

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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INSIDE

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"I'm sorry, Sir, I definitely can't allow you to pass through with this sharp and pointed collar!"

100 ml of what?!

Remember the Age of Aquarius, drenched with harmony and understanding, with sympathy and trust abounding?

Nice concept – except that we got dumped with the Age of Security instead, with its distinct lack of everything long-haired flower people had sung about.

"Security" is a must today, obviously, and you respect the irritating, invasive rules that come with it.

But sometimes...

You're standing in a bored line at the airport, attention wandering, when suddenly the words 'meat cleaver' flash on the TV screen.

"Meat cleaver"?

True, you don't want travelling companions wielding these in confined spaces with no escape access, since grabbing a passing cloud and tobogganing through the blue sky is out.

But putting items on a banned list indicates both the possibility of actually finding them nestling in hand baggage, and official opinions about travellers, and their ways.

"Don't forget the meat cleaver, dear. You know what those airline cutlets are like."

Similarly, 'axes', or 'bows and arrows'.

Now, who'd carry a set of B&A casually by hand, even as part of a theatrical production, or a competition of some kind? A Blackberry?

Yes.

But brass knuckles...?

What sorts of occupations require these?

Think of the airport staff, and their work that centres on that most erratic of elements — human behaviour.

And thank your stars, you don't have their job.

Ranjitha Ashok

State's still at No. 4

Fall in primary education and infrastructure ranking

(By A Special Correspondent)

Tamil Nadu retains its over all fourth position among Big States (those with an area of more than 35,000 sq. km. and a population of over five million) in the *India Today* 2007 State of States report. It is a position the State has held since 2003. Punjab No.1, Kerala No. 2 and Himachal Pradesh No.3 also retain their rankings for the fifth successive year.

Among the Small States, Puducherry is No.1 for the second year in a row. Goa holds on to its No. 2 position and Delhi to its No. 3 spot.

Chandigarh tops the list of Union Territories for the fourth successive year. Andaman & Nicobar Islands is No. 2 for the third year in a row. The achiever here is Lakshadweep, which jumps two rankings to bag the No. 3 spot.

India Today instituted its State of States report in 2003 to measure and compare the quality of governance at the State level, where it has a direct impact on the life of the common man. But very little has changed in the rankings in the five years.

Punjab appears to be a textbook case of economic development, says the *India Today* report. Puducherry has used its strong agrarian economy to invest in health and infrastructure and attract investments. Assam, although placed at No.14, has shown spectacular results in poverty reduction by trimming it down by 21 per cent, says the report. The names at the bottom of the heap are all too familiar: Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar, among the Big States, and Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya among the Small States.

Commenting on Tamil Nadu, *India Today* report says: "Despite a volatile political atmosphere and virtually no line

of communication, the political leaders have managed to fuel growth. The State has emerged as the fastest mover in investment, of which there is evidence in plenty, and also as the fastest growing consumer market. Of course, having a

(Continued on page 6)



One of MTC's new buses.

MTC – Is it turning the corner?

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) in Chennai recently began a trial run of a global positioning system for buses on two routes, 21G (Tambaram-Broadway) and 70 (Tambaram-Avadi). Electronic display boards to inform commuters on arrival times of the next bus were to be gradually introduced across the city. So, does this mean the ushering in of a new era – initiated a few months ago with new buses and new services – in bus transport in Chennai? Regular bus commuters across the city, however, have had varied experiences to share.

Since 1980, Munuswami, who works in the Slum Board office at Kotturpuram, has travelled the bus route from Guduvancheri to Kotturpuram and back. He said, "Earlier, at least once in half an hour I used to get an LSS (Limited Stop Service) on the PP 21 route. There are almost no ordinary services now. I used to spend Rs.20 to Kotturpuram and back, now I've to pay Rs.35 and that too if I get the Express or Deluxe bus! Now I've switched over to using the train service where possible."

Chithra, an irate commuter, wailed, "At some locations, there are huge distances between bus stops (for instance, no stops for route No. 1 between Mylapore Tank and Royapettah – Ehrlich Lab stop). Old unused stops still stand and buses stop randomly. And if you don't want to take an Express or Deluxe (which don't stop at all the 'ordinary' stops), you just end up paying a higher fare on an M (minimum fare) service to get to a bus stop where you can pay lower to get to where you want! Bus drivers also ensure

• by Shobha Menon

your 'mandatory exercise' by stopping a few hundred yards away from the bus-stop."

Meanwhile, the Managing Director of the MTC, R. Balasubramaniam, pointed out, "There are only 4 slabs – Ordinary, Limited Stop Service, Express and Deluxe. For ordinary service, we charge Rs.6.50 per 40 km. In Karnataka and Andhra, the same 40 km is charged Rs.18 and fares are raised just about a day or two after a diesel price hike. The fare in Tamil Nadu is a minimal 28 p/km, revised last in 2001,

when the cost of diesel was Rs.18 (now it is Rs.35). Actually, 75% of the collection goes to diesel charges. A recent traffic survey by reporters of various dailies about deluxe buses even found a flower vendor who used the Deluxe instead of the Ordinary because she 'could save time by tying flowers and sitting comfortably'. The Travel As You Please (TAUP) option is increasingly becoming popular... Rs.30 per day, Rs.600 per month and Rs.160 per week."

But shouldn't there be more Ordinary services and fewer Expresses/Deluxes, since most commuters are from the poorer working class. Says Balasubramaniam, "We have 2675 buses in the MTC fleet at this point. Only 12% are Deluxe, 10% LSS and 13% Express. The earlier 2 slabs for passes have been replaced by the 'Travel as you please (TAUP)' scheme with a single slab that caters to all buses. While six months ago the sales of the bus passes was Rs.20,000, now it is Rs.35,000. Last year, 35 lakh people used the MTC per day. Now it is 135 lakh per day. In June 2006, the cash loss was Rs.10 crore. This

(Continued on page 7)

Frogmarched into a fascinating past

For the fourth year running, the Chennai Heritage Week (19-26 August), organised by a band of heritage buffs, took the ordinary citizen by the collar and frogmarched him through a fascinating encounter with the past.

In a sense, the festival was a small but significant victory for *Madras Musings* that has been tirelessly championing various civic causes, from cleaning up the city's dirty drains and filthy waterways to finding ways of renovating the fading architectural glories of the colonial era. It has at last found an answering echo, with a number of young people taking up the cause of heritage. Some of them have started their own area-based tabloids, thereby reinforcing the notion that Chennai is still a collection of small villages.

"I think what we really lack is an easily recognisable meeting place," explains Sushila

in the South, quite unlike those who might be regarded as their counterparts in the North.

"They were," he explained, in the course of an illustrated lecture, "married to the Gods in their respective temples and highly-respected individuals. They owned their own property and the inheritance passed from mother to daughter. They could never become widows and, when they died, the cloth that was placed on the devadasi's body was the one that adorned the God.

"In fact, even in my family, it was considered to be very lucky when purchasing a diamond earring to make sure that it had once come from one of these women. It was a symbol of good fortune."

