

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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TN: A major A-power state?

Tamil Nadu is expected to become a major nuclear power generation centre in India by the year 2010. This will depend on two major projects coming through. When they go on stream, the total atomic power generation in the State will go up to around 3,450 MW.

One of the projects is the Kudangulam project, for which an agreement with Russia is likely to be a reality soon. And the other project will see

Kalpakkam get 2x500 MW indigenously developed Prototype Fast Breeder Reactors. The Centre has in the IX Plan allocated Rs.102 crore for preliminary work for the latter project and Rs.82 crore for construction of the reactors. According to officials, the project will go on stream in 2007, with construction expected to start in 1999.

Speaking about the agreement with Russia, R Chidam-

baram, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, recently said that the Centre will shortly sign the long-awaited supplementary agreement with Russia for the 2x1000 MW Atomic Power Project at Kudangulam, Tamil Nadu. The supplementary agreement is warranted as the original Inter-Governmental agreement (IGA) between the erstwhile USSR and India has had to be modified in the light of the changed political circumstances.

Soon after the signing of the IGA by the Rajiv Gandhi Government with the USSR, the Soviet Union disintegrated,

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Ten years — no laughing matter

A couple of the many guarantees of the Humour Club are, "We will certainly laugh at whatever joke is cracked and we will make you laugh too!" The politicians do the latter well, don't they? But that's not what they are meant to do. They should leave it to the humour brigade!

Good laughs, better health, stress-free lives — that's what the Humour Club promises. It's a manifesto any one of the political parties of various hues would kill to have!

At last! Got the politics bit out of my system.

But wait. Here comes a joke on a politician who has collected a throng for his speech.

How? You may ask. A kilo of onions free to each one who attends.

It's election time after all so there were a few more of these than usual.

It's been ten years and the same *Aala maram*, every Sunday mid-morning, at the Rajaji Hall grounds. An enthusiastic band of men, women and children, of

all ages from 8 to 80 looking for a getaway from the concrete jungle that Madras, is fast becoming congregate and start with a prayer — a full-throated, hearty laugh!! 'Tanglish' (Tamil and English) is the language used. Of course it is allowed, if you can justify 'Hinglish' or the 'masterful innovations' in language of Rushdie.

Present for the birthday were the methodical ones who had painstakingly compiled their jokes and seriously noted them, leaving nothing to the vagaries of memory, and there were the little boys totally free of inhibition. From 'kadi' jokes (pj's) to riddles they served it all up.

P. R. Govindarajan of 'Kalakendra' and 'Ragini Creations', that brought such classics as *Ethirnichal* to the stage, pioneered the concept of the Humour Club. To have survived ten years is no laughing matter, when associations and coalitions don't cast a week.

Oops! Haven't yet got politics out of my system!

Priya Krishnan



A SLOW FLOWER BLOOMS

All these years it looked like just another variation of a cactus to an uneducated eye. But suddenly in the last few months it struck passers-by in the eye, as a solitary 'stalk' towered over the rest of the vegetation at the Gemini, and then burst into bloom neither stalk nor bloom look elegant, but both have been certainly eye-catching.

The plant is apparently commonly known as 'Century Plant' or 'Rail Kathali' in Tamil. Its botanic name is *Agave americana* and it belongs to the family of Agavaceae.

These glow-growing plants are remarkable on account of their curious leafless formation, they can withstand drought in arid areas where no other plants survive. The thick, fleshy leaves are 3-6 feet long and 6-8 inches broad. Flowering denotes the maturity of the plant and a plant flowers only every 7-10 years, though under less favourable conditions flowering may take 20-25 years. An erroneous notion, which gives it its name, is that it blooms only once in 100 years.

The fibre from the leaves is used to make ropes and twine and even to manufacture fabrics. The sap of the plant is extensively used by Mexicans to make fermented liquor.

Rajind N Christy

Seeing red at TNPL

The Rs.419 crore sales Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Ltd (TNPL) is facing several problems, the most serious of which is the Madras High Court ordering TNPL to take necessary steps to see that the red colour in its effluent is removed before it is let into the Pugalur channel. "We are taking all possible steps to remedy the problems," states T. Jacob, Managing Director, TNPL.

According to TNPL officials, talks are being held with an Australian company on treating the effluent. All these years, the plant has been functioning with a 'No Objection Certificate' from the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) as the latter has refused a 'consent letter' because TNPL has been unable to remove the colour in its effluent nor does it have any time-bound programme for doing it.

Except for the colour, the treated water conforms to the BOD/COD levels prescribed by the TNPCB and the water discharged from the plant is used to irrigate about 1,400 acres of cane fields, company officials state. Nevertheless they have to fulfil the Court Order or face action.

Another problem is that the company has got itself caught in a discount war in the Rs.9,000 crore domestic paper industry. Not so long ago, the Company used to enjoy a premium for its newsprint and printing and writing paper (PWP). This is no longer the case.

The premier paper manufacturer in the country with the most modern machinery till last year, TNPL was promoted by the State during MGR's regime to manufacture, with financial assistance from World Bank, newsprint and PWP from bagasse — a pioneering effort in the country. The company was once touted as a shining example of how a government undertaking should be run. The World Bank, in one of its reports, paid rich accolades to the Government for the freedom given officials to run the company professionally.

Unfortunately, today, the same TNPL is a sad example of how a company should not be run. This is despite the fact that the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) and the general public own 36.51% and 28.57% stake in TNPL's Rs.68 crore equity, as against government's share of 34.92%.

