

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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FREE ISSUE

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The way to waste water!

Recent studies show that about 3200 million M³ (MCM) of water from Tamil Nadu flow into the Bay of Bengal annually without being used. Half a century after Independence, thousands of Indian villages still do not have a safe local source of drinking water. In many villages, people now have to walk longer distances to fetch drinking water. The water level in wells and the groundwater table are falling at an alarming rate. And there are long queues at all public water taps in the city.

Neglect in developing major and medium irrigation projects, overburdening of traditional irrigation systems, the advent of electrification and the consequent energisation of high powered pumpsets, improvements in drilling technology and large-scale mining have all caused groundwater to dwindle and its quality to deteriorate. Several international organisations have promised to fund practical water research in all these fields in the State.

All this was reiterated at a three-day workshop on 'Groundwater Management and Rainwater Harvesting' jointly organised by the Max Muller Bhavan, the German Returnees' Association, IIT Chennai and the Centre for Water Resources, Anna University.

Prof. N V Pundarikathan, Director, Centre for Water Resources, pointed out that the State, which is drained by 34 river basins, has 55 major reservoirs and about 3000 medium and small anicuts. The Grand Anicut across the River Kaveri, constructed by King Karikala Cholan, is one of the oldest still in use. 39,000 tanks built during the Chola period irrigated

about 38% of the total irrigated area in 1950; today, they help only 23% of the area. The main reason is that many tanks and catchment areas have been developed as real estate.

Once Madras boasted of 175 recreational parks; today, Chennai has only a few. The 39 temple tanks in the city served as percolation ponds to recharge the groundwater, which filled up during the monsoon season. Float festivals could be conducted regularly in them. Today, no temple tank gets filled and to conduct float festivals, tanks have to resort to water tankers after compacting the soil beneath to avoid percolation. This has caused considerable damage to the recharge. The need of the hour is to develop the City's groundwater resources of which only about 60% is harnessed.

A groundwater study in the State shows that 53 Blocks are overexploited, 36 Blocks are exploited 85-100%, 85 Blocks (65-85%) and the remaining 210 Blocks less than 65%. This report states that 45% of Tamil Nadu faces a precarious groundwater situation. The current demand for the rural population is 797.47 MCM and by 2024 AD it is estimated it will be three-fold.

To help manage the situation, the TWAD Board is in the process of implementing rainwater harvesting schemes. Channels, dykes and check dams are being constructed to trap rainwater during the monsoon. Eleven desalination plants are in operation, and a megaproject by BHEL, at Naripayur in Ramanathapuram District to produce one million gallons a day, is expected to go on stream in 1998. The major drawback of these plants is the



We have discovered the most polluting equipment at our Gummidiipoondi plant...

(our cars)

DuPont promised environment safety.

And we have kept our word.

Zero liquid effluents. Zero asbestos. Zero CFCs.

Even groundwater is benchmarked to ensure its protection.

A feat achieved through stringent quality processes, and state-of-the-art equipment.

DuPont adheres to environment standards set by the State of Tamil Nadu, the Government of India, the US Environment Protection Agency, or the

World Bank, whichever is more stringent.

And there's more.

New innovations in all areas... from any part of the world, are incorporated into every plant. This means that the Gummidiipoondi plant is the most technologically advanced among all our Nylon plants, worldwide.

As for the polluting cars, we are working towards a solution.

DuPont Nylon. A better environment for better living.



Better things for better living

It's indeed an eye-catching ad, this one that commits DuPont's Gummidiipoondi plant to environment-friendliness. And it's part of an appealing campaign that DuPont has launched to quell the rumblings against its project just north of Chennai, where protests continue against the plant on environmental grounds. Other ads in this series talk as cleverly of what DuPont is doing to improve the environs of Gummidiipoondi and life in them. But it must also be noted that the creativity in these productions — at least in this one — owes not a little to David Ogilvy's immortal message about the loudest noise in a Rolls-Royce being the ticking of its clock. But what matter a little adaptation in the cause of improving the environment in an industrial hub!

Scientific paper from Chennai grabs attention

At the XIV Enzyme Engineering Conference, held recently in Beijing, the programme committee selected as the best paper out of the 127 submitted one by an Indian scientist who does his research here in Chennai. Dr P V Sundaram is the Founder Director of the Centre for Protein Engineering and Biomedical Research at the Voluntary Health Services, Adyar. His Centre is only 6-7 years old and is funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.

high cost of the technology; 1000 litres of treated water cost Rs.40.

Increased participation by NGO's was urged at the workshop. Strict implementation of the laws and a wider Environmental Act to curb the menace of overexploitation of water sources were also advocated.

— Rajind N Christy

The international conference conducted by the Engineering Foundation, New York, is held once in two years at different locations and is limited to around 200 invitees who are actively involved in the fields of Enzyme Engineering and Biotechnology.

What is notable about Dr Sundaram's work is that it was done in India with the limited facilities and resources available here. "We are not only a little cut off from the mainstream — despite E-mail and the Internet, which have only recently arrived in India — but there are also the travails of the system in India", Dr Sundaram points out. Explaining the local challenges, he adds, "You may get the funds and buy the instruments for research and set up a lab, but money and instruments alone do not make a research lab. It is the people in it. Not only do you have to find them, you have to train them too. And remember all our good

people go away and rarely come back. We should also realise that most of us are probably only above average. There are very few who are really brilliant."

Dr Sundaram came back to India after more than 25 years of study and work in the US, UK, Canada and Germany. In all those countries he found two common traits amongst those he worked with; commitment and discipline. "Without these, you cannot survive, not even pretend that you are trying to be a professional competing with the best in the world. As my Ph.D. Professor in London used to say, there is no guarantee that the really clever ones always succeed. But as Einstein used to say, success in science represents only a very tiny small percentage of brilliance, the rest of it is blood, sweat and tears. Sheer dogged persistence is what it is all about," Dr

(Continued on Page 7)

Water, Water, everywhere ...

They were just a sharp shower or two, a prelude to the monsoons, and *The Man From Madras Musings* saw water slopping about inches deep in streets that had never become waterlogged in Monsoons past. The Corporation and the Metrowater authorities and whoever else is involved in keeping our roads 'dry' must have also seen what was happening in these stretches. But if MMM expected any action to be taken, he was doomed to disappointment.

When the first real rains of the Monsoon hit, whole stretches of roads in the City became canals. T'Nagar, Kodambakkam, Mylapore were areas which MMM experienced, driving or walking through road-rivers a few inches deep here, a foot and more deep there. What was significant about this was that several of these roads had never suffered like this in Monsoons past. Now they were almost impassable.

MMM wonders what has been happening, which services have been failing. Nirmal of EXNORA must also be wondering... his Giriappa Road in T'Nagar and streets around were some of the worst hit in the City. What happens next?

Freedom's voices

In a programme rather different from usual, the members of the Madras Book Club marked the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence listening to the voices of freedom. The Gramophone Company of India, His Master's Voice to people of *The Man From Madras Musings* generation, has brought out in CD and tape a 1½-hour long programme entitled *Voices of Freedom*. The Book Club members the other day listened to an abridged version of this, a potted oral history of India from Mahatma Gandhi to Rajiv Gandhi, with many of the voices of freedom marking the milestones along the way in speech and song.

The subsequent discussion about the content may have focussed on commissions and omissions, but what seemed significant to MMM was the paucity of speeches by Gandhiji, some of them major ones, like the call to Quit India, having to be read by the story-teller and commentator, Dr Karan Singh. Wondering over this, MMM was suddenly made to realise how much of the pre-Independence voices were missing and how much of archival material All India Radio has post-Independence. The explanation was simple: in pre-Independence days, the British were more interested in the speeches of Indian leaders from the law and order point of view than the historical view and the voices were more likely to be stored — if at all — in the police archives rather than the All India Radio archives, Akashvani never broadcasting any of the

speeches. On the other hand, AIR has a fine archive of almost all speeches made by the country's leaders from the time Nehru spoke of India's tryst with destiny; it had a new boss!

Tragic though that situation may be, a disc or tape like this is something every school and college library should have. MMM hopes that will happen, for here is a bit of history — no matter how weighted it may seem to some — that has had life breathed into it.

World of music

Speaking of voices and the Gramophone Company of India, a fellow company in the RPG Group has lived up to the shopping scene in the City by opening up a new music shop, Music World, whose ambience and arrangement offers local music enthusiasts the best of the Western shopping experience. Music World is being offered to Chennai — and to about twenty other Indian cities in the next few years — by Spencer's, who in its hundredth year as a public limited company is enjoying not only a resurrection but is finding it in its roots, retailing.

