

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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"Let's keep this safely...my realtor tells me that even the prices of the toy building blocks in Chennai are about to shoot up!"

How many zeros...?

Are you, like so many of us, supremely number-challenged? If so, you probably lead a life marginally protected from shocks set off by all those ubiquitous percentages and statistics spelling doom and disaster so frequently presented.

But, be warned – You are not immune.

There are exceptions that make even the number-numbered come leaping out of their over-stuffed chairs.

Like when Chennai talks real estate these days.

What's happening to this city?

Everyone knows that any search for a roof over your head means dealing with the All-Time Champions of Euphemisms – one single tiny window in a small box becomes 'mind-freeing space with a sweeping panoramic view', or a single shelf 'the ultimate global kitchen'. But even said Champions cannot disguise the fact that you will pay for this little box with bags of gold doubloons.

Which is fine for a successful pirate, but which, for the rest of humanity, is just a bit much.

Who comes up with these figures?

Are there secret meetings where people with impassive faces talk numbers out of the sides of their mouths, sealing not merely the monetary fate of aspiring house-owners, but that of their social stars as well?

These 'high-end' dream homes, gobbling up sky and earth space, are beginning to look increasingly ominous, nightmares waiting to pounce.

Are those thick branches on all those tall trees beginning to look strangely attractive?

Ranjitha Ashok

Do pedestrians have a place in road safety?

(by Sriram V.)

Observed in the first week of January in Madras that is Chennai. It witnessed the usual rituals of flagging off processions, distribution of sweets, and rallies held by students. My concern, however, is that road safety in this city may remain a utopian dream.

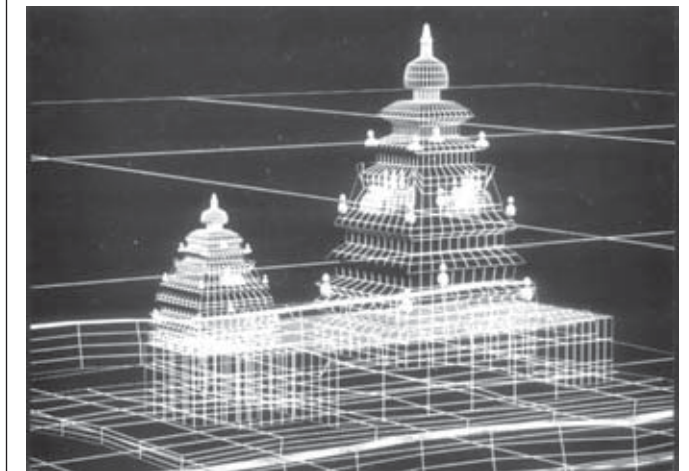
The pedestrians, who remain the most marginalised section on our roads, continue to get a raw deal. Most of the roads in the city are being developed or modified keeping only the motorists in mind, as evident in the rapid reduction of pedestrian pathways. In many areas, especially below the flyovers, there are no demarcated footpaths for pedestrians, putting them at grave risk. In places where the sidewalks have not been done away with altogether, they have been considerably reduced in width. In areas such as Royapettah, the sidewalks are not even a foot wide, making most users move onto the road.

The narrowing width also means that pedestrians who are on the sidewalk are almost brushed past by vehicles at the extreme ends of the road, thereby increasing the risk of accidents. The reduction in width has also been accompanied by an increase in the height of the kerb, making it difficult for the elderly to climb on and get off them. Schoolchildren are the worst sufferers, especially in crowded areas.

This correspondent spoke to students studying at the Calavala Cunnan Chetty High School in Perambur and found that most of them were of the view that crossing the road near the Gandhi Park or opposite the Railway Station was eternally fraught with danger. Some of

the older students help the young ones to cross and make their way to school. Policemen, if on duty in the vicinity, help. But all this is a makeshift arrangement and varies depending on the day and time.

In places where the footpath has been left largely as it used to be, political parties think nothing of displacing a stone or two and planting their cutouts and temporary hoardings, thereby effectively cutting off walking space. In other areas, it is the steel structure which supports hoardings that has eaten into the footpath. The junction boxes and transformers of the Electricity Board also claim their share of the space. These structures also make ideal urinals and the stench and stains



• The most striking New Year greeting we received was one from the Alliance Francaise with this computer-generated picture on its front. The following information was provided at the rear: Digital palimpsest – interactive multimedia slide; © Artist B2FAYS – 3D Graphics Kupuraj. Project presented in collaboration with Alliance Francaise of Bangalore, Mumbai and Hyderabad. beatrice@experimental.com

further deter users of the sidewalk. This is especially true of the broad sidewalk along Radhakrishnan Road, and in particular where it fronts the Electricity Board office (the old Tram Shed). Shops and commercial establishments also claim their share of sidewalk space, putting up signboards and displaying their wares.

As for pedestrian crossings, ensuring that the zebra signs are painted periodically is observed more in the breach. Vehicle owners, however, feel that these are of limited use, as pedestrians cross any-which-way-they-please and wherever it takes their fancy, thereby putting themselves in great danger. (Continued on page 7)

UNESCO initiative to help urban Indian heritage

In order to strengthen Indian cities and towns to cope with rapid industrialisation since the turn of the century, and, more recently, globalisation, UNESCO has formed the Network for Indian Cities of Living Heritage. Its mission statements are:

- Projection of the Indian city as a unique cultural resource;
- Preservation of its distinctiveness, diversity and cultural identity;
- Promotion of heritage and creativity as the driving force for urban and cultural development, employment generation, and balanced socio-economic growth; and
- Encouragement for setting up a 'Cultural Knowledge Database for Cities' through a network of its member cities.
- To raise awareness of the exceptional variety of living heritage in Indian cities, as well as the benefits and potentials of its conservation;
- To promote local community participation in all heritage matters;
- To advocate development into vibrant 21st Century centres with modern amenities, appropriate transport systems, and vital economies without losing historical assets;
- To work towards the alleviation of inner city poverty through financial and technical empowerment of its inhabitants; and
- To support Indian cities to participate in and profit from existing international networks of heritage cities such as the UNESCO Creative Cities Programme. — (Courtesy: Virasat, the journal of INTACH.)

The objectives of this Network are:

- To foster development of cities and their citizens;
- To strengthen their traditions, cultural identity, crafts, historic urban spaces, architectural fabric and social neighbourhoods, while mainstreaming conservation as part of overall sustainable development;

(Also see pages 4 and 5)

Citizens of the world are just people

My wife's mother was born in Poland. Her father was born in Latvia. We got engaged in Paris and, not long after, we were married, moved to South Africa. Our son was born in the U.S.A., but very soon after that we moved to Guatemala, and some of his first words were in Spanish. My daughter was born in Guatemala but shortly thereafter we moved to Chennai and, as a result, she does not sing *do, re, me* but, rather, *sa, pa, sa*.

In India, I continue to eat my favourite Italian pizza and Japanese sushi. Of course, I also love Indian food, which I began eating in the U.S. as a child, and ate regularly when I lived in South Africa. Less than one mile from my in-laws' house, in New Brighton, Minnesota, is a restaurant called *Udupi Cafe*, where you can get marvellous *dosas* and *idlis*.

