

• *In a letter to the CMDA...*

We, the people, suggest...

The Citizen consumer and Civic Action Group has with its newsletter sent out a separate letter on its findings and suggestions on the CMDA's master plan document. It stated that, "Based on requests from several citizens, we have drafted this letter for interested individuals to facilitate recording their objections/comments to the master plan" and urged that "in case you endorse these views, we urge you to sign on the letter and send it to Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority before August 31, 2007."

The letter urges the CMDA to adopt the suggestions and incorporate them before the draft Master Plan is finalised.

Integration of plans

There are no clear statements as to how the State's plans and policies for development of Tamil Nadu and Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) dovetail into the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's (CMDA) Master Plan. Schemes for development that are currently ongoing (e.g. JNNURM and others) and the master plan proposals have not been tied up clearly.

Suggestion: The second master plan should reflect State development plans and should address integration of the plans.

Approach to development

Approach to development proposals is not uniform for all the areas within CMA. There is more focus on developing the southern portion of Chennai.

Suggestion: Plan should be holistic and promote an equitable and balanced development for the entire CMA.

Urban poverty

No constructive proposals/plans for improving the quality of living of the urban poor.

Suggestion: Issues and needs of the urban poor should be addressed in a holistic way and facilities should be planned based on their requirements.

Infrastructure facilities

Strategies or improvements suggested are not based on the realistic evaluation of the existing infrastructure facilities.

Suggestion: Issues on infrastructure facilities should be assessed on an informed real-time basis and strategies should be taken forward based on this assessment.

Traffic & transportation

Traffic management measures are more biased towards motorised traffic and safety of pedestrians and cyclists is ignored.

Suggestion: Pedestrians and cyclists should necessarily be given a place in the traffic and transportation plan.

Water supply

A comprehensive analysis of the water supply scenario and water problems in the metropolitan area. Plan ignores critical measures needed to ensure sustainable water supply to CMA.

Suggestion: Water supply shortages should be recorded and a rational plan to overcome the inadequacies should be proposed.

Solid waste management

There is no mention of the major issues like burning of wastes in Pallikaranai marsh, limited sewer lines and open defecation.

Suggestion: The plan should address current public concerns.

SOCIAL FACILITIES

Education and health

Inadequacies in facilities like education and health have been overcome by adding such new facilities without considering the spatial location.

Suggestion: Provisions of new education and healthcare facilities should be determined based on data and analysis of the need, impact and accessibility of these services.

Telecommunication

There is no land use mapped for placement of 'towers' or antennas for telecommunication services.

Suggestion: Land use plan should clearly indicate the area for social facilities, including the area for placement of towers and antennas. The land use plan could be detailed out at zonal level, to make it more authentic.

Open spaces

There is no link between the objectives of preservation of open spaces and protection of ecologically sensitive areas as stated in the plan strategy and the proposed land use.

Suggestion: The ecologically sensitive areas should be earmarked and zoned as protected areas. Parks and playgrounds should not be privatised, nor be converted into built up areas.

(Continued on page 8)

The movement of Saturn

Saturn, who, according to those who know, shifts position, as per astrological cycles, every two-and-a-half years, made his moves last month. *The Man from Madras Musings* watched the developments with interest. For, this time, even Saturn must have been amazed at the amount of attention he received. Let us not forget that we are in the middle of an economic boom and a consumer revolution. And that no doubt makes Saturn much feared by one and all!

A leading business newspaper of the country brought out a full colour supplement on the subject. It dedicated a full page to the various sun signs and the effect Saturn would have on each one. MMM glanced through it and was chagrined to find that nothing but gloom and doom was predicted for one and all, MMM included. There was an interview with the chief priest of a temple dedicated to Saturn down South and he spelt out various propitiatory steps the public ought to take. There were advertisements for blue gems and other items dear to Saturn. MMM, who later met a correspondent of the paper, asked how a business daily could go in for this sort of material. He was told that businessmen happen to be the most superstitious among the general public and that there were several phone calls from readers asking for the chief priest's address. MMM later came to know that the supplement was sponsored by the temple itself! Apparently the shrine was interested in drumming up trade – and what better than a business newspaper for it?

