

WE CARE FOR MADRAS

## MADRAS

MUSINGS

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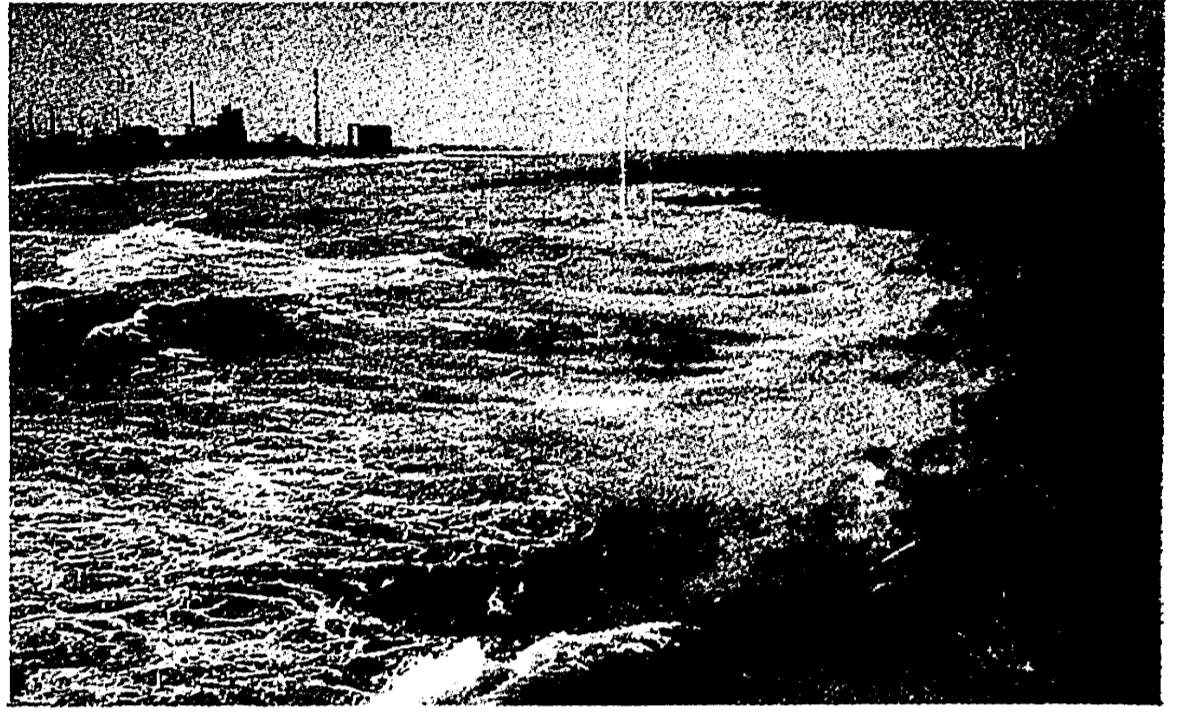
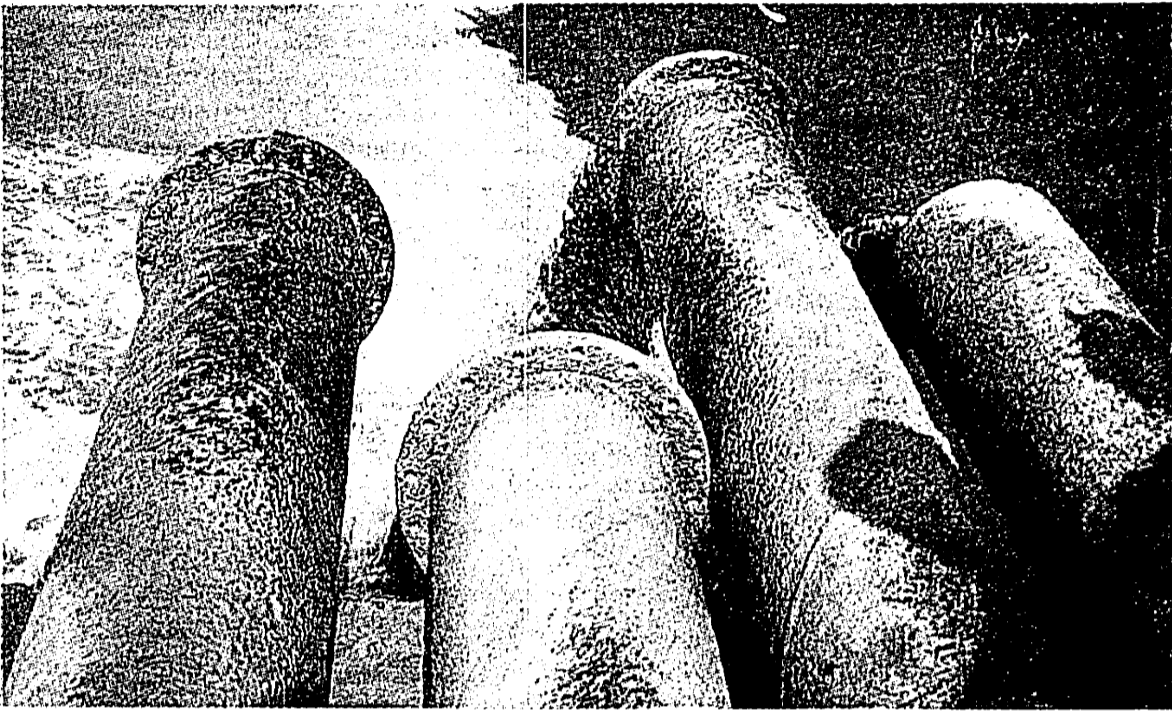
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**Wanted: Time to clean this stretch of coast**

The North Madras coast is under threat. Flyash is dumped through the pipes into the City's coastal waters by the Ennore Thermal Power Station. The effluent then spreads north and south (note one of the pipes in the middle, base, of picture on right) for a distance of two kilometres on each side. Marine life is being destroyed in the area, with the fish either dying or being stricken with disease. With bird life eating the dead or diseased fish, they too are being affected. Fishermen continue to fish in these traditional waters and are catching less fish. But whatever they catch is fish that has lived in these polluted waters and can hardly be considered safe for human consumption.

The Ennore Thermal Power Station has asked for TIME to improve their act. But will that promise be kept or are we to continue to live with a polluted coast with its natural resources badly affected?

This, however, is a nationwide problem. At the moment, only 30 per cent of the flyash generated by the country's 70-plus thermal power stations can be put to use. The balance is dumped in any convenient waterbody. With more thermal power stations being set up in the country, there will be, it is estimated by scientists, about 75 million tonnes of flyash being dumped in the waters of the country every year. When is new technology to make use of flyash in bulk going to be developed in the country? (Text and photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

# The best-laid plans of ...

(By The Editor)

A number of well-thought-out plans for decongesting the city and providing better facilities were initiated as far back as 1970. Sadly, they are still to

be implemented, completed or put into service! These include:

- Shifting of the wholesale markets for fruits, vegetables and flowers to Koyambedu.
- Shifting of the wholesale steel market to Sattangadu.
- Shifting of the wholesale textile market to Koyambedu.
- Shifting of the wholesale market for grain to Koyambedu.
- Construction of three bus terminals and three truck terminals on the City's outskirts along the three trunk arteries, at Koyambedu, Madhavaram and Peerkanarani.
- Building of a Madras bypass, connecting Tambaram to Puzhal; the Outer Ring Road, connecting GST Road to NH4 and NH5; and completion of the Inner Ring Road connecting GST Road to Velacheri Road and GNT Road to Ennore Expressway.