As he traced their story with the help of a slide show, he described how their times of glory at the famous Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur were slowly eclipsed by the Marathas'

● by **GEETA DOCTOR**
in *Mint*, August 31, 2007

Ravindranath, Editor of *The New Sunday Express*, who was at the forefront of the current initiative. "It is not easy for us to rally around any well-known spot as they might do with the Kala Ghoda Festival in Mumbai," she adds.

"So, we threw it open to as many people as possible, and made it a really fun kind of heritage festival. For me, the high point was to take an early morning walk through George Town, under the guidance of V. Sriram, and discover the immense wealth of history that lurks there. It's the sort of heritage that other cities would die for and, yet, we are barely aware of it today," she continues.

Sriram has tossed aside both convention and conformity in showcasing the lives of a once splendid community of dancers and musicians (devadasis) who, in their role as temple dancers, graced the inner sanctum of the Gods. They later became ornaments in the courts of southern kingdoms such as Thanjavur and Mysore.

During his guided tour of George Town, he pointed out that this was once a celebrated neighbourhood for both music and dance, with 2,000 women who were not only well-versed in the performing arts, but were educated and independent and belonged to a unique tradition

growing power. As the colonial powers gained ascendancy in Madras, the devadasis shifted their base to the new centre of privilege.

One of the old Indian elite's standard ways of offering entertainment to the English masters was to bring on the devadasis, much as the Moghuls did in the North with their nautch girls.

One of the observers of the scene, Thomas Salmon, wrote in 1699: "Female choristers make up part of the equipage of a great man when he goes abroad; for every man of figure in the country I observed had a number of these singing women run before him, even the Governor of Fort St. George was attended by 50 of them, as well as by the country music when he went out."

This does not fit in exactly with Sriram's image of excellence and virtue suggested by the term devadasis, though it does suggest how some of their kind might have had to adjust to the changing times. It was, he says, a combination of the change in attitudes that came with the Victorian era and the creation of a Western-educated Brahmin elite – a middle class that wanted to appropriate the hereditary landed rights of the devadasis – and their own

(Continued on page 6)

The high jump at Central

The *Man from Madras Musings* was at the Central Station a few days ago. Security had been "beefed up" (to quote a commonly used expression) owing to some threat or the other and the Railways had geared themselves for the occasion in characteristic fashion. First, a rope had been strung across the entire station entrance at around 4 feet height. This was, presumably, to prevent people from walking in, in any and whichever way they pleased, and to get them to use designated pathways for entry and exit. Unfortunately for the railways, men (and women) of Madras that is Chennai are an adventurous lot and most took the rope literally in their stride. The more agile jumped over it and the less abled bent and slid under it in a way that would have made Nadia Comaneci proud. Those who were saddled with bags slid the bags underneath the rope and then did the high jump themselves, and one enterprising child used its bag to give itself a leg up over the rope and then pulled the bag across. All in all, it was an active morning for those at the station.

Next, there was an X-Ray machine like the ones we have at airports. Only, here there was just one machine for the many hundreds that come to the station and everyone had to get his/her bags screened. The chaos had to be seen to be believed. Passengers who had come in late were on tenterhooks, as the queue took its time to snake its way. Porters cursed and tempers ran high. Also, given the sheer numbers, MMM was in doubts if any check of what the X-Ray revealed was really done. More likely, it was a mere formality that added to the tensions of catching a train.

Rialto at Central

Like Venice, Central Station also has a neat little wooden bridge rather like the Rialto. *The Man from Madras Musings* noticed that it does not span any waterbody, but merely connects one lane of the concourse, where passengers are picked up/dropped, to the other. It is a wholly unnecessary piece of beautification and, what is worse, it does not ramp down to ground level. On both ends, it steps down and this makes the carting of bags across it a very difficult task.

The Academy prepares

The *Man from Madras Musings* learns that the Old Lady of The Music Season, our own Academy, is undergoing a facelift and preparing herself for the season ahead. MMM is told that the seats in the ground floor of the auditorium have all been changed and will make for more comfortable seating. MMM wonders if the seats in the first floor will also

be looked into. They are in infinitely worse condition than those on the ground floor and the space between the rows was wholly inadequate.

MMM also notices that a tea shop that was in illegal occupation of space near the Academy entrance has vanished and a new gate is coming up there, making for demarcated and separated entry and exit from TTK Road. It is, however, a pity that the gate on Cathedral Road is more or less permanently closed owing to the flyover. MMM also wonders as to how the Music Academy and its neighbours are planning to contend with the Government plan to acquire land on either side of the flyover.

On a different note, a little bird whispered to MMM that the Music Academy's *Journal*, presently in arrears since 2002, is all set to make a comeback this year. It is a consummation devoutly to be wished for.

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

Away with hoardings?

Last month, the city police did what the Corporation ought to have done ages ago. Namely, removing the illegal hoardings, political or otherwise, that had broken out like a rash alongside important road intersections and traffic lights, thereby making life miserable for motorists and pedestrians.

The removal began with much fanfare and all the temporary creations extolling leaders for their achievements (past, present and future) were pulled down. However, *The Man from Madras Musings* could not help noticing that some hoardings, especially those close to political party offices and those facing the residences of some of our leaders, were left untouched. Why these were allowed to remain will remain a mystery like *The Man in The Iron Mask*.

MMM also noticed that the casuarina poles that were used to put up these hoardings were allowed to remain *in situ*. On enquiry, MMM was told by a party worker that, in any case, a few days later, the hoardings will be back and allowing the poles to remain where they were was a good way of saving on wood! Who said environmental awareness was low in our city?

Rising drains

The drains in the main are going to cause a lot of pain, to reward a popular song. It was only last fortnight that *The Man from Madras Musings* had written about the travails of the residents of a particular area when the drains were relaid. The last word had apparently

not been written on the subject. The pipes were laid, the sand was filled in and then the openings were cemented over, only to reveal that the concrete now was a good one foot above ground level, effectively blocking all the drives and gates, making ingress and exit of vehicles impossible and endangering people trying to cross them at night. These people faced further danger from the open manholes just a few feet apart on this new 'pavement'. "Raise your ground level" was the offhand reply of those who laid the drain. Obviously the authorities that ordered the drain and the raised covering have no obligation to the citizens they are inconveniencing.

MMM wonders what it is that prevents the various agencies from coordinating with each other even on such simple matters in our city. Each year, the manholes have a kind of protective wall built around them which become traffic hazards. Next, the road level is raised to match the drain, as the difference in heights prevents water from flowing in. Then, buildings in the area raise their plinth levels as otherwise they go below road level. Thereafter, along comes the drain-laying authority and raises the level of the drains once more. When will it all end?

MMM notices that in cities abroad, relaying a road invariably means removing the old macadam, exposing the earth and then laying the road to the same original level. The drains always remain a level below the road surface. How is it that in our country alone we follow a different method? Is it because we always aim "high"?

Westernising cities

A page from a recent newsletter from INTACH headquarters caught the attention of *The Man from Madras Musings*. It described what it termed a post-colonial malaise: the desire to create a global city that is automatically understood as a Westernised and sanitised one. It went on to regret that "the dialogue between the Government and local stakeholders only takes place through confrontation, often in court. Yet, if we were to re-evaluate our intellectual baggage (which presumes that a Western model of city-planning is appropriate everywhere) and reformulate our planning process (to make it participatory rather than top-down and punitive), it is possible to create a modern city that is simultaneously sensitive to local needs and responsive to global standards."