Not that others were far behind. A famed shrine of Madras that is Chennai had its sub-shrine dedicated to Saturn, declared it out of bounds and then charged a hefty fee for those wanting to have a peek at the deity. And you should have seen the serpentine queues that formed all around the area. Nothing better than restricting supply to build up demand, as any economist will tell you.

But there is always a positive side to anything. Apart from the temples and priests laughing all the way to the bank, the walls of the city ceased to be used as urinals for a good week around the time Saturn shifted residences. People were terrified of upsetting such a moody God who, if offended, could say it with thunderbolts, so they desisted from answering calls of nature against walls where posters of the deity were pasted. And, presto, when the next batch of posters was put up, these people were back with a vengeance. Holding on to full bladders for a week must have been tough.

MMM visited that Chennai Saturn shrine a full week after the event. He was practically alone at the sanctum which wore a forlorn look. After all

that adulation, it must be tough to be left alone. But, then, two-and-a-half years from now, there will be an encore and Saturn can have his revenge. Who knows? The Government which declares public holidays at the smallest excuse may extend its grace to Saturn as well.

Hall's sorry state...

The Man from Madras Musings accompanied a group that went on a heritage tour of Park Town last week. Among the many attractions was the Victoria Public Hall which was opened especially for the group. Walking into the Hall was, as always, a saddening experience for MMM. The Hall is becoming increasingly decrepit and copious rains have damaged the rich wooden interiors even further. Despite all this, the theatre on the first floor is still a grand spectacle and crying out for some of the city's stage productions to be held there. But with no end to the imbroglia over control of the Hall in sight, it does not look as though the Hall is going to see better days in the near future.

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Sometime ago, there was an announcement by a State Minister that VP Hall is an integral part of the city's heritage and would soon be restored to its full glory. Since then, nothing has happened and the building continues to gather dust. In any other country or city, a building such as this Hall would be a convention centre or a place for cultural events. Not so in our city. MMM, while watching a film recently, was surprised to see the Hall doubling as a prison where the hero was incarcerated and interrogated. Since the film became a big hit, MMM wonders if it will draw attention to the sorry state of the Hall.

...& a pavilion's too

It appears that locations associated with the city's sporting history also suffer the same fate as cultural landmarks such as VP Hall. The same heritage tour took in Moore Pavilion as well. Once the home of the South Indian Athletic Association, this handsome building passed into the hands of the Railways some years ago and became the home of the Sir Ashley Biggs Institute that once promoted boxing and football in the city. The Institute appears to have abandoned the building which has, like VP Hall, been made over to the elements. The structure is said to be infested with snakes, if the warnings put up outside are to be believed. But that does not appear to deter a family that was occupying the building when MMM went there.

To end on a happy note, MMM was delighted to see the upkeep of My Lady's Garden, during the same tour. More and more residents of North Chennai now use it for their constitutionals and the verdant lawns and flower beds are sights for sore eyes.

No symbol that

On August 1st, *The Man from Madras Musings* had written about what looked like a symbol on each tower of the restored Senate House. When he had first mentioned this to the Editor sometime ago, the Editor had said that he too had noticed them and had thought they were some kind of mystic symbols (mysticism being something Chisholm was into) in line with the sculpted gods, fauna, and arts of Aretino that figured on the granite capitals of the pillars. When MMM was later with a group visiting Senate House, he heard the subject discussed rather animatedly and in reporting this MMM appears to have trod on a few toes. His own contribution to the guessing game had been described by the architects who had magnificently restored the building as "frivolous or irresponsible" and the remarks of the don as "cynical".

They inform MMM: "This is the termination details of steel cross bracings which have been introduced in all the towers to arrest the vertical cracks at the top of the tower, which are of a very serious nature and would have ultimately led to the collapse of the dome. The shape of the termination is specially designed to distribute the stresses uniformly over the brickwork."

Now we know! And that is that what looks like a mysterious design of sorts to the public and MMM is in fact a bit of engineering ingenuity. MMM stands corrected and chastised. As no doubt will be the dons and their wards.