None of these have been realised!

On the other hand, the Koyambedu Market for vegetables/fruits/flowers has been ready for three years but remains unoccupied for reasons not known to the public. One more promise has recently been made to get the move underway, but will this commitment be kept? As for the site earmarked for the Koyambedu truck/bus terminal, it was arbitrarily usurped overnight for constructing the SAF Games Village! The other vital projects are languishing due to sheer neglect and apathy.

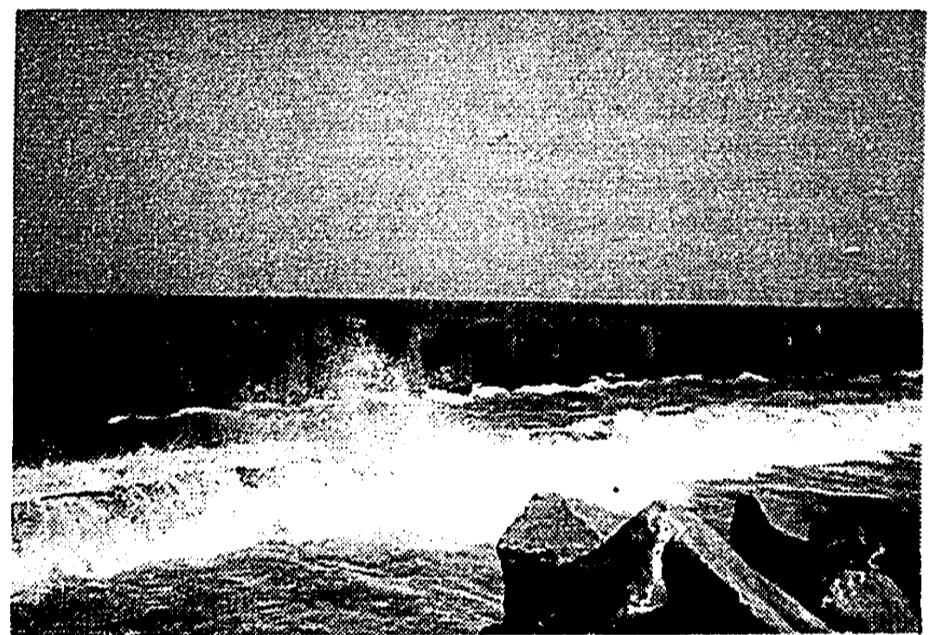
All these projects can be completed in less than two years' time, bringing tremendous relief to the citizens of Madras and providing excellent facilities for wholesalers, businessmen, traders, truck operators and bus operators. But it will need Government's commitment as well as the public's. Can we expect both in the near future?

## What is Metrowater's jurisdiction?

(By a Staff Reporter)

Madras Metrowater was set up for the WHOLE of the Madras Metropolitan Area (MMA), but its jurisdiction has been restricted to the City Corporation area till now! This has prevented people in peripheral areas from obtaining even their basic requirements and has been the main cause for the failure of decongesting the city.

Metrowater's jurisdiction should be extended to the whole of the MMA immediately, citizens' groups are demanding in various petitions to the Government.



## The failing barriers

Erosion continues to devour the coast road to Ennore. In 1992, a Rs. 4 crore, 18-month project was implemented by the Tamil Nadu State Construction Corporation to stem the tide of erosion. The unused Veeranam pipes were used for this purpose in the manner shown in the picture. This project was launched after the huge boulders that had been piled up to save the coast had been overcome by the fury of the waves. Now, with the sea crossing the pipe-fence and breaking on the old rocks (see left corner), the new rock barrier (right corner) being created is also under threat. Some experts feel the only way to save the North Madras Coastal Zone is by relocating the Madras Harbour. They feel the breakwaters of this manmade harbour are responsible for the North Madras coastal erosion and the blocking of the Cooum mouth. (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

## The Mahatma in Denver

(By A Staff Reporter)

A brass statue of Mahatma Gandhi, weighing about 30 kilos and costing about US \$ 250,000, has been sent to Denver, the sister city of Madras, for Madras Park. This is a gift from the people of Madras to the people of Denver.

The statue was made by Professor S. Gopal of the Madras College of Arts and Crafts and is modelled on the one in Tabistock Square in London.

The Mahatma is in a sitting posture, holding a book in his hands. A picture of this view is shown almost every night on Doordarshan just before the parliamentary news.

Dr Mohan Sundaresan, a medical doctor from Madras now settled in California, has contributed the money, towards the making charges of the statue, on behalf of the Indo-American Association.

# Wake a moribund giant!

Elder statesman C Subramaniam is one of *The Man From Madras Musings'* favourite persons. Alert as ever, he always has something important to say, whatever the occasion, providing excellent copy for those who want to make use of information beyond the world of politics.

In the latest instance, speaking as the Chief Guest at the Third Annual Lecture of the Ranganathan Centre for Information Studies, he drew pointed attention to the fact that over the last five to ten years little Government, nay, national attention had been paid to Science and Technology. In fact, while cloaking it with importance by taking charge of it himself, a too busy Prime Minister invariably gave responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Department of Science and Technology to a non-scientist Minister of State with little interest in technology and less in science. Things had got even worse, since, Subramaniam pointed out: Not a single party had paid attention to Science and Technology in its political manifesto for the 1996 elections! No wonder Indian S&T is lagging behind the rest of the world!

MMM was glad to hear Subramaniam state that he had written to the Prime Minister to rescue Science and Technology from its moribund state by appointing a Minister of Cabinet rank, with a scientific background, to put Indian S&T back on the rails. In the early years of Independence, Nehru and his team had established the country's many scientific institutions, many of which had done world-class work in agriculture, atomic energy, space etc. Little comparable was now being done; in fact, in the name of liberalisation, import was being preferred to research and technology to improve the products of Indian industry. It was a cry from the heart from a man who had done much for Indian S&T. MMM wonders whether it will be heard.

## Changing scene

In his welcome address on the occasion of the RCIS's annual lecture, Dr M Anandakrishnan drew attention to the changing scene in India where even Science and Technology was being politicised. When the main speaker of the day, Dr D Balasubramaniam, Director, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, and he had last met it was on the occasion of an IIT, Kanpur, reunion. Amongst other things they talked about was the fact that at one time 14 alumni of IIT, Kanpur, had headed Indian scientific institutions during the same period. Today, a son of the soil policy prevailed, diminishing many an institution.