MMM may be pardoned for thinking that this was a tract pertaining to Chennai. It was not. But the same passage can be taken as equally descriptive of what goes on here.

– MMM

OUR
READERS
WRITE



Temple entry – I

Reader C. Balasubramaniam's letter (MM, September 1st) has raised the issue of the ban "on non-Hindus entering Hindu temples". His subsequent comments in his letter show that he looks upon these "historic" temples as places of tourist interest. This is really the crux of the matter.

For the Hindu devotees visiting these temples, these are holy places of worship and prayer and they seek the Lord's blessings. This is a matter of faith and belief for them and the idols in the temples represent God in various forms.

For people of non-Hindu origin, idol worship is evil and many times a matter of ridicule. With such a mindset, if a non-Hindu visits the temple, it is either as a picnic or of tourist nature, and not to pray and worship. The minimum that is needed before temple entry is "at least respect the Hindu belief, if not accept it".

R.V. Chandramouli IAS (RTD.)

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Temple entry – II

I read with interest the letter of reader C. Balasubramaniam (MM, September 1st). I daily see many foreigners inside the Sri Kapaleeswarar Temple. Though they are not allowed inside the *sanctum sanctorum*, they are permitted upto the Ardh Mantapam, and have a full view of the main deities inside the *sanctum*.

Be that as it may, the hard reality is that other religionists

visit our temples not for any devotional or religious purpose but to view them only as a showplace and we do not know how they would be interpreting us in their own lands after photographing inside our temples.

Several young foreign women are scantily clad and nobody knows if they are 'clean' or not. I found a foreign gentleman smoking near the Dwajasthambam and asked him to put it out. They need to respect these places of worship, even if they see them only as 'sights'.

T.M. Sundararaman
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Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

Temple entry – III

Reader C. Balasubramaniam has asked for comments (MM, September 1st) on his suggestion of temple entry to foreigners.

As far back as 1996, I wrote in the *Times of India* that entry should be allowed freely as long as they are clean and properly clad. This reminds me of a conversation I had with my friend, the former Home Secretary, Padmanabiah. We happened to have 'darshan' together at Tirupathi. He asked me whether we could go inside the *sanctum sanctorum* to see the other side of the Lord. I told him that they would not allow us; even if they allowed us, we should not go in because we were not properly clad as a priest and perhaps we were also not fully clean. He did not argue the point and agreed with me. So the foreigners should re-

More transport – and greater safety – the need

Chennai has a population of 46 lakh which may increase to 58 lakh in about 10 years. To meet the needs of this population, efficient public transport services are essential.

The MTC which had a fleet strength of 2773 buses in 2004 operating in 537 routes and carrying about 36 lakh passengers a day will have to increase it several-fold in the near future. There is overcrowding in buses during peak hours. Waiting time at the bus stops has increased, causing inconvenience and irritation to passengers. The number of goods vehicles is increasing at the rate of 50% per annum and has reached 1,647,185 in 2007. The number of two-wheelers has grown to about 14 lakh. Similarly, the number of motor cars has also increased several-fold. There is acute shortage of parking space for all types of vehicles.

The CMDA proposal for a comprehensive transportation study of Chennai, at a cost of Rs. 2 crore and to be completed in 18 months, must take note of the reality in the City and should evolve various steps for improving public transport (the majority of population cannot afford to own cars and are unwilling to get fleeced by auto drivers).

MTC is certainly doing a good job and is definitely one of the best bus services in the country. Yet it does not adequately cater to the need of general public. The roads are very narrow for vehicles to pass through and there are repeated traffic jams, especially during the marriage season and during the visits of political leaders. Many of the existing roads have got to be widened by demolishing shops and houses on both sides of the road, irrespective of protests by their owners.

The Transport Department should introduce Point to Point (PP) buses – for instance, Poonamallee to Parry's, Parry's to Thiruvallur, Parry's to T' Nagar, etc. – to avoid frequent stops.

Bus shelters are a basic need and it is the responsibility of the authorities to provide decent, protected, habitable shelters. I have filed a PIL petition praying for such shelters.

The Government should also ruthlessly remove the pavement

and street vendors and hawkers who occupy almost the entire width of some roads. But it is equally necessary for the CMDA to identify places for relocating such vendors.

There is urgent need to initiate steps for ensuring road safety in the city and the State. Safety clinics must be provided for drivers of school buses, goods carriers and public transport vehicles. The drivers must be made aware of speed limits to avoid accidents. The authorities must install monitoring cameras particularly in accident-prone zones to control speed and punish the erring drivers. It is also necessary that emergency medical services, like ambulances, adequate First Aid training programmes for the Police and drivers of the vehicles to save the lives of accident victims during the Golden Hour, which is 24 hours from the time of accident, should be evolved. The drivers must be taught to strictly follow the road rules, avoid driving after consuming alcohol or when feeling drowsy. Safer vehicles are essential for reducing the number of accidents. In-built safety measures in vehicles are essential. In commercial vehicles, there should be collapsible steering columns, rear view mirrors, windshield of laminated safety glass, exhaust brakes, improved wiper blades, headlights, automatic dippers, reflectors, speed governors for heavy vehicles, etc.

The most important thing is to induce fear in the minds of violators by strict enforcement. In the cases of drivers with records of repeated violations, cancellation of licences must be mandatory.

For a plan that determines the city's future for next 20 years, the planners in the Transportation Sector must work towards environmental protection and prevention of accidents.

C. Lakshmi Narain

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Chennai 600 001

spect the norms prescribed if they want to enter.

With all this, my article said that one might still be an atheist or agnostic. So the foreigner need not certify that he believes in Hinduism, as it is prescribed now in some temples.

Dr. G. Sundaram
IAS (RTD.)

"Burma House"
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More demolition

In *Madras Musings* of September 1st, your Special Correspondent has stated "... initiating action against unauthorised development shall be deemed to have been suspended and no punitive action shall be taken for a year." I wonder if this is anyway linked with the demolition activities that have started in the D'Monte Colony located between TTK and St. Mary's Roads (near Park Sheraton Hotel).

It is being said that the area has been leased for commercial purposes – and this may lead to cutting of trees, destroying the flora, etc. Is the city to lose yet another green area to commercialisation?

Commodore Prem Kumar
VSM (RTD.)

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Vasan's picture

This is with reference to the article 'Looking back on

the early printing efforts in Madras' (MM, September 1st).

The writer has said that S.S. Vasan's picture never appeared in *Ananda Vikatan* during his lifetime. This is not true. Vasan's picture, along with that of S.A.P. Annamalai and C. Subramaniam, was featured in the magazine when it was selecting the winners of a contest it had held for its readers in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

P.K. Visvesvaran

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Persian Pallavan

The dynasties of the kingdoms were known by different names, Mauryas, Pallavas, Pandyas, etc. None of the textbooks reveals why they were called by such names.

The French TV channel

TV5 *Monde* ran a feature film on Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi. The name Pahlavi sounded to me like Pallava. So I collected the following details from the internet.