In India, I use the internet to check the scores of my favourite baseball team, and watch cricket on the television. While I'm doing that, I am also downloading NCAA basketball games to watch later on my iPod, which was designed in Hyderabad and assembled in China. If I'm mistakenly billed for the wrong games, it's no problem. I simply pick up my mobile phone and dial direct; the call is answered in the U.S. and bounced back to Chennai, where it is answered by someone who very well might have passed me by on Mount Road several hours before.

My children go to an Indian school, and share their classroom with children from more than ten countries. They try each other's food, sing each other's songs and are learning, from an early age, that people are people all over the world. If my children learn nothing

• Excerpts from a speech by CHRISTOPHER M. WURST, Deputy Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Consulate General, Chennai, at a National Seminar on 'Globalisation, Labour and Family: Opportunities and Challenges', organised at the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in Tirunelveli, shortly before his tenure of duty in Chennai ended a few months ago.

else from our global lifestyle, I hope that they take to heart that, though different cultures may superficially appear to be radically different, people have the same needs and desires and pleasures and pain throughout the world. There is an emerging global ethic, a set of shared values that include individual responsibility, economic and social justice, nature-friendly ways of life, tolerance for diversity, and freedom. Indeed, the smaller the world becomes, the more essential it is that we all live together comfortably. John A. Challenger, in a recent issue of *The Futurist* magazine, outlined his top ten candidates for jobs of the future. These included: *The Manager of Diversity, The Offshore Outsourcing Coordinator, Offshore Outsourcing Engineer, Corporate Age Advisors, Corporate Historian, Chief Health Officer, and Eco-Relations Manager*.

A common theme in these possible future professions is a more holistic approach to working together and working globally. In fact, I would argue that globalisation is much more a process of the world coming together than it is the, often misguided, notion that globalisation implies a takeover of the world by Western culture. The more we know about different cultures, the greater our tolerance, empathy and productivity. Be that as it may, allow me just a few minutes to debunk some myths on globalisation and how it is often wrongly associated with Western, or even specifically American, culture; sometimes it is known as the "McDonaldisation of the world."

Harvard University Professor Samuel P. Huntington points out that "the essence of Western civilisation is the Magna Carta, not the Magna Mac." He says, "The fact that non-Westerners may bite into the latter has no implications for accepting the former." Yet people continue to insist that Hollywood, McDonald's and Disneyland are eradicating regional and local eccentricities. But is this so?

Americans, after all, did not invent fast food, amusement parks or the movies. Before the Big Mac, there was – depending on where you live – fish and chips or, say, samosas. [And, just remember, you cannot get a McTikka burger in this town, but I can and do get Masala Vada and Bonda in New Brighton, Minnesota!] Before Disneyland, there was Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens...And in the first two decades of the 20th Century, the two largest exporters of movies around the world were France and Italy.

(Continued on page 8)

Recording without a qualm

The Man from Madras *Musings*, who was rather actively on the move during the recently concluded Music Season, is concerned at the number of illicit recordings that were going on at the various *sabha-s* during concerts. The proliferation of electronic gadgets, such as mobile phones that can also record video, and minuscule handycams that defy detection, is now threatening what is an intellectual property.

In all this, MMM is sorry to say, it is the Non-Resident Indian who is the worst offender. Coming down with the latest gizmo, the NRIs appear to have no qualms about attempting such recordings and at places have even made attempts to brazenly set up video cameras on stands to carry on with such recordings. When artistes object, they stop for a while and then, having moved to a less visible corner of the auditorium, resume their activities. These concerts are then uploaded onto the WWW where they are shared by a larger group. To be fair to those who record, they do not expect a monetary return, but what they do not realise is that this is basically unethical and that they are depriving artistes of what is their bread and butter.

MMM was witness to an intrepid committee member of the Music Academy detecting such an attempt by a woman with a mobile phone. The offender, rather than apologising, began arguing about her rights to record and even thought she could get away with it by complaining that the committee member had been rude. Such brazenness on the part of an educated person was most amazing to those witnessing the incident. MMM was glad to notice that the Academy pasted notices at all entrances and exits from the next day, warning against illegal recording. How much of an effect this had, MMM is not certain about, but it is surely a beginning.

The only solution to this problem is a blanket ban on all gadgets and, in particular, the mobile phone which, despite all requests, is rarely switched off by those attending concerts. Many do not even switch to the silent mode and some, when the phone rings, do not think twice about answering it and speaking into it even when a performance is in progress. Common decency is obviously a thing of the past.

What took the cake, however, was the behaviour of a woman seated on the stage at a performance where the crowds far exceeded seating capacity and several listeners had to be seated on the platform close to the artiste. Came a song and the woman dialled a number,

spoke into the phone and then kept the phone on during the duration of the song. This was obviously for the benefit of the person at the other end of the line! And MMM thought "phone a friend" was a feature of quiz contests alone.

Which way?

The ATP tennis tournaments are now a regular and a much looked forward to fixture on Chennai's annual calendar. The stadium itself is a pleasure to be in with comfortable seats, and the ambience making up for whatever small deficiencies there may be. It is, however, the parking arrangement that needs to be looked into.

That such a large stadium should have a parking lot that is not commensurate with the seating capacity is a design flaw. But there could have been better arrangements for accommodating the cars that spilled

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

over to the side streets. There were barricades galore and much confusion in traffic movement. Also, given that an international tournament was in progress, *The Man from Madras Musings* would have expected that there would have been more signposts close to the venue directing those who were new to the place. But the number of people asking for directions in the vicinity of Valluvar Kottam had to be seen to be believed.

The police way

The City Police began its sesquicentennial celebrations early this month and kicked it off in not the most people-friendly way. The Rajarathnam Stadium was the venue and the Chief Minister inaugurated the festivities – which the public deserved to see. But not only was the general public little seen, but it was also faced with several roads in the vicinity of the venue blocked by traffic jams, as a result of many other roads cordoned off. Surely, an event of the police, by the police and for the police could have been organised in a more public-friendly fashion, or is *The Man from Madras Musings* asking for too much?

The actual celebration of 150 years was recorded in a rather uninspiring set of displays, of which more inside. But a seminar organised on the same day would have been more interesting to write about had it not been closed to the

Press AFTER the Press had been invited for it. This resulted in more confusion, but the ostensible reason was that many speakers would have to be frank in their assessment and this, if reported, would not have made good reading or listening. Come on officers, what happened to the Right to Information?

On the blink

Talking about the police, *The Man from Madras Musings* would like to draw their attention to the fact that the electronic clocks that were installed at all the traffic signals that indicated the time left for the lights to change have ceased to function at most locations. In some places, they work partially, in the sense that the display works only for a few digits and at times only for parts of a digit, thereby giving a Morse Code kind of feel to the whole exercise.

MMM remembers the week when these clocks were launched with great fanfare, when it was said that awareness about the time intervals improved traffic discipline. Ground realities were different, for the road users of Chennai are an imaginative lot. People used the clock as a convenient indicator for estimating the time when their own lane would be allowed to move on and having waited till the time left was in single digits would accelerate and proceed BEFORE the lights changed and not AFTER, as was expected. If the man upfront was law-abiding and waited, then those behind would honk impatiently or, better still, form lanes by themselves and vroom out, thereby adding to the chaos.

MMM has also noticed policemen encouraging those waiting to move on, even as the waiting time for lights to change came down to single digits. Be that as it may, the clocks did serve a useful purpose and MMM is all for their repair and restoration.