Yet, there were islands of excellence, he pointed out. And MMM was happy to note his reference to the M S



The 'queue' on a 'normal' day at the U.S. Consulate-General, when the 'Season' hasn't quite got underway. (Photograph by V S RAGHAVAN.)

Swaminathan Research Foundation in Taramani: "It has become a major tourist centre for scientists and decision-makers from round the world; here they come to learn how much a Third World country can do to help itself."

Dr Swaminathan, MMM hears, was recently awarded the Japanese equivalent of the 'Nobel Prize' for his indefatigable efforts on behalf of the Indian farmer and will receive the prize in Tokyo in October.

## Now affordable

Reflecting some concerns of Subramaniam's, Balasubramaniam, delivering the RCIS's Annual Lecture, drew attention to the fact that at present India is spending only 0.9 per cent of its GDP on science and technological research as against 2 per cent in the Nehru era. This is an expenditure that falls far short of the 4 per cent recommended by UNESCO.

When it comes to scientific journals of note, there are 70,000 journals being published worldwide, but only 3300 of them are considered important by the international scientific catalogue. Of these, one-third are from the U.S., and about 15 per cent are shared by Japan and the UK. India, which is ranked 13th, with about a hundred countries behind it, has only 1.6 per cent of the publications recognised as internationally valuable — about 50 journals from a country that, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, has the world's second largest pool of technically qualified persons!

But there was a positive side to this litany of woe, *The Man From Madras Musings* was pleased to hear. Up to the immediate Post-World War II years, Indian scientific research was almost on par with that of the West, Balasubramaniam stated. This, he explained, was due to the equipment used for research being almost the same worldwide. World War II changed all that — and it was only those who could afford the expensive equipment developed during the War years who could leapfrog from wartime research to the Arthur Clarke world of today. In that process, however, a shrinking world and new

of thugs controlling the 'queues', of an NGO taking over and issuing tokens to those in the 'queue', of the NGO being chased away by thugs, of some form of local officialdom taking over the issue of tokens, of preferential tokens changing hands at prices upto Rs.3000. *The Man From Madras Musings* does not know how much of this is true or not, but the 'queues' remain and every person in the 'queue' has a tale to tell, making the old adage of no smoke without some fire seem quite appropriate. But it hardly does the American image any good to have this scene daily at its doorstep.

The American case, MMM has heard said, goes something like this. With budget cuts, the Consular staff has been cut to three or four officers — and one of them is full-time on dealing with the requests of Americans in South India (more of which anon). The biggest rush for student and work visas for the US is in the South — and the staff, which also doesn't work overtime, cannot handle this load. And as the requests for visas pile up — many of them last-minute requests — the backlog builds up. In these circumstances, the Consulate-General is helpless unless it gets more officers sanctioned. And with

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

for its smooth running. And this, in India, was in the hands of the Government, which could make no such guarantees!

As though to underline Balasubramaniam's thoughts on infrastructure and Subramaniam's views on the lack of progress we've made in industrial research, the sound system arranged for the evening played up right through and the speakers were barely heard. That's five-star India, MMM was inclined to think. Up in space ... but can't get a 'mike' to work! (ED. NOTE: Also see page 5.)

## Visa travails

*The Man From Madras Musings'* photograph today is of a 'normal' day outside the U.S. Consulate General. It is bad enough, even though it is a far cry from some of the more recent 'horror' photographs that have appeared in the Madras dailies.

Over the last few years, *Madras Musings* has repeatedly come back to this subject of visa travails and every time there has been a Consular response — but the situation has only got worse. And it is becoming positively ugly and demeaning, MMM is sad to note.

Amongst the most recent horror stories MMM heard is people sleeping on the pavement for two or three days to save their place in the 'queue',

day according to serial number. Each case to be allotted a specific time span of one-hour duration when they can walk into the consular waiting room unhindered, on production of the letter, and await their turn there during the day.

Police to be requested to keep the pavements and roads by the consulate free even of those awaiting their appointed hour or their hand-holders.

This procedure might seem slow to the visa-seekers, but it certainly will smoothen procedures a lot and get rid of those ugly scenes — and all their consequences — outside the U.S. Consulate-General. If that office is really concerned about this ugly situation, it might like to discuss this and alternative suggestions with representatives concerned with this City to work out a way to get rid of this eyesore.

## In brief

★ *The Man From Madras Musings* was visiting a large private medical college the other day and was walking down the stairs when he heard two very American-sounding voices behind him. Turning to look he saw two very pretty, designer *salwar-kameez* clad Indian girls, medical students to judge by their white coats and stethoscopes, but decidedly from America to judge by their voices and air of confidence. Going out, MMM almost bumped into a hand-holding young couple, again with American voices, better dressed than the rest and both boy and girl, again medical students, behaving with the confidence born of American campus life. And that's when the significance of what a US Consular official had once said struck him: There are more Indian-Americans in India than White Americans, most of them in scores of professional colleges, or working on business or professional assignments, or on sabbaticals. And many of them have problems that provide full-time work for at least one Consular officer. Indeed, there is now a two-way traffic, MMM realises.

American budget constraints, that seems unlikely for a long time.

## For consideration

MMM is willing to buy all those American arguments — and also the one that they can't put up a shelter and other facilities on the pavements. But surely the country which prides itself on being the most efficient in the world and the most technologically advanced can find an answer to this problem if it tries hard enough.

*The Man From Madras Musings* has a suggestion to offer. The Consulate General no doubt has any number of answers to it. Nevertheless, would it consider the following as a more humane and dignified option?

● All visa applications must be sent only by Registered Post and accepted serially. (This may be a bit of a lottery but it can't be helped.)

● Assuming the Consular office can handle about 250 applications a day, it could reserve time for about ten per cent of that number every day for emergency cases (to be defined and whose applications could be received at a special counter by the gate, assessed and allowed in) and VIP requests.

● The remaining 225 cases to be sent individual registered letters to call on a particular

★ Swivel-hipped, double-jointed super dancing star Prabhu Deva has married Ramlal, a none-too-well-off Muslim girl, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears. And Prabhu Deva's father, G. Sundaram, is up in arms while his mother has "sworn off food", according to reports. But the highest paid choreographer in the industry is paying heed neither to them nor to the film-makers he has contracted with; instead, he is concentrating on the love of his life. Ramlal was a member of Sundaram's dance troupe when the 25-year-old Prabhu Deva met her.

— MMM

# Desalination at last

For thirty years or more I have been pointing out that the most obvious source of the water so desperately needed for our colossal, sprawling metropolis, which was once a delightful small town, lies within a few feet of its limits. We call it the Bay of Bengal, and it is connected with vastly greater, virtually limitless bodies of water beginning with the Indian Ocean, stretching down to Antarctica and — well, covering a good two-thirds of the planet we live on.

And for thirty years I've heard the same objections and I've given the same answers. Too expensive, I've been told by a succession of World Bank 'experts'; and my reply has been in two parts: first, if you insist on having a metropolis of eight or nine million people in a place without any natural resources, you jolly well have to pay for it; and, second, would it in the long run be any more expensive than all those canals and pipelines that, after all these long years, have yet to prove their value? Have you to yield a single cubic foot of water?