1. Pahlavi: A middle Persian language spoken in pre-Islamic Iran from 3rd Century BCE to 9th Century CE during the rule of Sassanian dynasty. Naresh and Vistahm (a corrupted form of Vishnu? Note the names of Narasimha and Simha Vishnu of Pallava dynasty) are names of persons of that period.

2. Pahlavi is the royal house name. Pahlavan is a village on Azarbayjan-e-Gharbi, in Iran. Could Pallavan be a corrupted form of Pahlavan?

Will the historians probe further?

S.N. Mahalingam

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READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more **hand written** letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

– THE EDITOR

Our Addresses

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: Chennai Heritage, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, West Cott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014.

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No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR



Two Special Madras Postal Covers

(By a Staff Reporter)

Two Special Postal Covers released by the Postal Department commemorated important Madras events.

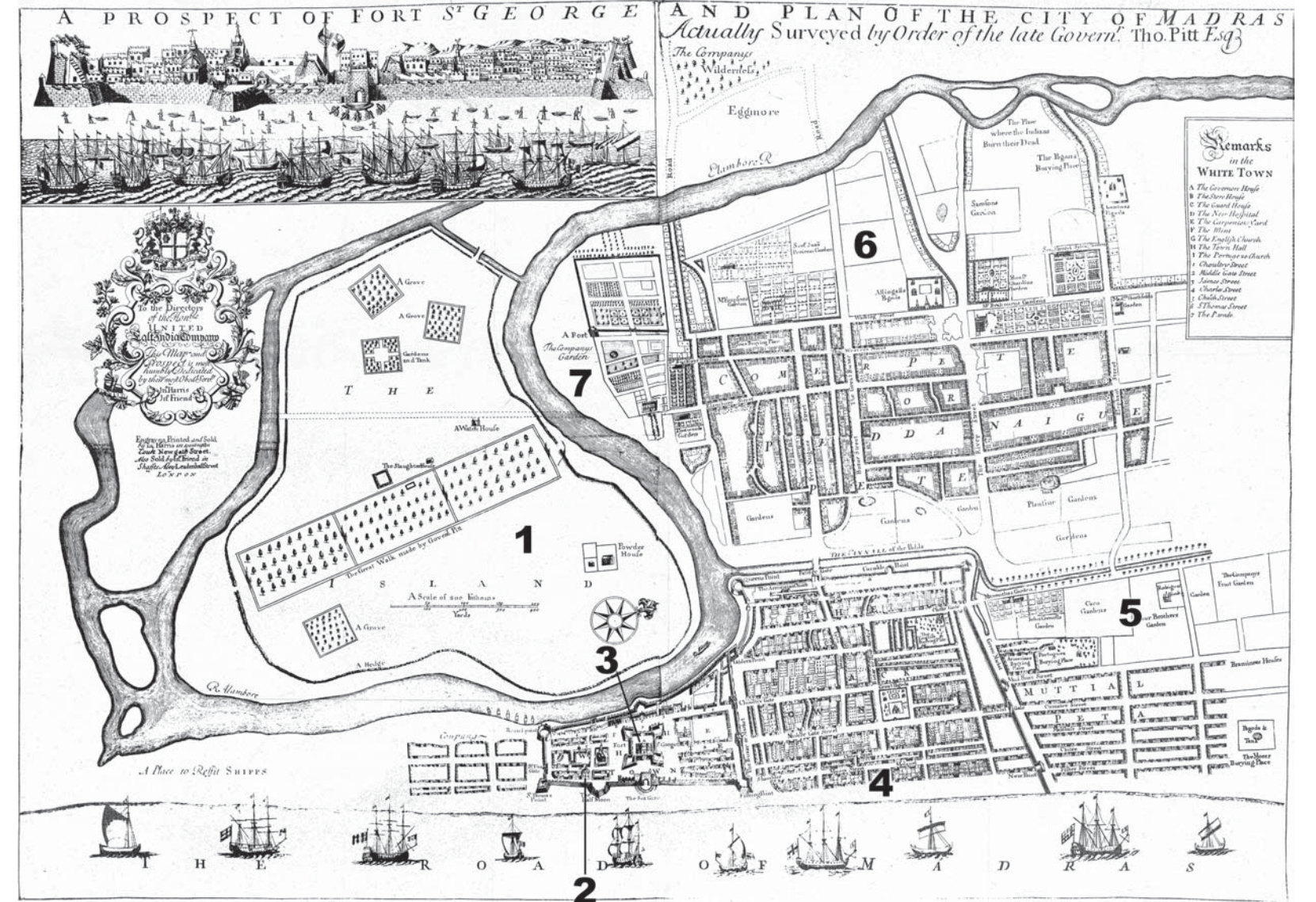
On August 19th, the centenary of the Indian Bank, founded on 15.8.1907, was commemorated with a special cover whose design reflected another August 15th forty years later. It is understood that 5,00,000 covers were printed and distributed to post offices wherever the Indian Bank had branches in the country and were quickly bought up by the Bank's customers. The five rupee stamp on this cover featured the Niligiris Gaur (Bison).

Then, on August 22, 2007, to mark Madras Day, the Principal Chief Postmaster General, Tamil Nadu Circle, released another Special Cover commemorating the 368th birthday of the city. L.K. Tripathy, I.A.S., Chief Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu, received it.

The multicoloured special cover, measuring 22 x 11 cm, was printed using the latest printing technology, making the cover a truly collector's item. The front of the cover featured the 18th Century layout of Fort St. George. This layout (featured in detail alongside) was printed in multicolours and with a glossy, embossed effect. The envelope also featured a picture of Madras Roads, with sailing ships at anchor. The diamond-shaped postal cancellation featured the famous flagmast of Fort St. George, which was the tallest in India. The Rs.5 denomination multicoloured stamp on the cover depicted majestic Senate House of the University of Madras.

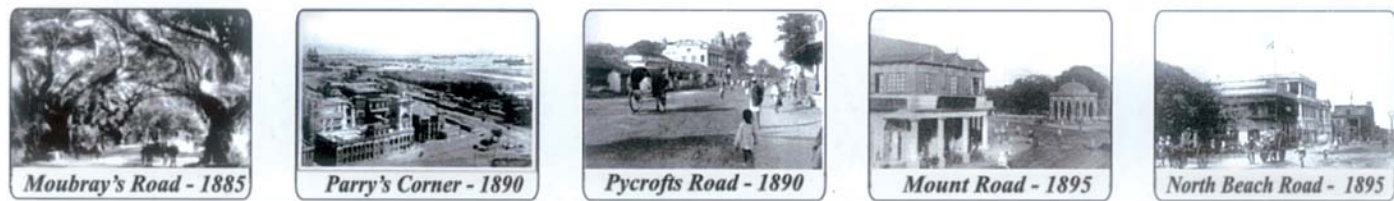
The back of the cover had 10 black-and-white photographs of old Madras from 1885 to 1923, together with a brief history of the heritage city. The cover concept was conceived and designed by numismatists, notaphilists and philatelists D.H. Rao and S.B. Raja Seetharaman.