Madras Week

Why does the *Madras Musings* Lecture Series always focus on past happenings, someone asked *The Man from Madras Musings*. Well, the paper does focus on heritage and so it is nothing unusual for it to have talks on its area of interest. But that, MMM admits, ought not to deter others from having programmes of current interest during the week in years to come. After all, the more the merrier.

The Chief, who has been campaigning for years for Madras Day, will be delighted to note that the lecture series attracted a good audience turnout on all days, with a mega turnout on a couple of days. All this augurs well for such events in future.

– MMM

● A 4-page look-back on Madras Week

The bloggers celebrate Madras Week

A new element during Madras Week was the proliferation of web logs (blogs). We bring you selections from a few:

- The Enfield rally to commemorate Madras Day:

The Madras Day ride 2007 went on pretty well. About 38 thumping Enfields rode out on a brisk Sunday morning to places like the Adyar broken bridge, the University Senate Hall, the Kohinoor petrol bunk where the emission levels were checked, then on to the Ripon Building (where I missed seeing one of the most important rooms, the Mayor's room) and finally to have lunch and celebrate the spirit of Onam at Kairali, Anna Nagar.

It was a wonderful half-day learning more about the culture and the rich values of this city and how we should be proud of lots of things. I learnt that the Tamil Nadu Police Department was the second best force after Scotland Yard and that the clock used in Ripon Building is a miniature version of the Big Ben in London. It was a thoroughly wonderful experience..

(from <http://mustang312.blogspot.com/2007/08/madras-day-2007.html>)

* * *

- All Madrasis, today's the day people! Apparently, Madras was created on the same day in 1639... yes, August 22, 1639.

And yes, this might be a surprise coming from me, as I am not a major history buff or anything... but one of my friends, Heidi, told me about this and I am really overflowing with enthusiasm... well, basically to do nothing... however, it just feels great we have a day named to celebrate the birth of one of the greatest cities in the world!



A packed hall at a Madras Musings talk by Randor Guy during Madras Week. (Pictures by SARAVANAN.)

Three cheers for Madras... Hip Hip Hurrhrrraaaaayyyyy!!!!!!:)

Posted by Zeppelin at 15:31

(from <http://music.paithiyam.blogspot.com/2007/08/madras-day.html>)

* * *

- It was a morning very well spent, a morning with lots of info and tidbits and lesser known facts of the Fort as well as the city.

They say you don't get much for free, but this day proved the maxim wrong, credit fully given to Chennai Heritage and its organisers (after a Heritage Walk in Fort St George).

(from <http://satyeki.sulekha.com/blog/post/2007/08/going-places-madras-week-the-fort-st-george-heritage.htm>)

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- Chennai Week is being celebrated this week. Every year this event is getting more and more popular with many people showing a great deal of initiative to put together happenings.

<http://padmininatarajan.sulekha.com/blog/post/2007/08/memories-of-madras.htm>

* * *

- A reason to celebrate is around the corner – Madras Day on August 22... Madras is beautiful and there is no doubt about it. The city has held its own in the face of commercialism and has stood its ground amidst taunts of being dubbed conservative.

<http://backpakker.blogspot.com/>

* * *

- 'Madras Week' is Chennai's trip down memory lane

In.news.yahoo.com

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- It would have been any other day in the month of August until four years ago, when some freaks, prominent among them S. Muthiah (the city's most famous historian), Sashi Nair (journalist) and Vincent D'Souza (editor of *Mylapore Times*), came out with the concept to celebrate the founding of Madras. The Madras Day, as they called it, is celebrated on 22nd of August every year... It is believed that an agreement was signed on this date in 1639 between Day-Cogan and the Vandavasi Naickers, the local rulers back then, to purchase a section of land (May I call that agreement paper to be the birth certificate of Madras? Well, many would agree, I hope).

The city is significant in more ways than one. It's here where the first municipality was set up, the famous 'Madras Eye' was discovered, the first train of South India ran, the only one in India to be bombed in World War, the first engineering college of the country was set up and yes, of course, I was born. To celebrate the spirit and to create awareness about the city and its heritage, several events are organised. It's only heartening to note that year on year events get bigger and better. And really thanks to those who are all behind this movement. *Madras Nalla Madras*.