Remember, too, that pipelines bringing water over very long distances are subject to all manner of problems, some political, some practical. Who is to say that future governments of Andhra will keep up a supply of water through those Krishna canals? What will the farmers on the arid land between say and do when they find all that precious water they themselves so much long for is being siphoned off to their neighbouring Tamils?

Some years ago an imaginative and energetic entrepreneur managed to get Government permission to set up a small pilot desalination plant on the beach next to the new light-house. It was only a tiny plant, but it produced enough beautifully fresh clear water from the sea to fill about half a dozen tankers a day. Suddenly it was closed down by Government order, no explanation being given. No explanation that was made public anyway. My own guess? Officialdom and politicians suddenly woke up to the fact that it was a roaring success! No one ever dreamed that a desalination plant down there on the Marina beach could be any kind of success at all. Success was the last thing they expected or wanted.

Heavens! If desalination worked, what would happen to all those glorious dreams of concrete canals and steel pipelines stretching across hundreds of miles of the countryside, bringing untold prosperity to the contractors who made them and — well, just perhaps, may I say? — to those who granted them their contracts?

We certainly couldn't have successful desalination. Why, in the long run, if someone did their sums properly, it might confound the World Bank experts by proving to be cheaper than all the other schemes, and we'd be in a proper downright mess then wouldn't we! So, overnight, the brave, bold little pilot desalination plant was dismantled and vanished.

That was years ago. I woke up on the day I wrote these words to find my house in darkness and pouring rain outside. I picked up the morning newspaper and, in the half-light, ran through the usual tedium of petty politics. And then my eye fell upon the news that the Chief Minister had sanctioned

## One Man's Madras — HARRY MILLER'S

a crore of rupees to set up a desalination plant at Nochi-kuppam, wherever that may be.

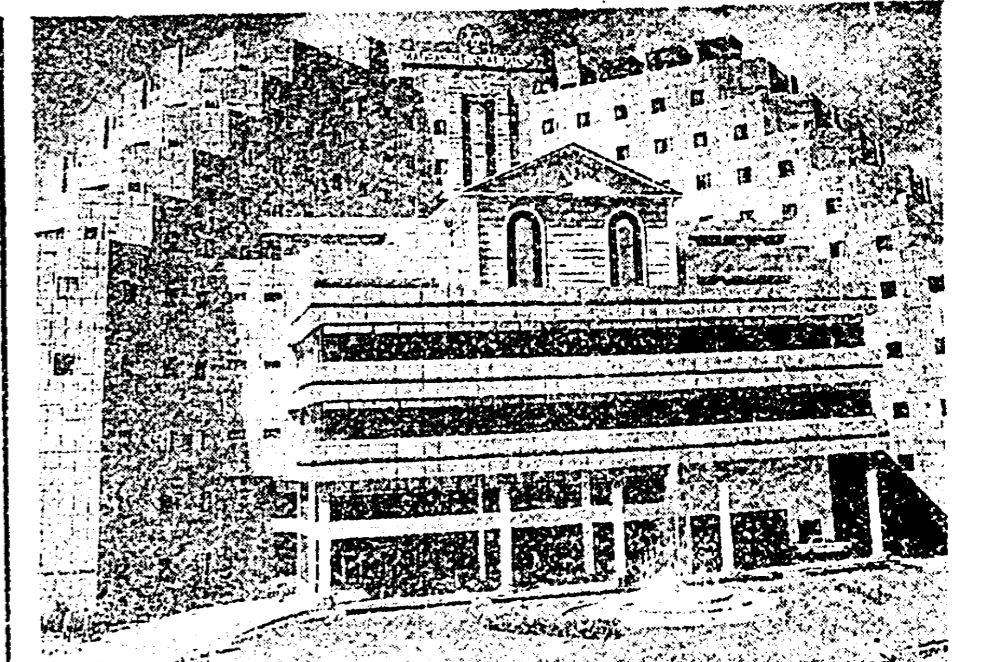
No technical details were given so what process will be selected I don't yet know, but after thirty years of proselytising it was rewarding to see that the light had at last dawned on one cornerstone of the Establishment. Perhaps I should also offer a certain lady official a share of my warmest congratulations.

Now I can only hope I'll live long enough to see that new plant running successfully, and the coastline of Tamil Nadu dotted with its giant siblings, bringing to this rather arid part of the subcontinent a super-abundance of water, and an end forever of water-tankers, long queues of overworked women

with heavy brass water pots, droughts, that prodigious waste of public money on lengthy, leaky pipelines and breached canals, and bickering politicians.

Some years ago, when Tamil Nadu's Governor was a Dr. Alexander, I received technical advice from experts in London to the effect that electrical generating plants, such as we have at Ennore, Tuticorin and elsewhere, could be adapted to produce desalinated water as well as electrical power and that new electrical stations should be planned and constructed with that purpose in mind. I sent copies of those letters to Dr. Alexander who was kind enough to reply that he would ask his experts to study them and he would let me know their opinion in due course. Though Dr. Alexander was an alert and intelligent man, I was not in the least surprised to hear no more about it from him. After all, he had those experts to contend with.

All the more reason, then, that we should rejoice at the news that our new Chief Minister has made the bold step of spending a crore on a desalinating plant, even though a crore of rupees, much as it would be welcomed, is not a great deal of money for an industrial plant, and I suspect that the proposed desalination project will not be a very large one. Nevertheless, if, as I confidently predict, it is a success, others will be constructed at suitable points along the coast of Tamil Nadu, and the day will come when the ocean beside us will transform this semi-arid land into as lush and green a paradise as any you will find on the Malabar coast or in Sri Lanka.



The Madras Medical Mission Hospital in Mogappur (West Anna Nagar).

# UNLIMITED HEART CARE FOR US \$500

(By A Staff Reporter)

In its quest to help people with cardiac problems, the Madras Medical Mission is introducing a unique 'Heart Care For Life' scheme. Under this programme, treatment at the Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases, Mogappur, is offered for an individual's lifetime for only US \$ 500 (five hundred)!

A member, under this scheme, gets lifetime security for treatment in case of a heart problem at any time after one year from date of enrolment. This includes surgery, which at the MMM costs US \$ 4000 at present. Membership under the scheme could also be gifted by individuals to their friends and relatives and by organisations to their employees. But all payments should be in foreign exchange.

The MMM is a registered Charitable Society. It has no profit motive. Its objective is to serve as many cardiac patients as possible. All the surpluses generated at the MMM are used to expand the medical, residential, research and educational facilities relating to the

where Kalakshetra, as it is now known, got its birth. I disagree with the statement that the art had lost its vitality (MM, June 1). When Rukmani Devi started performing, the art was dying, not clinically dead.

M S S Raghavan,  
7 Prakasam 1st Lane  
T Nagar, Madras 600 017.

## Help wanted

The largest number of Anglo-Indians anywhere in the country are in Tamil Nadu. It is here that a large number are poverty-stricken and suffer from unemployment, lack of food, shelter and clothing.