Spencer's, 135 years old, grew into a retailing hotelier and catering empire in British times. Few realise the extent of that empire — from Peshawar to Cochin, from Karachi to Gauhati, with scores of branches, several hotels and hundreds of refreshment rooms. After Eugene Oakshott took over John Spencer's store and made it a public limited company on July 1, 1897, not only did the company expand in the South by establishing a network of branches but it went all-India by becoming, as MMM sees it, the country's first takeover kings.

After Independence, the company Indianised and then, after a promising start, fell on hard times. In 1989, the RPG Group took over — and wondered what do with an ailing giant whose only assets were its real estate and its name. RPG's could have become real estate developers — instead, a searching look at the ancient company indicated that the answers might lie in looking at its once and former strengths in a 1990s' way. And so, retailing is what the company has turned to again in the last year or so.

Already, ten FoodWorld supermarkets have been established in Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad and 40 more are planned for the next few years. Three Health and Glow pharmacies and beauty care and pharmaceutical stores have been opened in Chennai and three dozen more will open in the South in the next couple of years. And the first MusicWorld — now open in Spencer Plaza — will look at many more stores in urban India in the next five years. They are all Spencer shops — but the Spencer's name is being reserved for the giant

superstores the Company hopes to expand into once the chainstore shopping concept is established by these three types of stores of TODAY.

The much-respected *Financial Times* of London, in a half-page feature, sees what Spencer's has been doing in the last 18 months as the first major success story in modern retailing in India. That should encourage RPG's to ensure the music plays on.

Wanted: Governor

The Centre chooses its Governors, but the States usually get whom they want. Andhra Pradesh, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands, wanted a governor who could be more than decorative and help the State with his advice. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, MMM is told, wanted the retiring Reserve Bank of India Governor to move into a different gubernatorial role and help with his financial and economic advice to push Andhra Pradesh, the sleeping giant, into the 21st Century.

Rangarajan, out of Sivaganga, National College, Trichy, Loyola, Madras, and Wharton, Philadelphia, has had a splendid tenure at the RBI, as he helped

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SNAPPY**

India liberalise and still remain on even financial keel. A global agency, grading the central bank governors of 18 emerging countries and 19 industrial countries, gave an A grade ('outstanding') to six of them and a B grade ('very good') to 19 of them. One of the very good ones was Rangarajan. The evaluating agency assessed Rangarajan as having "a good mix of caution, patience, prudence and innovation", but felt he lacked "a strong independent streak that characterises the best central bankers". The assessment adds that his efforts at economic reform and at heading off inflationary pressures were, however, "undermined by government failure to lift price controls" and the expected growth has not been fast enough to keep pace "with India's fast-growing population".

Finance Minister P Chidambaram too has been excellently rated in the world. A European agency rated him the best financial minister of the year. But despite having two such eminent personalities in the world of economics and finance, the country's economy is in the doldrums and there seem to be no winners in that world. MMM wonders how much this has to do with misreading the Indian

character and the effect it has on the market, apart from the fact that no one in India today is looking at what that global agency has pointed out: rampant population growth.

For industry to grow, the country needs the infrastructure first. For the consumer goods market to grow, there has to be a more realistic understanding of that market: the larger part of that market does not buy luxuries, it buys necessities; it does not buy cars, but it'll buy refrigerators and pressure cookers if it has assured electric or gas supply. And the obvious must be realised, and not treated ostrich-like: that unchecked population eats up facilities faster than they can be developed. In this context, MMM feels all the As and Bs in the world are of little help; economists and finance experts will have to be down-to-earth sociologists, even social workers, first. Rangarajan may do much to help the cream of Andhra Pradesh grow, but how much of that will trickle down to the grassroots in a State where even the writ of law does not run in many parts because poverty is too acute to heed the law?

In brief

★ Work goes on apace at restoring the DGP building — the Police headquarters on the Marina — which was saved from the wreckers' hammers by the Chief Minister. But now more danger to the building in the future may be caused by not following proper conservation principles. *The Man From Madras Musings* notes that cement plastering is going on after the lime-and-mortar original finish was scraped off. This might do more harm to the building than good, conservation experts feel. The Police may have got experts from IIT and Anna University to advise, but they would have done well to get those who've studied the latest conservation methods in countries strong in heritage building conservation to interact with them (the Police) as well as with the engineering experts. Another issue conservationists wonder about is how much documentation of the building was done before work commenced. Without such documentation, the work is unlikely to be faithful to the original, which is what conservation is all about.

★ Tamil Nadu, *The Man From Madras Musings* is happy to learn, is looking beyond industrial investment, particularly the automobile sector. MMM hears the Government is enthusiastically backing five new food processing projects whose investment is likely to be over Rs. 250 crore. The proposals include a Rs. 32 crore chicken processing unit in Pongalur, a Rs. 38 crore potato fries plant near Udha-gamandalam, a Rs. 125 crore food and vegetable processing plant with Thai participation, a Rs. 25 crore mushroom processing plant and a Rs. 40 crore coconut processing plant. This is in addition to a Rs. 40 crore egg processing plant that has already been set up near Erode with Belgian collaboration to export about 1500 tonnes of egg products a year. Government, MMM hears, considers the food processing industry as important as the automotive one and is looking for new investors to look into this option.

★ A rather similar exercise has taken place at the Luz Church, the oldest church in the Chennai region, *The Man From Madras Musings* notes. The interior has been rather garishly painted and the woodwork of the altar has received copious coats of gold and white paint. But did anyone who authorised all this exuberant painting stop to find out whether structure-friendly paints were being used or whether any old paint was being daubed, the chemicals in it a potential danger to both wood and brick? MMM wonders

MMM

whether it is too late to do anything about this?

★ Due for the wreckers' hammers is the Plaza Theatre, next to the Cosmopolitan Club on Mount Road. The theatre was built in 1945 by the Suguna Vilas Sabha and leased out. The Sabha itself, once known for its theatrical performances, had moved here from George Town in 1936. The Sabha, a legend in the world of Tamil Theatre from its founding in 1891 has gradually given up Theatre and become a social club. With the Plaza down, the space will be used for tennis courts and a swimming pool, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands. At the helm of the Sabha for 25 years has been M A M Ramaswamy. He had done a splendid job of resurrecting the Presidency Club. It would appear that he is determined to do an even better job with the Sabha. But MMM wonders whether, in the process, he can't get it to revive its theatrical activities in a theatre of its own here. Why not a renovated Plaza itself?

Business briefs

★ Reliance Industries which has hitherto had little or no presence here is planning to make a major entry into Tamil Nadu in 1998, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears. The Company, it is reported, is willing to invest over Rs.10,000 crore in the power sector in the State over the next few years. Making a presentation to the Tamil Nadu Government, the Company, MMM is told, envisages a role for itself at the new Ennore Port, work on which is just taking the first steps. An LNG import terminal integrated with power and city gas projects and a role in the Jayamkondam lignite-based power project are two of Reliance's prime interests, MMM understands.

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**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Cats and dogs

There was a man in north Malabar, so the story goes, who owned a tiger. The tiger became well-known and people from far and wide came to see it. The owner soon began to collect a small fee from the visitors. Taxmen heard of this and insisted that the owner pay entertainment tax or something like that. The owner did not pay and the taxmen came in a group to confiscate the tiger. The sorrowing owner suddenly had a bright idea and he clambered on to the top of the cage. "You can take away the tiger but not the cage which is mine," he said as he began to pull up the cage.

The taxmen fled and never came back again.

It was reminded of this story the other day when I heard that the City Fathers of 'Singara' Chennai planned to ban cats and other animals in the City — later corrected to owners of cats and dogs being made to pay taxes. Are the City Fathers planning to climb trees, tall terraces and run in circles around lime trees in neglected gardens to place tax tokens around the necks of the unobliging cats that abound in the City? Better still, can't they rid the city of them?

O.T. Ravindran
10 Main Road
Nandanam Extension
Madras 600 035.

Might have helped

How I wish Queen Elizabeth II of UK was shown the neglected statue of her grandfather, King George V, east of the Flower Bazar Police Station, GT, as well the historical buildings within Fort St. George, namely St Mary's Church as well as the dilapidated building where once dwelled Colonel A. Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington). She would have been so shocked to see them and would have perhaps funded their respective restorations.

C.A. Reddi
57 Rundsalls Road,
Vepery, Madras 600 007.

Swifts or swallows?

With reference to the description of the 'Mystery flights' by Harry Miller (*MM*, October 1), it would appear that the birds are probably the Indian House Swift (*Apus affinis*), though it would be desirable to have more information on the appearance of the birds to be decisive.