Two maps of Old Madras



1. The Island 2. The Town Hall 3. The Inner Fort and Castle 4. The Black Town
5. Muttila Peta 6. Peddanaiguet Pete 7. The Company's Garden and Country Retreat

विशेष आवरण SPECIAL COVER FORT ST. GEORGE



Madras Day is celebrated to recollect the city's heritage every year on 22nd August. On 22nd August 1639 A.D., a sandy strip of land on the Coromandel coast (presently Fort St. George area) was granted to the East India Company by the Vijayanagar kingdom for trading purpose. Over a period of time, ancient villages like Mylapore, old and new towns, new settlements in and around the place were brought together, to form this growing metropolitan city. The city was known by many names like Madrasapatnam, Chennapatnam, Chennapuri, Madras and finally Chennai from 1996 onwards. Many fascinating vestiges of the past can still be seen in many parts of the city highlighting its heritage.

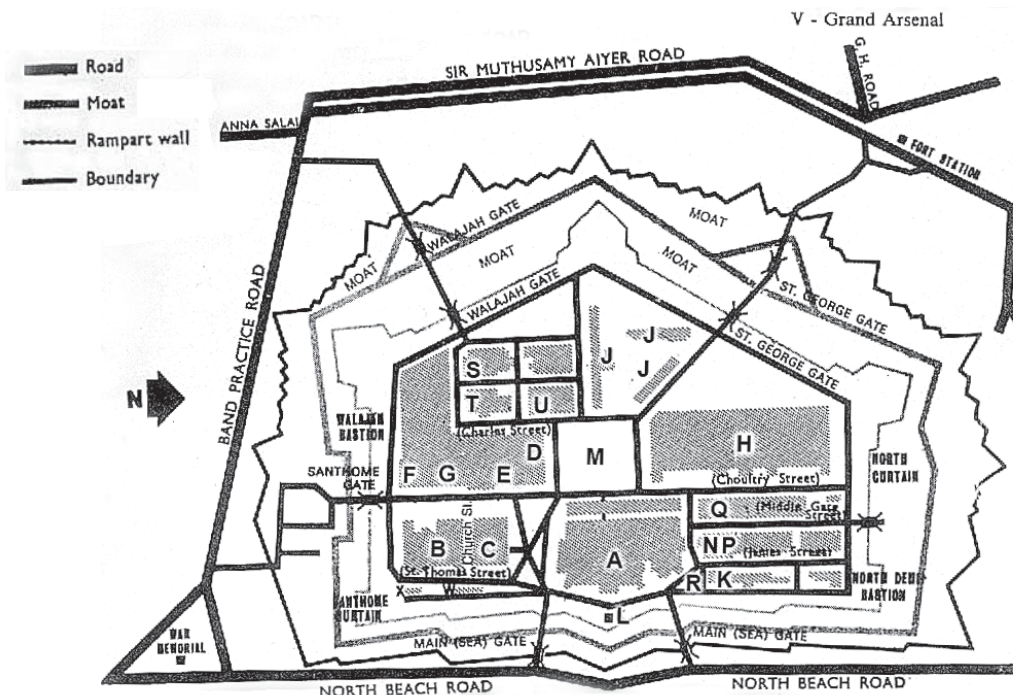
This Special Cover is released on 22nd August 2007 at the Office of Principal Chief Post Master General, Tamilnadu Circle, Chennai - 600 002 marking the occasion of 368th Madras Day Celebrations.

The postal cancellation in the front, shows the famous flag mast in Fort St. George, Chennai which is the tallest in India.



Special Cover Sponsored by :
Principal Chief Post Master General,
Tamilnadu Circle, Chennai - 600 002.

Special Cover Concept & Designed by :
D.H. Rao and S.B. Raja Seetharaman
Life members - South India Philatelists' Association



Fort St. George in the 18th Century

A. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE & COUNCIL CHAMBER, now Assembly Hall, Secretariat and Ministerial Offices. B. TOWN HALL, now Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Circle. F. WELLESLEY HOUSE, now Defence Offices. G. ST. MARY'S CHURCH. D. GUARD ROOM, where the Public Relations Office, Ministry of Defence, now is. E. CLIVE HOUSE (ADMIRALTY HOUSE), now the Pay and Accounts Office and the office of the Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Circle. H. KING'S BARRACKS, then as now. J. BARRACKS, then as now. K. OFFICERS' MESS, and before that the Public Exchange Hall and Light-house, now the Fort Museum. L. FLAGSTAFF, the tallest in the land. M. PARADE GROUND (CORNWALLIS SQUARE). N. Fort House. P. Bank. Q. New Secretariat Multistorey Building. R. CORNWALLIS CUPOLA. S. Police Station. T. Hospital. U. Post Office

Pitt's Madras - the survey for it began 300 years ago

Thomas Pitt, 'Pirate Pitt' to many, was Governor of Madras from 1698 to 1709. He who had been once described by the Directors of East India Company as "a desperate fellow, and one that, we fear, will not stick at doing any mischief that lies in his power," had the longest stint of any Governor of Madras, "a period which proved to be the Golden Age of Madras in respect of the development of trade and increasing of wealth."

One of his contributions was what has been called Pitt's Map of Madras, stated to be the first accurate map of any city in India. It's never been dated accurately but was published in 1711 after a survey that Pitt ordered and which began, from all accounts, 300 years ago this year. The only original engraving of the map known to be in existence is in Oxford's famed Bodleian Library. And it is from the internal evidence in the map that it becomes apparent that the survey probably began in 1707 and the map included details that date up to 1711.

The map names streets inside and outside the Fort, it shows significant private properties, and places of worship. The most striking feature of White Town (Fort St. George) is the exact shape of the Inner Fort wherein was the Governor's 'Castle'. It is centred to the east in a square enclosed by four walls and protected by large triangular bastions in the corners. To the southeast of the Inner Fort's neighbour, St. Mary's Church, and near the eastern walls, is the Town Hall, clearly depicted as a domed building that the Presidency College's latter day dome might well have drawn inspiration from.

South of the Fort is The Island with Pitt's tree-lined Great Walk clearly seen. North of the Fort is the first 'Black Town', even then developed on a gridiron pattern and protected on three sides by walls and on the fourth by the sea. Almost in the centre of 'Black Town' is "The Great Pagoda" (the Chennakesava Perumal Temple), about where the southern edge of today's High Court campus is. Also marked are 'The English Burying Place' (whose vestiges still remain in a corner of the Law College campus) and 'The Armenian Church', across from where Handloom House now is.

Across from Black Town's northern wall is 'Muttila Peta' which developed as the New Black Town (George Town) in the 1750s. But the gridiron pattern was already in place, as the map shows. The street names here are rather different from today's: Mud Point Street, Comatee Street, Malabars Street, Chitce Street and Fisher Street are marked. Prominently indicated is Rodrigues Tomb, that of the local Jewish leader. Separated from Black Town and Muttila Peta by 'The Cannall of the Pedda' and 'Gardens' (fields and groves) is 'Comer Pete or Peddanaiguet Pete', already gridironed but with a set of street names different from today's. Already in place are 'Allingalls Pagoda' (Ekambareswarar Temple) and 'Loraines Pagoda' (Bairagimadam Temple).

South of Peddanaiguet Pete and nestling in a curve of the Elambore River (now Buckingham Canal) and across from The Island is 'The Company's Garden', Pitt's rest-and-recreation 'country seat'. There's a small fort on the south, a walled enclosure north of it and a mansion on the east with a tree-lined walk/drive leading to it.