The State had given an un-

dertaking to the World Bank back in 1995 to reduce its stake in the company to 26% within one year of the company commencing commercial production on its second machine. (The company had doubled its capacity to 1.80 lakh tonne by installing a new plant at an outlay of Rs.585 crore — including a World Bank loan Rs.263 crore — in January, 1997).

The company, which came out with a premium public issue in 1995, is yet to nominate two outside directors as promised at that time. Further, IDBI, which can nominate four representatives to the company's Board, has restricted itself to two and, hence, TNPL's Board is packed



with government nominees. Laments an official, "The company is functioning more like a government department than like a corporate entity". The fall-out is that the company's once and former pride, its managers who have grown with it in the last one and half decades, are leaving the company one by one.

On the financial front too, the Company is facing tough times. The Central Excise Department has slapped a demand for a huge sum as tax arrears on the grounds that the company is not eligible for certain waivers. Several of its investments are also proving headaches. There are, in addition, considerable overdues from its dealers. Several of TNPL's long-standing dealers, who came to its rescue in times of crisis, are offended that the company has of late doubled its dealer network by adding several new dealers.

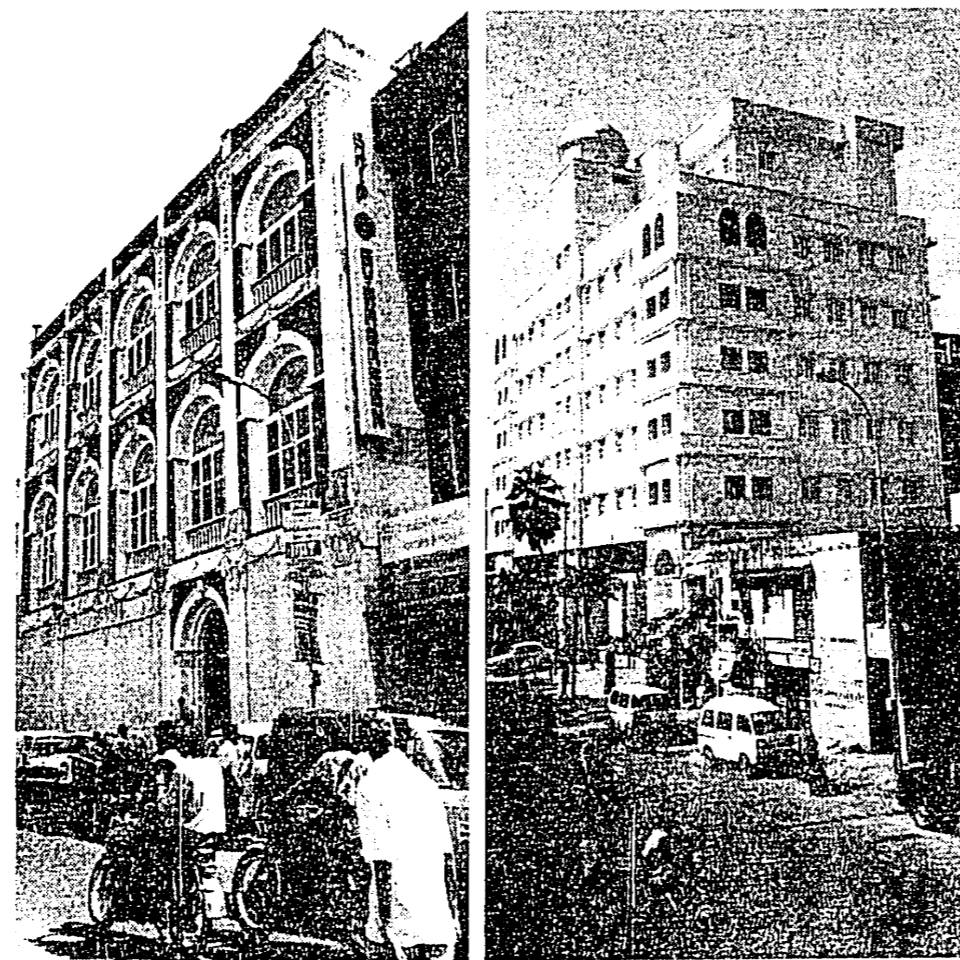
The only silver lining is the firming up of domestic newsprint prices as recent rupee prices have made imports unattractive. The Company should take advantage of the situation, market sources state. The company should also improve the quality of its maplitho and creamwoven papers, they add.

As a cost-cutting measure, the company should reduce its dependence on imported pulp, costing Rs.15,000, and instead, scout for cheaper inputs. It is also suggested that the company integrate backwards by taking over sick sugar mills or installing a new one of its own. While that is for the future, the company should concentrate

on negotiating bagasse-steam exchange contracts with several sugar mills immediately.

According to industry estimates, the future of the domestic paper industry is bright, with per capita consumption expected to rise to 4 kg by the turn of the century from the present levels of 3.5 kg. By the year 2000, the demand is expected to be of the order of 49 lakh tonnes, comprising of 40 lakh tonnes of paper and boards and 9 lakh tonnes of newsprint. Moreover, with the Centre re-introducing the 'actual user' condition for imports and a levy of 10% import duty, and with rising international prices, the local industry should do better.