On the subject of traffic lights, MMM wonders why these are religiously turned off at most junctions during peak hours? Instead, we have a posse of policemen standing around often issuing contradictory orders adding to the problems on the road. *The Man from Madras Musings* once made bold to ask a policeman about this and was told that it was easier to control traffic with a manual presence rather than depend on the lights. Something is rotten in the state of our traffic is all that MMM has to say.

– MMM



Tree thoughts

Transplanting of trees is an elaborate subject and we could learn lessons in this area from China. Thousands of trees are transplanted in a well-structured manner on either side of the highways in China, and the density of the "forest" provides a green cover of fifty to a hundred metres depth which prevents traffic pollution affecting the tenements. This can be seen for miles and miles at a stretch.

Full-sized trees are transplanted with the support of props, and the trunk is wound with coir ropes, which are kept wet. This goes up to just below the ground.

The Tree Walk, initiated by Nizhal, is another positive experience. A participant comes to know so much about the neighbourhood. Many persons from different walks of life, but with a common interest in trees, participate in it, and it is a happy feeling to find that so many of them are knowledgeable in the various ecological and botanical aspects of the subject. A lot of information is gathered and exchanged at leisure, and in this work-a-day world, you are reminded of the sonnet *Leisure*, wherein the poet says,

*What is this life, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.*

We walked, stood and stared at the verdant foliage and felt so much the richer. But more than that, it gave us a feeling that some concerted effort is needed. To quote a billboard in Bangalore, that goes somewhat along the following lines:

This Earth and its wealth are not our inheritance or legacy from the past.

They are a loan taken from the future.

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Trees unwanted

Some of the problems about trees which Shobha Menon listed (MM, December 16th) are really worrisome, but she tries to sweep all of them under the carpet as she views the issue through rose-tinted glasses.

I am a tree lover. Not so long ago, I took pains to contact the Forest Department and requested them to plant a tree near my house. In a few days, a small sapling with a guard cage was dumped at my doorstep. I was told that I would have to plant the sapling and erect the cage around it myself. I engaged some labour and had the work done. I watered the plant regularly, even when Chennai was

groaning under acute water shortage.

All was well until the plant took root and became a tree. Then it began to shed leaves into my compound, which I had to sweep regularly. One fine morning I found that the guard cage had disappeared the previous night. When the tree rooted itself well, my troubles started. Hawkers and vendors took rest under it during the hot season, which is understandable. But others spent time there noisily, playing cards. They spat all around it and threw leftover eatables and packings. Some would urinate at the base

making the whole vicinity insanitary. Whenever there was a function in any house on the street, the guests parked their cars and two-wheelers under the tree for shade. This spilled over and blocked the entrance to my house. If I protested the reply was, "I will remove it shortly", or "There is enough gap between the cars. You can move through it!"

These may be small irritants but they become cumulative in course of time. I am not complaining, but want to point out to Shobha Menon that house-owners wanting to cut down trees have substance in their

A committee of experts to provide the answer...

The article 'Clearing the Mullaperiyar confusion' (MM, December 1st) was somewhat of a disappointment. The issue required more than the casual treatment it got in the article. The greater disappointment was that I did not get what I expected from a distinguished person like Ramaswamy R Iyer: an objective analysis and a viable solution to resolve the tangle. I regret to say his article was one-sided.

The dam belongs to Tamil Nadu, but stands on land leased out by Kerala in 1886. Even a house owner, if he wants to enter a house rented out by him, has to get the permission of the tenant occupying the rented house. Otherwise, the house owner would be guilty of trespass, civil or criminal, depending on the intention of the trespasser.

The article is silent on the maintenance repairs undertaken from time to time to strengthen the dam and the inspections done by experts regarding the safety of the dam. It does not refer to the 1970 agreement between the Government of Kerala and Government of Madras ratifying the agreement of 1886 between the State of Travancore and the Madras Government, stating that the "rights, liabilities and obligations of parties under the principal deed have devolved on the Government of Kerala and the Government of Tamil Nadu, they being successors in interest." In 1970, of course, the present Kerala Cabinet was not in office and the Idukki project had yet to come into existence. This case, in my opinion as a layman, is a classic example of the failure of many high constitutional authorities failing to discharge, or acting in violation of, their constitutional responsibilities.

Article 144 of the Constitution specifically says that all civil and judicial authorities should act in aid of the Supreme Court. The decision of the Supreme Court, as the highest court, is final. It was to get over the decision of the Supreme Court that the Kerala State Assembly passed a new law to oversee the safety of dams in that state.

All Ministers, both in the States and in the Union Government, in their Oaths of Office expressly agree, *inter alia*, "to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established" (Third Schedule of the Constitution). The President of India, who is President both of the Union and also of all the States, in his Oath of Office says, *inter alia* "... to the best of

his ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law..." (Article 60 of the Constitution).

As a layman, I feel that the Supreme Court should have asked the two States to negotiate *before* pronouncing its judgement and not *after* it had pronounced it, when it was is final and binding on all. The Supreme Court normally is intolerant of any kind of transgression of or attempt to transgress its decision and comes upon the offending party like a ton of bricks.

Like 'Asterisk' who had a phobia that the sky would fall on his head, the Kerala Government is apprehensive about the dam bursting if the water goes above 136 feet. If such views are allowed to be entertained, then the people below the Himalaya may apprehend that the Himalayan range, which according to geological experts is on a seismic zone, may come down and crush them. All those living in temple towns having tall *gopuram*-s may apprehend that the old *gopuram*-s would tumble down during an earthquake and might start agitations for the removal of the *gopuram*-s. There are many ancient and weather-beaten structures still standing tall and safe in many parts of the country; this dam does too.

I do not want to take sides. It is in the interest of both States to contain the situation and not allow the situation to get out of control, as it is tending to go. Both States as neighbours are interdependent and nothing should be done to shake their mutual goodwill.

The only way to find a solution appears to be to form a Committee of Experts drawn from other countries, with representatives of Union, Tamil Nadu and Kerala Governments associated with the committee as assessors, to make a scientific study of the safety of the dam as it exists and the possible seismic effect that would pose danger to its existence. The committee may be free to suggest compensation by Tamil Nadu to Kerala for the use of its waters. Of course, the expert committee's finding should be binding on all parties to the dispute and the committee should be asked to submit its report within a reasonable time.

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... And here's a suggestion

Regarding the different views on the Mullaperiyar dam expressed in *Madras Musings* in the last few issues, I note the following from a map of the region made in 1910-1913 by the Surveyor General of India.

The maximum lake level above M.S.L. is 2861ft and the dam is at 2862 ft. The inspection bungalow is at 2935 ft on a hillock next to the dam and there is a regulator to control the height of water nearby, so that water (surplus) could be let off into the Periyar River. Near the Kumili end of the lake there are the sluice gates and tunnel to take the water to lower camp. The powerhouse and penstocks are not marked in this map.

If the Tamil Nadu Government is not allowed to raise the water level beyond 142 feet, perhaps it has to think in terms of having the water level regulator changed from the dam end to the Kumili end and installing a few tunnels to allow the surplus water to get into the Vairaven Aru, so that the farmers can get the benefit of the water almost immediately, provided the Vaigai Dam and such other water regulators are in place.

