

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

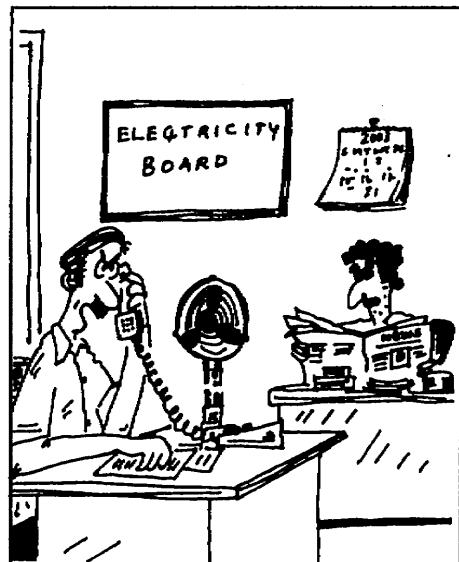
INSIDE

- How many Secretariats?
- Goddess Mosquito
- The John Davis contribution
- A paceman of potential
- Chennai rugby looks up

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FREE ISSUE

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No, Sir, the power failure in your house is due to OUR transformer and has nothing to do with the blackouts in New York and London!

Light of our lives

Do you believe that a dash of uncertainty adds spice to life, and prevents boredom?

Then, the rather whimsical, now-you-see-it-now-you-don't antics of the city's electricity supply must seem exciting to you.

Each day begins with a sense of "Gee—I wonder what fun things the power supply has in store for us today."

Chennai's electricity has a way of vanishing—suddenly, devastatingly, and almost always at the worst possible time. Like crucial moments of disclosure on your favourite TV show. Or when you, having tenderly put together several magic ingredients in the mixie, are all set to create a culinary marvel. Or when the most difficult group of relatives drops in.

Nervous hostesses include short prayers requesting un-interrupted power supply on their "must-do" lists while planning social events.

How about those times when electricity deliberately takes on an alien life form, described rather dully as "voltage problems" by the givers and the givees? Lights grow so dim, all navigation is by instinct. Or they flicker so erratically that your eyes continue to perform a shimmying dance long after supply is restored. This, while headache inducing, adds interesting dimensions to everyday faces.

And those much-advertised, perfect wattage bulbs that you took so much trouble over, end up looking like asthmatic candles.

Who says essential services have no sense of humour?

Ranjitha Ashok

Integrated approach to transport essential

(by Shobha Menon)

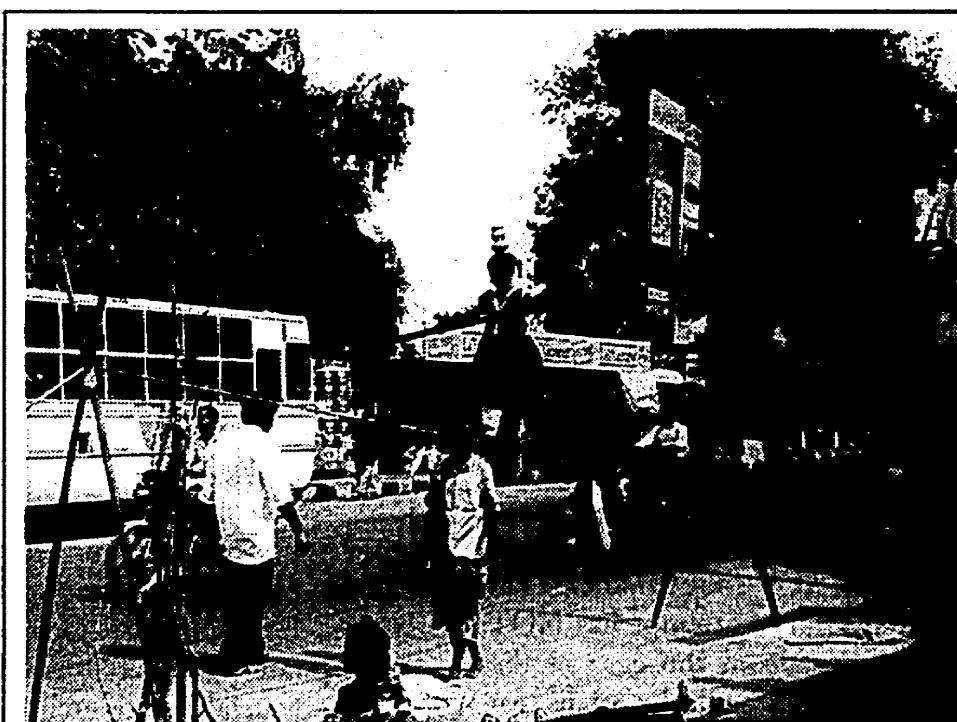
Jam-packed, dangerously tilting buses that labour heavily across congested city roads are familiar sights in Chennai. So are the strained, harassed expressions of waiting passengers at bus stops, or that desperate heart-thudding dash for that not-to-be-missed bus. And even as the '45 lakh passengers' served each day by the Metropolitan Transport Corporation continue to use the facility, the ever-increasing levels of private modes of transport in the metro only serve to reiterate the collective failure of a public transport system that can have markedly positive effects if it is re-constituted as an integrated system!