<http://wenkey.blogspot.com>

ENTHUSIASTIC CELEBRATION OF MADRAS WEEK

(Continued from page 1)

with the Max Mueller Bhavan's Goethe Institut flying in a scholar from Germany exclusively for the celebrations. Can this mean participation in future from more and more consulates and deputy high commissions in the city? After all, several countries must be having considerable unknown treasure troves of information on Madras, given its importance as a centuries-old trading centre.

Perhaps most heart-warming was the increasing number of events connected with children, for they will be the citizens of tomorrow carrying this city to greater heights. There were storytelling sessions, treasure hunts, heritage walks and displays of traditional arts. Asan Memorial School came forward with a special exhibition on the city which was on for three days. Four colleges too actively participated with several events. Nevertheless the number of schools and colleges participating needs to go up.

A particularly encouraging element was the involvement of

the Sir Thyagaraya Chetty College, Washermanpet, for its significant participation of long neglected North Chennai in the celebrations, going beyond schools from the north and south of the city exchanging visits. A contest encouraging city school students to explore Chennai's history and heritage and present the topic of their choice in multi-media form was another interesting feature. Among the quiz contests in Tamil and English, one on Dr.

Muthulakshmi Reddy, held at the Avvai Illam, was an eye-opener for those who attended, not only in terms of information on the activist but also the extent of knowledge schoolchildren had about her.

Women's organisations in the city also got together for a morning celebration and pledged to organise several events next year. Rotary sowed the seeds for greater participation in the future. And celebrations were organised in Kilpauk

and Vadapalani, which had hitherto not joined the party, indicating that more areas are likely to join next year.

The public talks at two venues were marked by overwhelming attendance, and several heritage and tree walks were sold out, indicating a heightened interest in the history, heritage and environment of the city. There have been indications that the IT Industry too is waking up and taking notice of the celebrations and there have been tentative

signs of its willingness to participate in future years. The Press too offered Madras Week greater space this year – but it can do still more in the future by not tapering down after a great start.

There is tremendous scope for expanding the event. A shopping festival held in conjunction with the Week would have generated tremendous response. Malls and shopping areas such as T. Nagar could have participated. It is only if they all come in that it will be possible to claim that this event represents the city.

The beauty of Madras Week is that it needs practically no sponsorship or financial support, just plenty of enthusiasm and energy to get things going.

"Gen Next" is clearly getting involved in Madras Day celebrations. What more could we ask for? **PLAN NOW FOR NEXT YEAR'S BIRTHDAY BASH**. For all those heeding that call, Madras Day 2008 (August 22nd) is a Friday and the Week will, therefore, be from August 17th to the 23rd.

North-South exchange showing promise

During Madras Week, I took a group of students of M.Ct.M. Chidambaram Chettiyar School to the Fort to kick off a tour of North Madras.

We had been working hard to arrange tours for a few schools on either side of the 'divide' and the response was wonderful.

The M.Ct.M. students came alive when we shared the stories on the Fort with them and this set the mood for the rest of the tour through Royapuram, Kasimedu and Tiruvottriyur

Heart daring was also the response of the girls from a Royapuram school who brought the North Madras stories to three South Madras school campuses.

When we broke for 'tiffin' in Besant Nagar, the girls tucked in the idlis in a jiffy and doubled out to enjoy a few minutes on Elliotts Beach!

Two positive things seem to have happened during 'Madras Day 2007'.

Our young community has shown greater interest in our city and the intensity will grow if they can be inspired and motivated.

Also, the north-south exchange is showing promise and we only hope city schools will follow up on these recent exchanges that have taken place to get to know the city's people better.

Vincent D' Souza

Looking back on the early printing efforts in Madras

Madras Week celebrations were kicked off by the Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL) even before the announced start on August 19th. RMRL got started on April 15th with, appropriately, a meeting and the opening of an exhibition on the print media in the early days of Madras. Roja Muthiah, an avid collector of printed material, must have watched the proceedings from above with immense satisfaction, probably feeling this was about the best tribute that could have been paid to him.