What a magnificent picture of 70-year-old Madras this 300-year-old map, seen above, offers!

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period September 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

- Which Asian country was rocked by multiple earthquakes in early September leading to tsunami warnings in India?
 - Name the Jamaican athlete who bettered his own 100m world record in Italy on September 9th.
 - In which European country talks aimed at ending sectarian violence in Iraq were held successfully?
 - Which former President of an Asian country was found guilty of plunder and sentenced to life imprisonment after being in custody for more than six years?
 - Name the world record explorer, the first human to solo around the world in a balloon, who went missing over the Nevada desert in the first week of September.
 - Name the famous Italian tenor who passed away on September 6th after a battle with pancreatic cancer.
 - To which place was former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif deported soon after his return to Pakistan after an 'exile' of seven years?
 - Which African country entered the third millennium on September 11th, seven years after the rest of the world, as it follows the Julian calendar?
 - Which cyber giant, in association with the X Prize Foundation, will award \$20 million to the first private team to put a robot on the moon?
 - Which F1 team was slapped a huge \$100 million fine and had its points scrapped for spying on the Ferrari team?
- * * *
- In which District is Alagappa University?
 - Which poet/writer won the 1980 Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize for his novel *Cheraman Kadali*?
 - How does one better know 'Chinnaswaamy Subramania Iyer'?
 - At which station was 'Collector Dorai' Ashe shot by the freedom fighter Vanchinathan?
 - On which routes are airconditioned buses to ply in Chennai?
 - Which Tamil was the founder National Secretary of the BJP?
 - For which type of entrepreneurial activity does the State Government give the 'Manimekalai Award'?
 - Which social and religious leader has agreed to clean up the Cooum?
 - Whose monthly English mouthpiece is *The Modern Rationalist*?
 - Which five post offices in Chennai have made Re.1 and Rs.2 coins available to the public at par, beginning September 10th?

(Answers on page 7)

State's still at No. 4

(Continued from page 1)

large contingent of Union Cabinet Ministers from the State has helped, but it has worked hard to attract investments by investing in social and political infrastructure. Arguably, if the health and education scores had not dropped, the State could have been in the top three."

This year, *India Today* focussed its State of States report on the themes of inclusive growth and poverty reduction. In his editorial, Aroon Purie, Editor-in-Chief, mentions that the National Sample Survey Organisation data between 1993 and 2005 shows that while poverty figures are down, poverty is still rampant in absolute terms. The top 20 per cent of salary earners in India earn 50 per cent of the country's total salary income, while the bottom 20 per cent earn less than 5 per cent. Purie writes that these "damning numbers" exist because of the sustained failure of governance in areas of education and skills training and the development of infrastructure. The editorial calls for State intervention – aggressive investment in social and physical infrastructure – and stresses that the 2007 State of States report indicates the need to empower the population in order to capitalise on the gains of the economic boom.

The report reveals the following picture:

Agriculture

Tamil Nadu ranks No. 2, up a step from its No.3 spot the past four years. Punjab is as usual the leader, while Andhra Pradesh is third, climbing two notches. Karnataka is No.6 and Kerala No.13, retaining their 2006 positions. Puducherry is the top ranker among the Small States, as in the past four years.

The variables taken into account for analysis included percentage of cropped area under cash crops, gross state domestic product, rural population, electricity consumption for agriculture/rural population, foodgrain yield, loans extended to agriculture/households cultivating land, net irrigated area, and net sown area.

Primary health

Tamil Nadu ranks No.3, retaining the same spot since 2003. Kerala gets back its No. 1 ranking from Himachal Pradesh which falls to No. 2. Karnataka is No. 4, while Andhra Pradesh comes in at No. 9.

Puducherry does not figure in the top 3 among the Small States.

The variables included inverse of infant mortality ratio (IMR), male IMR / female IMR, percentage of births assisted by trained personnel, percentage of households with access to tap water, registered doctors per lakh population, sex ratio, State Government expenditure on public health, and family welfare/population.

Investment environment

Tamil Nadu ranks No.7, but is the 'fastest mover', or the State where the rate of improvement on overall performance between 2003 and 2007 is greater than the rate of improvement between 1991 and 2003. The top three places go to Gujarat, which retains its No.1 ranking, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh. Karnataka is No. 6 (one position better than last year), Andhra Pradesh is No. 10 (the same as last year), and Kerala is No. 16 (the same as the past two years).

Among the Small States, Puducherry retains its No. 1 position.

The variables were percentage of State GDP spent on administration, per capita capital expenditure, commercial bank credit, capital formation, number of factories and industrial disputes, sick small-scale industries, and the number of industrial workers per urban population in the 15-59-year age group.

Primary education

Tamil Nadu, at No.6, is down two places. Kerala is the best State, getting back its 2004 ranking (it was at No.2 in 2005 and 2006). Himachal Pradesh, the No.1 ranked State the past two years is No.2 this year. Karnataka falls two steps to No.9 and Andhra Pradesh three steps down to No. 12.

Among Small States, Puducherry is not in the top 3.

The variables are literacy rate, proportion of 10-plus children having completed primary education, ratio of girls to boys enrolled in primary and middle school, teacher-pupil ratio, total expenditure of education department on primary plus middle school, and population within the 6-14-year age group.

Infrastructure

Tamil Nadu, surprisingly, falls two places, to No.7. Punjab retains its No.1 ranking of the past three years, as does

Himachal Pradesh at its No. 2. Kerala is No. 3, as it was last year. Karnataka slips a place to No.8, while Andhra Pradesh remains at No. 10. Among the Small States, following Delhi and Goa, Puducherry is third.

The variables include percentage of households with electricity, percentage of villages connected with pucca roads (surfaced and unsurfaced), road length/population, number of bank branches/population, number of LPG consumers/total households, number of post offices/population, and number of telephone connections/population.

Consumer market

Tamil Nadu moves a step up to No. 6. Punjab remains India's No.1 consumer market as it has been the past five years. Himachal Pradesh and Haryana retain their No. 2 and No. 3 positions of the past three years. Kerala remains at No. 5, Karnataka goes down a step to No. 10, while Andhra Pradesh remains at No. 11.

Puducherry does not figure in the top 3 among the Small States.

The variables are percentage of households owning TV, affluent households per 1,000 persons in rural area with monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) within Rs. 690 - 1,155 and more, affluent households per 1,000 persons in urban area with MPCE within Rs. 930 - 2,540 and more, bank deposits/population, and two-wheeler/population.

Law & Order

Tamil Nadu retains the second spot it has held since 2003. Kerala tops the list for the fifth successive year and Karnataka, moving a step up to No. 3, has been judged the 'fastest mover'. Andhra Pradesh, however, does not fare too well, and is ranked No. 8.

Among Small States, Puducherry is at the top for the fourth year.

The variables are actual strength of civil policemen/lakh population, percentage of pending cases (under Indian Penal Code), total cognisable crimes / incidence of murder, kidnapping, rape and molestation.

Budget & prosperity

Tamil Nadu ranks No. 8, up two places from 2006. Punjab retains its lead of the past four years, followed by Himachal Pradesh, a ranking the State has enjoyed the past two years. Gujarat is No. 3, a spot up from last year. Kerala is No. 5, up two places, Andhra Pradesh remains at No. 9, while Karnataka has moved up one place to No. 10.

