

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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Vol. IX No. 5

FREE ISSUE

June 16-30, 1999

## Losing a bit more of Adyar Creek?

(By The Editor)

The Adyar Creek and its estuary were once over a hundred acres in extent and had been envisaged as a wild life sanctuary. Now it is less than half that area in extent

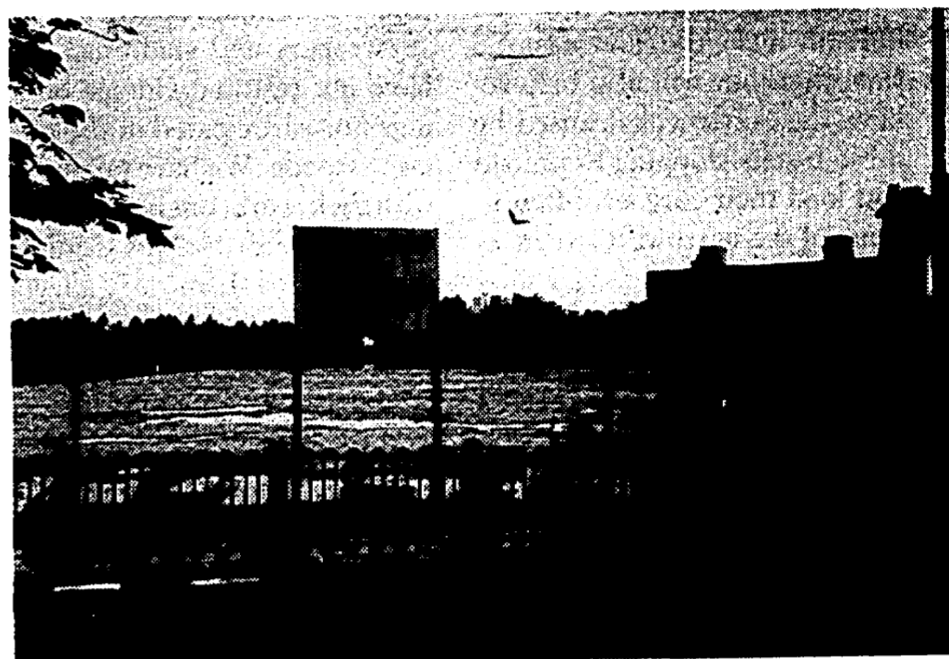
and plans for a sanctuary seem to be in abeyance. Instead, work on one more development is scheduled to start shortly — and a little more of the Creek will be lost. The

work to begin will be on the Dr. Ambedkar Memorial. Already up on the site is a proclamation of intent and a plan for the memorial.

The Adyar Creek and its estuary fall under the Coastal Regulation Zone, 1991. During the monsoon, these areas hold the backwaters of the Adyar River besides serving as a prime breeding and feeding habitat for the migratory birds that visit.

The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) allotted an extent of 5 acres to the Adi Dravida Housing Development Corporation to construct a memorial to Dr. Ambedkar in 1991. Work began on filling these five acres of low-lying land that form a part of the Adyar Creek.

(Continued on Page 7)



Five acres of the Adyar Creek were filled in with sand in 1993 and never cleared despite a Court Order. That order permitted the building of the Ambedkar Memorial in 0.75 acres and the development of gardens around it in a further 0.75 acres. Work is to start shortly on that Memorial. But does a 'mantapam' constitute a 'memorial' or is it an auditorium — that the Order prohibited? And are 'mantapam' and gardens to be raised in 1.5 acres or will the filled-in five acres (seen above) serve for the purpose? The plan (below) that has been raised at the site (above) does not make anyone the wiser. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

## Let us remember the Constitution

In the course of his order dated 9.3.94, Justice Kanakaraj of the High Court stated:

‘While paying homage and deliberating on the Centenary Celebration of Dr. Ambedkar, it is but proper that we begin with a reference to the Constitution of India. Though a later introduction by the Constitution, 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, Article 48-A is in furtherance of the United Nations Conference on human environment held at Stockholm in June 1972 in which India had participated. That conference had taken a number of steps for the protection and improvement of human environment.

Article 48-A of Constitution of India is as follows:—

“48A. The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country.

Protection of environment. Read with Arts. 514(g), 14 and 21, the Supreme Court has drawn the following conclusions:

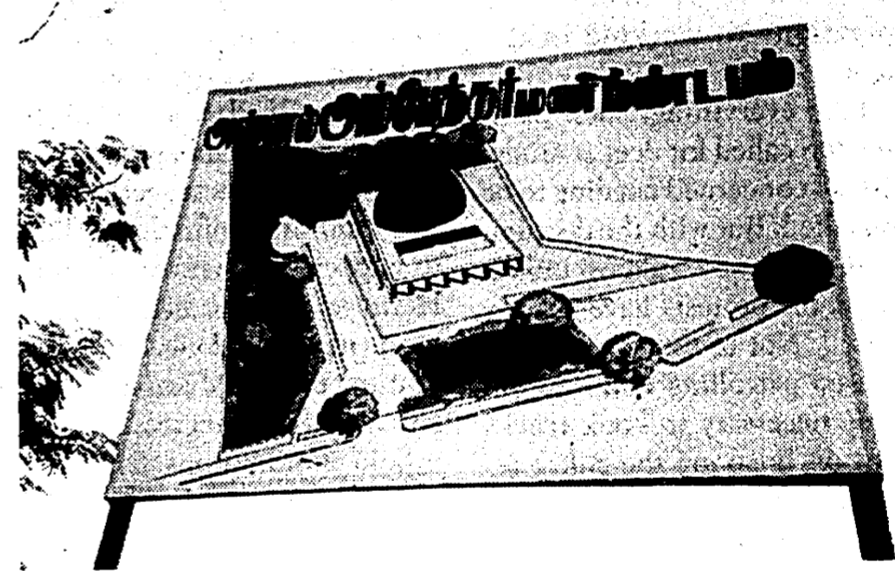
- It is a constitutional duty not only of the State but also of every citizen to protect and improve the environment and natural resources of the country.
- Though neither Art. 48A nor 51A is judicially enforceable by itself, it becomes enforceable through the expanding interpretation of Art. 21, so that in case of a failure of the foregoing duties, the Supreme Court or a High Court would entertain a Petition under Art. 32 or 226, as a Public Interest Litigation brought by any individual or institution in the locality or any social action group, even by a letter.

The fundamental duties introduced by the same Amendment Act is also worth looking into.

Article 51-A(g) is as follows:—

“51-A. It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures....

The emphasis made by the learned counsel for the petitioner is that the respondents have no right or jurisdiction to convert wet lands and low-lying areas into building an auditorium or car parks. At the risk of repetition I make it clear that the petitioner has no objection for the construction of a memorial to Dr. Ambedkar in a fitting manner. The manner in which the auditorium has to be constructed has been explained by in the second counter affidavit of the sixth respondent. It does not make a secret of the idea of the respondents to erase the wet lands at least an extent of five acres for the present.....



## A ‘current’ crisis

It is surprising to hear Mr. ‘Arcot’ Veerasamy, the State Electricity Minister, announce that there will be load-shedding in urban and rural Tamil Nadu due to a ‘current crisis’ (*The Hindu*, April 2, 1999). This must be viewed in the light of the Minister’s earlier assurance that there would be no load-shedding whatsoever this summer (*The New Indian Express*, January 22, 1999). The basis for this sudden and convenient change of stance is apparently due to “overdrawal by the States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka” (*The New Indian Express*, April 8, 1999). Without going into the merits of this plea, the State Electricity Board and the Minister must first look at the flagrant wastage of elec-

tricity taking place in Tamil Nadu.

Several thousand hoardings and neon signs in Chennai waste precious electricity to advertise through the night. At the Gemini Flyover alone, there are at least 50 such sets

of neon lights and spotlights that burn throughout the night. The same is true in several other parts of the city, especially at major traffic junctions. This situation is not very different in Coimbatore, Madurai and other urban cen-

● by **Bharath Jairaj**  
Editor, *CAG Reports*

tries in the State. CAG’s repeated complaints on this wastage of energy has not yielded much result and why this colossal wastage of electricity cannot be stopped continues to be a mystery.