This being so, it should have been the endeavour of the Anglo-Indian-nominated Members of Parliament to come up and implement schemes under the area development fund made available to them.

What have the Anglo-Indian Members of Parliament done?  
D.V. D'Monte  
16 Wallers Road Madras-600 002.

Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases.

MMM has been helping patients in need in the past from its own resources. In 1995-96, MMM helped needy patients to the tune of Rs.14 million. What is envisaged through this scheme is an extension of this facility, under which those in need can demand service as a matter of right instead of looking for assistance. This scheme is open to any person upto the age of 70 in any income bracket.

A cardiac patient coming to MMM under this scheme will get the following treatment:

1. Free non-invasive and invasive investigations and treatment like angioplasties, pacemaker implantation, stenting rotoblator, etc., in the general ward.
2. Free surgical treatment (closed or open heart surgery) in general ward.
3. Free accommodation in the ICU and general ward before and after surgery for a period of 12 days, which is the normal time needed for investigation, surgery and recovery before discharge from the hospital.

Costs over and above this have to borne by the member. For instance, to those in the high income bracket, better facilities will be available by meeting the incremental charges.

The Institute's new 200-bed, centralised air-conditioned hospital in Mogappur has five operating rooms, two cath labs, a 40-bed intensive care unit with 20 beds for adults, 16 beds for paediatrics, 2 beds for transplants and 2 for TMR, and a 20-bed Coronary Care Unit with 24-hour DocVue monitoring facilities, apart from full-fledged Departments of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery as well as several others, making it one of the largest super-speciality heart hospitals in Asia. Its nursing staff and physicians' assistants, numbering nearly 300, are all specially trained in handling cardiac patients.

# C.M. favours power, port, road plans

The Tamil Nadu Government will soon be formulating a new industrial policy. "The proposed policy will be much more investor-friendly and decisions will be made in a transparent manner," Chief Minister M Karunanidhi told the 160th Annual General Meeting of the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "The government will encourage the private sector to invest in power and other important fields," he added.

The Chief Minister welcomed foreign investment for 2000-3000 MW power projects.

It might be recalled that Madras Musings had published in its June 1 issue photographs of the temporary constructions put up by the Korean company in Sriperumpudur. It is learnt that the Koreans were disturbed when they came to know that the land was *poromboke* land and it was likely to be regularised in favour of the Empee Sugar Group for their proposed educational institution. However, Government pacified the Koreans, who were worried about the flying start becoming a false start, by convincing the Empee Group

Venkatachari Jagannathan looks at THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE

The Government would immediately examine the possibilities of new projects either directly under the TNEB or by the National Thermal Power Corporation or in partnership with industry or solely by foreign or local businessmen. He also disclosed that Government planned to set up a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal near a minor port to feed a 2000 MW power plant.

He was also in favour of foreign investment in port development and stated, "The Government would request the Centre to speed up the construction of Ennore satellite port, deepen Tuticorin port and sanction the Sethusamudram Channel".

Speaking of road development, he invited foreign participation in linking Madras with Tiruchi, Madurai, Coimbatore and Hosur by four-lane express highways. But while making investments, and looking at profits, industry should also bear in mind its social responsibilities, he advised.

## Hyundai's choice

Will it be Sriperumpudur or Arakkonam for the Rs.3800 crore Hyundai car project? According to Industry Secretary P C Cyriac, the Koreans have preferred Sriperumpudur as it is nearer Madras, even if it is not connected by rail like Arakkonam.

Dismissing speculation that "there would be problems in land acquisition" for the project in Sriperumpudur, he said, "It will take at least five months to complete the formalities, since the land belongs to private parties".

to relinquish its claim to this plot of land in the larger interests of the State.

According to Cyriac, had the Hyundai people agreed to Arakkonam, Government would have readily allotted 350 acres owned by Tamil Nadu Steels Ltd, a State Government undertaking.

On the other hand, Kim Yang Soo, Executive Managing Director, Hyundai, says, "We are still discussing the site with the Government and haven't decided as of now".

It is now learnt that the previous State Government had promised to get a railway line laid from Sriperumbudur to Madras, if the project was located in Tamil Nadu.

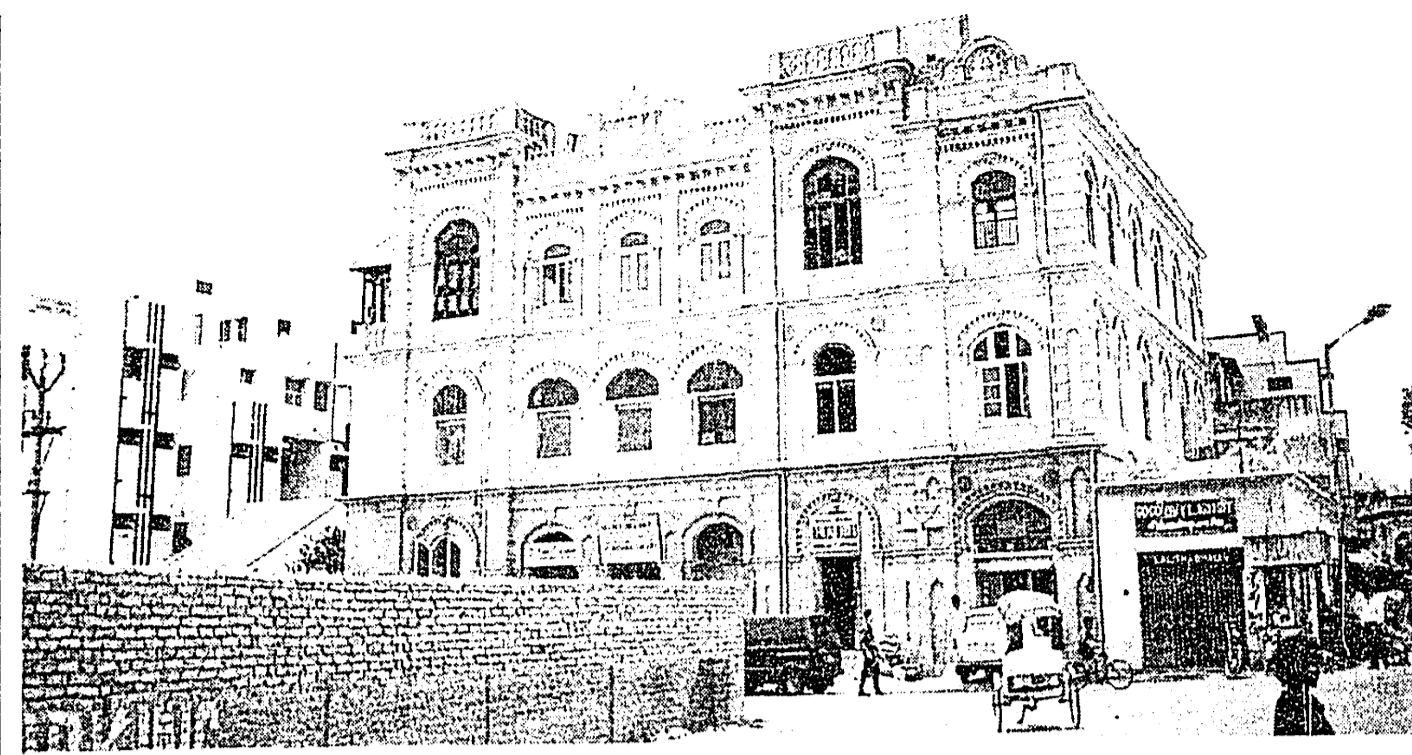
Though Hyundai want to sign the MOU with the Government as soon as possible, they will have to wait at least four months to complete the major formalities. In the meantime, the Koreans are scouting for houses for executives and trying hard to acclimatise themselves to the Madras weather.