This bird is resident in Chennai, found nesting in old structures like the High Court, temple towers and on the underside of bridges. It obtains its food on the wing, its diet consisting mainly of spiders and airborne insects. Indeed, it spends most of its time flying.

These birds are known to be active in the evenings when flocks congregate and 'ball' up in the sky, for no clear reasons. They are also likely to be seen in large numbers when on some local migration.

They are swift fliers (and hence the name) and are known to cover large distances and wander around in search of food. It is possible that Harry Miller chanced to see one such flock.

In the winter months we see large numbers of common swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), a winter visitor, which could also fit the description given by Miller. These birds roost in the reed-beds at Velacherry-Pallikaranai in thousands and it is a common sight seeing hundreds of birds flying towards this spot in the evenings, chiefly between October and March.

V. Sant'haram
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Use the Roman script

The letter from B. Gautham 'Let's communicate' (*MM*, August 16th) made very interesting reading. It is important not to be misunderstood. The basic premise of communication is to convey or understand.

One more question to be asked apart from which language one prefers receiving a communication in is "How many would prefer it to be in the Roman script?" The Roman script is being adopted by many countries all over the world. Germany has changed from Gothic to Roman script, one of the same things that Hitler did. One of the reforms Kemal Ataturk, father of Modern Turkey, introduced was to adopt the Roman script for the Turkish language which had far reaching effects.

State Government communications and application forms if written in the Roman script, apart from the local script, would greatly simplify matters because everyone picks up speaking the local language wherever they are.

In the days of the Raj, Army Officers studied Urdu in the Roman Script in order to give commands. The Bible and prayer books were also published in the Roman script back in the Twenties and Thirties.

Anna Varki
"Aajil", 9 Central Street,
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Chennai 600 010.

'Police inaction'? I

I was amused to read the report "Police in action" (*MM*, October 1) by MMM. Perhaps the title has been misprinted and should have been "Police inaction". This would correctly describe the City Police's performance. To take only one example, viz. autorickshaws, it is clear that not only political but administrative will and determination are woefully lacking.

The Transport Minister issued his final warning on 8.3.97 but presumably nothing happened, because he issued another warning on 28.4.97 explaining why the earlier



This, we thought, was one of the best photographs captured during the recent visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip of the United Kingdom to India. It's a pity that neither photographer nor reporter followed up what appears to be an intriguing story that's frozen in this eloquent picture that was published in *The Hindu*. Taken at the INS Angra Parade Ground of the Western Naval Command in Mumbai, it seems to show the Sailor Prince tearing a strip off a poor sailor in the Guard of Honour who might, just, have got his medal the wrong way about. It might also be exactly what the newspaper's caption says: "Prince Philip inspects the uniform of a sailor". But would that be enough to have the Commander of the parade in such a dither as to adopt such an uncharacteristic pose of alarm? We thought the rest of the Guard had also turned to look at what was happening, but Lt Gen Inder Gill tells us that turning to look at the back of the VIP after he has passed in inspection is a practice India has adopted from the Russian manual. He might just have been, characteristically, pulling our leg, the way he thought the Prince might have been pulling the sailor's. Meanwhile, we wonder whether a reader will come up with an answer to the Commander's consternation that caused him to act more than a bit unmilitarily. — The Editor

warning was not final. Perhaps the State Government as well as the Police think that announcements in themselves are achievements as public memory is short.

In July, the police announced a temporary arrangement at Central Station till the prepaid autorickshaw system was reintroduced (Pray, why was it discontinued?). In June, boards displaying auto fares to important destinations were to be installed. Complaint cards were to be given to passengers. Nothing has happened. On traffic control the less said the better. The Anna Salai four-lane experiment introduced on 1st July with fanfare is in a mess, neither enforced nor abandoned.

Instead of dealing with such bread and butter issues to relieve the sufferings of the people, the Commissioner calls for wireless sets in autos, inaugurating the year-old dial-an-auto-facility. Since there is no political interference, what prevents him from solving these problems in no time? Other states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka did it years ago. What is needed is action, tough action and not going through the motions of action.

R.V. Chandramouli, IAS
(Retd.)
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11 First Crescent Park Road,
Gandhinagar, Adyar,
Chennai 600 020.

'Police inaction' II

I agree with MMM's comments in "Police in action" (*MM*, October 1). May I venture to suggest that in the heading, the last two words should have been merged, so that the whole thing would have read as 'Police inaction'!

Any number of instances of police passivity can be observed everyday on our roads. I mention only one. At the junction of Thiru Vi Ka

Road and Anna Salai, near Anand Theatre, there is a zebra crossing where pedestrians getting the green signal and walking are stopped dead in their tracks by water-tankers, cars and two-wheelers taking a prohibited right turn into Anna Salai towards Gemini. The traffic police just ignore this and make no effort to help the pedestrians.

C Kesi
21 Conran Smith Road
Chennai 600 086.

Welcome population

I am happy to see more people coming forward to continue *Madras Musings* and to form the 'Chennai First Trust'. Population is to be controlled. But in the columns of supporters in the 8th page of *MM*, population is more welcome.

Joseph
2/87-D4, South Street,
Post. Tirukkanoorpati,
Via Kurungulam West,
Thanjavur 613 303.

U.S. bookshops

J.N. Manokaran's (*MM*, April 16) views merit a response. A young professional American, with 3-4 years work experience, can be assumed to earn an average of US\$50,000 a year. To presume that he spends US\$10,000-15,000 (20-30%) a year of this income on purchasing books is, I am afraid, far-fetched. If he is to raise a family, acquire his own house, car and other appurtenances of modern living and comfort he surely must have other priorities at this stage of his life and career.

Second, public and other subsidised libraries are so many in the U.S.A. that he can get all the reading he wants in them without having to buy his own books. The

question of affording this luxury does not, therefore, arise. Of course, there are older and more affluent Americans, who buy their own books, building their own libraries over the years, but then, the percentage of income spent by them is far less than the 20-30% suggested by your correspondent.

Third, none can deny that the reading habit is steadily on the increase among discerning middle-class Indians with their increasing purchasing power. Many do buy their own books, setting aside a part of their monthly or annual budgets (though not to the extent of 20-30%!). As for escalating costs, which service or commodity has not increased in cost in recent years? This is an inevitable inflationary trend of modern living, from which none is exempt.

Fourth, if prices are a deterrent, how does one explain the proliferation of excellent bookshops all over India, particularly in the urban sector? None can deny that they are on the increase, as pointed out in the editorial feature, which led to my last letter. Books published in India are, by and large, excellent in quality, and can hold their own against their foreign counterparts, in content, blur, jackets and presentation. Apart from the new bookstores established in recent years, there is good, old, stately Higginbothams, over 150 years old, and still going strong — a real landmark for Chennai's reading public, where books on every conceivable subject and at a range of prices are available — and being bought. Indeed, I can't agree with your correspondent's statement that "the escalating costs of books have kept many readers away from (Indian) bookshops".

K.P. Mahalingam
Flat 6-B, The Peninsula
778 Poonamalle High Road
Chennai 600 010.

Disquiet at atomic plant

Though the 25-day strike by the Madras Atomic Power Station (MAPS) workers on the issue of safety in their work place concluded with an agreement signed at the Labour Commissioner's office recently, the 7-year-old contentious issue remains unresolved. According to Union officials, workers have been advised to stick to the safety guidelines strictly, these, they allege, had been given the go-by before the strike.

The strike in the 220 X 2MW (its capacity was downgraded from the original 235 X 2MW) plant at Kalpakkam was the first in the country's atomic power history for a safe working environment. The grounds are particularly significant, for the preliminary work

down by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB). SARCOP is a subordinate body of AERB. Globally, the International Commission on Radiological Protection, lays down standards, but these are not mandatory for member countries.