Given this scenario, all at TNPL are pinning their hopes on M S Srinivasan, Industry Secretary, the ex-officio Chairman of TNPL, who, while he was the Managing Director of TNPL, installed efficient information systems to monitor costs and was the key mover for TNPL rolling out pink newsprint, now favoured by financial dailies in the country, and computer stationery. Will he have new answers to TNPL's woes?



The OLD...

...& the NEW

Our OLD is of an old building in Armenian Street, George Town, owned by A S Shipping. Whether they built it or bought it — and if so, from whom — is not known, but it certainly looks a building that goes back to the 1910s and 1920s. It also appears to have received a face-lift in the last couple of years, which has also included embellishments such as period coloured fanlights. But what struck us about the building were the original fluted pillars and the elaborate garlands that link the ornate capitals of the pillars. Both pillars and the garlands — in their usage — bear a striking resemblance to the embellishments on the facade of 'Graeme's Dugan' on Grae-ne's Road, our NEW. This gleaming new building with its echoes of the Regency style, is occupied by the Corporate Division of the State Bank of India. The Bank's choice of this Raj-style building makes us wonder why it doesn't pay more attention to some of its own buildings in a similar style, the Mount Road Branch, for one. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



THE STATE OF THE PAPER INDUSTRY

One likely casualty of the Tamil Nadu Government's attempts to enthuse the Indonesia-linked Sinar Mas Pulp and Paper (India) Ltd to locate its mega packaging paper project in Cuddalore (see MM, February 1) will be industry's demand for a mother pulp unit. The subgroup on the paper industry formed by the State Government to recommend measures to boost the paper industry in the State had requested Government's assistance in promoting a 300 tpd bagasse-based pulp unit at an outlay of Rs.450 crore.

The Subgroup had stated that 60 per cent of the paper produced in the State is accounted for by non-integrated mills using waste paper as raw material and the mills would be in a better position to improve their efficiency and their product quality if they were assured of sustained supplies of chemical pulp.

The State Government, however, seems to favour a greenfield project to generate

more employment opportunities and is banking on Sinar Mas to invest.

Tamil Nadu has 74 paper mills accounting for 12 per cent of the country's paper production (41 lakh tonnes). Excepting two mills, Seshasayee Paper Boards Ltd (SPB) and TNPL, the rest are non-integrated ones.

According to the Subgroup, if the State is to maintain its share in the domestic industry, then it has to add 2.5 lakh tonnes capacity by the turn of the century and another 3 lakh tonnes before 2005.

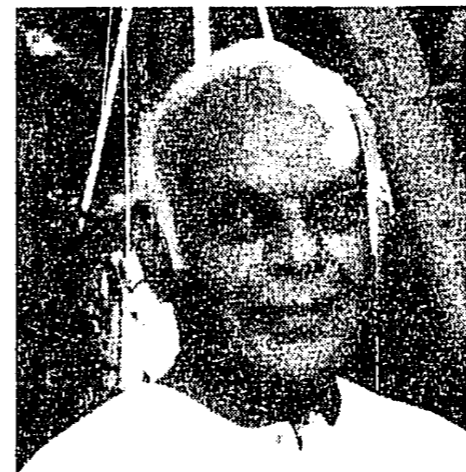
The Subgroup has requested the State Government to impress upon the Centre the need to give the industry five years to restructure itself to meet global competition. The Industry wants the Centre to revise upward the import duties on paper. It has also requested the State to ensure adequate availability of bagasse without affecting the returns to sugar mills which use it for power generation. The report states that bagasse for making paper adds more economic

value to the country and provides better returns to the promoters.

Among other demands of the Industry are:

- Encourage recycling of paper by formulating suitable legislations.
- Permit the industry to raise wood plantations to meet its raw material needs.
- Encourage co-generation and captive generation of power.
- Encourage use of treated paper mill effluents for irrigation purposes.
- Encourage establishment of paper conversion units in Tamil Nadu.
- Ban packing of food items in plastic or wooden packaging material.

Meanwhile, Seshasayee Paper Board Ltd is going ahead with its Rs. 230 crore expansion programme to double capacity to 1,20,000 tpa by next June. Similarly, the Coimbatore-based Amaravathi group is expanding capacity to 250 tpd from 170 tpd.



C. Nachiappan, now Swami Nachiappan, a pioneer in colour printing.

The man who made printing an art/craft

The stories about him can make another Mahabharata. Nachiappan, who now wears the robes of a swami and has been installed as the Swami of the Koviloor Madam near Karaikkudi (Chettinad), invites the controversy by the dozen. His association with Kalakshetra has been a colourfulness, with the gossip mill grinding its grit without pause. After my curtain-raiser about the photographic exhibition of the early dancing years of Rukmini Devi Arundale appeared in *The Hindu*, there was call after call to give me stories that will serve as ideal material for a future bestseller I may write!

Nachiappan came to the Theosophical Society as a young boy in the early Thirties. Rukmini Devi saw him through his education. Nachiappan had an aptitude for art and became a disciple of Conrad Woldring, a Dutch commercial photographer who arrived at the Theosophical Society. He learnt photography, commercial art, furniture design and lighting for the stage from Conrad. Nachiappan took over from Woldring after the latter died in an electrical accident in 1941. In 1945, Nachiappan created a makeshift darkroom and began to make his own photographic prints. At this time, Kalakshetra was borrowing time at the Theosophical Society's Vasantha Press to print books on Montessori methodology and other textbooks, as well as pamphlets and brochures for the Kalakshetra programmes.