Prof. G. Anantharajan, Researcher and Consultant on Urban Systems Development with a Chennai focus since 1974, says, "Bus transport needs to be viewed as part of a comprehensive whole. In a good traffic planning system, at least 70% of trips must be by public transport, all the more imperative in a developing country with small roads. We have so many companies manufacturing cars in India, but so few manufacturing buses. We lack bus strength and an organised system that ensures periodic replacement and maintenance. We also continue with buses whose designs are of the 1960s. Why not go in for modern buses with better comfort, and provide differential pricing? Accessibility to connecting systems is another imperative need. If the three important requisites—comfort, convenience and easy accessibility—are met, people will want to switch over to public transport."

An expert in Urban Systems Development from an academic institution of repute in Chennai says, "A comprehensive inte-

grated approach is totally absent here. Ten years ago we submitted a comprehensive project proposal on the 'Design of the Madras City Bus Transit Network System', but while officials agreed with all suggestions proposed, nothing happened. In an organisation where most people involved are government stakeholders, everybody wants quick results without any effort or time spent on planning processes."

But a senior MTC spokesperson in charge of operations says, "While in Mumbai 70% of
(Continued on Page 6)



On page 3 today there's a letter that states, in effect, that beggars are forced to beg out of necessity, not out of choice. It stresses that children who beg are children first and beggars only afterwards. Do those convictions apply to the everyday scene RAJIND N. CHRISTY has captured in his picture? As a father drums away and his 7 or 8-year daughter walks the high rope on a roadside, with neither traffic nor people stopping for them, are they street entertainers making a living or a family seeking a hand-out more 'respectably' than by begging? Is a child in this situation a child, a child-labourer or a beggar? Does being 'dressed up' to earn a living through entertainment make such a performance less demeaning than begging?

Chennai's threatened Ecological Heritage Sites

(by M. Amirthalingam)

Ecological Heritage Sites (EHS) are areas of remnant indigenous vegetation representing different ranges of landform, soil, plant associations, habitat or ecosystem that occur in a particular region. They are the remnants of unique vegetation types that exist in such regions and have high ecological value. There are hundreds of EHS in India. In Chennai alone, over 20 sites have been identified as EHS and assessed and evaluated on various criteria such as the number of native species, degree of disturbance and the area covered by the site.

According to their vegetation and natural resources, the EHS in Chennai have been classified into five broad categories. They are:

Estuaries – Adyar, Cooum

Scrub-jungle – IIT campus, MCC campus, Guindy Park, Theosophical Society campus and Kattupalli Island

Water bodies – Temple tanks, Adambakkam Lake, Mohapper Lake, Red Hills Reservoir, Madhavaram Lake, Korattur Lake, Ambattur Lake and Pulicat Lake

Wetlands – Pallikaranai, Velachery and Chembarambakkam

Parks – Natesan Park, Nagheshwara Rao Park, Panangal Park, etc.

The EHS are noted for their richness of biological diversity, but, sadly, they face a number of threats.

The major threats are the increasing pressure of human activities, such as sand mining, increasing hutments, dumping of wastes and encroachments. They cause significant damage to plants, animals and birds. Developmental activities also cause irreversible changes because they badly displace the native vegetation.

Two major EHS that are particularly threatened are examined below.

Adyar Estuary

Chennai is one of the few cities in the world having an estuarine ecosystem. The Adyar Creek is of a tidal type and is a part of the natural estuarine ecosystem located right in the heart of the city. The original creek area was about 100 acres. Of this, roughly about half remains as a creek, where a tidal effect is felt twice a day.

The Adyar River originates at Chembarambakkam tank in Tiruvallur District. It flows 40 km to join the Bay of Bengal in the southern part of Chennai. At its mouth (the estuary), it takes a bend forming the creek. The estuary extends from the sandbar at the edge of the sea to the Adyar Bridge, with small islands in between. The creek

(Continued on Page 4)

No party for an undivided India

• From the pages of N.D. Varadachariar's 1939-1945 diary

(Continued from last fortnight)

1943

Friday January 1

A very pretty function took place at the Music Academy conference, Rasika Ranjini Sabha, when titles were conferred on leading music experts who have presided over the Conference 'Sangita Kalanidhi'. They called it a Convocation, but as far as possible, in its homeliness, informality, colour and warmth, it was a really oriental gathering – a *Sadas*. In the evening, a very beautiful performance by Brinda, Muktha and Abhirami, full of most pleasant musical expressions.