At a later date, this extra water could be used for a hydro-electric project, increasing the existing capacity of the power house at the lower camp, Cumbum Valley.

The total reduction of carbon dioxide generation against that of thermal power would qualify the project to claim US\$2 to 5 per tonne of CO₂ so sequestered on an annual basis as per the Kyoto Agreement.

It is in the national interest that the entire water gets diverted to Tamil Nadu as, apart from generating hydro-electric power, the water is put to much better use by the farmers. A lot of waste land too would be cultivated. If it goes to the Idukki project, it only generates hydro-electric power and the water goes on to the Arabian Sea. After all, Kerala is a water-surplus state, especially during the Southwest Monsoon (June-September), when Tamil Nadu starves during this period, as it depends on the October/December rains.

I do not think there can be any legal issue to this. In 1970 the lease was raised six times. If need be, a fresh lease needs to be looked into.

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grievances and not just antipathy or malevolence!

M. Sethuraman

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The highs & lows

In connection with MMM's remarks on 'ever-rising levels', I refer to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed before the Madras High Court. The PIL seeks appropriate direction to the Government to formulate a fixed rule for relaying roads without raising the level. It was emphasised in the PIL that, previously, the authorities prior to re-laying the road used to dig at

least six inches and then fill it with gravel for two inches followed by sand and then only tar the road. By this, the road level was kept at the same level as before. This scheme was given a go-by and the authorities now re-lay the road without digging them. As a result, the road levels have kept increasing each time the re-laying work is taken up, pushing the levels of the residential complexes to low levels causing inundation.

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Taking a look at urban development & heritage

It was just a one-day Seminar on *Delhi and Urban Development* in New Delhi, but there were many who responded to INTACH's invitation and voice the growing concern among informed citizenry about urban development of the national capital. It was widely accepted that planning and development have not yet been fully linked to an assessment of the long-term environmental impact on people. As Chairman INTACH S.K. Misra said in his inaugural remarks, "Delhi is now bursting at its seams and the problems seem insurmountable. We have a population explosion, rising pressures on land, various other problems like traffic, congestion, pollution, parking, and there seems to be really no concern for heritage".

Is there any reason why highrise buildings should metamorphose into concrete jungles? Or spaces filled up with garbage dumps? Or green belts nudged out by encroachments? Or residential areas encroached by

commercial enterprises? Or traditional water bodies filled with industrial waste? Or roads choked with pollution? Or for the common man's misery multiplied by absence of good planning and governance; that too in an age of knowledge and technology? We boast of 5000 years of history and heritage, but we do not walk the talk that would treat our cities, historical sites and cultural assets like we should – as the wealth of the nation.

INTACH took the initiative to organise the seminar to bring together city planners, builders and policy makers to explore ways and means whereby the compulsions of development could be reconciled with those of conservation. At present a multiplicity of agencies, like Delhi Development Authority (DDA), New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Urban Arts Commission, are major stakeholders, actively involved but not necessarily coordinated.

It is time for all concerned segments of Government and concerned organisations to work together and ensure that Delhi remains what it is: one of the great historic cities of the world. It could be a model for urban development for all other historically and culturally endowed cities of India.

The seminar held up a mirror to Delhi, and by inference to all State capitals that are afflicted with problems similar to Delhi – of urban growth that converts once gracious cities into unplanned sprawls, obliterating their distinctive character or identity. Rapid urbanisation has had a bulldozer effect on environment and ambience, destroying heritage that should be protected and preserved for future generations to cherish and proudly claim as their own, a legacy of the country's chequered history.

The Chief Guest at the seminar was former Urban Development Minister Jagmohan, whose

book *Soul and Structure of Governance in India* cites examples of the nexus between the politically influential, land grabbing builders and greedy entrepreneurs that has resulted in urban mayhem. He stated: "Multiplicity of authorities does create problems but in any metropolitan town there will be certain problems of coordination, control and direction. But my experience is that we lack urban discipline. What we have is a diseased type of democracy that is creating indiscipline; we criticise issues of planning when the real issue is honest implementation of decisions. Whenever a Master Plan has been prepared, due consideration has been given to the likely expansion of population, expansion of areas, requirement of various sections of society, the need for green belts, and for preservation of historical heritage. But it is in the process of implementation (Continued on Page 8)

To save our living heritage

● Urban development and heritage conservation make good business partners, says MINJA YANG.

The UNESCO World Heritage List has 800 natural heritage sites of which 300 are cities. Not a single Indian city is on the list. A rather worrisome thought, given the vast, rich reservoir of 'heritage' we boast of – on the streets, in our homes, courtyards, people, palaces, museums, forts...

Urban development should use heritage as an ingenious solution to technical challenges. It is important to reconcile urban evolution with the realities of cultural uniqueness of each society. True social cohesion and cultural regeneration will happen only if heritage works as an asset to people.

A living heritage coexists with the present age. Adaptive reuse of crafts, traditions, built heritage to generate economic sustainability will stand in good stead for all "modern-isms" that are a reality now. If heritage is about the wonders of our culture, it has to be contextualised with people's livelihood, tourism and all other revenue sources. A quest to preserve heritage should not be seen

as a contradiction with general aspirations towards development – a 'living' heritage has this advantage. According to UNESCO Director (Delhi), Minja Yang, "it's an affirmation of a way of life. Valorising of the past to create a future. Culture is collective memory; we have to understand it to qualitatively improve the lives of the majority. Infrastructural development in terms of improved housing, sewage, hygiene, access to water to improve the living environment is a part of heritage conservation concerns."

Bordeaux and Kochi have initiated discussions to converge a technical data bank, conduct exchange programmes and study tours to learn from each other. Vrindavan, a city along a river, can learn much from restoration efforts by similar cities along rivers in France. "As an inter-governmental body, UNESCO feels that there are many experiences from different parts of the world, including third world countries, that can be instrumental in helping local authorities into designing pro-active strategies based on the way of life of the population," Yang added. If we could use heri-

itage-based activities, with the support of FICCI and CII, conservation could generate employment opportunities. "Jobs created through heritage are double the amount than jobs created through agriculture," Yang affirmed. If Puducherry's houses, Darjeeling's railroad, Jaipur's side-walks could be used along these lines, it would serve the dual purpose – the past would live on into a lucrative future.

The rich-poor divide has been the bane of any major movement. "People feel heritage and culture are a luxury. By the time we reach that level of comfort, the entire incredible heritage will be gone. That's why UNESCO is constantly coaxing the government and local authorities to first understand the value of what you have and then plan around it. Though heritage is a non-renewable source, 'living' heritage is a thriving force. But once you lose it, you've lost it all. Built heritage is a concern, we risk losing it because it's impossible, financially and economically, to recreate later. Skilled artisans and labour are dying away unlike the crafts industry that survives because of its economic viability."

UNESCO has created and endorsed a network of Indian Cities of Living Heritage, linking 20 cities through India. "It will serve as a secretariat to have a data base for all 'good' practices. Experiences in one corner of India are not known in another; we need to pool in information and make it available to all states. The Hampi Rural Heritage Management Authority is the first of its kind. Kochi has adopted its heritage bye-laws. There are various specialised public institutions that are dealing with heritage

management. We need to look into their statutes and adapt their programmes to other parts of the country as well. Intellectual investments need to be shared. "UNESCO can't make things happen. The local governments, city authorities, NGOs, university research groups need to find out what are the human, cultural, tangible and intangible resources of an area, mobilise a body, like the Jaipur Virasat

Said at the Seminar...