In 1948, The Kalakshetra Colour Laboratories became Kalakshetra Publications. Under Nachiappan's management, Kalakshetra Publications began its activities by publishing *Education for a New World* by Dr. Maria Montessori. Kalakshetra Publications undertook photo documentation of Kalakshetra activities, performances, visitors and classes. The dark room developed for the photographic

department of Kalakshetra Publications in 1950 served professional photographers like the Magnum group, Henry Cartier Bresson, Brian Brake who worked with *National Geographic* and *Time* and *Life* magazines and leading advertising agencies in Madras like J. Walter Thomson and Benson's.

Kalakshetra Publications was the first to introduce many photographic services in India: like the processing of rolls and large format Ekachrome trans-

parencies to world standards for reproduction purposes for the advertising world; processing of Kokad colour rolls and large formats films for Ektacolor print system for such professional uses as colour showcards for movie theatres and for the advertising industry; the making of colour transparency duplicates for advertising, making dye transfer prints from trans-



The young Rukmini Devi Arundale photographed by Nachiappan, who captured on film all the Kalakshetra personalities and programmes for years.

parencies for use in advertising; making commercial and industrial pictures for advertising and setting up photolab service both for black and white and colour. J. Walter Thomson & Co. was helped to set up its photo lab in the Fifties and this led to the setting up of photo labs by ad agencies all over India. The Kalakshetra photo lab also helped in setting up manual colour photo labs in Hyderabad, Bangalore and Madras for many clients.

The lab also took up micro-film services on a commercial basis for customers like *The Hindu*, the Oriental Manuscripts Library, the State Archives in Madras and Hyderabad, the Adyar Library, Dr. Swaminatha Iyer Library, the Regional Meteorological Centre, Madras etc.

(Continued on Page 7)

December decibels and death-traps

Quite a lot has been said and written about the ever-increasing number of *sabhas* and the consequent number of concerts and concert hours during the Season in Chennai. The decreasing number of listeners at these concerts has also been a topic of discussion in the last few years. One reason, of course, is that supply far exceeds the demand.

There are so many *sabhas* competing for so few auditoria, so that some concert series even start in late November. So many residential colonies have come up in the peripheral areas of the city and many people have moved out to these colonies from the central part of the metropolis. But most of the available auditoria are concentrated in the Mylapore/T.Nagar areas of the city. Only music lovers within reasonable distances from these halls are willing to attend concerts due to problems of commuting and, nowadays, of security. But how many can this limited audience attend during an extended season?

Besides the quality/quantity of concerts and the audience, there are other aspects to the concert scene that many people do not seem to have thought of. Two aspects that need to be considered have to do with human wellbeing and safety. One is the sound/noise level at the concert halls due to overamplification and the other



A Kalakshetra dance-drama of a time long ago when the December Season was not as hectic as it now is. Kalakshetra is also one of the few places where there is an auditorium safe and sound-friendly. The photograph is another Nachiappan picture.

is the ever-decreasing level of safety standards in these halls due to overcrowding during the concerts of popular artists. In many a hall, even if the auditorium is somewhat empty, people cannot in times of emergency get out safely in haste. Easily accessible and an adequate number of exits do not exist in most halls.

Let us take noise levels first. During the recently concluded season, at least one popular *sabha* paid heed to the complaints of a writer and reduced the noise levels. But this was an exception. There are well-defined levels of amplification that are acceptable in concert halls and these should be enforced by the authorities. I am not talking about the quality of sound but the loudness of it. Even a child understands that

beyond a point loud noise hurts the ears and grown-ups know that a person can actually get hurt irreversibly by a constant bombardment of the eardrums by high levels of noise.

There is a real problem here — we are increasingly like the Caribbean islanders in our attitude in such matters — the louder the better (literally and metaphorically). This has become steadily worse in the last 15-20 years. Of course, technical arguments will be advanced on behalf of musicians and listeners for very high amplification levels. And musicians will complain that they do not get feedback of their own voices or instruments.

There is a solution to this which should satisfy the musi-

(Continued on Page 6)

NOTHING EXCEEDS LIKE EXCESS

One, the *sabhanayaka*s and other festivalmongers have yet to grasp the reality beneath the brouhaha, although they have begun to deplore the poor levels of audience turnout except for a few star performers. And the sponsors have yet to introduce a sense of discrimination in providing the funds.

The 'mad, mad Madras season' has, over the years, expanded to encompass the 4-month period beginning on November 1st and concluding on the last day of February. Even those who have begun to speak or write about the excesses of the extravaganza underestimate the numbers. The data assembled by *Sruti* for the 1997-98 covers only the first three months of that period. Yet, it is clear that the number of organisations conducting festivals, the number of festivals conducted and the number of music and dance performances organised this season will ex-

ceed the figures for the 1996-97 season.