On display were imprints from some of the earliest Tamil and English journals, newspapers and books that had been printed in Madras. Among the exhibits were early Madras newspapers, magazines and journals, such as *Dinasari* (1944), *Dinamani* (1934), *Swadesamitran* (1882), *The Hindu* (1878), *The Mail* (1868), *Ananda Vikatan* (1926), etc.

The panel that greeted me displayed logos of old publishing houses, such as Lokobakari, TMR of T. Kumarappa Mudally St., Choolai, Madras, and T. Sababathy Pillai, Siddhar Noorpadippukazhagam, O. Mooneswamy Modeliar, Sivakami Press, and Vithiya Rathinakar Press. These logos had been wrought with great care and aesthetic sense and even now appeal to the eye.

An issue of *Janavinodhini* (February 1888) was presented on one panel with its contents page. The contents included such subjects as 'The Industrial Arts and Education of Hindus'. The journal, a monthly, was started by The Madras School Book and Vernacular Literature Society in 1869. It survived for 30 years. Though the publication of the journal ceased in 1899, V. Radhakrishna Iyer, who was editing the *Viveka Bodhini* in Mylapore, revived it in 1922.

Another exhibit which attracted attention was the Tamil journal *Madhar Manjari - Andappurathu Thamizh Ithazh* (மாதர் மஞ்சரி - அந்தப் புரத்துத்தமிழ் இதழ்;) which is reported to have got support from the Government and was edited by C.S. Ramaswamy. *Andhapuram* is the place reserved for upper class women in their extensive homes and, therefore, this must have been exclusively for women of such families. The journal ran for 18 years from its start in 1899.

ஒரு பைசாத் தமிழன்; (The one pie - paisa - Tamil) was started by the well-known Ayodhidasar in 1907. It was a weekly, issued every Wednesday. The title was indicative of



Matar Manoranjani - Tamil Zenana & School Magazine.

The Tamil Zenana & School Magazine was founded by C.S. Ramaswamy Iyer in 1899 with the help of grants from the Government. The magazine was described as *Anthapurathu Tamil Itai* and was published for about 18 years. The main focus was on education, marriage reforms, demand for equal rights and awareness for women through education: science, history, domestic economy, hygiene and teaching and much more.

"The magazine is full of varied and interesting matter and written in Tamil not made too difficult for the average reader," says Prof. K.B. Ramanathan, then Professor at Pachaiyappa's College.

The advertisement for the magazine goes like this: "The magazine affords the best and the cheapest medium for advertising. It reaches all classes of people in the Tamil districts, Ceylon, Singapore, Natal, etc."

its price. In 1908, the name was changed to *Thamizhan* and it ran for another seven years when Ayodhidasar's son Pattabhiraman took it over in June 1914, and ran it for another year. It then ceased publication. Later, it was revived and Kizhur G.F.G. Appadurai took over as its editor in July 1925. The journal was regular till it was stopped in June 1934. In its later *avatar*, it was priced at quarter anna (3 pies).

When she decided to write social novels, the legendary Vai. Mu. Kodhainayaki Ammal (வைத்தமாநிதி முடும்பை கோதைநாயகி அம்மாள்) wanted a vehicle for her output and, so, bought out *Jaganmohini* (ஜகன் மோஹினி), a Tamil monthly, in 1925, which was owned by one Nagaswamy Iyer. Kodhainayaki lost her mother when she was an infant and was brought up by her grandmother who encouraged her talent. Unfortunately, Kodhainayaki had no formal education and

learned Tamil only at home from her uncle. She narrated the stories she wanted to write to one T.C. Pattammal who wrote them down. Her first novel was *Vaidehi*, which was based on the life of a devadasi. To publish this story she wanted a journal and that is how *Jaganmohini* changed hands. She serialised the novel in the journal. The front page of the journal, which had largely targeted middle class women readers, appears attractive even today.

When you see the cover page of the *Ananda Vikatan* issue dated 15-7-1934, you actually see S.S. Vasam, though his picture was never featured in its pages throughout his life! Vasam purchased the then monthly from Pudur Vaidyanatha Iyer for a mere Rs. 200 at the rate of Rs.25 a letter in its name (it has eight Tamil letters). On the cover of the issue exhibited was an advertisement offering Rs.4,000 as prize money, a big amount for that day by any standard! Vasam revolutionised the journal's contents and was the first person to introduce a crossword competition with

● K.R.A. NARASIAH reports on a significant Madras Week exhibition

handsome prize money. It was he who first introduced a Tamil short-story competition.