## Needs spreading

It seems that for global auto majors, all roads how lead to Madras. First it was Ford Mahindra, now it is Hyundai, and next it is likely to be Mitsubishi tying-up with Hindustan Motors at Sriperumbudur. According to Cyriac, there are others too, not to mention several auto component manufacturers who would like to locate their units near the car plants.

At this point, it would seem high time to take a second look at the allotment of sites for mega projects. Concentration

(Continued on Page 6)

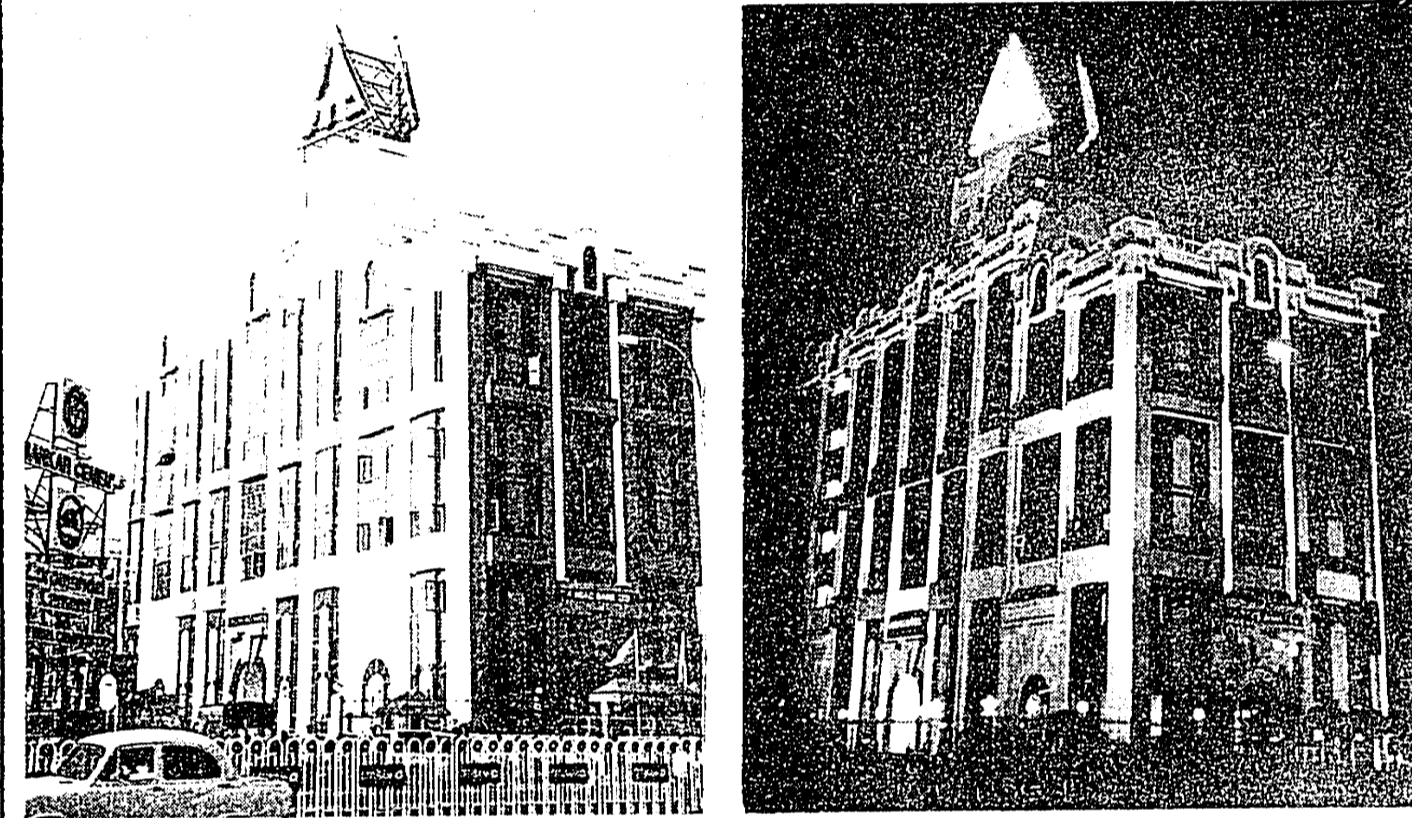


Our OLD and NEW echo Art Deco adaptations of the Regency style. The OLD, 14 Jafar Sarang Street, off 2nd Line Beach Road, was built between the Wars and reflects what even a modicum of restoration can do to old buildings. Some of the stained glass used in the fanlights still remain, but other windows needed restoration at the time this photograph was taken. Except for the little shed at the right, this office block next to the National Hospital is every bit as handsome - if not handsomer - than its new cousin.

The NEW, by day and by night, with ITC blaring its message to the skies, is the ITC Centre, where many of ITC's regional offices are centralised. This new, virtually soundproof, fully air-conditioned six-storey building, with imported tinted glass not allowing heat to pass through, is noteworthy for its several safety features. Its polished brown granite exterior and interiors give it a rich look, but richness does not equate with elegance in a city which demands white or lighter shades. A rooftop garden is another of the building's luxury features, but it hardly is soothing in the shade of the giant 23' x 23' neon signs. A more useful contribution is an underground tank to collect rainwater. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

THE OLD...

...& THE NEW



# Tanneries must follow pollution control norms

— TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT

(By A Staff Reporter)

The Tamil Nadu Government is insistent that tanners in the State must comply with the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) norms.

The tanners, however, claim that the effluent standards for common effluent treatment plants — the biological oxygen demand (BOD) of 30 ppm (the minimum national standard is 100 ppm), the chemical oxygen demand (COD) of 250 ppm, and the total dissolved solids (TDS) of 2100 ppm — fixed by the TNPCB are too stringent for them to meet with the existing technology. They cannot be regularly maintained even when achieved, they point out. Citing an example, they say that one of the tanners who has been consistently maintaining the 30 BOD level for the past two years was asked to shut down his operations when the BOD level went up to a level of 31.

There are ten more CETPs to be completed and work is to be taken up on 13 other CETPs which are still in the proposal stage. The state subsidy of 25

per cent will be released to the tanners on a case-to-case basis, depending on the progress made, Government has stated. Meanwhile, the State and the tanning industry plan to file an affidavit in the Supreme Court to grant the tanners more time to complete the pending CETPs and allow the industry to reopen the 400 tanneries that are closed in the State.