● How do I make this heritage stretch without destroying it in any manner? Does that mean I leave it as it is? Or do I adjust, accommodate all the modern conveniences and retain the facades? For a large segment which is commercial, I think this would work. So perhaps I think we come back to the cliché of 'different strokes for different folks' and each piece of heritage, which we define as anything which is less than 100 years and more than 50 years old – I am using the thumb rule because till date nobody has defined for me what is heritage. It is something that I have inherited. Fine. But I have also inherited the slums. So do I preserve those? These are the sort of different levels one is struggling with.

Sindhushree Khullar, Chairman, NDMC

* * *

The World Bank says that the efforts to preserve heritage are fragmented, which obviously means that we need to work together to look at heritage in a holistic manner and not simply as conservation of one building, or a market or whatever... We need to do some thinking about why conservation has not taken off in India. The obvious reason that comes to mind is that conservation is seen as anti-development, rather than pro-development. I need to stress that conservation and development are not mutually exclusive... We have legal frameworks which have been changed all over the world. Yes, we inherited them from the British. But look what the British have done to the same legal frameworks, whether it is planning policy guidelines they issue every year or whatever. Why can't we also move on?

Ratish Nanda, Conservation Consultant

* * *

● There is nothing called midway that assumes development and conservation are counterpoints against each other and they have to meet midway... what we call 'midway' needs to be defined contextually and that context is given by the heritage value and grade that is assigned in the listing of that particular heritage. And must be the factor that drives development... Delhi is actually a collage of character districts. It has historically many different communities. It has different built forms mediated by different historic periods and therefore reflects separate character in separate areas. We cannot possibly have a set of byelaws that can be universally applied... we need to modify or sensitise the building laws as a tool used for development. The unique morphology of the city needs to be met through an interface that is between urban design and heritage conservation.

K.T.R. Ravindran

School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi

* * *

● Kuala Lumpur in the 1970s was an absolutely beautiful town. After the destruction of the houses, villas, street patterns, the whole territory of regional management of what made Kuala Lumpur – Kuala Lumpur, what did they do? They decided finally that it was not possible to keep the capital in chaos, so they made Putrajaya, they made a brand new town. This is a pity... What is happening in NOIDA, what is happening in Gurgaon, is also a pity. There was this opportunity, a fantastic opportunity that has been lost... In terms of grandeur and urban planning... New Delhi in my opinion is world heritage class. I think it would be a great pity if we were to continue with unplanned, chaotic, uncontrolled construction... because at the end of the day, no matter how many fly-overs you make, it is never going to be enough.

Minja Yang, Director, UNESCO

* * *

● Heritage conservation needs reasoned prescriptions, as it is tangible or intangible. It can be natural or man-made... Some of heritage is inherited and, therefore, if of lesser economic value, is considered dispersible by the inheritor, irrespective of views by society. Legal safeguards are therefore necessary to ensure that heritage conservation is part of a development process.

Prof. E.F.N. Ribeiro, Director, Association of Urban Management & Development, New Delhi

Foundation, to take action. This is where the government needs to coordinate, support and link such groups," Yang stated.

Public awareness and information dissemination are vital. "To value what we have requires cross-fertilisation of ideas and information. Heritage management needs to be a part of the curriculum. Real heritage should

be a part of the curriculum. Real heritage should

be a part of the curriculum. Real heritage should

(Continued on Page 8)

A modern temple builder

When Dr. Alagappa Alagappan, an U.N. career official, came on leave from New York to Chennai in the summer of 1970, he was summoned for a full morning *Nadi* reading by Lord Agastya at the residence of O.V. Ragu. There, the Sage said that in a city, the name of which would begin with the letter 'N', Ganesh will take a small abode. Dr. Alagappan was also asked to come the following day when he was told how this Ganesh temple would be the forerunner of a new movement to build Hindu temples in different parts of the world, especially in the U.S.A. He was asked to take on the task of getting it done.

Dr. Alagappan teamed with C.V. Narasimhan, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, to organise an ecumenical Board of Trustees including the spiritualist Hilda Charlton, who was close to Lord Skanda, and E.C. Grigg. Narasimhan was invited to be the President of the

building came into being. Dr. Alagappan continues to be associated with some of those temples to this day. He has taken a deep and abiding interest in the growth of the Sree Meenakshi Temple at Houston. He was also called to help the Hindu Temples in London when they were being built.

Dr. Alagappan's earlier years at the Besant Theosophical School and the influence of great Theosophists like Dr. Annie Besant, Dr. G. S. Arundale, Rukmini Devi Arundale, K. Sankara Menon and others have made him truly an ecumenical person and symbols of all religions have been incorporated in the New York temple.

When Dr. Alagappan called on Kanchi Paramacharya, who was on a walking tour in Gulbarga in 1985, and asked him whether it would be a good idea if all six Skandas were placed in one temple, as this would help devotees to save time on travel and focus on worship, the Sage

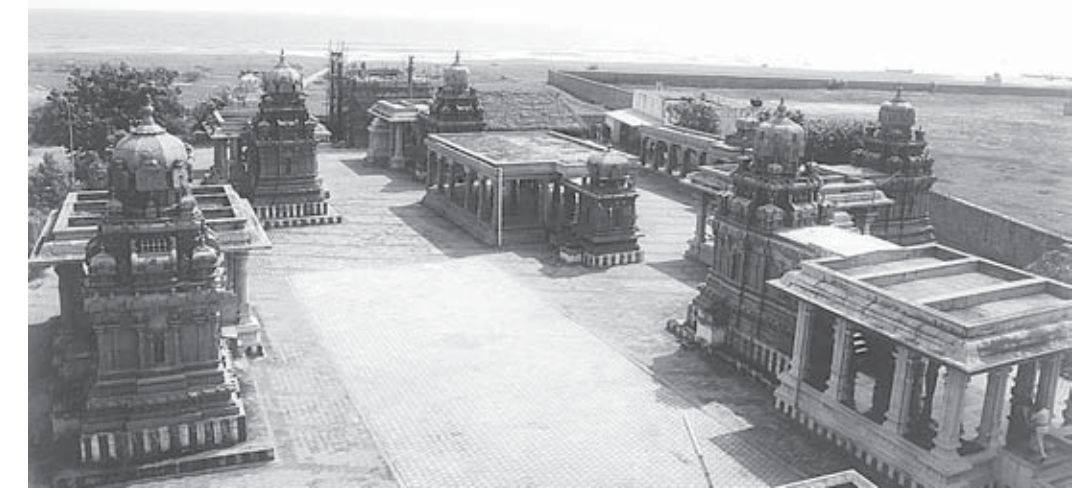
● by K.V.S. KRISHNA

Trust. Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam, the Endowment Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, and the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh took an interest in providing the external inputs, including expert *Shapathis*, trained workers, sculpture and stonework.

The New York Ganesh Temple, set in an urban area in Queens, was consecrated by His Holiness Sri La Sri Pandarimalai Swamigal on July 4, 1977 (the American Independence Day).