The cover displayed of T.S. Chokalingam Pillai's *Gandhi*, a journal with a purpose, belonged to one of its issues that included the first short story of Ku. Pa. Rajagopalan, "குலோபஜாமுன் காதலி". The annual subscription of this journal was Rs. 4½.

P.S. Chettiar, the pioneer in providing information on cinema through a journal, started *Cinema Ulagam* on April 21, 1935. This issue's cover is featured in one of the panels, along with cover pages of other journals like *Anil* (1944) and *Sakthi* (1939).

I viewed with nostalgia the English dailies of those days, which carried advertisements on their first pages. Those advertisements clearly revealed the taste and needs of the public of the day. In fact, those first pages are a mirror of the society of the times.

What we saw at the exhibition were several publications which, in spite of whatever the financial difficulties, were brought out just for the love of publishing. There was a sampling of street-corner ballads from the hundreds of RMRL



Logos of early printers and publishers



collections, a selection from which is worthy of re-publication as an anthology. Among those displayed were: the *Aaththichoodi Sindhu*, *Royapuram Railway Station*, *Kadaikkal Kummi* (ஆத்திச்சூடிச் சிந்து, இராயபுரம் ரெயில்வே ஸ்டேஷன். கடைக்கால் கும்மி),

in 8 pages. The author must have been a musicologist, as he has provided the notations for the *raga* and the *tala* as well, so that it can be sung properly! In other words, in the late 19th Century and at the beginning of the 20th Century, Madras had people who recorded any incident of importance in lyrical form and there was someone to print and publish the record, irrespective of the financial constraints. These ballads were sold on street corners and had ready buyers.

Amongst the books exhibited, in ingeniously home-constructed dust-proof display cases, were the first Tamil dictionary and the first English-Tamil dictionary.

A book that particularly attracted me was the "*Thamizh Thalaimaipulamai Nadaathum Thandavarayar Mudaliar Seitha Ilakkana Vina Vidai*" (தமிழ்த் தலைமைப் புலமை நடாத்தும் தாண்டவராயர் முதலியார் செய்த இலக்கண வினா விடை), published by Chennai Kalvi Sangam in 1828. This book on Tamil grammar is written in a simple style in the form of questions and answers. The honorific confidently describes the author as one who has created a system for improving knowledge of the Tamil language. Also on view was *A Dictionary of the Tamil and English Language* by Rev. J.P. Rottler, printed and published by the Vepery Mission Press, and other books brought out by the SPG.

The RMRL and *The Hindu* must be congratulated for this splendid effort and I look forward to both institutions teaming together on more such exhibitions. Both have fine collections.

8 pages, published by Thiruvotriyur Parasurama Muthaliyar and printed in Parabrahma Mudhirakshara Salai (பரப் பிரம்ம முத்திராக்ஷர சாலை); an 8-page *High Court Alankara Sindhu* (ஹைகோர்ட் அலங்காரச் சிந்து, சென்னை ஏகாம்பர முதலியார்); published in 1908; *The Song of the College* (காலேஜ் சிந்து, சிறுமணலூர் முனுசுவாமி முதலியார், இரத்தினவேலு வாணி விலாச அச்சுக்கூடம், நாராயண முதலி வீதி 52வது நிர்வீடு), 8 pages printed in 1898, giving an insight into how college education was regarded in those times; one on the problems faced by the people after the German cruiser *Emden* shelled the city in 1914 (ஜெர்மன் குண்டால் பட்டணத்து ஜனங்கள் பரிதவிக்கும் சிந்து / திருத்தப்பட்டது அ.மா.முண்டியா பிள்ளை 1914, சங்கநிதி விளக்கம் பிரஸ், 8 பக்கங்கள், 6 பைசா), and another entertaining lyrical work on the fire in the People's Park. Drinking was always a social curse and the inebriated had their peculiarities. A lyrical work called *Song of the Arrack Vendor* or *The Song of the Drunkards* (கள்ளுக்கடை சிந்து என்னும் குடியா; சிந்து - ஏகாம்பரக் கவி) was brought out by Chennai Purasai Sundara Vilasa Achchukkudam in 1901

Of Chennai – and our temples

During my last visit to Chennai (that was Madras), I met a group of Europeans and they were asking me for places of interest to visit in Chennai. I was told that whenever they ask someone, they were told to go to Fisherman's Cove and Mahabalipuram. These places are two hours' drive out of Chennai and they were looking for local (downtown) places of interest.