A team from the Nagpur-based National Environment and Engineering and Research Institute (NEERI) and CLRI has recently been inspecting the effluent treatment plants in the State. Based on the survey conducted, a detailed report is to be compiled and submitted to the Supreme Court. NEERI has also evinced interest in taking up construction of some of the proposed CETPs and will be seeking permission from the Supreme Court for this purpose, besides extending corrective assistance to the operational CETPs.

Looking back after a 20-year interval, I am struck both by the relevance and importance of the priority that was attached to the S&T policy then and of the process by which the Plan was formulated and implemented. But new challenges have now come up for attention. Space-related programmes are clearly a major thrust now, be they in mapping natural resources or in facilitating nation-wide communications. Information technology is witnessing rapid and unprecedented changes all over the world. India cannot afford to lag behind. A weakness here will adversely affect us in a variety of ways, be it in our produc-

tion capacities, trade relations, progress in education or even defense preparedness.

There are other changes occurring in the country and elsewhere which have a bearing on our Science & Technology policy and add urgency to the task I am outlining. The impact of liberalisation and entry of powerful multinational corporations can seriously threaten our R&D effort and discourage indigenous technology through the onslaught of imported technologies, products and managerial practices. The changes that are sweeping over us offer both new opportunities and new challenges for the work of our S&T community. This is where a new, well-thought out S&T Plan can make the difference.

# Whither Science and Technology in India?

The country's main attention is on politics and political leaders. It is a pity that public attention does not focus on a particular aspect of national policy which receives very little attention and which, to mind, the country can neglect only at its peril, namely Science and Technology.

The institutional infrastructure for R&D work in the country in such key areas as agriculture, industry and health was a legacy from the colonial era. An important challenge facing policy-makers during the 1960s and the 1970s was to restructure these institutions and to expand their scope and coverage in keeping with the emerging needs and the country's socioeconomic development goals. I was appointed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1971 as the first full-fledged Cabinet Minister in independent India in charge of Science and Technology. During the next four years my endeavour was to take stock, with the help of leading scientists and technologists in the country, of the strengths and weaknesses of R&D institutions, identify areas of trust and to evolve a coherent plan to which the government would allocate enough resources and provide other support for its implementation. In undertaking this task, I was able to draw substantially from my experience in restructuring the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) in the mid-1960s that paved the way for, and in many ways made possible, the Green Revolution. A National Committee on Science & Technology (NCST) was set up in 1971 to develop a national S&T Plan covering key sectors and reflecting important development priorities. Every attempt was also made to involve private industry for a more purposeful R&D.

Looking back after a 20-year interval, I am struck both by the relevance and importance of the priority that was attached to the S&T policy then and of the process by which the Plan was formulated and implemented. But new challenges have now come up for attention. Space-related programmes are clearly a major thrust now, be they in mapping natural resources or in facilitating nation-wide communications. Information technology is witnessing rapid and unprecedented changes all over the world. India cannot afford to lag behind. A weakness here will adversely affect us in a variety of ways, be it in our produc-

tion capacities, trade relations, progress in education or even defense preparedness.

Leaving aside larger questions of a drift to an unbridled consumerist culture that may be getting promoted as part of 'liberalisation', it needs to be ensured that technologies currently in use and skills developed over a period of time in India do not get swamped by imported and what may turn out to be, unsuitable technologies. The answer clearly is not to try and keep out all tech-

nologies developed elsewhere, but to ensure that institutional arrangements are in place to assess available technologies, to be selective in what is imported and for ensuring that these are properly assimilated by and for local use. This calls for an appropriate framework of policy and of institutions. Simultaneously, export of processes and technologies largely developed within the country will need to be promoted.

Yet another dimension to the proposed S&T Plan is what I would like to call R&D for public good. There is a danger that under the influence of markets and commercial impulses, R&D resources in the country may get increasingly deployed for projects which have an immediate market potential. In the process, issues of high national priority and social concern may get neglected (example: upgrading production technology for small weavers, improved water supply in remote villages). The proposed S&T Plan should make sure

terms of land and water use in villages and towns, in forest cover, climate changes, pollution levels etc. The proposed Plan should identify issues requiring R&D support concretely, and while drawing on what has been devised elsewhere, come up with solutions that are relevant to our conditions.

The next important aspect that I would like to emphasise and one that would determine the success or otherwise of the entire thrust for S&T, relates to the human resource aspect. This needs to be looked at from the school stage. Higher S&T institutions cannot thrive in an environment where poorly trained and indifferently motivated students come out of schools and take to science streams in colleges and go on to fill crucial leadership positions in S&T institutions.

The proposed S&T Plan should also explore and identify areas in which the S&T community can play a more significant and even decisive role in public affairs than is the case at

# An Ode to Sanity

ARE YOU MAD  
ARE YOU MENTAL  
ARE YOU CRAZY  
ARE YOU OFF YOUR ROCKERS

Of repeated questions  
Rhetorical and with suspicion  
In various situations  
Asked by people in blunder  
Makes me wonder  
Can it be true  
Am I really mentally through

Opting to study  
Unconventional, unfashionable  
Ancient History  
Worried about my bleak future prospects  
My professionally oriented sibling suspects  
With no hope of jobs with MNC's in store  
You'll turn out to be an erudite bore  
No success at exams for bureaucracy  
How can you make it to dig archaeology  
With your Asthma and perpetual allergies  
Anxiously furiously she queries  
ARE YOU MAD

My unlettered plumber  
Called to repair a faulty motor  
With affectionate garrulity  
Wonders at my idiocy  
In spending my hard-earned money  
Getting the plumbing to work efficiently  
On what was after all hired property  
Why don't you buy your own place  
And do it up with a lot of glaze  
Nobody spends on others' houses  
He asks me with a frown and deposes  
ARE YOU MENTAL

Driving on pot-holed roads  
Keeping left obeying traffic rules  
Allowing old people to safely cross  
Braking to save street dogs  
I was hauled up for a small parking fault  
Sternly admonished my worldly nephew  
Where was your attention Dear Aunt  
You should have greased the traffic cop's palm  
Alas now you'll be stiffly fined  
Gosh maybe even publicly arraigned  
You're CRAZY and on the way to Kilpauk  
A basket case for the shrink's flock

Left alone husband and wife  
Arthritic infirm and barely alive  
Choosing against migration  
To join our children in places foreign  
We struggle and strive to live our life  
On our own terms and style  
With occasional uncomfortable visits  
From vaguely guilty but loving offspring  
Why asks the world with shock and spite  
Should you live such a lonely life  
Without emotional support and succour  
You surely must be OFF YOUR ROCKERS

Letting my husband read this epistle  
Allowing him editorial privilege  
I ask him rather tentatively  
Do I need to conclude positively  
It's already too long I think  
And anyway it's not easy rhyming  
I'm ranting and raving about things trivial  
Maybe this is senility making statements banal  
Pat comes the reply predictable  
ARE YOU MAD dear faintheart

Padmini Natarajan

that avenues of research related to such objectives are systematically identified, adequately funded and vigorously pursued.