Here are some details:

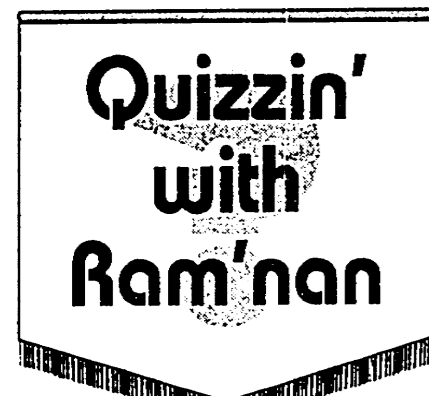
- Fifty-nine organisations conducted 65 festivals during the full period of the 1996-97 season. By the end of January this year, with a month still to go before the season concludes, 57 organisations had already conducted 66 festivals.
- The music and dance programmes for the four months of the 1996-97 season totalled 1,732; the score at the end of January this year is 1,954 — and a number of programmes have already been scheduled for February. A conservative estimate is that the final figure for the current season will exceed the previous season's total by about 20 per cent. This is galloping inflation, nothing less.
- The number of music perfor-

mances during the 1996-97 season was 1,425. The tally during the current season is already 1,605. The number of dance events during the 1996-97 season was 307. It has already been overtaken, with the score at the end of the first three months of the current season at 351.

On the other hand, the audience turnout did not match the increase in the number of programmes; on the contrary. The sparse attendance at many performances is the talk of the town. Over the years, it is the alien invaders who have constituted the hard core of the audience.

The statistics, even at this point, confirm once again that, to quote what was said in *Sruti* last year, "It is sheer madness, indeed, to boost supply to the extent it has been done when demand is so inadequate."

(Courtesy *Sruti*)



(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN'S questions are from the period February 1 to 15. Questions 16 to 20 pertain to Chennai.)

1. Name the popular South African Cricketer who called it a day on February 4th.
2. Name the former Union Minister and senior member expelled from Congress (I) for six years.
3. Which Indian temple's replica is being built in Sri Lanka to ward off ill-effects and prevent political turmoil there?
4. Name the legendary lead singer of Beach Boys who passed away recently.
5. Which epic film has been nominated for a record 14 Oscars?
6. What bestselling song lyrics for 1997 were sold for \$442,500 to the Lund Foundation?
7. Name the outfits banned immediately after the Coimbatore blasts.
8. In the recent list of best universities, the top university outside the US and in the world is in India and ranked 18th. Which is it?
9. To which State's people did Mohamed Azharuddin publicly apologise for allegedly calling them 'thieves' during a Ranji Trophy match?
10. To which group of people did the U.N. award \$ 5.5 million as compensation recently?
11. Name the cricketer who became the first No.10 batsman in 96 years to score a Test century.
12. Name the popular writer and visionary who was knighted shortly before his name was linked with a sexual scandal.
13. Who recently became the second oldest winner of a Grand Slam men's singles title when he captured the Australian Open?
14. Name the magazine which has initiated a crusade by publishing a list of offenders contesting the present Parliamentary elections.
15. What dubious distinction did Tripura's cricketer Hemulal Yadav achieve recently?

* * *

16. Who is the new Police Commissioner of Chennai?
17. Name the city-based sporting legend whose house was ransacked on February 6th.
18. Where in city was the State's second Mass Mailing Centre opened on February 10th?
19. Name the former Finance Secretary and Professor Emeritus of the Madras Institute of Development Studies who passed away recently.
20. Where in Chennai was an 'Aarupadai Veedu' Subramanya Temple built over one acre, inaugurated recently?

(Answers on p.7)

In Madras and at Home always a Church Unionist



The Rt. Rev. Leslie Newbigin

The Right Rev Leslie Newbigin who died recently in the UK had a long and distinguished career in the Madras area. A Tamil linguist, he was also a proponent of the unification of the Church in South India and was one of its first Bishops.

The following are excerpts from his obituary in *The Times*, London:

“Leslie Newbigin was an outstanding worker in the cause of Christian reunion. He was elected at the early age of 38 to be one of the first bishops of the Church of South India at the point of union in 1947.

James Edward Leslie Newbigin was born into comfortable circumstances in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1909. His parents were members of Jesmond Presbyterian Church there. After education at Leighton Park School and Queens' College, Cambridge, he had every intention of entering his father's shipping business. At Cambridge, however, he became caught up in the work of the Student Christian Movement, then in its heyday. Recruited to be the movement's secretary in Glasgow, he went to live with Dr Archie Craig, the chaplain of the university, later the first general secretary of the British Council of Churches.

Newbigin's vision of Christian unity became enlarged. His personal life enjoyed at the time even greater enlargement, for he was able to pursue his growing friendship with another staff member, Helen Henderson, whom he was to marry in 1936.

It was to be an ideal marriage which enormously supported Newbigin in the demanding career that lay ahead.

Both offered themselves for service in the foreign mission of the Church of Scotland in India, although Newbigin's marriage had to await his theological training. This he sought not in a Scottish divinity hall, but in the theological college of the Presbyterian Church of England in which he grew up. There, at Westminster College, Cambridge, his prowess as a student became legendary and he was deeply influenced by the then principal, John Oman, the philosophical theologian.

Appointed to the Madras area, he became both an expert

Tamil linguist and a committed evangelist, ready to “live rough” in a way which did not commend itself to all missionaries. His theological prowess swiftly caused him to be drawn into the difficult closing stages of the reunion movement, which had been going on since 1919. At the crucial point of union he became Bishop in Madras and Ramnad, the only former Presbyterian to become a bishop at that time. The pastoral simplicity with which he interpreted the office of a bishop of which he gave a vivid picture in 1951 in his *South India Diary*, allayed any Presbyterian suspicions of prelacy.

In 1959 he left India with some reluctance to become

In Memoriam

method of reunion, setting forth his convictions in an influential book *The Reunion of the Church* published in 1948. Its second edition in 1960 gave him the opportunity to write a hard-hitting introduction in which he dealt faithfully from his point of view, with the 1958 Lambeth Conference for its discouragement of other Anglican churches from following the same method. Characteristically, his argument was incisively theological rather than pragmatic. It led to a memorable clash between him and Geoffrey Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury...