I was surprised to find that the hotels in Chennai did not have a travel desk offering advice on places to visit in Chennai or tourist brochures on the city.

I have been to Chennai many times and never have I seen tourist brochures promoting visits to its museums, temples, etc. But whenever I meet my Chennai Tamilian friends, they proudly talk about their ancient history, Dravidian culture, temples, etc.

Another issue I like to bring to your readers' attention is the ban on non-Hindus entering our temples. I have accompanied British friends to Madurai Meenakshi and other temples and was

told to leave the foreigners outside. When a meat-eating, alcohol-consuming Hindu like me can enter a Hindu temple, I don't know why a Christian cannot enter our temples.

These temple managers stop the Europeans because of their white skin. This in the United Kingdom would be considered a racist policy and I am glad it is not being practised in Hindu temples in the UK.

I have been to churches (including the Vatican and Lourdes) and mosques all over the world, but no one ever asked me not to enter.

If we can open our beautiful historic temples to the tourists, it will not only enrich our religion but may also make the visitor think of becoming a Hindu (the world's oldest religion).

I would be interested to hear your readers' comments.

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OUR

READERS

WRITE



Boundary pillar?

I refer to the picture with the article 'A racy chronicle of Madrasapattinam' (MM, August 16th). It would be interesting to know the part of Madras which this picture depicts. Can you possibly tell me where and in which part of Madras the monument shown on the right side of the picture could be and whether it still exists.

I do hope that a translation of this book in English is

published as it would make good reading.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: 1. The picture, a part of a painting, is very likely of 'Black Town' (George Town), with the Esplanade in

the foreground. The pillar on the right is very likely one of the six obelisks marking the boundary of the Esplanade, behind which 'Black Town' was developed. The buildings near the pillar look very much like those of the Madras Christian College – but the temple on the right confuses the whole issue, because there was no temple next to the MCC buildings; its neighbour to the right was Parry & Co, by which there was an obelisk which still stands tall there.

2. An English edition of the book is due before the end of the year.

Knowing the city

The article 'Know your City' (MM, August 1st) was really informative. Though our family has lived in Madras for the last three decades, we did not get the correct answers for the fifty questions. These questions and answers will find place in my general knowledge book.

Madras Musings is not only worth reading for adults but also gives useful information for schooling children like me. Could we have more and more of such articles in future?

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Defacing the city

I often wonder whether anyone in Government reads Madras Musings and, if so, any action is taken.

Madras Musings gave a graphic account of the posters and bill-boards spoiling the walls, and roads and pavements with holes and hitting the heads of or forcing the pedestrians to the road. I find that this disease has infected even the Vivekananda Illam, covering the rotund, heritage Ice House building. Vivekananda and Ramakrishna certainly do not need this kind of publicity!

Even young, savvy politi-

cians seem to acquiesce to having their pictures pasted on walls. Do they realise how much posters deface this city? In Belgium, posters can be pasted only in earmarked places. In Beijing, they are now bringing down the billboards for the Olympics, so as to present it as a first world city. I read recently that when Lady Lyndon B. Johnson noticed the ugly billboards on the road from Texas to Washington, she got them removed and replaced with flower-beds. She campaigned for the people of the USA to keep the environment clean and beautiful.

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North-South divide

How come the zealots who cried hoarse that North (India) flourishes while South (India) withers have made the reverse true in the case of their home turf, i.e. North and South Chennai. Is it because they hope to get political gain through the more violent thugs spawned in North Chennai (who however eventually get killed in encounters)?