Meanwhile, Dr. Alagappan was also helping to organise the external inputs from Andhra Pradesh for a group headed by a Dr. Rajagopal in Pittsburgh which was building a Venkateswara Temple. This temple too was consecrated by His Holiness Pandarimalai Swamigal two days later, on July 6, 1977.

This prompted other groups in Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Nashville (Tennessee), Poughkeepsie (new New York) and Chicago to contact Dr. Alagappan for advice and help on developing well-planned and well-endowed temples – and a whole movement of temple-



The Arupadai Veedu Murugan Temple, established on 26 grounds near Kalakshetra Colony, Adyar, by Dr. Alagappan in 1985.



The Ganesha temple in New York.

Kalakshetra colony to be granted for this purpose. High quality standards have been maintained in the construction of this temple.

Joanne Punzo Waghorne, in her book *Diaspora of the Gods – Modern Hindu Temples in an Urban Middle Class World* (Oxford University Press), narrates all this and more. She relates the six battle houses of Lord Murugan representing the six *chakras* within each one of us, as follows:

Muladhara Chakra: Tiruparankundram
Swadhithana Chakra: Tiruchendur
Manipuraka Chakra: Palani
Anahata Chakra: Swamimalai

Visudhi Chakra: Tiruttani
Ajna Chakra: Palamudirsolai.

While the *Arupadai Veedu* temple near Kalakshetra gives the pilgrim/devotee the opportunity to see all the six manifestations of Murugan in one temple, the seventh temple, the Mayiladuparai Saravana-bhavayai temple, will become the seventh battle house of Lord Murugan. This is currently being built on the outskirts of Kundrakudi, enroute to Palani, by Dr. Alagappan.

Prof. Waghorne says in the preface to her book, "Dr. Alagappa Alagappan is a major force in the construction of new temples worldwide."

Quizzin' with Ram'nan

(Current Affairs questions are from the period December 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. The elections in which Gulf country were held on December 16th, the first since their Independence in 1971?
2. What is the official name of the much-talked about American Congressional Act relating to nuclear pact between India and the U.S. that was signed by President George W. Bush on December 18th?
3. Saparmurat Niyazov, who was an authoritarian life President of his country for many years, passed away on December 21st. Which country?
4. For which crime was Saddam Hussein hanged on December 30th?
5. Which global diplomatic figure retired on December 31st after 10 years in charge?
6. Name the place in NOIDA where skeletons of children were recovered leading to international disgust and condemnation?
7. Name the one half of the creative team behind Tom and Jerry and Yogi Bear who passed away recently.
8. With which cyber-major did NASA sign up recently to make space data available on the web?
9. Who was Shane Warne's 700th Test victim, a wicket he took on December 26th?
10. Gerald Ford, who passed away recently, set the record for being the U.S. President to live the longest. When was he elected President?

* * *

11. Name the Reserve Inspector in the City's police force who represented India as goalie of the hockey team in three Olympics?
12. For which work was Akilan given the Sahitya Akademi Award?
13. Which social scheme was re-launched by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on December 31st?
14. Who is the Tamil Nadu Minister for School Education?
15. What is housed in a colonial bungalow at Egmore, built in 1852 and originally owned by Arumuganatha Mudaliar?
16. Simple one. What does the initial 'K' stand for in the name of the renowned film-maker K. Balachandrar?
17. Which global sporting legend played cricket with children of the tsunami-affected people at the Chinnurpudupettai village on December 23rd?
18. Which is the odd one out in respect of the District in which it is located: Ulundurpettai, Pattukottai and Gingee?
19. Who was the illustrious son of Kakarla Ramabrahmam and Seethamma?
20. Haridwaramangalam A.K. Palanivel is considered one of the best player of which instrument?

(Answers on page 8)

A brief peep into Police growth

(by A Special Correspondent)

To mark the beginning of its sesquicentennial year, the office of the Commissioner of Police, Chennai, held an exhibition recently at the Rajarathnam Stadium. It was a rather modest show, with even more modest publicity, and attracted a modest turnout, mostly from families with police connections. The general public, it would appear, were not particularly appointed to. Which was a pity, for whatever was available was interesting, even if rather indifferently displayed.

The 150-year-old force which, according to *The Hindu*, "today comprises 121 police stations, 35 all-women police stations and nine outposts, together policing an area of 894 sq. km with a population of 7.8 million," classified its displays into five categories, each of which had a stall.

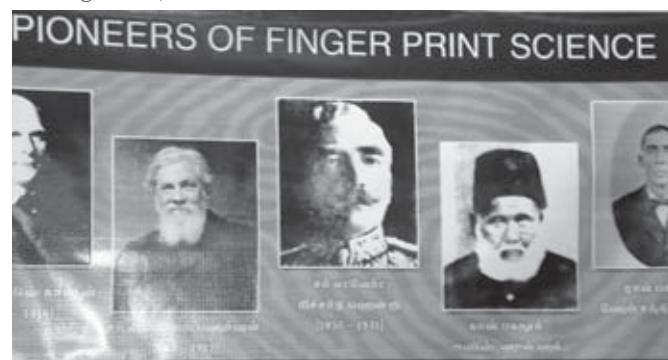
The first was titled **Communications** and had displays of all the communication equipment used by the force, ranging from the Blake Telephone of 1880, all polished wood and gleaming brass, to the Bakelite (black) telephone that was extensively



Some of the oldest phones... once used by the Police.

used everywhere till the 1980s and gadgets such as the walkie talkie, wireless communication devices, and the latest laser-based equipment now being used.

The second was devoted to the **Tamil Nadu Fingerprint Bureau** which, it was stated, is one of the oldest in the whole world, having been established on August 22, 1895. On that



The pioneers of forensic science.

day, Sir Edward Richard Henry (1850-1931), one of the pioneers in forensic science, who had trained E.A. Subramania Iyer of the Indian Police, and two clerks in the art of fingerprinting, established a fingerprint bureau at the Madras City Police Office. Photos of Sir Edward and other pioneers in the field were prominently displayed in the stall.

The third was on **Uniforms** and had wooden models with uniforms that traced the changes that have taken place in what policemen and women wear. The best of the lot, which attracted maximum attention, were the ceremonial ones. The plaque next to the uniforms for mounted police had plenty of information, some of which was very interesting. The Mounted



A display of uniforms.

Police Force was established in 1926 in accordance with GO Ms No 511, Judicial, dated July 28, 1926. It was headed by a Sergeant of the Mounted Branch and had 15 horses exclusively for headquarters. After sufficient training had been given to both men and officers, 41 horses were added and used for patrolling the respective sub-divisions. There were stables at the Vepery Veterinary College, Flower Bazaar, Triplicane, Mylapore and Saidapet. The Mounted Police were mobilised in case of emergencies and were also sent in to



An early police station.

quell mobs. The present strength is 34 horses.

The fourth booth, titled **Arms and Weapons**, had a range of weapons that included an 1856 Patten Musket, a 1902 England Lee Enfield Company's Bolt Action Rifle, 1917 muskets, a 1936 Light Machine Gun and later arrivals such as the AK 47. There were also a number of pistols.

The last section was on the **Band** and had mannequins displaying the uniforms of those playing the clarinet, the alto sax, the trumpet and several other instruments. It was interesting to note that the Indian Armed Forces entered the Guinness



Various models of pistols on display. dusty registers in which complaints were lodged.