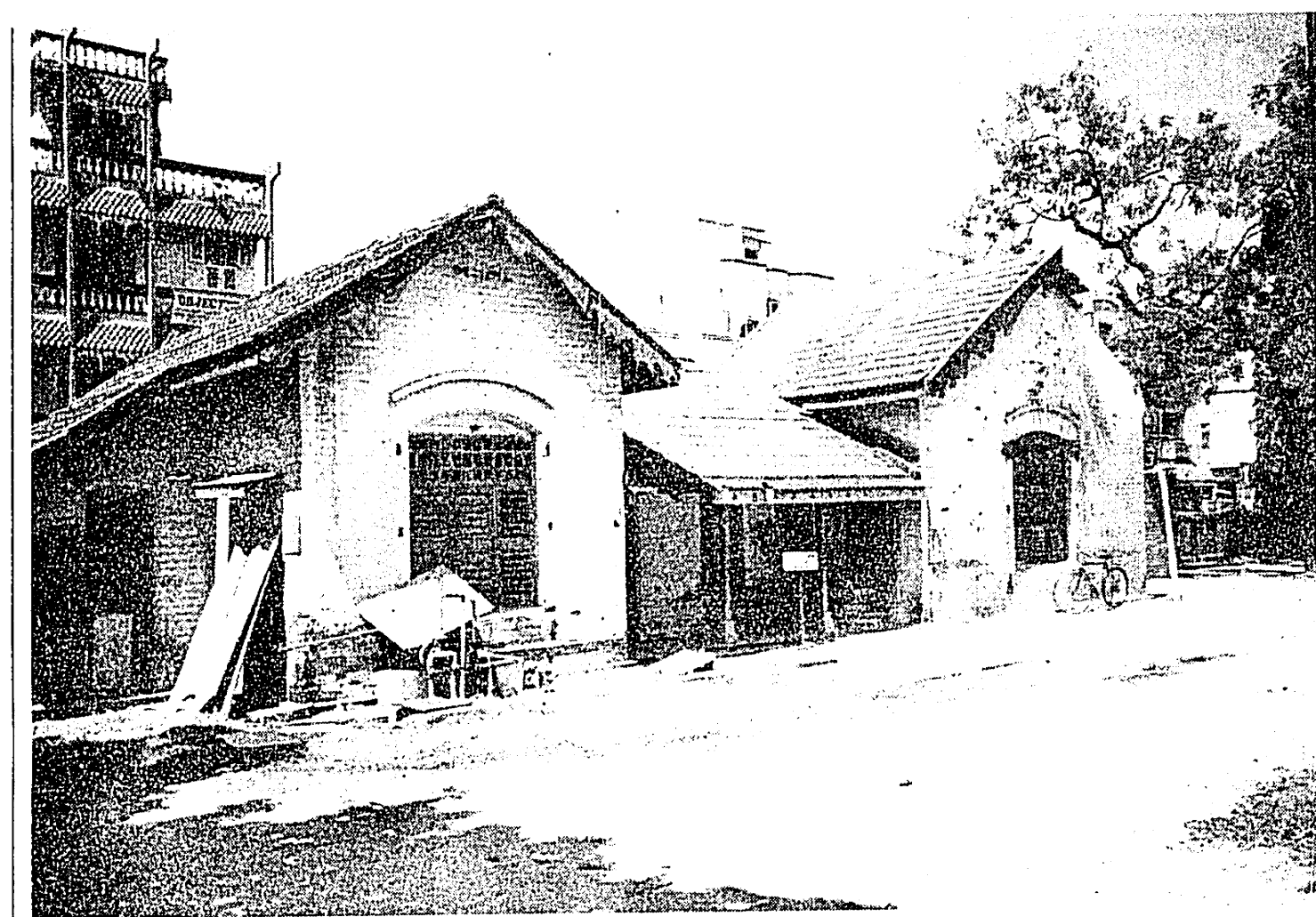
According to MAPS' officials, Indian standards are much more stringent than international ones. They point out that India is the first country to agree to scaling down of the maximum permissible radiation limit for a year to 2 REM (Roentgen Equivalent Man) from 5 REMs. The AERB has laid down that exposure to DAC is to be counted on an hourly basis. A person is subjected to radiation to the extent

of 2 REM, or 2000 millirems, if he is exposed to 1 DAC for 8 hours for 5 days, 300 days a year. In any one year the maximum exposure is limited to 3 REMs, with not more than 10 REMs in 5 years.

Significantly, the AERB has revised the definition of DAC. According to the revised version, 1 DAC is 2.5 times lower in concentration than the earlier one that is followed by countries like the USA, Canada and France. MAPS officials are silent on international norms for permissible DAC levels compared to Indian norms.

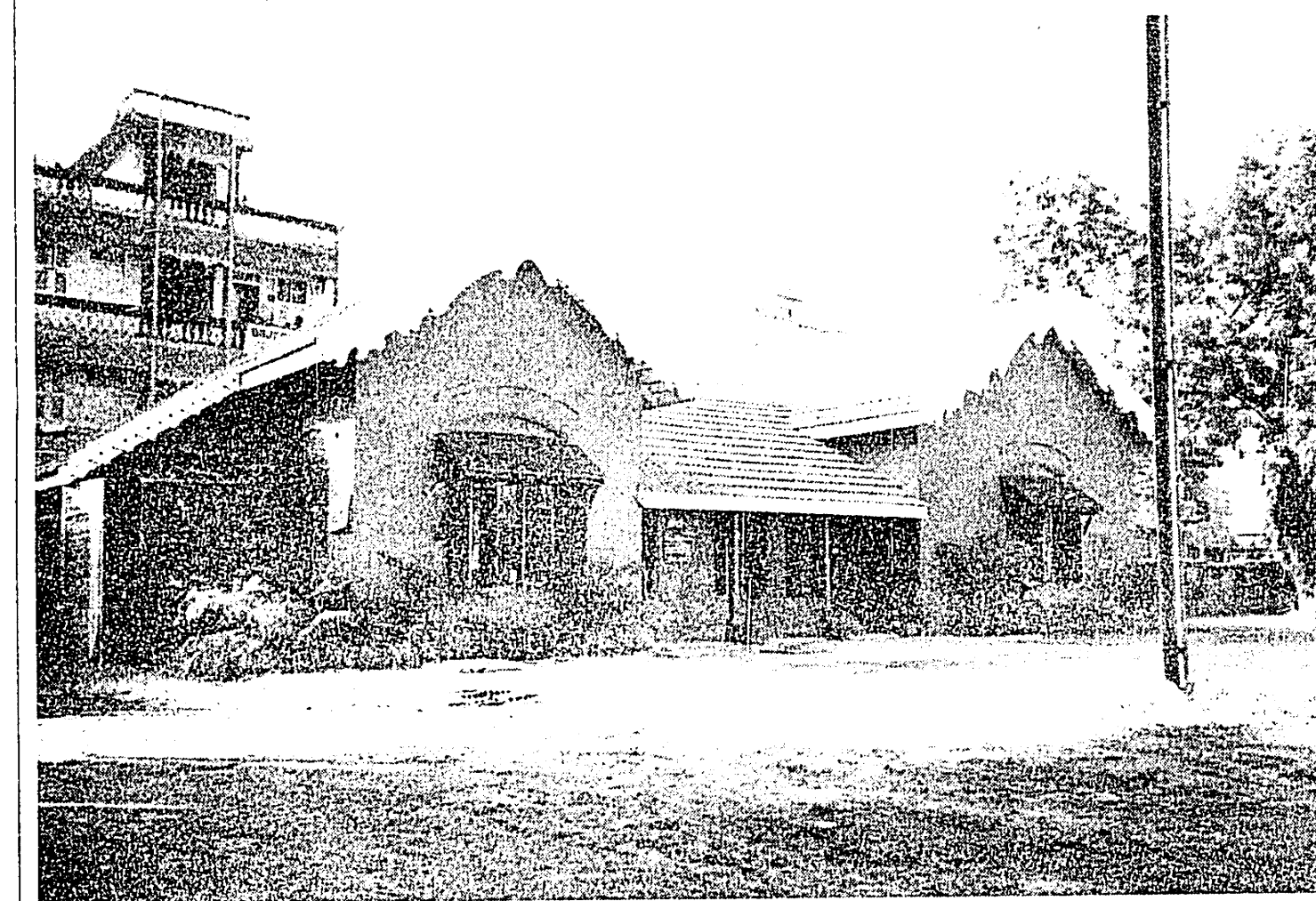
Brushing aside references to these standards, the workers complain that the norms are often followed only in the breach. They allege that the AERB doesn't have the teeth to penalise delinquent stations and that the Health Physics Department is lax in its functioning.

A spokesman for the Tamil Nadu Atomic Power Employees' Union says that exposure radiation should be measured taking into account the time and the radiation level. At MAPS, the management is concerned only with the field level and not the time; it has even removed the time column in the 'work permit' issued to a worker before entering the critical zone.



The Madras Cricket Club went and pulled down in 1981 its famed pavilion that was designed by Henry Irwin and built in 1892. The pre-1990s were the days when heritage consciousness and a dedication to conservation had not caught up with Madras, not even with much of the membership that is now showing an interest in these concepts. The result has been seen in the Club, while celebrating its 150th year, getting its new pavilion to look a bit like the old and, even more commendably, in saving what has for years now been the office 'cottage'. Restoration and renovation of the OLD, with, we hope, proper conservation techniques, has produced the gleaming NEW below. And those within find that an old-shell-made-new can even provide comfortable working conditions. The Club has not been able to trace the date the OLD was built, but from a record here and a note there we think it was built at least before 1903. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

THE OLD... ..& THE NEW



Disputing a uniform safety standard for all nuclear power plants, the Union spokesman states that MAPS cannot be compared with other reactors in the country as its design is old and different from other plants. MAPS has eight primary heat transport pumps (PHP pumps) as against four in other nuclear power stations. "More the number of pumps, higher will be the bends and greater the possibilities of leak," he states.