Leaving Madras in 1974, when his service was recognised by his appointment as CBE, he returned to England overland

general secretary of the International Missionary Council, then drawing near to its integration with the World Council of Churches.

Newbigin had already become a notable figure in World Council circles, having served as chairman of the weighty commission on the main theme for the second assembly at Evanston, Illinois, in 1954, and as a vice-chairman of the Commission of Faith and Order.

Newbigin served as an associate general secretary of the World Council after integration in 1961 until he was called back to southern India as Bishop in Madras in 1965...

Newbigin was a doughty proponent of the South India

by local buses to gain an insight into both history and geography. He then gave five years service as lecturer in theology at the Shelly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. He courteously declined an invitation to be an assistant bishop in the diocese of Birmingham, and firmly identified himself with the United Reformed Church, into which the Presbyterian Church of England had flowed.

This had two fascinating consequences: the ecumenical leader of worldwide renown being minister of a small congregation near Winson Green prison, 1980-88, and (earlier) the vision of a bishop being presiding officer of a Free Church assembly. He served as Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, 1978-79...

His publication of a short but influential book, *The Other Side of 1984*, for that year, led to many invitations to lecture across the world, which he did with undiminished zest. He was to write five further books before his death, the last being published in 1995.

He was given honorary doctorates by six universities. His combination of spiritual power, intellectual acumen and evangelical zeal, yoked to profound ecumenical commitment, made him one of the outstanding British figures on the world Christian stage in the second half of the century.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, a son (who used to work for Neil Kinnock) and three daughters.

DECEMBER DECIBELS AND DEATH TRAPS

(Continued from Page 5)

cians as well as protect the listeners' eardrums. After all, the listener is entitled to listen to music that is not distorted. (The fact that the poorer *sabhas* cannot afford expensive acoustics is another matter). Today's electronics is such that it is possible to provide feedback to musicians through miniaturised headphones that are not at all cumbersome. Also, the artists can wear tiny FM microphones on their collars or saree flaps, which will ensure a close-to-deal conveyance of the music they produce. In such an arrangement, amplification can be reduced to acceptable levels and music will be music, not noise. Most important, our eardrums will be spared.

As for health and safety as-

pects, let us consider the indifferent conditions of our halls. Tin sheds and asbestos-roofed halls are common. Sadly, thatch-roof pandals which still provide the best acoustics for our kind of music and which are ideal for our climate — the thatch prevents the heat from filtering in — have gone out of existence. Remember how nice it was when the Music Academy used to organise their series in the thatch-roof pandals at the P.S. High School grounds? With the sides open, they are also the best accommodation for people to escape from in case of emergency.

Except for one, the airconditioned halls do not switch on the airconditioners for the daytime ticket-free concerts. With no ventilation in

such halls designed for airconditioners, the artists and audience get cooked inside the closed auditorium. As for the asbestos-roofed halls, the less said about how hot they get the better, even though the sides are open.

Most of the halls lack legspace between rows of seats, making movement difficult. With the lack of adequate exits and with these narrow spaces between rows of seats, many of these halls are death traps. Look carefully and you will also notice that many concert halls do not maintain the standard minimum firefighting equipment for an emergency. With the average age of concertgoers around 45-50, any emergency is bound to cause problems with such primitive facilities.

Besides these, there are other comparatively minor complaints. There are some halls which do not have proper toilet facilities. In other halls there are continuous programmes from 9 a.m. — 10 p.m., but no canteen facilities. In some places the temporary kitchens are so close to the hall that the cooking smells smart the throats of both the listeners and the artists, leading to bouts of coughing, while the smell of the smoke from the cooking oil which pervades the atmosphere is not conducive to the comfortable listening of music.

If our concerts are to attract more people, these health and safety aspects need to be addressed to make the year-end celebrations less worrisome.

Lakshmi Venkatraman

A half century of providing American information

For a half century, USIS libraries in New Delhi, Chennai, Calcutta and Mumbai, have been used by millions of Indians in all walks of life, from school students to governors, chief ministers, senior IAS officers, judges, politicians, and academics and other leading public personalities. These four libraries, with their collective holdings of about 85,000 books, one thousand journals in print and electronic form — including back issues of many magazines — provide the latest information on American life, culture, government, politics, society and management practices.

The USIS library in New Delhi celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1996, the library in Mumbai celebrated its golden jubilee in 1994 and the library in Calcutta in 1993. Established in 1947, the USIS library in Chennai is currently marking its 50th year of service to South Indians; it celebrated its golden jubilee last month.

Over the last five decades, the Chennai library has grown steadily from a small lending service to a highly effective reference and research facility. Its collection, which started with just 800 volumes, now has more than 24,000 books and subscribes to 127 magazines.

Several years ago, Dr. S.R. Ranganathan, the then Professor of Library Science at the University of Delhi, arranged with the American library to

provide training for a few university students. Since requests like this for professional guidance kept coming from several Indian institutions, a formal internship programme was introduced in 1968 at the New Delhi library. The libraries in Chennai, Mumbai and Calcutta soon followed suit. Several Indian students of library and information science have benefitted by this programme and are currently occupying important po-

• by Thomas D. Gradisher

sitions in India and abroad. It has become a common practice for library science students of leading universities in India to visit a USIS library for orientation as part of their learning process.