The exhibition itself displayed commendable effort. But what it showed was that, like most Government departments, there was little effort to involve



Book of Records for playing *Amazing Grace* on October 23, 1950 with 4459 musicians under one conductor. An eye-catching photograph here showed the present Chief Minister in a suit taking the salute at a parade during an earlier Chief Ministership many years ago.

Apart from the exhibition was a stall titled **Helpline**, which listed the various complaint cells that the police force has and how these could be contacted. There were also on display books written by police officers, some of which were on sale. Outside, in the grounds, were replicas of the Triplicane and the Anna Nagar Police Stations, depicting the old and new in terms of construction styles. More interesting was the open air display of the interiors of the police stations themselves and the manner in which they had changed. From the era of the hat stand and the petromax, they had moved to the laser jet and the mobile phone. One aspect, however, appeared to have remained common – the

knowledgeable experts in putting up and documenting the items on show. Those in attendance at the booths were friendly, but had no extra information on the contents of the exhibition. There was no information on some of the sensational crimes that the State police has unravelled and resolved. There was no roll call of famed officers or at least a list of names of Commissioners of Police who have served the city from 1856. Beyond the first name, that of J.C. Boulderson, and those of some well known later incumbents, such as F.V. Arul, there was very little information.

I hope that the celebrations will not stop with just this display and will involve year-long celebrations, including seminars, case studies, and talks and, above all, will involve the public in an effort to create a public-friendly image of the police. For starters, how about a dedicated police museum open to the public, say, in *Government House*, Government Estate?

Do pedestrians have a place in road safety?

(Continued from page 1)

Pedestrians, on the other hand, are of the view that vehicle owners rarely stop when someone is attempting to cross on the zebra marks and so what difference does it make to anyone? To prevent pedestrians from making sudden darts across the road and to also deter vehicles from usurping the lane belonging to traffic in the opposite direction, the city police and coordinating agencies, such as the Highways Department, have built medians along the centre lines. While these may have prevented vehicles from spilling over, the average pedestrian still does not think twice before attempting to cross, even if it means having to climb over a median. Often the heavy onrush of traffic forces such pedestrians to stand on the top of the median, a most unsteady perch from which a fall would result in their being immediately run over by passing vehicles.

In several places concrete blocks have been used instead of permanent medians. These blocks are displaced very easily by heavy vehicles and are often also displaced by cyclists and two-wheeler-users trying to cross the roads with their vehicles.

These displaced blocks are very hazardous, especially at night, when they can be hit by any road-user. Two-wheelers in particular run a great risk of accidents. Practically the only pedestrian crossing being effectively used in the city today is the one on Anna Salai near SIET College. A permanent police presence and a traffic light that works non-stop have ensured that pedestrians and vehicle-users are on their best behaviour at this spot. It is a pity that the success here has not been emulated elsewhere.

What of the foot overbridges that have been put up in places like Nungambakkam High Road, Haddow's Road and Perambur? Hardly anyone ever uses them. The very thought of climbing all that way puts off most pedestrians and they prefer to run across the roads. In this connection, the foot overbridge that has been planned to connect the Stanley Hospital with its paediatric block, for which the foundation stone was laid recently, may provide the answer. The overbridge is to be provided with steps and a lift and if this idea is successful and if implemented at other locations it may prove beneficial. The idea

of providing an escalator, as has been done in the Egmore Station, may also prevent jaywalking and encourage people to use the overbridge in the interests of their own safety.

What about the subways? Most pedestrians, especially women, are wary of using them for fear of being accosted by beggars and ruffians. There was a time when the police assuaged fears by posting guards at both ends of subways, but this arrangement, like much else, has become erratic. The lights inside subways are non-functional at many places and the seepage of water, a perennial problem in many, has only added to the woes of the user.

In the ultimate analysis, any attempt at improving road safety for pedestrians has to be done the whole year round and not during one particular week. Also, solutions for smooth traffic movement have to take into account the needs of pedestrians.

The police will have to inculcate a sense of road discipline among vehicle users and among the pedestrians too. Perhaps it is also time that pedestrians themselves banded together and demanded an increased share of road space.



January 19: *Bharata Natyam*, dance performance by Divya Murthy and group (at the Narada Gana Sabha, 6.30 p.m.).

January 19: The World of Women in Dance. Panel discussion and demonstration of dance. Speakers: Lakshmi Vishwanathan: "The Concept of Feminine Grace" Leela Samson: "Identities of the Dancer" Malavika Sarukkai: "Shifting Perspectives" Padmini Chettur: "Pushed" Moderate: Sharada Ramanathan (at Kalakshetra, Open Air Theatre, 6.30 p.m.).

January 19-26: Photography Exhibition *Under Over* by Parvin Dabas (at Apparao Infinity).

January 20-31: *A Season of Seeing - Frame 2*. An exhibition of Gita's work *Earthlight*. Paralleling this exhibition, two of Gita's films will be screened. *Echoes of Freedom*, which is being premiered here, is about painter and arts educationist R.B. Bhaskaran. *Red Symphony* peeps into the art, life and complex motivations behind the work of abstract artist Achuthan Kudallur (at the British Council).

Till January 20: *Sacred trees* by Deidi Von Schaewen, a renowned international photographer and film-maker. This exhibition is organised as part of the *Tree of Life Festival* in collaboration with Prakriti Foundation (at Nageshwar Rao Park).

January 20: *Gaate Rahe Mera Dil*,

an evening of golden hits from the 60s and 70s presented by the Divine Mother Society (at Kamaraj Memorial Hall).

January 20,26,27 & 28: *Oh God!* a comedy of biblical proportions by Evam (at Sivagami Pethachi, 7.15 p.m.).

January 20-February 28: *Vasantha Vizha* - annual children's mela with bullock cart rides, shadow puppets and special activities (at DakshinaChitra).

Till January 21: *Metamorphoses - decentering Gendered Spaces*, a group show put together by DakshinaChitra, Apparao Galleries and Sunita Kohli, chairperson of National Women's Museum in Arts (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

January 21: *The Odd Couple*, a comedy about two opposite friends stuck together by Evam (at Chinmaya Heritage Centre, 7.15 p.m.).

Till January 21: Painting Exhibition of the works of Dr. Norman L Guide. From January 24-31. Group show by James Manickam and his group artists.

January 27-February 2: Group show by R. Rajendran and his group. (Both above at Lalit Kala Akademi).

Till January 22: An exhibition of the works of Kathleen Scarborough (at Artworld).

Till January 22: *A View from the Saddle*: an equine art exhibition

by Sabrina Siga where she captures the essence of the thoroughbred (at Taj Coromandel).

Till January 22: *Stylised Depiction*, an exhibition of paintings by A. Loganathan, retired professor, Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai, who has over 40 years of experience in painting and ceramics (at Dakshina-Chitra Art Gallery).

January 23: Scriptwriting workshop by Peter Venn, film screening of *Planet Earth: Caves*, workshop by Laura Marshall, and film screening and discussion *When animals talk* by Jane Goodall. (at British Council)

January 24: Erik Truffaz Quartet (at the Museum Theatre, 7.00 pm)

January 24: Workshop on the role of films in conservation by Jeremy Bristow, Film screening and discussion *Paranormal Pigeons*, public lecture by Jane Goodall, and Film screening and discussion *Life on the Undergrowth: Invasion of the Land* (at British Council).