An argument that is often heard at the State Electricity Board offices is that the Board gets precious revenue from this

wastage of electricity. This is untrue, since many of these hoardings are on private domestic property or on private buildings. And for this reason, they are only charged domestic rates for the electricity consumption, though their activity is clearly commercial. Still

(Continued on Page 4)

# Daylight curbs on trucks in the city?

The latest move to decongest traffic in the city is expected to be the banning shorly of truck movements in 24 trading areas of Chennai between 10.30 a.m. and 8 p.m., *The Man From Madras Musings* understands. These areas are expected to include Walltax Road, Broadway, Royapuram and Tondiarpet. The 24 areas listed are said to handle 95 per cent of the truck traffic during these hours.

Keeping the trucks out will not only make the flow of traffic smoother, but will also help relieve the bottlenecks caused by these trucks stopping to unload and load their cargoes, often in some of the narrowest streets in the City, it is stated.

While the State Traffic Department's move is likely to be welcomed by other roadusers, MMM can't exactly see the Trade taking kindly to these restrictions. In the first instance, with much of the truck traffic from outside the City arriving in Chennai only during the night, trucks might have to wait a whole day to unload and load again, pushing up costs. On the other hand, traders could think of working during the night and remaining closed during the day. What, then, happens to their daily business? A third issue is that many of the trucks are headed for or from the Port. And the Port workers prefer day-long operations to working in the night.

Like everything, such planning too called for deeper study, with all concerned needing to be consulted. But with the decision having been taken almost unilaterally, the protests have already started. Not to mention the increased patrolling that will become necessary to book trucks bent on breaking the rules; remember, breaking the law is part of the challenge of life in the City whenever a new one is introduced.

## Getting around Act?

Ever since INTACH and other heritage buffs in Chennai sought a Heritage Act for the city and found themselves studying a Heritage Act for the State, there's been enthusiastic hope in these circles that Tamil Nadu will get an effective Act before the Millennium. The draft act that *The Man From Madras Musings* has seen is certainly an improvement on the Mumbai heritage regulations which the conservationists here cited as not only the pioneering step but also the way to go. MMM now hears that the Mumbai regulations are facing problems — and in those problems there is a warning for Tamil Nadu, which conservationists would do well to study and ensure it doesn't happen here.

When Mumbai's Heritage Conservation Committee was recently reconstituted for a three-year period, the heritage activists found that the 1995 stipulation of a "heritage conservation ar-

chitect" and an "urban design specialist or (one) having experience in conservation architecture" was not fulfilled this time round. The Maharashtra Convenor of INTACH has stated, "It is shocking that the government has chosen to ignore the individuals and heritage groups who have taken Mumbai's heritage movement forward, and to bring in architects with no standing in the field of heritage conservation. These architects have designed skyscrapers and stadiums; they have not restored vintage buildings nor participated in the heritage crusade. We have no quarrel with their work, but how on earth do they qualify for this Committee?" One of them, it is alleged, called the heritage conservationists "a bunch of jokers who are taking the city for a ride!"

The eight core members nominated to the Committee include two architects (with little heritage background — one even said he had only taken the subject for credits during his college career!), two structural engineers,

Tamil Nadu	39	33	31
Kerala	20	16	16
Andhra Pradesh	42	41	39
Karnataka	28	27	26

The figures for the future are based on the following growth rates: UP 2.3, Rajasthan 2.3, Bihar 2.2, and M.P. 2.1 and Tamil Nadu 1.1, Kerala 1.2, A.P. 1.5 and Karnataka 1.5 per cent (National average 1.8). Thus, literacy and family planning will give the four Hindi-belt States 25 more seats than now by 2016 and the four Southern States 17 seats LESS, a gap of 42 seats. The four Hindi-belt States will make this political gain as a consequence of having 54 per cent of the 329 million population that will be added in India by 2016!

Unless there is going to be a more equitable distribution of Parliamentary seats, it could lead to the Southern states watering down their family planning programmes and losing the gains from them, MMM fears. This therefore is a problem that needs greater attention than is being

much as we did. MMM this time came across the story in an interview with G D Patwardhan of Mumbai, whose "incurable but non-fatal infection" is the railways. Amongst the immense amount of railways and train material he has, is a cutting from a "1901 issue of a South Indian newspaper". Given the contents of the letter which appeared in that daily, the paper could only have been *The Madras Mail*; it did enjoy a bit of fun from time to time. The letter, undoubtedly a spoof, read:

"I am arrive by passenger train at Ahmedpore station and my belly is too much swelling with jack fruit. I am therefore went to the privy. Just as I am doing the nuisance, that guard making whistle blow for train to go off and I am running with brass pot in one hand and dhotie in the next when I am fall over. I am get leaved at Ahmedpore station. This too much bad, if passenger go to make \*\*\*\*\* that dam guard no wait train five minutes for him."

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

an environmentalist, a city historian, the Director of the Prince of Wales Museum and a Corporation official "not below the rank of Chief Engineer to be nominated by the Corporation". The official will also serve as the Committee's member secretary.

MMM is not suggesting that this kind of nomination is likely to happen in Chennai when the Heritage Act is passed. But Government would do well to pay attention to the Mumbai experience in this respect too. Some ex-officio nominations from non-governmental bodies might go some way toward solving the problem — but even that is not a foolproof method, MMM agrees. What is really needed is Government commitment to a Heritage Act and its goodwill in seeing that it is implemented in the right spirit. It is commitment not laws that will make the Heritage Act work.

## Losing by planning

The 25-year freeze on parliamentary seats lapses next year. Presumably, the next allocation on seats will be on the basis of the 2001 Census. And those figures, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands, might leave the Southern states with fewer seats in the Lok Sabha. That, it would seem, is the price you pay for literacy and family planning that is a consequence. Forecasters predict:

State	1999	2001	2016
Madhya Pradesh	40	43	44
Uttar Pradesh	85	93	99
Rajasthan	25	29	30
Bihar	54	55	56

## ...& a railway story

As delightful is this bit of railway lore that *The Man From Madras Musings* thinks he's read before, but whether he has or not, many a reader is unlikely to have and is likely to enjoy it as

The newspaper reports: 'Mr. Patwardhan beams gleefully at reading out this diatribe. "It gives us so much insight into travel in those days," he says.'

## In brief

★ The other day, listening to a lecture on Indian English by a speaker sympathetic to the variation, *The Man From Madras Musings* was surprised to hear a Professor of English wonder what the necessity was to worry over errors students make so long as you understood what they were saying. That is tantamount to accepting 'Butler English' as a variation. And accepting as acceptable a newspaper's headline referring to the 'forward' of the book and repeating this version of 'foreword' at least a couple of times in the body! So much for Spellcheck replacing those vanishing tribes called subeditors and proofreaders.

★ Surprise, surprise! Do you know what was the second biggest film hit in Japan in 1998 after *Titanic*? *The Man From Madras Musings* learns that it was *Muthu*, a three-year-old Rajnikant starrer that grossed \$5 million in Japan with a 24-week run in Tokyo. The success of *Muthu* has about ten Tamil movies lining up for release, including those of G Venkateswaran-Maniratnam, like *Dalapati*, *Anjali* and *Nayakan*.

★ Amusement parks are becoming moderately successful business, *The Man From Madras Musings* finds. When the dolphins let down one showman, he brought back business with sea lions. Another has decided not to take chances with animals; he'd rather imitate nature, with Chennai Kuttralam, a 63 feet waterfall that imitates Kuttralam's pride, down to the protective railings. But he's also gone one step further; he's added cloak rooms and lockers to help those flocking to the falls to beat the heat. All this has made this destination a "notified" one on the tourism circuit. With such wave-of-a-wand notifications, no wonder tourism is in the doldrums in India, MMM feels.

— MMM

capita electricity consumption should be up by a factor of 8 to 10. The other factor for life expectancy is literacy. The United Nations uses adult literacy as a parameter for life expectancy. To my mind, female literacy is a better indicator." The scientific wisdom would therefore appear to be that with greater electricity availability and greater female literacy we can expect Indians to live till they are 80. But what, MMM wonders, do we do to ensure them a comfortable life?

## Business briefs

★ Work on the Balaji Group-Oberoi, Chennai, at present at a standstill, is likely to get underway again soon, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands. A soft opening of the de luxe hotel is anticipated in the first quarter of 2000. The Balaji Group, MMM also hears, is firming up plans for its Rs 85 crore, half a million hectalitre brewery in Thiruvallur. Civil work, meanwhile, has commenced on the Group's 106 MW power project in the State. An American energy major may well pick up a stake in the Group's Balaji Power Corporation to give it a new impetus, MMM hears.