K Hariharan, Station Director, counters, "The workers' contentions are unscientific and without any basis. We do care about the safety of our workers." As for the time issue, he states that MAPS takes into account both the time and DAC levels before sending a worker into an irradiated zone.

According to MAPS' officials, no harm would befall any worker at the DAC levels followed. MAPS follows a principle of 'As Low As Reasonably Achievable' (ALARA),

whereby radiation levels are restricted to 40 per cent of the permissible limits. MAPS, in a circular, states "individual internal exposures will be limited to 40% of the total exposures to the extent possible on annual basis". Nevertheless, the Union reiterates, MAPS was not able to adhere to the SARCOP standards of 20 DAC level even for a brief period in the early '90s.

According to Hariharan, it costs Rs. 50 lakh a day of delay in starting the operations. This also affects the plant load factor, which currently is 75 per cent. The Union officials state the workers can make up for the loss of time in starting the plant after finishing the maintenance work and have been doing so all these years.

While each side firmly holds to its arguments, the management, at the last sitting with the Labour Commissioner, agreed to a DAC level of 40 instead of 50 for carrying out maintenance work during plant shut-

down. This agreement is valid for two months during which time the Union can approach any authority and get its doubts on the safety aspects clarified.

The workers also want Government to declare cancer an occupational disease. This, they say, has not been done despite several representations and a Supreme Court judgement in a case involving Bharat Electronics Ltd's, where a section of workers handle radioactive materials. If this demand is accepted, their anxiety over the financial security of their families would, to some extent, be reduced, state the Union officials.

Latest: MAPS Plant No. 1 is being shut down from November 15th for 5 days for maintenance. MAPS Plants No.1 and 2 have set a record for continuous power generation, feeding 116MW into the grid in the last 182 days. Since its inception MAPS plants No. 1 & 2 have generated 25,182 million units.

Of dolphins and deluges

The Director of the Madras Cyclone Warning Centre, which is just opposite the Reserve Bank, was a prickly sort of chap, but I got on very well with him and he was certainly not a man given to exaggeration. So when I had finished photographing his radar screen showing the eye of an approaching cyclone, at noon on November 18, 1977, I took him seriously when he tapped the screen and said, "Mr. Miller, if that comes ashore here, this city will be wiped out".

Well, it didn't come ashore here. It missed Madras city, but only by a mere 150 miles. During the night the great storm surge it brought with it (even meteorologists still wrongly call it tidal waves) went 15 miles inland, which might have taken it up to Ambattur if it had hit the city. A few days later I was there looking at fields full of the putrefying dead — men, women and children, cattle, dogs and pigs. Though no one could ever be sure how many died, officials were heard nervously mumbling that the figure might have exceeded 50,000. I was told that most of them were migrant agricultural workers who had come there to help in the harvest. They slept in the fields with no protection of any kind. These were the victims of that raging wall of water that came roaring out of the ocean in the darkness of the night.

On the morning of the 19th, I had a phone call from a reader who was employed at the Air India Radio headquarters next to that lovely old building housing, in those days, the offices of the Inspector-General of Police. My caller told me that the torrential rain accompanying the cyclone had left extensive pools of water on the sands of the Marina close to the road, a good quarter of a mile from the sea. In the one he was looking at, he explained, a dolphin had been stranded, and since I knew a bit about animals would I come and rescue it. Before the fishermen killed it.

This was indeed exciting news. First I phoned the I.G. of Police — I believe Eric Stracey held the post at the time — asking for Police protection for the animal, which was just outside his own office. I then rushed off to see for myself, and sure enough in the extensive pool of water that lay parallel to the road, but far from the surf, a large animal could be seen mov-

ing about and occasionally coming to the surface to breathe.

Eric had promptly sent an Inspector of Police and a dozen or so constables in response to my appeal, but by now a vast and uncontrollably excited crowd had gathered around the pool to watch the animal. The Inspector knew that the dol-

phyn could not survive long so far from the sea and that sooner or later it would be killed for its meat by the fishermen. I urged him to get three or four of them into the water to catch it, pick it up and carry it down to the surf and release it into the ocean, from where the great storm had presumably carried it.

That raised an interesting question I did not think of at the time. Were those huge

obeyed the police, managed to corner and pick up the animal and were carrying it to the sea when I managed this photograph. Our efforts were rewarded and I was relieved to see the dolphin free in the ocean, speeding in a straight line out to sea. The most efficient way for dolphins to swim is by using their horizontal tails to make continuous leaps out of the water, for air has less resistance than water. Fish cannot do this, for, unlike the Cetaceans — the scientific name for the animals that include all the whales and dolphins — the tails of fish are vertical, excellent for swimming, but useless for leaping out of the water like the Cetaceans.

I had only a brief glimpse of the dolphin because of the excited crowd, but what I saw astonished me. Was this really a dolphin at all, I asked myself? It was quite unlike the dolphins I had seen so many times in the captivity of dolphinariums, in movies and during my long voyages at sea. This animal did not have the long nose or snout that is characteristic of the dolphins most people are familiar with.



This shows the surprisingly large extent of the pool left by the cyclone on the sands of the Marina, in which the dolphin was found, far from the edge of the sea. — H.M.

Its head was blunt and rather ugly, the whole of its body seemed to be a light grey with no markings. Perhaps this was a young whale of some kind, I thought, not a dolphin at all. The problem was solved for me by the Curator of Cetaceans at London's Natural History Museum in South Kensington, one of the world's finest. He told me that five species of dolphins were common in the Bay of Bengal and the photograph I'd sent him was of an Irrawaddy Dolphin, so-called because this species is often found far up the estuaries of great rivers like the Hooghly and the Irrawaddy in Burma, after which it had been named.

Naturally I was anxious to get photographs of the dolphin, when it was taken from the water, but the illustration accompanying this article was the best I could do. The excited crowd



Because of the hysteria of the jostling crowd, this was the only recognisable photograph I could get of the Irrawaddy Dolphin, just outside the offices of the I.G. of Police, on what is now Kamaraj Salai (November 19, 1977). — H.M.

I was reminded of this incident recently by a news item that an entrepreneur was proposing to set up a dolphinarium somewhere down the road to Mahabalipuram. I couldn't help feeling a twinge of jealousy and bitterness, because twenty years ago some friends and I had tried to do the same thing. I had my eye on an ideal site for it too, right within the city, not miles away down the crowded road to Mahabalipuram. My dolphinarium, I had decided, would take the place of the present Corporation swimming pool on the Marina. The site was ideal for the purpose, the area quite large enough to accommodate several dolphins, plenty of water and all other facilities, and within easy reach of everyone living in or visiting the city. Madras would have had India's one and only dolphinarium, a tremendous tourist attraction.

But the more we learned the more difficult the possibility of establishing a dolphinarium here in India seemed to be. There was no shortage of dolphins in the Bay of Bengal. But how do you catch and train them, without harming them in any way? Experts everywhere told me the same story. Even if we had the facilities for catching dolphins, each animal would have to be evaluated for its suitability for life in captivity. I was told I'd be lucky if I found one in ten that would satisfy this vital criterion. Those dolphins that did not would show their unhappiness by refusing food, losing weight and presenting an obvious picture of distress. They would then have to be returned to the sea, and we would have to try again. A far better method, we were advised, would be to BUY ready-trained dolphins from such facilities in the United States and have them flown over when our pool was ready for them. Oh, and the very smallest possible facility of this kind, we learned, would cost around half a million pounds sterling.

That put the lid on it. We could think of no way of raising that kind of money. Our plans just withered away. Now others are establishing a dolphinarium somewhere along the Mahabalipuram road. If they succeed and make it work they will certainly make a lot of money. I wish them luck, but must also mention that since we now know how intelligent and sensitive dolphins are, there is a strong public feeling that they should never be kept in captivity at all.

When Dr. Seshadri and I made our attempt twenty years ago dolphinariums were fashionable and all the rage. These days they have fallen into disrepute. Knowing what I know now about these wonderful creatures, I can well understand why. Dolphins are delightful, highly intelligent and sensitive animals that love playing in the boundless reaches of the oceans. Don't turn them into vulgar circus acts to amuse the ignorant. Let's leave these lovely, happy sea creatures where they are.

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN'S questions are from the period October 16 to 31. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.