Goa takes the No. 1 slot among Small States, moving from its No. 2 position of the past three years. Puducherry also moves a step up, to take the No. 2 place.

Going back into the past

(Continued from page 2)

marginalised status within the community that led to their being labelled women of easy virtue, whose rights had to be denied to them forever by an act of legislation.

What was extraordinary, however, was how everyone of the women he characterised, Veena Dhanammal, Mylapore Gowriamma and Mysore Nagarathnamma and, finally, the incandescent Balasaraswati, found a resonance in the memory of the equally well-educated and receptive audience.

In one of the evening sessions, Gowri Ramnarayan, a granddaughter of the celebrated Kalki, writer, dramatist and stalwart of the freedom movement, not only spoke on music but also entertained the crowd with her own spontaneous rendering of the compositions they wanted to hear. In some ways, it was a coming together of the many different strands of Chennai's past in an atmosphere that was full of nostalgia and even a sense of longing for all that has been lost.

The hotels in the city rose to the challenge. The Taj Coromandel recreated the recipes of Chennai's most famous writer of cookbooks, S. Meenakshi Ammal, whose three volumes of recipes titled *Samaihu Paar* have become such a resource for brides departing to North America that she was named one of the 50 most influential women of the sub-continent by *Cosmopolitan* magazine.

The ITC Welcomgroup Park Sheraton created a high tea around the theme "Memsahibs and Mamis", serving hot dosas and lemon tarts. Others organised tree walks, a tour of Stone Age Madras at a site not far from the city.

And there were art shows, displays in the local museums and galleries, and a talk by a German scholar of the time when the German warship, *Emden*, on a freak tour of the coast during World War I sent citizens scattering to the hinterland by shelling the harbour.

"Madras Week does not call for wild parties, colourful wristbands and ribbon-cutting events," declares Vincent D' Souza, Editor of the *Mylapore Times*, who runs a heritage week in December/January in the city's Mylapore temple area, "it invites you to enjoy the good things of the city."

The ghosts of the devadasis of George Town would have danced a round to that.



MTC – Is it turning the corner?

(Continued from page 1)

June the cash profit was Rs 1.11 crore. We've turned the corner!"

P. James, who works in a private firm and commutes regularly by bus across the city, drew attention to the fact that "even Deluxe buses carry more passengers than they should officially," and wondered, "What was the point? Many times, I prefer to take a share auto." And the travel is similar to being "on a race track, for a very cheap fare". While "some

services are discontinued with no announcement of changes in the papers, new ones are introduced ad hoc," complained another commuter. And a resident of Nanganallur stated that the 52L route that is supposed to go via Thillaiganga Nagar many times gives it a miss because the crew would on that day "be taking the Pazhavangal route." But officials insisted that these changes "must've been done over two years ago. Call our helpline and we'll follow up."

On "the rank disregard for traffic lights by bus drivers," and on "many drivers racing each other even on GST Road, Anna Salai, SP Road, etc." Balasubramaniam confirmed, "Earlier, we agree, there was no action, but now fines imposed by traffic police are promptly recovered from the drivers' salaries, and this has been a deterrent."

Bus stops at important junctions, for instance, near Kathipara, for those boarding mofussil buses will come up "soon". But what about the appalling conditions that exist at some bus stops/depots? One of the bus stops at Saidapet and also at Vijayanagar in Velachery are a series of pits. The bus depot at Broadway, an important transfer point, is a dirty, smelly place! An official confirmed, "Rs.10 crore has been allotted for improvement of bus stands and we are in the process of upgradation."

MTC officials offered information on progress. Two hundred comfortable semi-low-floor buses have already been introduced and another 265 will be introduced soon. Ten airconditioned Volvo buses were to go on the roads by end-August. 500 old buses were replaced last June, another 1000 will be replaced soon. There are plans to introduce circular routes to connect with MRTS stations, starting with Tiruvanmiyur-Adyar. Peak hour specials include an extra 300 buses, between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. There are plans to issue tickets at the bus stand itself, with 40 main counters in the city. Ticketing machines will be introduced before the year is out. Smart Cards too, that commuters can swipe and travel with ease. Also a tie up with banks across the city to issue refills or extend the Smart Cards.

The introduction of buses with hydraulic doors in Deluxe

services (that can be operated by drivers and kept closed on the move) increased the cost of the vehicle by Rs.25,000 to Rs.35,000. A traffic improvement committee has recommended to the State Government to introduce only buses with doors, including those to be operated for regular service, as "this is the foolproof way to avoid footboard travel accidents." However, Krishnan, a 'regular', pointed out that "in many buses the existing hydraulic doors aren't closed because the buses are overcrowded!"

An agitated group of girl students travelling daily to the Arts College from Iyyapanthangal to LIC bus stop confirmed this, "We lose attendance almost every day if we rely on the scheduled times of buses." But Kochukrishnan, a senior citizen, says, "Bus service has improved tremendously in the last six months. From Ashok Nagar to Anna Nagar and back, I can travel on minimum fare and comfortably, and I've to wait for only five minutes before I get a bus. But the bus crew can certainly be more friendly and polite."

Priya, who travels from Chennai Central to Anand Theatre bus stop regularly, said, "During peak hours, the conductors force the driver to stop in-between, before the next stage, generally near the MTC-Pallavan House. Most of the office-goers are forced to go in late. 'Romba avasarama iruntha autole porathuhane' ('If you're in so much of a hurry, why don't you go by auto?') is what we hear if we dare hurry the conductor!" James alleged, "During one trip, a driver strode out of his seat and almost hit a passenger." But the PRO of MTC, Shanmugam, argued, "You must understand the traffic in the last ten years has increased tremendously. Just imagine how frayed the tempers of the drivers and conductors will be having to face the many commuters who are always in a rush to go to work, etc. in the midst of chaotic traffic. In fact, we have regular counselling sessions, behavioural programmes etc. at our Anna Nagar Training Centre – and for the workers' families, too."

However, a senior bus driver told me, "The fact is that almost all the Ordinary services have been taken off road. The M services that have been retained charge more anyway and the accent is now more on 'collections' than on service to the public. The 'Sokusu Perunthu' (Deluxe) is introduced to entice those who travel by autos, but with the same traffic signals and the same chaotic traffic, you'll reach your destination only at the same time as by the ordinary services. Specialised services in a city at this stage cannot serve the purpose."

Student research on locations of the bus stops has also revealed that:

- i) In certain areas, the bus stops are too closely located, resulting in waste of time and space;
- ii) In many areas the bus stops are sparsely sited, forcing people to walk long distances or to take other modes of transport; and
- iii) Some bus stop locations are found to be hazardous, posing danger to other vehicles and commuters, and also causing traffic congestion.

However, another senior bus driver pointed out, "With the public waiting halfway into the road, we can stop 'correctly' only when it rains and people move under the bus shelters!"