★ Subhiksha, a no-frills chain of supermarkets in Chennai, is where you "Pay less... Always", the chain claims. Many a customer agrees, *The Man From Madras Musings* has found. With 21 pharmacies, 8 supermarkets and 10 department stores, this chain of dowdy-looking shops is, however, not being encouraged in its customer-friendly policy by some pharma companies and other manufacturers, it would appear. At least, those are the grounds on which the chain has gone to court, MMM hears. The court rulings in these cases should be interesting.

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— MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### The forgotten pedestrian

I can only respond cynically to the notion (MM, May 16th) that decisions regarding roads and traffic (or anything else) can ever be taken in the interests of the less privileged sections of the public. Those responsible for the various plans and their implementation (and perhaps the majority of MM readers as well) are all likely to be vehicle owners/users. It is inconceivable that they can have any notion of the problems that bipeds encounter, despite occasional letters or articles like the one by Divya Murthy which you published.

Though it may be quirkish, I have been stubbornly getting around this city over the past 15 years mainly by foot, if possible by bus, and when inevitable by auto, and find that it now sometimes takes up to ten minutes to cross some roads. Occasionally I have had to give up the attempt altogether. I presume that any chance survivors of my ilk will be expected to migrate to some remote village — if there are any left — while the aged and the handicapped and the supposedly 'stray' animals and other riff-raff will in any case get exterminated by the VIP traffic.

The situation brings to mind an old Sardari joke about a guy trying to cross Marine Drive in Bombay. Every time he stepped onto the street he almost got his toes or nose lopped off by the speeding traffic. After wandering up and down a while, he spotted a turban on the opposite side. Gesticulating wildly to attract the attention of the fellow-Sardar, he shouted, "How did you get across?" Pat came the reply, "Arre bhai, I was born on this side." (May be this would sound more effective if related in rustic Punjabi.)

Thomas Tharu

4-A-7, Kasypar  
Nehru Nagar, Fourth Street  
Adyar  
Chennai 600 020.

### Chennai that's Madras

You carried my letter titled "Who knows Chennai?" in MM, February 1st. May I add the following to that?

Recently, I returned to Chennai from Singapore by Singapore Airlines. The captain referred to Chennai as Madras in his announcements — at one point of time, he said "Madras... umm, umm, that is Chennai", but thereafter he stuck to Madras.

*The Straits Times* from Singapore shows world weather and refers to Madras, not Chennai, in its weather map.

I did not come across anyone in Singapore who referred to Madras as Chennai and that includes a number of Tamils living or working in that Little India area. Of course, the use of Madras in names like 'Madras Cafe', 'Madras Music Centre' and even 'Madras Road' continues.

And, in Jakarta, when I mentioned that, "I live some 600 kilometres away from Chennai", the counter staff I was talking to,

who until then claimed to know quite a bit about India, was simply confused. When I told her that Chennai is Madras, her reply was most telling: "Say that! I definitely know Madras, but no village like Chinnai! It is better to give the well-known city's name, than small unknown village names!" The message was clear: Madras is a city, while Chennai is a village!

In Kerala, Kochi continues to be Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram, Trivandrum and Kozhikode, Calicut even in official documents and nameboards. The other day, when I sent a foreign fax from Kochi, the operator corrected my 'from address' to 'Cochin' saying that was the name known abroad!

P.S. Sundar

"Skandam", Reilly Compound  
Coonoor 643 101, Nilgiris.

### Polluted water

When I first came to live in Besant Nagar in 1984, the water here was very good. The subsoil and well water pumped out by Metrowater was sweet and very clear and pure. It was also plentiful, water being struck just below the ground surface in the rainy season and at about ten feet in summer.

This copious availability was due to the subsoil water being renewed on a large scale during the rains. In

### Half-bottle saving

We spend crores of rupees on elections. To meet this huge expense, every means, no matter how small, should be adopted in the interest of the economy.

Every day we see thousands of bottles of mineral water on conference tables all over the country and presumably in other areas as well, for it is now a symbol of the awareness we Indians have distrusting our drinking water.

Thousands of these bottles are opened and partially consumed and thrown away daily. In international forums nowadays, such mineral

water is served in small bottles, probably 250 ml. to 500 ml., as people have realised the vast wastage in half-consumed bottles. We should follow suit. By such small economies, much could be saved. If half size bottles, rather than the ugly-looking large bottles that clutter our conference tables as well, are used, I am sure the country will be saving millions of rupees each year.

# A Green Charter deserving adoption

On World Environment Day, June 5th, the CPR Environmental Education Centre, reaffirming its commitment to protect the environment, issued a Green Charter for all those concerned about the environment. The Centre hoped every political party would include the following charter in its manifesto:

- The basic life support system of the atmosphere, water, land, forests and biodiversity which are so essential for human survival must be protected.
- Unsustainable lifestyles and unacceptable poverty must be ended by curbing unchecked development which has not considered the sustaining capacity of the earth.
- Animals, both domesticated and wild, have a right to live with dignity and must be spared all forms of suffering and torture.
- Access to information on all issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources and the treatment of domestic and wild animals must be a right.
- The Supreme Court order that environmental education should be compulsorily introduced in all schools to inculcate among the students a love

for nature and the care for natural resources must be implemented.

- Eco-efficient technologies in agriculture and industry must be promoted and the utilization of pesticides and fertilizers which are harming the health of human beings, animals, the land and water be cut.
- Programmes for safe drinking water, sanitation, waste management, healthcare and pollution control must be the goal of municipal bodies.
- Population control and family welfare are essential for the creation of a healthy society and environment.

### The Charter adds:

We acknowledge that the protection of the environment and the conservation of natural resources are crucial for the survival of all living beings on this planet. Unless we use natural resources responsibly and protect and safeguard those that are non-renewable and curtail excess consumption of all resources, we cannot progress towards equitable development.

against the excess drawal of groundwater by a teeming population. They were afraid this would so lower the groundwater level to below the adjoining sea level that seawater would seep into the subsoil and, thus, contaminate the water supply. The pollution by seawater has already started if my experience

which is now more than 90% normal. Two relatives of mine living in the same area but in different houses have a similar skin problem. It is therefore beyond doubt that the water in Besant Nagar is becoming progressively unfit for human consumption, although it may be all right for external uses like washing and bathing. The situation may become worse in the coming years as the groundwater level sinks still lower. It is high time that Metrowater lays pipes in the Besant Nagar area connected with the supply from Red Hills.

To my knowledge no other large urban area in India or abroad is supplied entirely by groundwater. The piped water in large towns and cities is always supplied from reservoirs, rivers and river beds. It is only in small communities that subsoil water as in wells or bore wells is used. I hope that Metrowater will bring Besant Nagar on par with the other parts of Chennai in the matter of water supply.

Samuel J Prabhakar  
11, Manohar Avenue  
Off Casa Major Road  
Chennai 600 008.

V.E. Arunachalam

H-9/5, Kalakshetra Colony Extn.  
Besant Nagar, Chennai 600 090.

### Forgotten transplants

In MM, May 16th, in the table captioned "Only 95 transplants in four years" you have not taken into account the CMC, Vellore, a premier transplant institution in Tamil Nadu.

In the course of my visit to the nephrology department of CMC, Vellore, in December '98, I saw a

big board with a graphic display of the kidney transplants alone done at CMC. If my memory serves me right, it showed 5 kidney transplants in 1971 and peaked at 1996 with about 168 transplants. The graph gradually increased from 1971 and never less than 100 transplants were done after 1990. I do not know about other organs transplanted at CMC, but I am sure you can get full transplant statistics from the Superintendent, CMC-Vellore.

Apart from that, while passing by I have seen at least one big hospital building with the board kidney and transplant centre in Madurai and another in Trichy. Have any transplants taken place in them?

Muhammed Ibrahim

Kalifullah

20, Heber Road

Beemanagar, Tiruchirappalli 1.

### Evoking memories

Mention of Sir Archibald Nye (MM, May 1st), takes my mind back nearly 60 years when he presented me the Gold (colour) Chord honouring a First Class Scout. There were many other scouts of the Madras Presidency so honoured that day at the Pachappa playground behind Telephone Bhavan. That playground is no more. It is now Fruit Market and Bus terminus.

Dr. C.B. Hari Rao

Plot 63, Mahalakshmi Nagar  
Selayur, Chennai 600 073.

### Want to muse with MUSINGS?

If you would like to be put on *Madras Musings'* mailing list, just fill in the form below (use block letters/type) and post it to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press Pvt Ltd, 62/63 Greames Road, MADRAS-600 006.