USIS libraries also have extensive outreach services. This is usually done through book and article discussions, satellite TV programmes and telephone conferences, in addition to individualised book and article promotions. The four libraries in India specialise in specific areas in providing information: Over the past several years, the library in Chennai has

include a broad range of journals, from art and entertainment to business and public policy and many other subject areas.

To keep pace with the fast growing Information Technology (IT) industry, the Chennai library is currently concentrating on introducing a Bulletin Board System (BBS) as a pilot project for institutional members. Once it becomes fully functional, these members can have remote access to the OPAC as well as other library resources. The BBS will be of great use to the outstation members who can browse the library catalog without visiting the library. Very soon, it, along with the Internet, will open new and exciting vistas of information retrieval and usage for library members.

Today, after years of refinement, innovation and marketing techniques, USIS libraries in India are model electronic libraries using state-of-the-art technology. The traditional im-

age of USIS libraries as “book bound” has changed over the years with the addition of new services and new technology, such as the CD-ROM and access to online databases. This includes bibliographic, indexing and textual databases, and directories.

The combined resources of all the American Centre libraries in India can be accessed through the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). Proquest General Periodicals OnDisc offers access to almost 1,000 titles in abstract and index form, with nearly 400 of them available in full-text format. The titles in-

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The Centre has also set up a multimedia system and has ten very popular multimedia databases. Patrons are allowed to use these PCs to access them for research purposes.

In order to keep pace with current trends in the world of information technology, the USIS libraries are transforming themselves into the vibrant, pro-active and sophisticated “Information USA System”. This system is a network of information resources about the United States and provides seamless access to state-of-the-art electronic databases.

All this is a far cry from the beginnings.

Ballad of the ballot

The fashionable question on every lip with indelible ink on index finger tip is have you cast your vote in this election.

Thereby hangs a tale, dear friend, what with frequent change of my residence I leave behind a trail of votes uncast.

I did, I did inform the pundits with long forms and affidavits, alas the administration denies me cognizance.

But hope does spring in my heart tells me for something eternal me soon, very soon I shall have my chance at the hustings.

Combines and coalitions of fair weather friends and unholy alliances will join and break and form governments periodically ad infinitum

And like the student who takes twice annually his examinations every September and March we'll have failed governments and vote begging politicians.

Padmini Natarajan

TN: A MAJOR A-POWER STATE?

(Continued from Page 1)

putting the project in limbo. However, life was infused into the project in 1995 with the Russian Federation agreeing to offer its expertise but on modified terms. Russia will now restrict itself to the supply of design, plant and other equipment instead of executing the entire project on a turnkey basis as was originally agreed. The civil and other engineering works will now have to be handled by India.

The deal, it is stated, would revitalise the Russian nuclear industry, but India too will benefit, 85 per cent of the Rs.11,400 crore project being on a soft loan basis.

The Russians are expected to submit a Detailed Project Report (DPR) within two years of signing the agreement and the Indian Government will go ahead with the project if the Report is approved. Rs.200 crore has been allocated in the IX Plan for the DPR.

Necessary clearance from the pollution control authori-

ties has been obtained for Kudangulam after the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies were conducted. According to Chidambaram, the required land has also been acquired for the project about 25 km for Kanniyakumari.

Two options are being examined for the disposal of spent fuel. While the IGA talks of sending back the spent fuel to Russia, India is not averse to reprocessing it here. Spent fuel from a light water reactor can be reprocessed, as it will contain 2 per cent Uranium, thereby enabling it to be used as a feed-stock again.

Pointing out that China too is buying identical reactors from

Russia, Chidambaram allayed fears that India is buying reactors no longer on the production line. Stating that these reactors are very different from the Chernobyl reactor, Chidambaram explained that the Kudangulam reactors would be provided with leak-tight containments consisting of 1.2 m thick pre-stressed concrete and 8 mm-thick steel lining on the inside, so that, in the unlikely event of an accident, the reactors will be isolated from the environment.

Chidambaram also disclosed during his visit to Chennai that plans were being drawn up for a 6.3 million litre/day desalination plant at Kalpakkam.

Answers to Quiz

1. Dave Richardson; 2. Buta Singh; 3. Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangam; 4. Carl Wilson; 5. Titanic; 6. Candle in the Wind; 7. Al-Umma and All India Jihad Committee; 8. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; 9. Bihar; 10. The victims of the Gulf war of 1991; 11. Pat Symcox; 12.

- Arthur C. Clarke; 13. Petro Korda; 14. Outlook; 15. First batsman in first class cricket to be timed out.

* * *

16. P. Kalimuthu; 17. Ramana-nathan Krishnan; 18. Anna Road P.O.; 19. S. Guhan; 20. Tiruvanniyur.

NOSTALGIA

A sporting declaration sets up a thriller

When Mark Taylor's Australians take on Azharuddin's Indians in the first match of the 3-Test Pepsi Cricket Series at Chennai's M.A. Chidambaram stadium from March 6th, there'll be only one player on each team who will remember what it was like in the middle during the last Test the two countries played at Chepauk. That was in September 1986, and it was one of the most famous matches of all time, the second tied Test. It was a thriller which Azharuddin and Steve Waugh — and many in the crowd — will remember...