- On October 30th, Dilip Parikh was sworn in as the Chief Minister of...
 - Which famous revolutionary leader's remains were publicly interred in a mausoleum at Santa Clara, Cuba, some 30 years after his death?
 - At the recently held Channel V awards, who won the coveted Freddie Mercury award for artistic excellence?
 - Roberto Goizueta, who died recently, was the CEO of which globally respected firm?
 - Dr. Jonathan Black of Bath University has pioneered a new concept in cloning, one which can be useful to transplant medicine. What?
 - Which State's assembly witnessed shameful incidents of members indulging in rioting during a vote of confidence session?
 - The first State assembly to have its own Web page is...
 - Which international bestselling author has decided to stop his fiction writing career with his latest book, *Icon*?
 - Which recently became the largest 'single' of all time, with some 31.8 million copies being shipped globally?
 - With what recognition have Gangubhai Hangal, Habib Tanvir and Ammannur Nadhva Chakyar been honoured?
 - What global jolt was the financial world witness to on October 27th?
 - Name the *veena* maestro who passed away in Bangalore on October 28th?
 - Which country's President has ordered a probe following reports that his country's Tamil residents were aiding the LTTE?
 - The new Indian Home Secretary is...
 - Of what crime was British teenager Louise Woodward convicted and then released?
- * * *
- Simple. Name Kamal Haasan's film whose *muhurat* the Queen witnessed during her visit to Chennai.
 - Another simple one. What are the two stations between Chepauk-Tirumailai on the newly inaugurated section of the MRTS.
 - With what distinguished award were Rajaram Venugopal and Sylvia Wright of Chennai recently honoured?
 - Name the four post offices where telephone subscribers can drop their cheques, towards bills, in specially marked boxes.
 - At which temple did the Chief Minister inaugurate the Rs.1.5 crore desilting project of 39 temple tanks in the city?

(Answers on Page 7)

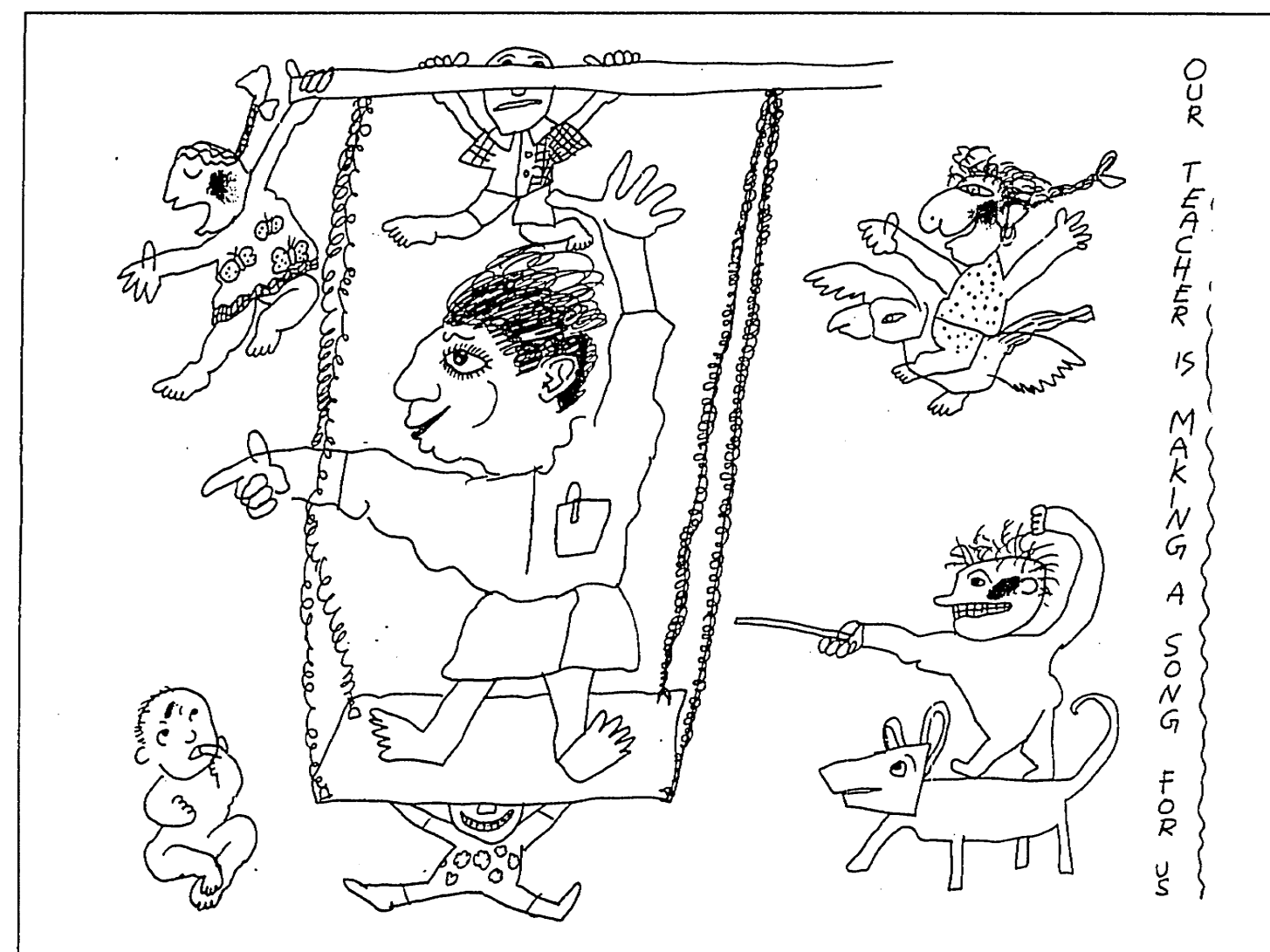
A child has rights

Rights of children ...? Many treat them as punching bags to express private anger and frustration. And, of course, a mother can do anything she wants with her child! Children are the worst abused individuals in the world and they have no voice to protest.

Well, not quite. At least on paper. India is one of the countries which have ratified the UN Convention on Children's Rights. It can be pulled up by the international community for lack of monitoring or for not sending its report in time. "Our report has been sent a year late....," says Ossy Fernandez, a human rights activist, "and has been written to give a rosy picture..."

A workshop for media persons on the UN Convention on Children's Rights was conducted by UNICEF and the Indian Council for Child Welfare in Chennai recently. There were just a handful of media persons present... representatives from *The Hindu* and *News Today* and me... that's all. There were, however, some talented artists, painters, *villupattu* singers — and some NGOs.

The workshop proved to be an eye-opener. Even to get to know the rights of the child is one step forward in the understanding of human problems. Children are vulnerable, especially when very young — smaller, younger, weaker and less mobile than adults. Children have always been a critical



element in the social system, for the promise they hold for the future. Should they, therefore, be seen as adults-in-waiting or as having a childhood by itself a permanent social phenomenon, a social category with its own boundaries and characteristics which give it a special identity? Children's voices, perceptions and priorities are not listened to and are thus not incorporated in the planning and implementation of development initiatives which concern children.

"The newborn ward, at the Institute for Child Health, Chennai, is on the 7th floor; said Dr. Jayam in her presentation. As the Director of the In-

stitute, she fought for twenty years to get it down to the first floor, but because of some problems with the PWD, she could not succeed. She is now retired and consults at the Vijaya Hospital. She says that because of the socioeconomic backgrounds of the mothers who come to have babies there, the circumference of the head of a newborn in Vijaya is one inch larger than that of a baby born in the Institute for Child Health. "The baby has a right to be born in a warm place," she says. "It needs two warm and clean towels, to be wiped and wrapped around it after coming out of the swimming pool of the

mother's womb. It should be taken to a warm and dry corner. Are we prepared to give our future citizens a warm welcome?" she asked.

"The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents," says the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Article 7. In Article 3 it declares that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration.

It is critical to ensure that children participate in partnership and collaboration with adults in all issues concerning them or, at least, are given all the information that is involved in the situation. It is possible to make child participation a less threatening prospect for adults, the two-day workshop concluded.

M Natesh, the artist who took part in the workshop, came up with the sketch above to illustrate the point "all children have a right to joyful education".

* * *

Corrections: Re. the article on N Rajagopalan in *MADRAS MUSINGS*, October 1, 1997.

— N Rajagopalan retired as Secretary, Excise and Prohibition in the Board of Revenue, and not as Secretary, Excise and Customs, as mentioned.

— The concession price for a set of four volumes of *Garlands — Biographies of Musicians* is Rs.870/- (against Rs.990/-) and not Rs.770/- as mentioned.

The errors are regretted.