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Note: Overseas postage extra. Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Gulf: Rs. 375/year. US & Europe: Rs 425/year. Cheques payable to M/s. Lokavani Hall-Mark Press.

# Who will save our trees?

*An unconcerned public — or an irresponsible City Corporation?*

The large-scale tree-cutting that has been taking place in Chennai over the last few weeks has seen the removal of several of the oldest shade-providing trees all over the city. That this environmental blood-bath has taken place just before the onslaught of summer reflects the complete lack of sensitivity within the city administration. What is worse is that till date there is no confirmed reason or basis for this ecological carnage, though there have been rumours that it is to facilitate the construction of 23 flyovers or for stormwater drains. Surprisingly, ugly and offensive hoardings, which are also in the same path — be it a flyover or a drain — have been retained, with the project contractors carefully working around these ugly structures.

Despite protests and reports in the media, the Corporation Commissioner, who is legally the protector of trees in Chennai, has remained silent. On March 25, 1999, CAG sent the Commissioner a notice and requested for information under the Tamil Nadu Right to Information Act, 1997. Till date, there has been no response.

Reproduced below is the CAG letter:

March 25, 1999

The Commissioner  
Corporation of Chennai  
Ripon Buildings  
Chennai 600 003.

Dear Sir,

We have noticed, with alarm, that several trees are being cut down in the city of

Chennai, just a few weeks before the onslaught of the hot summer months. Some trees are apparently being removed for allowing the laying of water pipes, while others are being cut to allow for hoardings and flyovers in the city.

We are made to understand that under the Madras City Municipal Corporation Act and the Rules made thereunder, "no person can damage or cut any tree on any public street, park, garden or other public or municipal place, without the written permission of

## ● A CAG report

the Commissioner". We therefore request you to confirm if the several trees cut down in our city have received your written permission. If they have not received your written permission, we call upon you to immediately stop the cutting down of any more trees and to take stern and severe action against the perpetrators of this heinous crime.

If you have granted them permission then please furnish us with a list of all such trees, and their exact locations, in the last two years. This request is made under the Tamil Nadu Right to Information Act, 1997, which is the Tamil Nadu Government's first step towards transparency.

If you have earmarked any trees for felling for road widening or putting up flyovers or hoardings or any other purpose or received any more requests for cutting down trees, we re-

quest you not to grant any permission without hearing us, since we are vitally interested in the protection of trees in and around the city of Chennai. We are sure that we will be in a position to provide alternatives to the proposed tree-cutting.

We also notice that under the Madras City Municipal Corporation Act and the Rules made thereunder, "no person can write, paint, cut or carve or affix anything on any tree in any public street, park, garden or other public or municipal place." However, a cursory look at the condition of trees around the city will reveal that nearly all trees are mutilated or nailed with some advertisement or the other. CAG has been actively opposing this abuse of trees and you may recall an earlier letter dated 26.02.1998 that we had written to you about this issue. We call upon you to immediately order the removal of all such violations of the law and take severe action against all such violators.

Sincerely....

Subsequent to this, the CAG has sent two reminders to the Commissioner, neither of which has yielded a response.

Surprisingly, there has not been much public opinion voiced against the tree-cutting. Is it that the public have become apathetic to this ecological carnage? Or have we forgotten why we need trees? Have we forgotten how our climatic conditions and the water availability are linked to the preservation of trees? Have we forgotten the importance of shade?



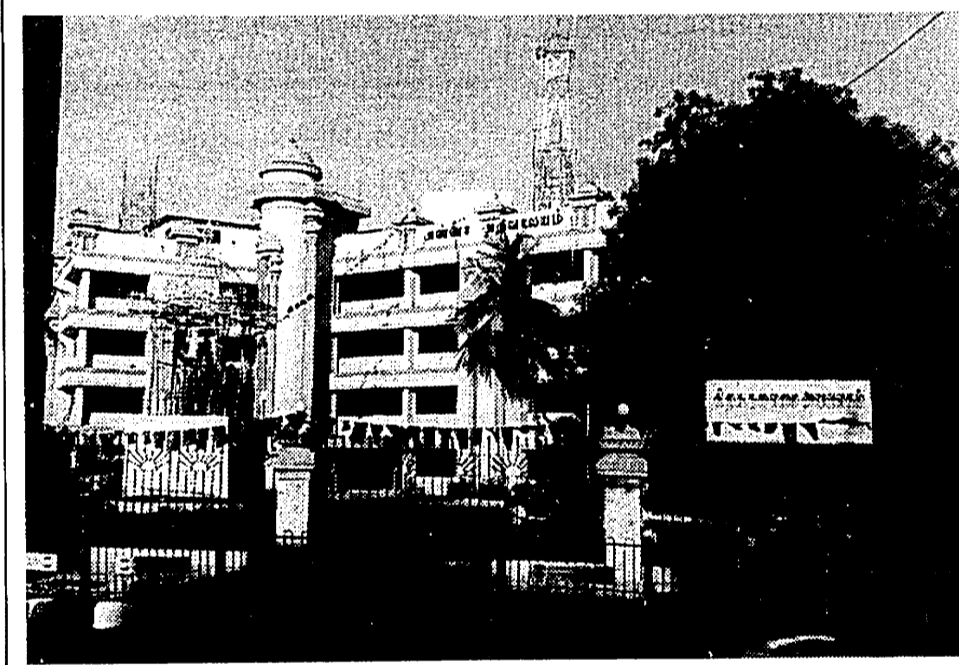
Why don't you ever write about politics in Madras Musings, your Editor has often been asked in letter and call. And his answer has always been, "Haven't you had enough of it in your daily papers?" But today's OLD and NEW bends Madras Musings' policy in a sort of a way and takes a look at two political structures.

RAJIND N CHRISTY has had reason in the last couple of weeks to go down the Royapettah end of Lloyd's Road (Avvai Shanmugham Salai, if you will) and couldn't help but notice the striking restoration that has been made of the AIADMK headquarters. Echoes of the Classical and Regency styles out of England's finest era are to be seen in pediments, balustrades and fluted semi-pillars with ionic variations in the capitals.

Painted a dazzling white, it bids fair to challenge in appearance the DGP Building, of the same style, which the Party's leader had wanted to pull down when she was Chief Minister. The 1998 renovation, our NEW, thus, adds one more building to Chennai in the Regency/Classical style now favoured by architects and which had gone out of fashion when the Raj decided to build public buildings in the Indo-Saracenic style, seen as a more local imperial presence.

The OLD, on the other hand, is the DMK headquarters on Anna Salai, declared open in 1987. At the time of the inauguration it was announced that Anna Arivalayam had been built in Chola style. But except for Chola temples and shrines — and these the DMK of the Eighties would certainly not have favoured — there is little evidence of what Chola architecture was really like. Nayak architecture in Chola Nadu, yes; but Chola palaces anywhere, NO, except in artists' visions on the screen and in magazines... that is really the position.

Which makes both buildings rather curious political statements, if political statements they are meant to be. Which is why, perhaps, it is best to enjoy them as political buildings and eschew politics.



## A 'current' crisis

(Continued from Page 1)

worse, many of these hoardings are on land belonging to, or given to educational institutions, including premier colleges and schools, where electricity consumption is even further subsidised. Therefore, the Government, as the service provider, is actually providing subsidised electricity for advertisers to waste, and is making the citizen pay for it.

Several other hoardings, especially, those on pavements and street corners, conveniently draw their electricity from nearby streetlights or electricity poles. Why has the State Electricity Board not taken any steps to minimise this blatant theft of electricity? What monitoring is done to

ensure that theft of electricity is not permitted?

Why should citizens pay for this current indulgence to hoarding contractors? Why cannot electricity supply to hoardings and neon lights be completely prohibited?

In Mumbai, a resident successfully challenged the use of neon advertisements after 11 pm, on the grounds that the flickering lights were a nuisance and did not permit him to sleep. The High Court was quick to direct that hoardings that use electricity and neon lights be switched off at 11 pm. Perhaps a similar litigation is required in our State as well to demonstrate that crying 'crisis' is only on attempt to deflect responsibility.

# Flyovers: — cures or killers?

Moderator: We have this sudden largesse of 50 flyovers in two years. Do we really need them?

Nitin Gadkari: The traffic density in Mumbai, the air pollution and traffic jams at signals are terrible. There is therefore a demand from the common man for some relief. Flyovers will reduce 120 traffic signals.