The several milestones reached during the match were overshadowed by the events that occurred on September 22nd, the last day of the Test when the game ended in a dramatic tie off the penultimate ball of the Test match. The only other instance in which a Test ended in a tie was the December 1960 West Indies-Australia Test at Brisbane, which also ended with the penultimate ball of the match.

What set up the excitement and thrills of the last day? "It was the sporting and bold declaration by Border", feels former Test medium pacer T.A. Sekar, who adds that "the Australians played positive cricket and went for a result". "It was the courageous effort from Dean Jones, who used his feet very well against the spinners," feels former South Zone batsman V. Sivaramakrishnan. And the dubious decision against Maninder Singh was responsible for the thrill of a tie, feel many who were part of the crowd on that day of exciting

cricket. When the match started, however, there was no promise of the thrills to come.

Batting first, Australia piled up 574 for 7 declared on a perfect batting pitch. Tasmanian David Boon (122) and skipper Allan Border (106) scored centuries, but the highlight of the Australian first innings was the courageous 210 by Victorian Dean Jones in his maiden Test appearance against India. The stadium was a cauldron. It was

● by G. Krishnan

always at least two degrees Centigrade hotter inside the concrete-and-steel enclosed ground with no means for cooling breezes to reach the middle. And that was a particularly hot September. Jones suffered the most from the conditions. Despite suffering from dehydration, vomiting, leg cramps and stomach upsets, he determinedly battled the Madras heat, never giving up. "And Border extracted the best from him, keeping him going through the worst," recalls former Test off-spinner M. Venkatramana.

India replied with 397. Srikanth, Azharuddin and Ravi Shastri scored half centuries but it required a captain's knock from Kapil Dev (119 from 138 balls) to save India from a follow-on. It was vintage Kapil Dev, according to former international cricket umpire R.V. Ramani.

Australia struggled a bit in

the second innings but were a comfortable 170 for 5 on the fourth day of the Test when Border, to the surprise of everyone, declared the innings closed before play on the final morning. As news of Border's declaration spread, the crowd began to build up at the stadium. And after lunch the stadium was packed to watch the Indian run-chase.

Chasing 348 to win at four runs per over from a maximum of 87 overs, India began in style with Srikanth knocking the ball all over the ground for a quickfire 39. Gavaskar and Amarnath added 103 runs for the second wicket that laid the foundation for India's charge for victory. Gavaskar missed his century by 10 runs. Ravi Shastri kept his cool throughout and closed up one end. Azharuddin pitched in with 42 and C.M. Sharma added 23.

The climax set in when last man Maninder Singh joined Shastri with India four runs from victory. India required two runs from four balls in the last over when Shastri took a single and ensured that India did not lose. And that's when off-spinner Greg Mathews trapped Maninder lbw and history was created at Chepauk where so much history had been written from the first days of India Cricket.

To this day there are mixed reactions to Shastri taking that last run and giving Maninder, a batting 'rabbit', the strike. "He played it safe and ensured that India did not lose," says Sunil



The umpire's finger is up, Maninder Singh is out and the Test is tied, only for the second time in the history of the game. The only picture taken of that historical decision, this one was clicked by amateur-photographer MALA MUKHERJEE, who regularly exhibits her work.

Subramaniam, the left arm spinner who is the third highest Tamil Nadu wicket-taker in Ranji Trophy cricket and no mean bat. Cricket enthusiast Ramachandran, who was present on the last day at the popular 'D' stand, however recalls Shastri's role and says emphatically, "He did the wrong thing by taking that single and let the nervous Maninder face the bowling. If it hadn't been for that, India would have won."

Sunil Subramaniam, who missed his college final exams because of the Test, however feels, "Australia deserved to win the Test as they bowled us out twice, which we could not do to them, and for the way Border led during the tense moments, keeping a cool head". And former Test opener W.V. Raman sums up the Test, "There was everything in that Test, the Dean Jones double century in boiler conditions, the brilliant hundred by Kapil, good spin bowling by Mathews, the sporting declaration by Allan Border and that dubious lbw decision. We could not have asked for a better result than a tie." Border was to say later, "It was a fantastic result which did justice to a great game".

Greg Mathews picked up five wickets in each innings to make it 10 for 249 in aggregate. His spinning partner, Ray Bright, took the other five wickets in the Indian second innings. Sunil Gavaskar became the first player to appear in one

hundred consecutive Tests and Ravi Shastri achieved the double of 100 Test wickets and 2000 Test runs during this historic Test. And Dean Jones and Kapil Dev shared the Man of the Match award for their centuries.

Will we see a match like that again a few days hence? The result, almost definitely not. But why shouldn't it be a thriller?

It's a hot March — and it'll be hotter in the Chepauk cauldron. But both teams can handle warm conditions, though it might not make for high individual scores. After the Indore pitch debacle, the Kingston pitch drama and the mysterious boot marks on our own Chepauk pitch during the Delhi-Tamil Nadu Ranji Trophy match, the pitch could be the focus of much interest. But curator Parthasarathy says, "I will prepare a sporting pitch" and Kapil Dev, Chairman of the BCCI's Pitches and Grounds Committee promises that all will be well.

Raman feels the series will go in favour of India, but is quick to point out that it will depend on the kind of pitches we produce. Sunil Subramaniam, however thinks, 'Shane Warne will be a major obstacle for India'. He however expects the series to end in a draw as "neither team is likely to dismiss the other twice". But whatever the result — and Chepauk usually produces results — a good game can be expected Chepauk has always assured that.

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