

Another fortnight of cricket in the TNCA senior division league produced a mind-boggling array of impressive performances from bowlers, batsmen and all-rounders, despite rain interruptions, which washed out the match at the ICF ground, involving UFCC T' Nagar and the hosts.

While many young players continued to show excellent form — with Dinesh Mongia, J.R. Madanagopal, Sunil Viswanathan, Dinesh Karthik, Vasudeva Das, Vasanth Saravanan, Badrinath, Jaffer Ashique Ali, Vishal Kudawla and state skipper S. Suresh with the bat, and Gokulakrishnan, R. Ramkumar, K. R. Sivaprakash, N.N. Sivakumar, Prashanth Chandran, Vidyut Sivaramakrishnan and Sanjay Satpathy with the ball, prominent among them — it was essentially a veterans' fortnight during which a number of senior cricketers did the star turn.

But first, to come to the rich vein of form Sadagopan Ramesh has maintained, scoring a big hundred almost every time he takes guard, the lefthander has probably never batted more consistently showing great powers of concentration, nor looked trimmer and fitter. It must be a big disappointment for him that his name does not figure in the list of 36 probables to attend a conditioning camp before the forthcoming tour of India by New Zealand. Though no one expects to be picked for India

on the basis of league performances — it's been known to happen in the past, as in the case of a certain Sandip Patil whose huge sixes in the Kanga League and Times Shield did the trick for him — it is not as if Ramesh failed in Test cricket or did not score enough runs in domestic first class cricket to merit a look-in as a probable. He may take courage, however, from the soothing noise India coach John Wright recently made to the press about his future.



While it is easy to come to the conclusion from Ramesh's continued exclusion at the national level that Tamil Nadu cricketers are the victims of unfair treatment by selectors, it is time for our players also to introspect into their own attitudes leading to repeated rejection. Few cricketers from the State have grabbed the limited opportunities coming their way, despite knowing the vagaries of a system in which the pulls and pushes of the zonal system and the State of origin of the selector from their zone play key roles.

Outside Tamil Nadu, there is little sympathy for our crick-

eters and this is something worth pondering over. The Delhi manager, Bishan Bedi, praised the behaviour of the Tamil Nadu team of last season's Ranji Trophy semifinal, describing it as humble and modest in victory. To score such brownie points in PR terms cannot do the cause of the team or its members any harm. I cite this instance because it is such a rare compliment bestowed on our players.

One solid way of applying pressure on the selection panel is to win the Ranji Trophy, something Tamil Nadu has threatened to do in the last few seasons but has narrowly missed achieving every time. All the same, it is time questions were asked at an appropriate forum, if it exists, how the likes of Vijay Bharadwaj, Amit Bhandari and Rohan Gavaskar are preferred to genuine performers like Ramesh or, for that matter, Mumbai's Sairaj Bahutule, overlooked for the recent India 'A' tour of England.

Coming back to the local league, it is heartening to note that many so-called veterans gave exceptional displays in the recent matches, reminding you of the several years of pleasure 'senior citizens' among cricketers gave Madras spectators, from the days of Johnstone, Gopalan and Ram Singh, through the subsequent exploits of K.S. Kannan, Y. Ramachandran & Co., to more recent times when veterans R. Raghavan, V. V. Kumar, S. Venkataraghavan

The success of a professional as a cricket 'amateur'

J. Ramdas is one of a dying breed, a sportsman who has other strings to his bow and is actually playing in the highly competitive senior division league, despite his corporate responsibilities. This 33-year-old was, in the late 1980s, one of the promising youngsters of Tamil Nadu cricket, touring Australia with the India Under-19 Main and leading it to victory in Pakistan in 1989. With his brilliant academic record—he finished 20th all India in the CA and second in the ICWA examinations, later winning prizes in State-level competitions for young managers—he must have decided against waiting too long for regular Ranji Trophy opportunities in the face of competition from Aashish Kapoor and M. Venkataramana. Though this was not uncommon a couple of decades ago, Ramdas' is the only instance of a successful professional in both cricket and career I have known in the recent past after lefthander R. Madhavan in the 1980s.

V.R.

and others competed fiercely with much younger cricketers. There were many others like V. Sivaramakrishnan, Abdul Jabbar, 'Doc' V. V. Giri, Giridharan, A. G. Satvinder Singh and R. Prabhakar who continued to delight cricket lovers long after their serious playing days were over. Personally, I decided to call it quits when umpires started to address me deferentially 'Sir', even asking me if I had played alongside the greats I have mentioned in the opening sentence of this paragraph. My decision came in the nick of time as it turned out, a frantic call for a stretcher going out after my last spell in the first division at Chepauk.

Among today's seniors, though players like R. Venkatesh, V. B. Chandrasekhar and P. C. Prakash are older, and others like D. Vasu, S. Sharath, K. Ananthapadmanabhan, N. Raghavendran, Aashish Kapoor and K. Srinivasan have perhaps been more prolific, my vote for outstanding veteran goes to J. Ramdas, the Alwarpet CC off-

spinner, a perfect professional among the last of the amateurs, who capped a recent good run with a ten-wicket haul in a match against UFCC T. Nagar. What is uncommon about Ramdas' performances is the fact that he is a part-time cricketer, holding a responsible position as Assistant General Manager in the Sanmar group of companies, with no time off for practice.

With six matches completed in the league, the State selectors have watched enough action to evaluate the form and class of the talent at their disposal. Hopefully, they will also consider some of the better players in the lower divisions when they meet to select the teams for the Buchi Babu tournament. I particularly have in mind young Muthupandian of Booksellers XI who scored 187 and took 5 for 48 in a 50-over match in the IV division B zone, though it is a mystery to me why this competent lefthander is not playing in the senior division.

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