R.C. Sinha: It's not as if flyovers are new to Mumbai. There already are flyovers — at Kemps Corner, Byculia and Kalanagar. What I want to know is what is the target of all this hue and cry?

Debi Goenka: The environmentalists are not opposing all the flyovers. In fact, we even told the Paranjape Committee in 1988 that certain junctions in the city were bottlenecks and needed flyovers.

The main argument of the environmental groups is that when such a massive project is being taken up, surely there should have been a public debate. The public doesn't know how the locations were chosen. What techno-economic or environmental assessments studies have been carried out? And if you're talking about serving the needs of the people, it is public transport that should be improved. Instead, crores are being spent to benefit a small minority.

Darryl D'Monte: When 88 per cent of Mumbai's population uses public transport, it doesn't make sense that Rs.1,500 crore should be spent on a project that will benefit only 12 per cent. Throughout the world, in progressive cities everything is done to stop cars from entering. Cars contribute 60 per cent of the pollution. There is absolutely no justification for flyovers.

Gadkari: About the lack of public debate, I appointed the Jog Committee. On it, there was the BMC chief engineer, representatives from every department, Mr. Ghafoor from the traffic police, and some renowned persons from Mumbai — Shashi Prabhu and one or two architects. Earlier, the Paranjape Committee and the MUTP-I and MUTP-II had also recommended flyovers.

On May 1st, Madras Musings focussed on the flyovers fast coming up in the city and questioned their usefulness. Of course, it was a reaction too late as far as the first ten flyovers are concerned. But that is the consequence of the lack of transparency when such projects are planned. This factor is emphasised on the 'Editor's Page' of the most recent issue of CAG Reports. Its Editor writes:

Common sense tells us that there are smarter, cheaper and easier ways than building a massive network of flyovers to get traffic to move. And yet the Corporation is building flyovers in 23 places of the city. No public consultation (apart from asking 120 individuals to fill in questionnaires) has been held on whether there are justified requirements for such a large investment to be made and, even if there are, whether these flyovers are the solution. Was the Sustainable Chennai Project, which identified 'decongestion of traffic' as one of three priority areas, party to this decision-making process? Why is this massive road network not part of a larger Master Plan for our city? And if

Moderator: But environmentalists were not consulted?

Gadkari: Are the environmentalists traffic specialists? If you are not well, you consult a doctor; if you want something written in a newspaper, you go to a journalist; if you want something on traffic, you go to a traffic engineer. Journalists and environmentalists cannot jump in to say that this alignment or that is not good, or that you should make a six-lane highway. Everybody has his role. I don't have to listen if a traffic commissioner starts giving me engineering advice.

Sinha: I entirely agree that 88 per cent of people use public transport. But where is it written that buses are not allowed on flyovers?

Moderator: What about the absence of public debate?

Sinha: See, we don't have a Switzerland type of referendum system here, where you go to the people to decide every issue. In India, we have elections at the local, state and central level, and these MPs, MLAs,



A view of work in progress on the Peter's Road flyover. (Photograph by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

Chennai Corporation has the money for this huge exercise, then why is it not spending the money first on maintaining existing roads in Chennai? Or providing streetlights or pavements? Or enforcing traffic rules strictly?

Unfortunately, we do not have answers to these questions — and those who may have the answers, like Mr. Kolappan, the Commissioner of the Corporation of Chennai, have chosen to remain completely silent.

The problem is not confined to Chennai alone. Fifty new flyovers are planned for Mumbai. The Sunday Times of India organised a two-hour seminar to discuss the controversial issue.

The official viewpoint was presented by Nitin Gadkari,

Minister for Public Works, who has come to be called 'Mr Flyover', and R.C. Sinha, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of the executing body, the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation. The opposition was represented by Debi Goenka of the Bombay Environmental Action Group, which has taken the MSRDC to court on a related issue, and Darryl D'Monte, author and environmentalist. The discussion was moderated by Bachi Karkaria.

Many of the points raised in the discussion are relevant to Chennai, in fact to unilateral decisions taken by those in power anywhere, which is why we this fortnight publish at some length portions of the Mumbai discussion.

— The Editor

etc. represent the public. This flyover project has been approved by the general body of the BMC, by the state assembly, the cabinet. Is all this confirmation not enough for the duly elected minister to go ahead?

Moderator: But the World Bank objected to the flyovers, saying they would not complement the MUTP-II, which it is financing?

Sinha: The World Bank's track record speaks for itself. The MUTP plan was submitted to it in 1986. The Bank cannot bear to see that while the MUTP project is stuck for 13 years, a poor country has been able to successfully complete a huge project on its own without begging from it.

Moderator: You environmentalists have been accused of only opposing. Do you have any alternative solutions?

Goenka: The key issue here is that public transport must get priority. As Mr D'Monte has mentioned, building highways makes things easy for car-

owners, but these roads will only attract more traffic. In a few months, you are back to square one. Nowhere in the world is a new road or traffic-way seen as a long-term solution to a problem. The only solution is to upgrade public transport. The Paranjape Committee recommended a ban on odd-numbered cars on odd days and even numbered cars on even days but this was shot down by the automobile lobby.

Sinha: The recommendation on cars with even and odd numbers has not worked in Manila or other cities because people have simply bought two cars, odd and even, resulting in tremendous parking problems. Also, building flyovers does not mean that you cannot simultaneously impose disincentives on the entry of the private cars. Parking can be restricted, a fee can be charged, a tax can be imposed. We are not against this.

Goenka: The point is that when such a large project worth thousands of crores is being taken up, it is not enough to say that elected representa-

tives have approved it. Have they really had the chance to debate it?

Moderator: You reportedly have strong views on the minister's Jog Committee. Why not express them directly to Mr. Gadkari here?

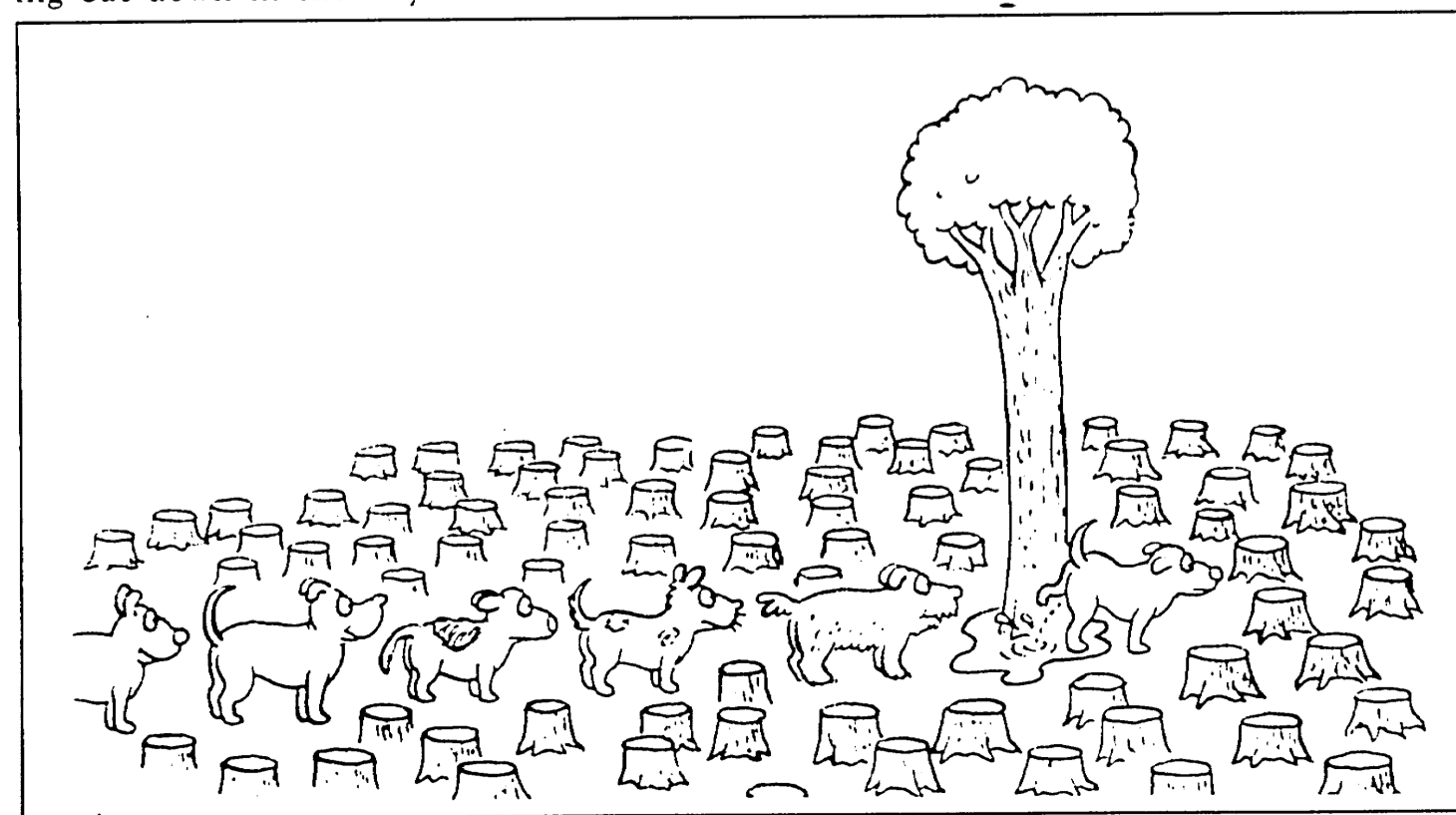
Goenka: Its term of reference was not to construct flyovers but their beautification. The 'eminent people' on it were of the rank of deputy chief engineer of BMC. It's also very interesting that Madhav Jog is the person, who, incidentally has been awarded the contract for the Rs.120-crore Andheri flyover. If it is not conflict of interest, what is? Jog is a public servant... As far as the Andheri flyover is concerned, all the experts we have spoken to have told us that the flyover will only increase traffic congestion. Yet the PWD and the MSRDC have chosen to go ahead.