V R Devika

COOKING with Chandra

Pick up some humble *aval*. Make golden brown *oothappams*, sumptuous *idlis* or crisp *aval fry*.

BEATEN RICE IDLI

- 1 1/2 cups raw rice
- 1/2 cup beaten rice (*aval*)
- 1/4 cup blackgram dhal
- 1/2 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 1/2 cups grated coconut
- 4 green chillies, chopped fine
- 1/2 tsp ginger, peeled and grated
- 1 tbs sour curd
- A small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine
- Salt to taste

For tempering

- 3 tbs ghee
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp asafoetida powder
- A few curry leaves

Method

Wash the raw rice in several changes of water. Drain and soak in three cups of water for a couple of hours. Drain and grind coarsely, adding very little water.

Combine the blackgram dal and fenugreek seeds. Wash in several changes of water. Drain and soak in one cup of water for an hour. Drain well.

Wash beaten rice. Mix together blackgram dhal, fenugreek seeds and beaten rice and grind to a smooth paste, adding very little water.

Combine both the batters, adding salt and sour curd. Set aside for eight hours to ferment.

Just before making the *idlis*, heat the ghee over a medium flame and add all ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add to the *idli* batter.

Add chopped green chillies, coriander leaves, grated coconut and grated ginger. Mix well. Add more water if necessary to make a batter of thick, pouring consistency.

Steam the *idlis* for 15 minutes in *idli* racks in a pressure cooker (without the weight).

Serve hot with a chutney.

BEATEN RICE OOTHAPPAM

- 1 cup raw rice
- 1/4 cup Bengal gram dhal
- 2 cups beaten rice (*aval*)
- 5 or 6 green chillies
- 4 small bunches of coriander leaves, chopped fine

- 3/4 cup grated coconut
- Salt to taste
- Oil for shallow frying

For tempering

- 1 tsp oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp asafoetida powder
- A few curry leaves

Method

Combine the rice and Bengal gram dhal. Wash in several changes of water. Drain and soak in 2 1/2 cups of water for two hours. Wash the beaten rice in several changes of water. Drain and soak in two cups of water for one hour.

Drain well. Combine the rice, Bengal gram dhal, beaten rice, green chillies and chopped coriander leaves, grind to a fine batter. Add salt and mix well. Set batter aside for six hours to ferment.

Heat the oil over a medium flame and add all the ingredients for tempering. When the seeds splutter, add to the batter. Add the grated coconut. Mix well. Add more water, if necessary, to make a batter of thick dropping consistency.

Heat a tawa and prepare thick dosas. Fry till golden.

Serve hot with a coconut chutney.

Chandra Padmanabhan

The birth of a new star act

Recently I was witness to an event that to my mind will be looked upon as a landmark in the Indian music scene. Called 'Purna Kumbham' (the golden pot that emerged from the Cosmic Ocean, containing *amrit* - the heavenly nectar) the event saw the launching of a new fusion group called 'Brahma'. The Gandhi Mandapam in Adyar, provided the perfect setting for this event. Its carved columns and granite walls gave a sort of timelessness to the new sound of 'Brahma', though I would not put the *mandapam* on my 'must-see' list of places in Chennai (Graffiti in the men's loo - 'Join the MDMK!')

The evening started with a *Tappattam* performance by the Tanjore group led by Rangarajan (who plays Siva in Anita Ratnam's latest dance piece). He was joined by 'Tiger'

by Mithran Devanesan

Jaffer, the *Puliattam* expert who also showed off his skills with six fiery balls that he twirled in circles dangerously close to his body. For those of you who have not seen a *Tappattam* performance, I would urge you to catch one the next time it comes around. It is a sound that echoes through the villages of time and stirs the joy of rhythm in you. It is an infectious beat that prompts you into foot-stomping and hand clapping.

Coming back to the main event — the launching of 'BRAHMA'. Ganesh and Kumaresh, the still baby-faced violin duo, who started their musical careers at age five (and were favorites of the late MGR) and who have now matured into a prodigious talent, held centre stage. The music was composed by Ganesh, who also added vocals now and then.

Vikku Vinayakaram — the irreplaceable maestro *ghattam* player (He has a Grammy under his belt) — and Balu on the tabla led the percussion that brought the house down. Paul Jacob on bass guitar arranged the music, giving it a contemporary sound, and he was joined by Jim Satya on the keyboards

and John Antony on lead guitar. The result was an exciting fusion that was as Indian as *idli* and *sambhar* and contemporary as Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Tight, well balanced, the evening saw a new sound emerge that Chennai can proudly call its own. The audience, made up of grandpas and grandmas, middle-of-the-road people like me, yuppies, wannabes and just plain folk were kept busy clapping, yell-

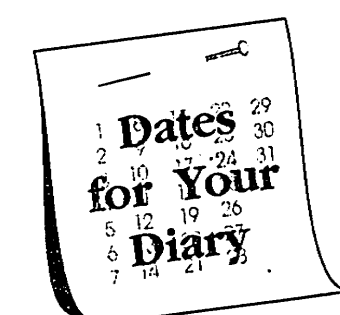


The new fusion group in Madras, BRAHMA, who were a hit in their premier performance in the city, 'Purna Kumbham'.

ing and swatting at mosquitoes. And, at the end, the promise of future concerts was met with

wild applause, because we all knew that a certain magic had taken place that night and, if

the band can keep its act together, we were witness to the birth of a new star.



Till November 20 : *Vision Recaptured* is an exhibition of hitherto unseen work by ten artists who have received a part of their training and/or education in the UK.

C Douglas, Rm Palaniappan, Vasudha Thozhur (all from Chennai), Ananda Moy Banerjee, Anita Chakrabarty, Kristine Michael, Nita Thakore, Pankaj Panwar, Subba Ghosh, and Sunil Gawde, the ten artists selected for this exhibition, all express themselves through a

Scientific paper from Chennai

(Continued from Page 1)

Sundaram points out when asked what science and research in India lack.

Referring to what Dr Rodriguez, Director of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, observed the other day about most Indian students going into infotech areas and that we would suffer in the future because of this, Dr Sundaram reinforces this view — "He is absolutely right. Students look at secure employment for the future, especially abroad, and they plunge for computer science. No one wants to go into pure science any more. Leaders of Indian Industry should do something about it; they should spot talent and sponsor their research."

variety of art forms including ceramics, sculptures, oils, lithographs and digital prints, at the Lalit Kala Akademi gallery.

November 18-28 : Heinrich Boll (1917-1985) — *Life and Work: Photo-exhibition* (at the Max Mueller Bhavan)

November 18 : Inauguration by Dr Subramaniam/Mr Koçkriz. Reminiscences on Heinrich Boll by Dr Herring. A lecture on "Boll and Gandhi" by Dr N T Bhat (at the Max Mueller Bhavan, 5-8 p.m.)

November 19 & 21 : Films based on Boll's works (at the Max Mueller Bhavan, 6.30 p.m.)

November 19 - December 3 : *Human Form and Art*, an exhibition being held as part of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence. It is curated by Chennai-based artist Reddeppa Naidu, who has selected

for it paintings and sculptures from all over the country created by artists born since Independence.

Though Indian art has basically been quite figurative in the past, in recent times more and more young artists appear to feel more at home in figurative expression, using the human form to communicate abstract feelings and emotions. This can be seen in some of the work of the local talent to be included in this exhibition, like Asma Menon, Vaidehi, Chidambarakrishnan, Sajitha Shankar, Aparajithan, Ebenezer and Umashankar.

December 1-6 : Rose Auslander (1901-1988) — *Mutterland Wort - Photo-Exhibition*.

December 1 : Inauguration: Readings of poems by the Madras Players (At the Easel Gallery, 6.00 p.m.)

research as a career, especially in biological sciences. Engineering, medicine and computers are the priority areas. This must change.

— The ethos of scientific research does not exist in India any longer. Only drastic steps can remedy this situation. The fallout of the existing ills will be known in 20 years and it will not be pleasant.

— By A Special Correspondent

Early December : Kate Rusby has been steeped in song all through her twenty-some years. From the age of seven she has developed a love and a talent for the fiddle and singing.

Growing up in a rich atmosphere of unaccompanied singing has led to a distinctive solo voice, mature beyond her years. She accompanies herself with delicate and sensitive guitar and piano work. But audiences will also remember her for the dry witty Yorkshire humour that decorates her performance. She is one of the youngest and most talented singers on the British folk scene.