Aiming to make bus travel more 'commuter friendly', however, are the Consumer Forum Meetings once in 3 months, which about 8-10 Consumer Federations attend, where suggestions for proactive measures come up. Minutes recorded are followed up by the Operations, Maintenance and other departments. The Passenger Complaints Cell in the PRO's office receives at least 2 or 3 complaints/suggestions a day, and changes are introduced as and when and where possible. For suggestions, call PRO at 23455859, for emergencies or breakdowns etc. call wireless control room at 23455801, and for modification of routes call Operations Section at 23455228.

It's certainly time for the bus passengers across Chennai to unite and ask for what they need in strident tones. A senior official concluded, "Only when bus passenger associations and the MTC agree on fares planned on the basis of fuel budgets, can this issue be solved. Otherwise, reducing the availability of cheapest services might be the easiest available option." And, sadly, it is the average bus passenger who will be the most affected.

October 5-28: *Nirvana*, an exhibition of photographs by Vinoh who lives and works in Chennai. His photographs are a witness to an emotion of poetry in a universe of poverty. For 'Nirvana', he has chosen to showcase sleeping people. "It is only when we sleep that we tend to forget everything – even ourselves – and are almost in a state of Nirvana which we cannot otherwise experience in our daily lives. A secret and intimate world that escapes reality."

The inauguration at 6.30 p.m. on October 5th will begin with songs sung by Tamil Arasan, who has been singing for death rituals for 13 years and sung for more than 5000 death ceremonies so far. (At Alliance Francaise.)

October 8-12: *Movie Festival of Historical Movies* in collaboration with ICAF. *Veera-pandiya Kattabomman* and *Kappal Oattiya Tamilan* will be screened. (At 7.00 p.m. at Alliance Francaise.)



October 13: *The Music of Sikkil Gurucharan and Anil Srinivasan*. Sikkil Gurucharan is one of the youngest top-ranking artistes in the Carnatic firmament. Anil Srinivasan is an accomplished classical pianist. In an exclusive, two-hour workshop-cum-live demonstratin, the duo, aided by the acclaimed percussionist B.S.

Purushotham, present the thought process behind the making of their music. The workshop will be followed by a short preview of their ongoing work, *The Colour of Rain*, which will be premiered later this year. (At 5-7.30 p.m. at Alliance Francaise.)

October 19: *Lire en fête*, a celebration of books. The festival will revolve around theme *A City, A Book*. There will be readings on this theme. (At 4.00 p.m. at Alliance Francaise.)

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THE EDITOR

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Answers to Quiz

1. Indonesia; 2. Asafa Powell; 3. Finland leading to the 'Helsinki Agreement'; 4. Joseph Estrada of the Philippines; 5. Steve Fossett; 6. Luciano Pavarotti; 7. Jeddah; 8. Ethiopia; 9. Google; 10. McLaren.

* * *

11. Sivaganga; 12. Kannadadan; 13. Subramanya Bharati; 14. Maniyachi station; 15. 21G, 19G, 70 (Tambaram to Avadi), and from Chennai Airport to Broadway; 16. Jana Krishnamurthi; 17. The best self-help group in the State, District and Panchayat level federations; 18. Sathya Sai Baba; 19. Dravidar Kazhagam; 20. Anna Road HPO, Chennai GPO, T' Nagar North, Triplicane and Anna Nagar.

A man with a Tamil literary mission

It was afternoon when I got down at Vriddhachalam station to go to Chidambaram. My escort asked me if I had the time to see a unique private library. After having seen the Roja Muthiah Library, I thought there could not be anything else like it! Certainly, I hadn't heard of the library he mentioned.

Tucked away from the main hustle and bustle of the otherwise sleepy town of Vriddhachalam in a lovely rural location with greenery all round was a startlingly different type of building whose circular opening was inviting. Walking through one of the best maintained garden spaces I've ever seen, where the design of every bud was meticulously planned, I was in another world altogether.

I was met by the man himself, Palladam Manickam, a lover of Tamil who has made it his mission in life to organise

and run this library and maintain its buildings and gardens.

The library has tens of thousands titles – among them copies of the entire published versions of, and on, the *Thirukkural* – about 1500 volumes in all – the entire published versions of *The Bible*, the various earliest published versions in Tamil of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and their various commentaries, and almost all the Tamil classics published.

The entire Sangam literature compilations with their various commentaries, from the earliest times to the present, all the publications of U.V. Swaminatha Ayyar, and Buddhist, Christian, Jain and Islamic literature by different authors and their commentaries are other holdings arranged in the scientific manner that is a hallmark of this library.

The collection also includes rare and very old copies of the

Nalayira Divya Prapandam, *Panniruthirumurai*, *Siddhantha Sastra*, early editions of the *Kambaramayana* (more than ten different editions) and all the writings of political leaders of all hues with no exception at all, copies of the research articles of Maraimalai Adigal, T.P. Meenakshisundaranar, N.C. Kandhiah Pillai and many others, and biographies of almost all major Tamil personalities.

Another section has copies of more than 500 theses, dissertations, and research papers by various research scholars of almost all the universities in South India and more than a hundred different Tamil and English encyclopaedias and lexicons. In fact, the earliest printed edition of a lexicon is here.

Another section has copies of modern Tamil literature and other Tamil contemporary works.

What caught my eye was the way they were all stacked, so as to make it easy for a researcher to find what he wanted. There was a lot of room to move around and plenty of furniture to enable comfortable research.

Simple catalogues are available and a knowledgeable assistant can get you whatever you need.

Many journals from their first issue are available for reference. *National Geographic* magazine's issues of 55 years are stacked.

Called the **Tamil Nool Kappagam** (Tamil Texts Resource Centre), this library is



The main building of the garden-girt Tamil Nool Kappagam, near Vriddachalam.

the result of a dedicated and long-term effort of a single individual assisted by a handful of dedicated persons. Its building in half an acre of land on the banks of Manimuttar in Thiru Mudhu Kundram (Vriddhachalam) was constructed at a cost of Rs.50,00,000 from private funds! The design of the facade and other areas was copied from the Nepal King's palace and the Annamalai University building and the architect,

by
K.R.A. NARASIAH

one Palanivel, has done a splendid job. The work was completed in 2000.

While the ground floor of the main building has the stacks for the books, it also has a separate area for VCDs and DVDs of old Tamil films as well as award-winning classics from different countries, as also a host of old records and copies in tapes of classical and film music.

The first floor has a well-equipped hall for conducting seminars and meetings. What caught me unawares was the thoughtful inclusion of a few rooms provided for researchers who can stay and carry on their

research in all comfort necessary, the library's location being off the beaten track. Nevertheless, the 'Women's Literary Meet 2007' was conducted here.

The man responsible for this remarkable venture, Palladam Manickam, knows his collection intimately and is able to immediately locate whatever you want, in addition to providing any further information. Palladam Manickam publishes books as well and is the founder of an organisation called 'Nirangal Enum Kalai' (the art of colours). He had earlier run a journal called *Valluwan*.

A number of researchers and authors have donated their work and his "library doors are open for such donors," says Manickam.

As I left, the words of Manickam still rang in my ears. "We have lost many great Tamil classic literary works, as they were not protected; that loss is irreparable. I want to ensure, at least from now on, we don't lose any more literary creations".

Palladam Manickam can be reached at Tamil Nool Kappagam, Salem Highway, Tamil Nagar, Vriddhachalam 606 001. Phone 04143-231611.



Palladam Manickam with his books.

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