At Andheri, the height of the flyover has been raised to accommodate an entire extra floor of the shopping complex that is to come up below it. Tenders were invited for 9,000 square metres of commercial space and this was raised to 45,000 square metres. How and why this happened, who was consulted, I don't know.

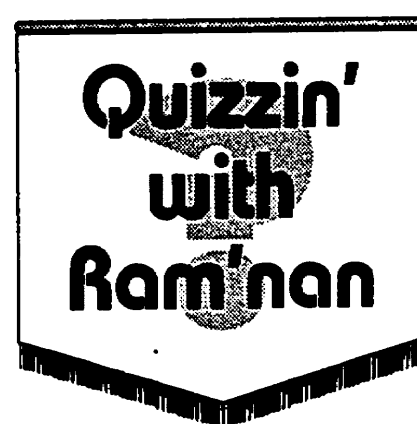
Moderator: But, why did the environmentalists wake up only when the Andheri flyover project was already underway?

Goenka: Unless the government follows the procedure laid down by law and invites suggestions, how do we object? Who knows what is being planned or what is happening behind closed doors? To move a court of law, you have to build up documentation, right? All these documents are being treated as top secret, so how do you approach a court of law? I can't go to the court based on my personal apprehension.

(Continued on Page 7)



Singara Chennai 200??? (Courtesy: CAG Reports)



(A changed format. Questions 1 to 9 are from the period May 16 to 31. Questions 10 to 12 pertain to Chennai and questions 13 to 20 are on general trivia.)

1. Which famous 500-year old tempera painting in Italy was restored to its original glory after a 20-year and \$8 million restoration job recently?
2. Simple. Name the party formed by the expelled senior Congress leaders Sharad Pawar, P.A. Sangma and Tariq Anwar.
3. Name the Indian film which bagged the Camera D'Or at the prestigious Cannes film festival recently.
4. The 99-year old legendary wrestling 'guru' and a Dronacharya awardee was killed in an accident recently. Name him.
5. Which country's beauty is the new Miss Universe?
6. Name the IAF pilot who was captured and subsequently released by Pakistani authorities in the ongoing conflict in Kashmir.
7. The PSLV-C2, which blasted off from Sriharikota on May 26th, was the first commercial launch from India as it carried two foreign satellite payloads. Which country's satellites?
8. Where did the President inaugurate India's latest international airport on May 25th?
9. What heady feat, an Indian first, did Kishang Dorji, Sange Sherpa and Amar Prakash achieve of May 28th?

\* \* \*

10. Who is the new Chief Justice of Madras High Court?
11. The Chennai varsity chess team won its maiden international title in Singapore recently. Name the tourney.
12. What new telephonic 'audioweb' (4997370) has been introduced for the benefit of commuters?

\* \* \*

13. In Indian cricket, who or what is the 'Gunga Din'?
14. If Star Wars' Episode I is called *The Phantom Menace*, what is Episode IV called?
15. Name the country whose flag is not rectangular in shape.
16. Which is the tallest peak south of Delhi?
17. Which country's Lower House of the Parliament is called the Duma?
18. What was the former name of Burkina Faso?
19. How is the Barber of Seville better known?
20. Who is next in line to succeed Prince Charles to the British throne?

(Answers on Page 8)

# The best colleges in Chennai

India Today's third annual survey to list the country's Top Ten Colleges reveals several significant perceptions about the colleges of Chennai. While the list does include a few Chennai toppers, a more detailed look at them and at the omissions is revealing.

The three best Arts and Science colleges in the country are St Stephen's, Delhi, Presidency, Calcutta and St Xavier's Bombay, in that order. In Commerce, they are Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi, St Xavier's, Calcutta, and St Xavier's, Mumbai. In Medicine, Tamil Nadu gets a look in at last, CMC Vellore being sandwiched between AIIMS, Delhi and JIPMER, Pondicherry. In Engineering, it's the IITs at Kanpur, Mumbai and Delhi in that order and in Law, it's the National Law School, Bangalore, the Law Faculty,

Delhi and the Law College, Mumbai.

Where does that leave the Chennai or other Tamil Nadu colleges? In the Arts, Loyola is 5th, Madras Christian 7th and Presidency 10th. In Science,

• by  
A Staff Reporter

Loyola is 4th, Presidency 7th and MCC 9th. In Commerce, only Loyola figures in the list at 4th, in Medicine, Madras Medical is 7th, in Engineering IIT Chennai is 4th and in Law, NO Tamil Nadu college figures. Which is a telling commentary on Madras Law College.

A closer look at the colleges under the parameters of Reputation, Curriculum, Academics, Facilities, Attention to Students and Admission Proce-

dures reveals some curious situations. In Arts, Science and Commerce, Loyola is 1 to 3 on all counts except admission procedures and, in Science, attention to students' (9th). Loyola deserves to have been

rated 1st in Arts and Commerce, on these indicators it would appear. On the other hand, in Arts and Science, MCC and Presidency are at the bottom of the Top Ten in reputation and not much better on any other count. Madras Medical is bottom of the list in all but admission procedures (4th) and facilities (7th). CMC's 10th in facilities and IIT Chennai's 6th are also surprises.

Listing the best colleges in the City, categorywise, the

survey had Chennai's best, in order, as follows:

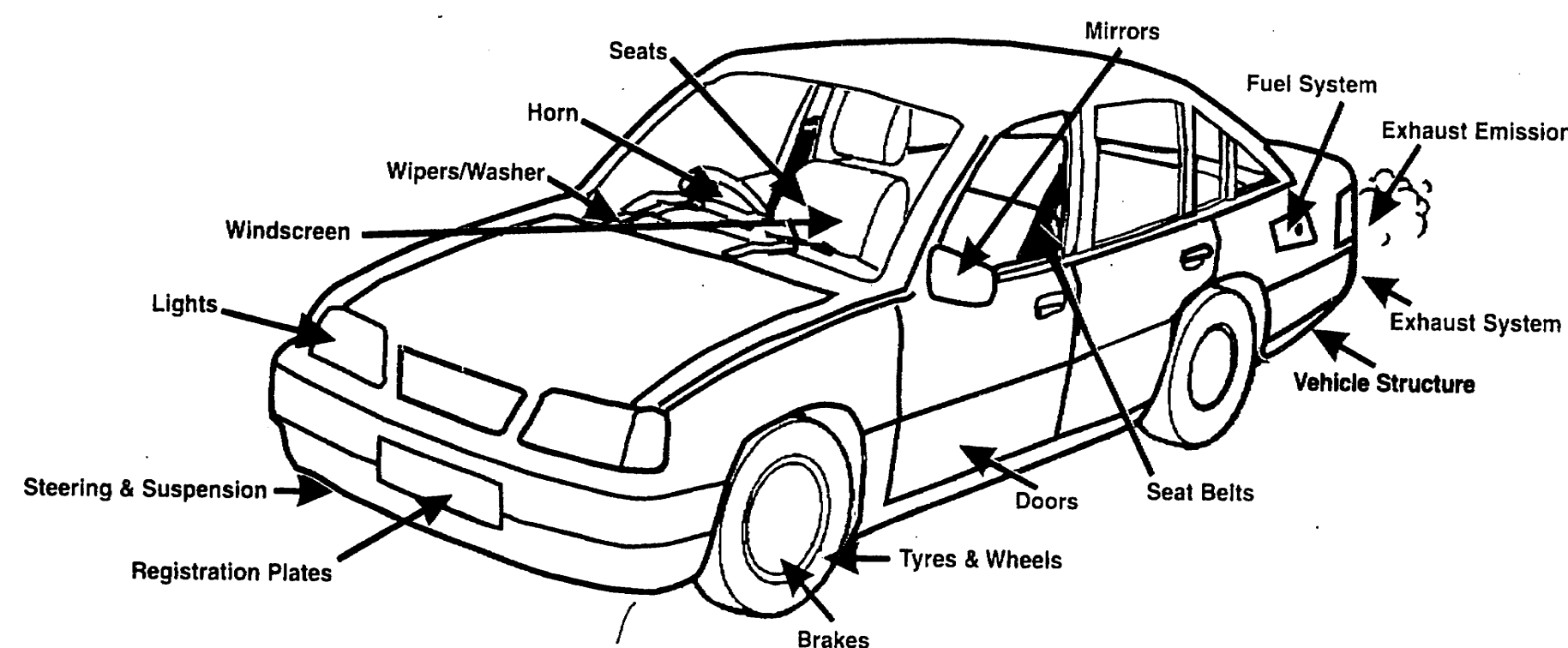
ARTS: Loyola, MCC, Presidency, Stella Maris, Vivekananda and Vaishnav.

SCIENCE: Loyola, Presidency, MCC, Ethiraj, Stella Maris and Vivekananda

COMMERCE: Loyola, Presidency, MCC, Ethiraj and Meenakshi.

The biggest surprise was Anna University not making it to the Engineering Top Ten, whereas Roorkee, REC, Suratkal (Karnataka) and RVCE, Bangalore made it. And only one all-women's college made it to any Top Ten, Brabourne of Calcutta.

No matter how debatable the parameters for selection and the judgement used, there is undoubtedly much food for thought — especially on the part of those missing out — on the lessons of these rankings.



## When will we ever get a vehicle fitness test like this?

Every vehicle (passenger/commercial) or motor-cycle in the U.K. which is more than 3 years old, is required to undergo a fitness and emission test every year. Developed by the British Ministry of Transport (MOT) in 1961 and, therefore known as the MOT test, it was recently demonstrated in India. Madras Musings wonders when we will ever get around to a vehicle fitness test like this to ensure that the vehicle under test meets at least the minimum road safety and environmental standards:

### Seats

Secure

### Lights

Condition and operation,

show the colour and headlamps properly aimed

### Steering & Suspension

Correct operation, condition and adjustment

### Brakes

Condition, operation and performance (Efficiency Test)

### Tyres and wheels

Condition, security, tyres size/type and tread depth

### Seat belts

Correct type, condition, operation

### Registration plates

Condition, security, digits correctly formed and spaced

### Fuel systems

No leaks, cap fastens and seals securely

### Doors

All latch securely, front doors can be opened

### Mirrors

Present, good condition, secure, good adjustment

### Vehicle structure

Complete, free from excessive damage or corrosion in specified areas, no sharp edges

### Exhaust system

Secure, complete, without serious leaks and silences effectively

### Exhaust emissions

Vehicle meets the requirements for exhaust gas emissions

### Horn

Correct operation and the right type

### Wipers/washer

Operates to give the driver a clear view ahead

### Vehicle identification number

Single VIN present and legible

### Windscreen

Condition, driver's view of the road

(Courtesy: BCN March/April 1999)



## The flyover debate

(Continued from Page 5)

**D'Monte:** A very good case in point is the public hearing that was called to discuss the Nhava Sheva Sewri Link (NSSL). The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), which is the nodal agency, had the nerve to debar some journalists from attending the briefing.

Secondly, at the hearing, they actually refused to allow some NGOs to xerox papers at their own expense. Now, if this is called public participation, it is some kind of joke. MPCB's argument on the NSSL is that if you publish information on the alignment of the bridge, it will allow people to corner mainland site land. My argument is that the converse of not giving that piece of information is that politicians and bureaucrats will form an alliance and corner that land themselves. So it is the fundamental right of the public to know. It is not some sort of indulgence or munificence on the part of the authorities.

**Moderator:** Let's get back to the flyovers....

**D'Monte:** With all these flyovers, vehicles will increase, and with them the total amount of emission and fuel consumption. I'm afraid to say, Mr Sinha, nobody has done traffic studies to estimate the load that these roads and flyovers are going to add to the total emissions to the city.

**Moderator:** What has really raised public suspicion is the speed with which this project is being pushed through. Fifty flyovers completed in two years in a country where public works normally take forever. Where's the catch?

**Gadkari:** If we work slowly, people are upset. Now that we are working fast, people are still upset. What to do? I am supposed to construct flyovers and I am constructing them. I have certain budgetary sanctions approved since 1990. Should we, like the World Bank, spend 20 to 30 years of our lives taking decisions?

**Moderator:** The haste is so uncharacteristic that the public is cynical. What is the motivation?

**Gadkari:** If I am doing something, does it mean that I am getting something? Is it a crime to work for the people?

**Goenka:** I would like to make one comment on 'transparency'. I was asked by the environment ministry to be a representative at a meeting on the Bandra-Worli link bridge — one of the worthy gentlemen across the table was also there. My presence was objected to on the ground that the project could not be discussed in the presence of environmentalists. It's fine to say that documents will be made available but at that public hearing, there was a two-hour-long discussion on which documents should be made available to the public. That is the gap between practice and pronouncement.

**D'Monte:** The Shiv Sena wants to be seen to have achieved something in its five-year tenure and the flyovers are very visible evidence. The public has the right to know why all this money was spent, what traffic studies were done and why its chief planning authority — the MMRDA — wasn't consulted, why such massive incentives — Rs 1 lakh per day — are being given to contractors for completing the work before time.

**Sinha:** You people keep talking about a lack of environment impact assessment studies. If all the studies that have been done were kept in this room, there would have been no place for us to even stand here.

As for the incentives to the contractors, this was advertised openly before the tender was given. Why do you conveniently ignore the penalty, which is one-and-a-half times higher than the bonus?

**Gadkari:** If you wear green goggles, whatever I may say, you will only see everything green. You can say good or bad, write what you want. The

# Running to help the smaller NGOs

The Third Citizens' Run will be on July 18, 1999 and the Citizens' Run Trust is again looking forward to a few thousand citizens of Chennai participating in the Run in aid of small, little-known NGOs usually run by one or two individuals in Chennai or the suburbs.

Six or seven NGOs' are supported annually, after all those who apply for support from the Run are visited and assessed by representatives of the Trust. Support is given only for specific projects which can be seen as completed during the year. The Citizens' Run Trust generates about Rs. 10,00,000 every year from corporate and individual donations and from the sale of T-shirts with the Citizens' Run logo that was designed by Manjula Padmanabhan. The NGOs to be supported this year will be:

1. **Aruwe:** A day centre for the aged run by young graduates of social work of Loyola College. Targetted: Rs. 50,000 to be given for a toilet to be built at the centre.
2. **Vasantham:** A training school for the mentally ill founded by an individual

who has trained herself in the care of the mentally ill. Targetted: Rs. 3,00,000 for a building for which land is available.

3. **Samarpanam:** The home for the mentally ill run by a husband and wife team. Targetted: Rs. 3,00,000 for a building for which land is available.

HIV Positive and has promised help for its building projects that it will route through the Citizens' Run Trust.

One more organisation, a citizens' group, has asked for Rs.1 lakh assistance and the Trust awaits the project report. The Citizens' Run Trust has also permitted the Gandhi

• by A Staff Reporter

4. **The Welfare Foundation for the Blind:** Run by a former professor to provide vocational training for the visually handicapped. Targetted: Rs. 50,000 for sewing machines, cupboards etc.
5. **Andhra Mahila Sabha Home for the Aged:** It is proposed to help needy senior citizens to get admission. Targetted: Rs. 60,000 for each new person admitted.
6. **The Balagurukulam School:** Toilets for a needy school. Rs.75,000/-
7. **Doraiswamy Trust:** A French voluntary organisation has visited the Doraiswamy Trust's home for the

Peace Foundation to mobilise support for its activities by selling Citizens' Run T-Shirts, all proceeds of such sales to accrue to the foundation in full.