Answers to Quiz

- Gujarat; 2. Che Guevara; 3. Asha Bhonsle; 4. Coca Cola; 5. He has created embryos of headless frogs; 6. Uttar Pradesh; 7. Himachal Pradesh; 8. Fredrick Forsyth; 9. Elton John's *Candle in the Wind*; 10. Fellowship of the Sangeet Natak Akademi; 11. The New York Stock Exchange suffered its biggest fall in ten years; 12. V. Doraswamy Iyengar; 13. South Africa; 14. B.P. Singh; 15. 'Shaking' a baby of mixed Indian-American parentage to death.

16. *Manidanyagam*; 17. Tiruvallikeni and Lighthouse; 18. Member of the 'British Empire'; 19. Tiruvanniyur, Tambaram, TNagar and Park Town; 20. The Kothandaram temple in Saidapet.

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Two athletes of promise

Two athletes of promise were noted during the latest edition of the A L Mudaliar athletics meet, M M Manubha (Ethiraj College) and Selvakumar (Madras Christian College). While Manubha set a new meet record of 12.10s in the 100m (also a new State University record), Selvakumar narrowly missed the meet record of 10.70s by 0.10s. Manubha and Selvakumar also won the 200m, setting meet records, 25.30s and 22.00s, respectively.

Born in Palghat (Kerala) and brought up in Madras, soft-spoken Manubha took to athletics as an eight-year-old. With her father a former footballer and her mother a former Kerala hockey player and an athlete herself, it was but natural that Manubha should take to sport early. She began by participating in her father's employers' athletics meet, the Port Trust Employees' Children's sports meet. A product of St. John's MESS, Baba Nagar, she began representing Tamil Nadu in different age-group championships from 1989 and has gone from strength to strength in the 100m and 200m events. Her speciality is in getting off the blocks in a flash to surge ahead of the others.

Manubha was first coached by C K Valsan of Madras Port Trust but earlier this year joined her present coach, S Gnanasekaran (a former State and National sprinter). She came close to being selected for the Junior Asian Games after attending the

training camp in Patiala in 1996, but a viral fever came in the way of her making it to the team. Failure to recover in time also marred her chances of representing Tamil Nadu in the Junior National Championships in Bangalore. She was unable to attend the camp this year as it was within a few days of the ALM meet. She is therefore now concentrating on the State senior selection trials and the All India Inter-University Athletics meet to be held in December.

Manubha trains with the Karl Marx Athletics Club run by Gnanasekaran and works out six days a week at the ICF Stadium. A diploma holder in



Selvakumar, the other collegiate champion. He's from Madras Christian. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

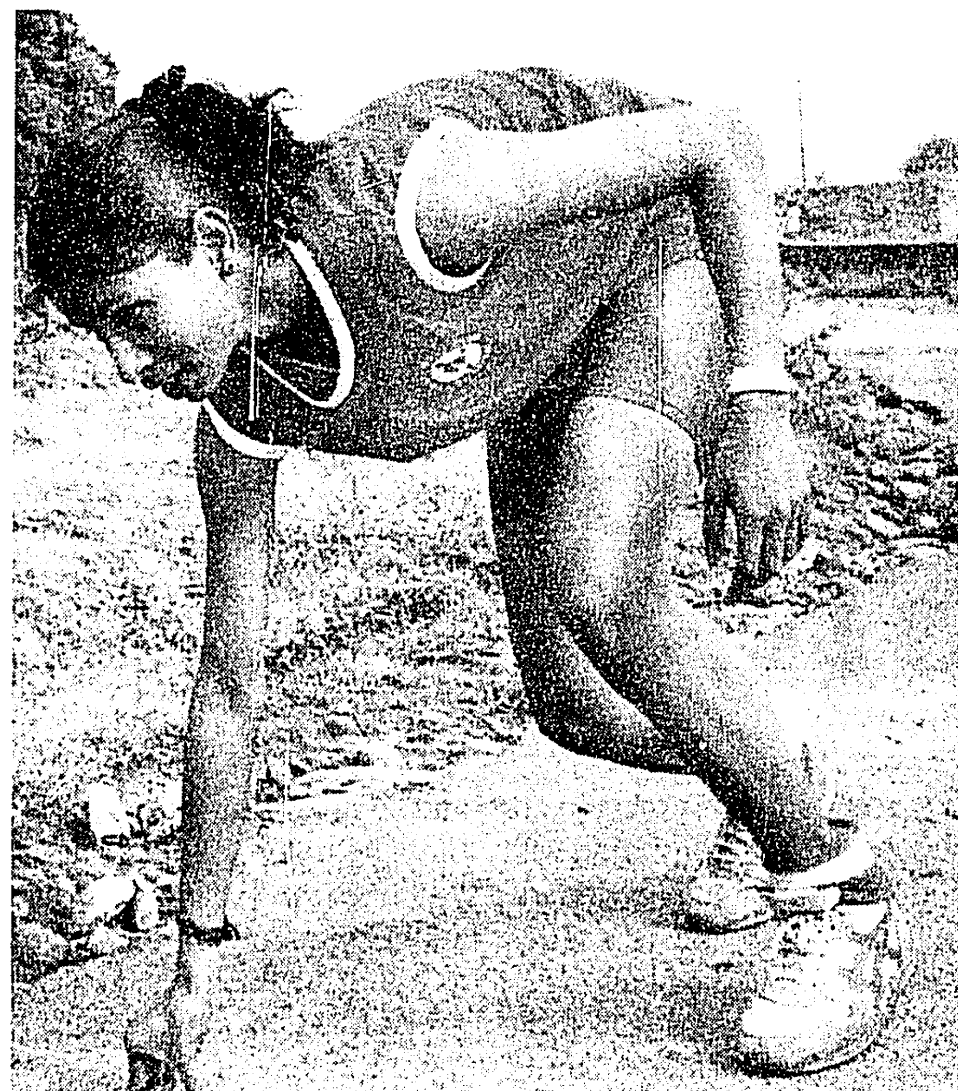
Athletics from the National Institute of Sports, Bangalore, Gnanasekaran sees that his athletes have "a good diet, adequate training and sufficient rest". Of Manubha he says, "She is a very dedicated

athlete, sincere, obedient and disciplined and has a never-say-die attitude". But he rues the fact that athletes like her lack the best facilities and generous sponsors. Chips in her father, "It is difficult, for instance, to buy quality shoes; they range from Rs. 2,000 upwards and whatever shoes I can afford wear out quickly". Gnanasekaran points out that unsatisfactory shoes could cause knee pains and ankle twists when used on the hard and uneven surfaces of the grounds in India.

A second year B.Com student, 19-year-old Manubha is good in her studies too. She has always tried to maintain a balance between athletics and studies, even if it has meant finding time for tuitions.

The other promising girl athlete in the State, V Pandeeswari of Madurai, is the National Junior record holder for the 100m and 200m (11.92s and 23.95s respectively). But Gnanasekaran fancies Manubha's prospects better in the Asian scene, particularly if she can get adequate sponsorship.

It is a different story for the 24-year-old Selvakumar. He did not run seriously until he was 15. And then he became a champion runner at Britannia High School, Padi, from where he participated in the zonals and at the district level. Selvakumar idled for a year after his XII Class, but when his friends prompted him to do something with his running



M M Manubha, the record-breaker from Ethiraj College, practising at St. Thomas' Mount.

talent, he joined MCC in 1994. There he met his present coach, V V Sebastian of the Sports Authority of India. He was selected to represent Madras University in the All India Inter-University championships in 1996, but had to withdraw because of a muscle injury. It was not until the 1997 edition of the ALM meet that he could concentrate on his running, without being plagued with injuries or slowed down by college exams.

Selvakumar, who is from Thanjavur, is a third year Philosophy student who reads a lot of religious books "to control the mind". He is firmly believer that athletes can also fare well in studies; "with discipline, sportspersons can achieve the right mix between studies and sport," he says.

Selvakumar is very serious about his training; Coach Sebastian, a former athlete, adds "Selvakumar is very hard working, obedient, sincere in his training and has the ambi-

tion to come up in life". He trains at the SAI grounds and can be found practising at the Nehru Stadium every Monday and Friday evening.

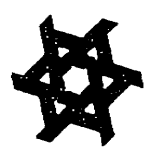
A self-confident Selvakumar says he is aiming at Rajeev Balakrishnan's National record in the 100m (10.5s). His coach is confident that "he will win a National medal."

The son of a retired PTC bus driver, Selvakumar too hopes he will be able to get a sponsor who will help him to develop his running skills. Otherwise, like many others, what little talent he has will only get him a job — and then he'll begin to concentrate on that and not his natural talent, feels his coach.

Manubha and Selvakumar are two promising Tamil Nadu athletes who have the potential to wear India's colours, but that potential needs help if it is to develop to the national and Asian levels. Anyone out there reacting?

G Krishnan

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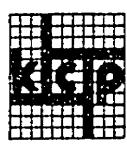
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