Another set of issues that arise in a market-oriented environment is changes in our natural environment, particularly in

present. Typically, R&D institutions in India do not think it necessary to inform the public of the work they are doing, or to build a constituency in their favour. It is even more rare to see such institutions taking a public stand on issues that have generated national controversy, even though as technical groups they may have important information to provide or views to offer to help mould public policy as well as public opinion. Examples here would be of major irrigation, power or industrial projects and their impact on local ecology and community.

Organisationally, the R&D institutions in India are typically established on a sectoral/discipline basis. This served its purpose up to a point, but the need to work increasingly on a multidisciplinary and mission-mode is becoming urgent. The S&T Plan, while identifying issues of national priority for S&T action, should also spell out innovative institutional mechanisms by which a truly inter-disciplinary and task-oriented approach can be brought to bear to this work.

R&D in the modern world has become costly in terms of time and resources that need to be committed. No single organisation or agency can as a rule mobilise the inputs on the scale that will generate worthwhile results. There is, thus, a clear case for pooling of resources cutting across organisational boundaries.

Secondly, the tasks to be addressed, and, therefore, the inputs to be provided, are typically multidisciplinary. This is as much true of R&D focussed on economic products as well as on social sciences.

Finally, in terms of marketability of R&D outputs, there is likely to be greater credibility, and acceptability if the potential user sees them as coming out of team work involving all relevant disciplines.

A 'business approach' to R&D programming is absent or weak in our existing systems. By a business approach I mean a willingness and an ability to scan the 'market' (products and users), assess emerging needs, sell the output and service the customers. I recognise the dangers of pushing this analogy too far in the R&D world, but I have no doubt that user-orientation and cost-effectiveness are the two pillars on which a viable R&D plan needs to be squarely placed.

The Government's role immediately, as I see it, is as follows: send a clear signal to the S&T community that its work is of high national priority, facilitate formulation of a well-thought out S&T Plan relevant to our development goals, assure resource support for implementing the Plan, insist on accountability and results, reward performance, weed out dead-wood, and encourage innovation and initiative. Given such a framework, there is no doubt that every rupee spent on good R&D in the country will provide a bountiful harvest in the years to come. Time is of the essence and we cannot afford to waste a single day.



# Backwaters of badminton?

When I came to Madras from Bangalore, I was surprised to hear that very few clubs in Madras had badminton courts. Being a keen and regular shuttle player (as are my two sons who accompanied me to Madras), I wanted to become a member of a club where we could continue to play badminton. We were lucky to be accommodated by the Madras Cricket Club, where games and sport are the prime object.

Later, I tried to recollect which badminton players from Tamil Nadu had come to national level, but I could not recollect anyone's name. Tamil Nadu, which has produced a number of good sportspersons in all fields, has not produced one good shuttle player of international level. Why is this so? Is it because there is no talent or no aptitude for the game, or is it because of lack of facilities? It may not be due to lack of talent or aptitude, because I have observed in a few local tournaments that there are a number of players who have the talent. Hence, I have to come to the conclusion that it is only due to lack of adequate facilities and lack of proper encouragement that players are not reaching the desired level in Tamil Nadu.

When I visited the University Union Court to witness a tournament, I found the condition of the court really bad. There was no proper lighting system, the flooring was damaged, there were no proper lines for the courts. I was told that this is the only place where college students and other State

by  
**JAYARAMA  
CHOUTA**

players can practice. It is a multi-purpose hall for basketball, volleyball and some other games and is not easily available for regular practice of badminton. Why cannot the authorities take some interest and provide facilities for the players by having exclusive shuttle courts? Without proper infrastructure, it is very difficult to kindle interest in the players to improve their standard.

Just see our neighbouring states. Karnataka had produced players like Prakash Padukone, Chengappa, Narendra Ubayakar, Kiran Koushik, Vasanth Kumar, Sashi Kiran, Vivek Kumar, Sishier Kittur, Ajit Wijitilak among men, and Aparna Habbu, Shyama Kittur,

Sudha Padmanabhan and a few others, among women. Kerala has produced Vimal Kumar, Vinod Kumar, George Thomas and other good players. Similarly, Andhra Pradesh has players like Gopichand, Praveen Kumar, Manoj Kumar, Vijaya Raghavan, Anirudra, K.P. Naik among men and P.V. Lakshmi, P.V. Sharada and Neelim Choudry and others among women. Maharashtra has produced national players like Rajiv Bagga, Vijaya Lancy, Amrith Shinde, Sunil Welling, Tushar Pai, Bavingala and many others. Why hasn't Tamil Nadu produced such players?

As I am from Karnataka, I can say that almost all the clubs in Bangalore have badminton courts, the leading clubs two or three courts, and some of them have good coaching facilities too. This is what has produced a number of good players in badminton in Karnataka. Now it has the Prakash Padukone Academy!

The SAF did not include shuttlecock as one of the games, so a good badminton court did not come up in Madras, as was the case for other games, like Tennis, Volleyball and Swimming. If the Tamil Nadu Government in general, and the Tamil Nadu Badminton Association in particular, show more interest along these lines, then there can be no doubt that this State will produce good shuttle players as in other sports and games. (Courtesy: *The Cricket Clubman*, the journal of the Madras Cricket Club.)

# A matter of words

Sports journalism, or Cricket reporting to be more precise, would seem to have undergone a revolution in India. Words, words, words appear to have replaced matter-of-fact reporting. Nowhere is the transformation more patent or prominent than in Test match reporting, which has come to be dominated by verbiage, as in a recent report in Madras's leading daily. The reporter apparently does not bother about the requirements of his reader, who is more keen on knowing the close-of-play scores and where India stood than individual performances, however great they were.

"Take the damn thing away and come to the point," was how the British News Editor of the British-owned (now defunct) *Madras Mail* of the Thirties used to yell at the Indian cricket reporter who began his Presidency Match report with platitudes on Chepauk and its lush-green ground. (Every local report in those days had to be submitted to *The Mail's* News Editor.) "We want the closing scores and the leading scorers and wicket-takers first," was his full-throated advice.

The transformation that has now come over cricket re-

porting indeed defies description. Most of the present-day reports do not begin with the close-of-play scores or mention of the leading run-getters and wicket-takers. If there is a century-maker, the reporter devotes one-fifth of his story to the batsman's background, past three-figure knocks, big-match debut etc., and in the case of a maiden three-figure hitter, he somehow manages to recall the hero's school and college day achievements with the bat, his bloodline and what not. But every reader who wanted to know where India stood would have to go through the score-board, given invariably at the bottom of the report.

Such indeed is the modern writer's appetite for verbiage that it would make the late S.K. Gurunathan, India's first reporter to cover an Indian team's foreign tour, turn in his grave. Deeply embedded in the hearts of his readers even today, Gurunathan invariably began his reports with facts and figures on the day's play and not with his first impression of Lord's or the Oval. Obviously, he knew what his readers wanted most.

Jaici

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