Join the Citizens' Run at 4 p.m. on July 18th from Gandhi Mandapam to Gandhi Statue on the Marina and help the cause in any way you can, either with corporate or individual financial support or by buying T-shirts at Rs.100/- each (available at Karna Prayag — Tel: 4355182 — or at the Run) or with your presence at the Run, thereby helping publicise the need to support the needy.

## LOSING A BIT OF ADYAR CREEK

(Continued from Page 1)

A foundation stone for the memorial was laid in 1993 by the then Chief Minister.

The Consumer Action Group went to court on this issue. In its plea the CAG categorically welcomed the memorial to Dr. Ambedkar but felt it should be located in an appropriate place and not by converting low-lying areas which are absolutely essential for the maintenance of the environment and ecology.

Speaking to Madras Musings about the recent developments on the site, the Legal Coordinator, Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG), Bharath Jairaj said that the court order of 1994 has permitted the Adi Dravida Housing Development Corporation to

people are with me. The top-most contractors of India are working with us.

**Goenka:** If there is so much transparency, why aren't documents made available?

**Gadkari:** Am I supposed to submit my file to you? Who are you? Am I supposed to stand at VT and hand out my plans to everybody? I am the Minister, I have some jurisdiction and I am acting within it.

construct a memorial in an extent of 0.75 acres of land and to use another 0.75 acres around the memorial they intend building for a lawn or park at the eastern end of the 5-acre allotment. Sand filling elsewhere in the plot was to be removed. The memorial could not be an auditorium. The rest of the land was to be vested in the CMDA to retained as wetland. This will cause least inconvenience to the maintenance of the area as it is and preservation of the environment and habitat for the migratory birds, the order stated. It also added that construction of office or commercial complexes here was not permitted. An appeal was then filed by the respondents and the same is still pending before the court, Jairaj pointed out. Meanwhile, the areas filled up at a "cost of Rs.22 lakh" has not been cleared. And now plans are underway to start construction while the matter is still in court. In these circumstances, it is to be hoped that the proposed construction will be in terms of the court order, dated 9.3.94, and will not exceed the limits ordered.

Subsequent to the Court order, the CMDA in 1996 formulated an Environment Im-

provement Project for its 45 acres (or is it 56 acres?) of the Adyar Creek area, to be implemented on a build, own, operate, and transfer basis (BOOT). This proposal was forwarded to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board which noted that such developments should not deviate from the Coastal Regulation Zone laid out by the Supreme Court of India. Representation by the CAG on the environmental impact of the Project led the CMDA to withdraw the project. The CMDA then, in September 1997, thought of handing over the land to the Forest Department with a request to the Chief Conservator of Forest to develop the Adyar Creek area into an eco-friendly forest. But with the Public Works Department (PWD) planning a study on cleaning the waterways, it was felt that the Adyar Creek too could form a part of the study and the CMDA has decided to wait for the result of that study before handing over the land to the Forest Department.

Madras Musings hopes that study will echo Justice Kanakara's feelings and recommend not only an ecofriendly forest but one which is also a sanctuary.

# Wandering around 35 weeks a year

(Continued from  
last fortnight)

This was a world apart. All most people did was live and breathe tennis. Not for them the high-minded concerns of global warming, disarmament or recession. Not for them the fluctuations in the stock markets that was, of course the prerogative of their agents. All that mattered were the fluctuations in the ATP rankings (the tennis Bible). Not only theirs but those of their peers; there was an almost devilish delight in seeing a fellow journeyman drop a few notches.

To climb this ATP ladder in the shortest possible time is the goal. "Sport scientists" and con artists, products of commercially fertile territories, work tirelessly to convince native young climbers that they hold the key to the gates of stardom. Pasta and wheat germ, "focus" and "ritual" (pluck your string a few times, bounce the ball a few times, talk to yourself and then let the games begin!) are the tools to success they say.

"Too late, I think the ancients have stolen your words. I come from the land of Yoga and Hinduism."

It could be McEnroe in rage or Connors' antics, but across the net was my husband (assumed to be a practitioner of Yoga), Mr. Unflappable himself. I was lucky and glad to have a serene spouse, having heard stories of bad losers ripping curtains in hotel rooms or testing the thickness of glass in

mum of fuss; the delicate cross court here, a disguised 'lob' there, letting the racket deliver a lesson in humility.

The European player, by and large, was all manners and impeccably turned out during and after work. He had his own code of conduct in a match and followed less the dictates of the umpire than his conscience, most generously awarding a point to his opponent if he thought it appropriate. The

## Priya Krishnan recalls the life and times of a tennis wife

frenzied rage. A good temperament — a must to survive in this rainbow coalition of North Americans, South Americans, Europeans, South Africans and Australians.

The Americans, save a few, possessed the anger, the swagger, the strut and there were times I would pray for such cocky overconfidence to be tackled by Ramesh with a mini-

Spaniards and South Americans were the party animals, full of Latin *joie de vivre*, blood and sweat on court, yet always ready to give their feet a workout on the dance floor. The English, South Africans and Australians, of course, always had a minute to discuss the nuances of cricket and husband most willingly joined in.

Ours was a different world from the amateur era of a Roy Emerson whose sense of fun, warmth, simplicity and large-heartedness I had the privilege of experiencing in large measure. He told me stories of the winner buying the loser a glass of beer at the end of the day over delightful banter at some watering hole. Enter professionalism and commerce and change is inevitable, good and bad. Today is the day of the cocooned individual wrapped by a sense of bloated self-importance, minimising interaction



Ramesh and Priya Krishnan with their daughters (From their collection).

with the outside world through a sound bite at a press conference. Verbal skills dead and gone except for the odd articulate one. Some of the fun lost in the name of professionalism, a single-minded effort at winning a tennis match and every activity directed to that end.

Of course we had our fun through a judicious mix of work and play. We explored the streets of Florence and the museums of Europe. I tried my rusty French in the cafes of Paris, we wandered around antiquarian bookshops around Leicester Square, watched plays on and off Broadway and movies in American cine multiplexes. Yet, there was no getting away from the demands of this life — to be in bed at a decent hour to wake up to another day of trying to perfect the weapons in the armoury.

America was our base, a home away from home for some years, from which to jet off to the tournaments in the Western world. We travelled through the vastness of the U.S.A., without and with our kids, filled American homes with odours of chilli powder and turmeric, and initiated our hosts into the culinary delights of India. We made friends for life. We became ambassadors, discussing the finer points of

Indian life, held hands saying Grace, over a table of sweet corn, baked potatoes and apple pie in the small towns of Ohio and Tennessee.

I had by now acquired one more role. That of a mother or beast of burden. Stroller in one hand, baby bag in the other, one kid on a hip and a toddler clutching on to the one finger available, traversing the long cavernous walkways of air line terminals. I oftentimes wished I were a ten-armed goddess.

Wandering around for 35 weeks a year, has made me flexible, pliable and adaptable! I survived the Tour. I am an excellent theoretician of the Game, a master of strategy. I saw, a kinder gentler McEnroe with his kids in the creche, the intense practice habits of Connors, the fanatical discipline of Lendl, the poise of the late Arthur Ashe, the rise and fall of many young careers and the price to be paid for success.

This was a phase in our "joint adventure". We both gave of ourselves and the rewards have been sweet. I am back on terra firma and am living out of cupboards at last — (Courtesy: *The Clubman*, the MCC's house journal.)

(Concluded)

## ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*; 2. The Nationalist Congress Party; 3. Murali Nair's *Mira Simhasanam*; 4. Guru Hanuman; 5. Miss Botswana, Ms. Mpule Kwelagobe; 6. Ft. Lt. Nachiketa; 7. Korea and Germany; 8. Kochi; 9. Climbed Mt. Everest from the most difficult side, the Kanjshung face in Tibet.

\* \* \*

10. Justice Ashok Agarwal; 11.

Global Tertiary Institute's Chess Challenge; 12. The SETC's interactive facility gives information on bus timings, fares and distances.

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13. The heavy roller at the Eden Gardens; 14. *A New Hope*; 15. Nepal; 16. Mt. Everest; 17. Russia; 18. Upper Volta; 19. Figaro (in the musical works by Rossini and Mozart); 20. His son, Crown Prince William.

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