Thursday February 4

(General Hospital where Sita is receiving treatment for typhoid – strict rules for visitors) This hospital discipline is meaningless and absurd in its rigidity. The rules conceive of a patient as a machine gone wrong to be delivered at the repairer's end and to be taken delivery of when put right. They forget that there is a human element. At the same time, all this great care may possibly benefit the patient too.

Saturday April 3

The goody-goody British Padre class have started deeply regretting the 'impasse' and asking the British Govt to relent! Our freedom comes as a piece of charity, if it does. The vital thing is not freedom but that

moral, political and social development which makes its sustenance possible. Do we have that character for freedom?

Monday April 5

To see Prof K.V. Rangaswami Iyengar (Eminent Historian). A long, sparkling conversation. As a student of history, he says he can see the British Empire 'visibly and obviously disintegrating' and nothing can ever restore it.

Sunday April 8

(At the Cosmopolitan Golf Club) Across the stream, a corpse was burning, and on this side, men were drinking and playing!

Thursday April 22

(On train to Bombay with leading businessmen as fellow-travellers) Conversation was dull and mostly around business and businessmen, of which I understand very little, except that most of them are sharks, greedy and cruel and selfish with no idea for the promotion of industry or the general wealth of the nation. Personal successes are thus frequently national failures.

Saturday April 24

Bombay, so full and busy, is still strangely disquieting and the feeling is as though she is heading for some disagreeable climax. Food rationing comes on from 2nd May next. Plenty of money is being made, but there is not plenty of happiness about, apparently.

• We today publish the last lot of excerpts from that fascinating diary of the late N.D. Varadachariar. 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.

— The Editor

Sunday August 8

To Sagar Talkies – *Mangamma Sabatham* – a Tamil film featuring Vasundhara who acts and sings better than any South Indian I have seen so far.

Tuesday September 28

(Ruminating over the contemporary scene) Two noteworthy facts are the promise of a great increase in urban air traffic and the perfection of synthetic processes in the manufacture of rubber substitutes.

Tuesday October 19

I really believe in this : who are the men of light and leading, of character and wisdom who may lift this world by their example and guidance? With all his faults, Gandhi seems to be the only real big character. In the world that I see there is not another man of genuine public spirit and character and selflessness of Gandhi and it is a pity I can't agree with a great deal of his philosophy and view of life.

1944

Wednesday January 26

C.N.Lakshmikanthan who for years got involved in several cases and went to jail for long terms has been released and is immediately making himself felt. His weekly called *Cinema-Thoothu* is replete with scandals which he lashes with brutal violence – of course every sentence is a libel according to law, but also, I am told, substantially true.

Monday April 17

The South East Asia Command has moved from New Delhi to Ceylon and the reason officially given is that Ceylon is more central. Rumour has it that Mountbatten has fled from Delhi because he found Auchinlek sullen and unhelpful. The cry for Mountbatten's recall is growing in intensity.

Monday July 10

In the evening comes startling news of C. Rajagopalachari-Jinnah correspondence by which the former offers Pakistan to latter with the approval of Gandhi.

Tuesday July 11

Gandhi approves of offer to

Jinnah of Pakistan – a commission to ascertain predominantly Muslim areas and plebiscites of all residents there to decide whether or not they would be within India, all this after the British agree to our complete Independence.

Friday July 14

With Gandhi going over to the moderate camp, there is no party which stands for complete Independence for an undivided India.

1945

Saturday May 26

I discovered that I had omitted (in my last testament) to refer to the charity of money of Rs. 800. I have promised S. Guruswami (Labour leader) to buy a bicycle for his son Rs 200 or thereabouts from this charity account. I 'phoned Mr. Sundaram of Royal Cycle who has promised to get this machine (in addition to one for Sampath at my expense). I justify this on the ground that G. is a poorly paid public worker of great ability and character, his boy a brilliant fellow who has earned his father's approval. This will be debited to charity.

(Concluded)

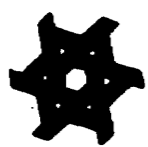
Answers to Quiz

1. 150 years of Indian Railways; 2. Edward Teller; 3. Jugraj Singh; 4. 'Hawks' from British Aerospace Systems; 5. Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon; 6. Cancun in Mexico; 7. *Let It Be*; 8. New Delhi, thanks to a navigation CD produced by a Belgian company, Tele Atlas; 9. Andy Roddick and Jutine Henin-Hardenne; 10. G.S.Ramchand.

* * *

11. The family should have one or more IT assesseees and monthly income of Rs. 5000 and above; 12. *The Hindu*; 13. S. Thirunavukkarasar; 14. Bharatidasan University; 15. Connemara; 16. Outside the Cinema Paradiso in Alwarpet; 17. Va. Thu. Natarajan; 18. S.P. Thyagarajan; 19. S. Rm. M.Ct. Muthiah Chettiar; 20. Broadlands.

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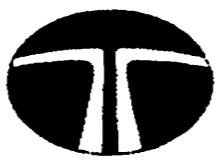
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