January 25: An evening of John Keats' poetry. A selection compiled by Renuka Rajaratnam and read by Sashi Kumar (at the British Council).

January 26: Odyssey Quiz 2007 open to all above 14 (at Music Academy).

January 27-February 10: An exhibition of paintings by Sakti Burma. There will also be an exhibition of the artist's photographs in Apparao Infinity during the same period (at Apparao Galleries).

(Continued on page 8)

Subscriptions and contributions

• Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), *Madras Musings* has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to CHENNAI HERITAGE and send it, together with the COUPON BELOW, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 260-A, TTK ROAD, CHENNAI 600 018 or C/O LOKAVANI-HALL MARK PRESS PVT. LTD., 122, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

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If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep *Madras Musings* going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on on-going projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to *Madras Musings* for 2005-06 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

We look forward to all readers of *Madras Musings*, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions. We are indeed sorry we can no longer remain a free mailer.

— The Editor

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Senate House Conservation Fund

• The Senate House Restoration and Management Trust appeals to all alumni of the University of Madras and heritage lovers everywhere to contribute to the Senate House Conservation Fund which the Trust is managing for the purpose of restoring *Senate House* to its old glory and maintaining it thereafter in the same condition. Cheques should be made out to the Senate House Conservation Account and sent to the Registrar, University of Madras, Chennai 600 005. Contributions are eligible for benefits under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

Dear Registrar,

I am pleased to enclose a cheque for Rs. as my contribution to the restoration and maintenance of *Senate House*. Kindly acknowledge receipt.

Name:

Address:

.....
.....

I am an alumnus/alumna/heritage lover and wish the project all success. My college was

Date: Signature:

Citizens of the world are just people

(Continued from page 2)

Richard Pells is a History Professor at the University of Texas, as well as a senior Fulbright lecturer. He asserts that the cultural relationship between the U.S. and the rest of the world over the past 100 years has never been one-sided. "On the contrary," says Pells, "the United States was, and continues to be, as much a consumer of foreign intellectual and artistic influences as it has been a shaper of the world's entertainment and tastes."

In his article "Is American Culture 'American'?" Pells outlines that as a nation of immigrants from the 19th to the 21st Century, "the United States has been a recipient as much as an exporter of global culture. Indeed, the influence of immigrants on the United States ex-

plains why its culture has been so popular for so long in so many places." "What Americans have done more brilliantly than their competitors overseas," he says, "is repackage the cultural products we receive from abroad and then retransmit them to the rest of the planet."

So Europeans, Asians, and Latin Americans flocked to *Titanic*, as they once did to *Gone With The Wind*, not because those films celebrated American values, but because people all over the world could see some part of their own lives reflected in the stories of love and loss. In the end, American mass culture has not transformed the world into a replica of the United States. Instead, America's dependence on foreign cultures has made the United States a replica of the world.

Yet there remains a large group of people who feel that the word "globalisation" means that American culture is taking over the world. Here's a local observation: *Idli* and *dosa* will never be replaced by Domino's pizza and Chinese food. Being able to watch great films from around the world will not mean that there won't continue to be a steady stream of movies from Kamal Haasan, Jyotika, Vijay or Vikram. Your classical dance forms, epic poetry and literature have been around longer than the U.S. has even existed. Appreciation for American jazz, Japanese theatre and Latin American novels will only enhance your knowledge.

Globalisation is a two-way street. Soon I'll be able to get a Starbucks Coffee in Chennai. But I can turn on the TV, in Washington DC, and watch Sun TV or Jaya TV. Never forget that as the world encroaches into your lives, those things that influence your lives are suddenly available to the world, often for the first time. If we are all open-minded and smart enough to grab hold of those things from around the world that we truly appreciate – be they products, art forms, clothes, work habits, beliefs or interpersonal behaviours – our lives can only improve. And though your children may end up in careers that are unimaginable to you now, you'll still be able to recognise them. Citizens of the world are really just people! — (Courtesy: AIRC News, the Newsletter of the American Information Resource Center, Chennai.)

Mita Kapur

SAVE OUR LIVING HERITAGE

(Continued from page 5)

include how regular people lived, in *mohallas* and streets, not just what the kings did or the wars they fought," Yang said.

Tourism is a growing sector that should be viewed in an overall context of a development strategy. Not all tourists want to hop from one monument to another. They want to stop by, stroll, watch a craftsman beat copper, buy bangles by

the roadside, have coffee, listen to folk music, take in colours, smells, sights and sounds of the place.

Urban development and heritage conservation make good business partners. Yang is tireless in her work, she strives to spread the word, UNESCO's concerns and its effort to link living heritage cities to broaden and share a database are bound for success. — (Courtesy: *The Hindu* Sunday Magazine.)

Urban development and heritage

(Continued from page 4)

that things go wrong, and this is primarily due to the type of politics that this country is pursuing...If you go on regularising all illegal structures, allow residential properties to be converted into commercial areas, permit higher FIR at the drop of a hat, without considering the implications involved, what then can you expect?"

In a nutshell he said it all. There are lessons to be learnt by all metropolitan and satellite towns in India. As Jagmohan concluded: "If you have to reform the very basics, you have to reform your attitudes. It is an issue of social and cultural reforms, fundamental change

of values, whether you want to be a just and fair nation, or just carry on and live under cultural self-deception, confusion and chaos..."

UNESCO was represented by its representative in India, Minja Yang, and landscape architect Nikol Ballomay. Yang said that out of 800 World Heritage Sites worldwide, as many as 300 were city-centric, and expressed dismay that not one Indian city was on the list.

The quintessential recommendation to emerge from the discussions was that public participation and debate be initiated before the Government or the Private Sector embarks on new projects accompanied with an environmental impact assessment – thereby ensuring a proper understanding of issues, the requirements of the local community, and the goodwill of the citizens. — (Courtesy: INTACH Virasat)



(Continued from page 7)

January 28: Vintage Car Display the Madras Heritage Motoring Club, with about fifty Vintage and Classic cars and twenty two-wheelers. The convoy will depart from Palavakkam to Dakshina-Chitra at 9.30 a.m. (at Dakshina-Chitra, 10.30 a.m.).

January 29: *Merzhin*: Rock with a strong Celtic inspiration by a group that has performed at more than 100 concerts (at IIT campus).

Till January 31: *Between waves and shores*, an art exhibition by Ka.Ty Deslandes. (at Alliance Francaise).

February 2: *Three Raagas*, a jazz trio (at the Taj Connemara).

February 3: *Darb Al-Harir*, an evening of world music featuring French, Algerian and Indian artists (at DakshinaChitra).

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. United Arab Emirates; 2. Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006; 3. Turkmenistan; 4. For killing at least 148 people in Dujail in 1982; 5. Kofi Annan; 6. Nithari village; 7. Joe Barbera; 8. Google; 9. Andrew Strauss; 10. He was never elected! He was Vice-President when President Richard Nixon stepped down.

* * *

11. R. Francis; 12. *Vengayin Mainthan*; 13. 'Varumun Kappom Thittam'; 14. Thangam Thenarasu; 15. The Chennai Police Commissionerate; 16. Kailasam; 17. Roger Federer; 18. Pattukotai. It is not in Villupuram; 19. One of Carnatic music's trinity, Tyagaraja; 20. The *thavil*.

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