Be that as it may, we wish to see North Chennai developing in an orderly, legitimate way, with huge malls, multiplexes and sabhas having all the infrastructure perfectly in place. I do not know of any sabha there conducting Carnatic music concerts regularly. Many readers would not have visited places like Washermanpet and Tondiarpet etc. I wish we had an all-encompassing transport system which would blur the North-South divide and make a mélange of the whole Chennai metropolis. Let us hope that day is not far off.

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(Current Affairs questions are from the period August 1st to 15th. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Tamil Nadu and Chennai.)

1. Why was the astronomical object TrES-4 in the news?
2. Who has been recently ranked by Fortune magazine as the richest person in the world?
3. Which Asian animal of the waters has been declared officially extinct following an intensive survey of its natural habitat?
4. Where did 600 people recently pose naked on a glacier to raise awareness of climate change?
5. In which African country's once-lost forest have six animal species new to science been discovered recently?
6. The 65th Anniversary of which event in our country's Independence movement was observed on August 9th?
7. Name the Asian Nobel Laureate who became the Prime Minister of his country, where the President is also a Nobel Laureate.
8. After a long legal battle, which computer company won the rights to Unix and UnixWare copyrights?
9. Which leading toymaker has recalled over 18 million toys made in China that may potentially be harmful to children because of lead and other substances in the paint?
10. Which Indian has won the Ramon Magsaysay award this year?

* * *

11. After which two famous European leaders are the conference halls at the Taj Coromandel named?
12. Name the founder-editor of the popular evening News Today?
13. 'Survival of the fittest' is the tagline of which recent Tamil film that gets its title from a locality in Chennai?
14. Who is the new Commissioner of Chennai Police?
15. Which Chennai institution has instituted an award worth Rs.1,00,000 for the best original play script in English written by an Indian?
16. What in Chennai now stands on the old site of the Monegar choultry established in 1782?
17. In which year was Surjit Singh Barnala first appointed as the Governor of Tamil Nadu?
18. At which archaeological site near Tirunelveli were a number of skeletons, dating from around 3,800 BCE, buried in earthenware urns, unearthed in 2004?
19. What is Bharathiraaja's new work, the bilingual *Bommalaatam*, going to be titled in Hindi?
20. Another filmy question. Whose 150th film is supposedly titled *Vithagan*?

(Answers on page 8)

Our Addresses

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No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Till September 8: The Madras Canvas. (At the Forum Art Gallery.)

Till September 13: An exhibition of paintings & sculpture by Asma Menon, T. Athiveera Pandian, Gayatri Gamuz, Radha Chandrashekar, V. Ravindran, B.O. Shailesh. (At Artworld.)

September 14-23: Woyzeck – A Soldier's Story, presented by Koothu-p-Pattarai, directed by Gil Adlon. Karl Georg Büchner's Woyzeck has, for this Tamil production, been placed in the Indian Navy. (At Alliance Francaise, 3.30 pm & 7.30 pm each day.)

September 21: Signum Quartett: Music travels time. The Quartett, shortly after its founding, was awarded 1st prize in Germany's 1994 nationwide youth competition Jugend - Musiziert. (At the Music Academy, 7.00 pm).

Garbage pile-up

(Continued from page 1)

conservancy work. Dogs and rag pickers had a field day. The handover from one agency to the other was far from smooth and there were accusations against the former alleging non-fulfilment of commitments at the end of the contract.

The new agency envisages a system where its vehicles would call from door to door and residents would be expected to keep their refuse pre-segregated and ready for handing over. Unlike the earlier system, the sweepers would not collect garbage from the bins but would only clear the streets. It is not clear how the public of the city, not exactly known for much discipline in such matters, will respond to such demands. The Corporation had, in typical style, not informed the public, a full month after the contract had been finalised, that it would be their responsibility to segregate waste. In view of this, the agency (Neel) has announced that it would clear garbage from bins for the time being till the

system of households segregating wastes comes into place. It is anybody's guess how soon that would happen.

In the meanwhile, with no relief in sight to the continuing pile-up of garbage, the Corporation struck a deal with the erstwhile agency Onyx to step in with 30 compactors and 3000 bins to clear the garbage. This was hailed by the Mayor as an instance of Onyx coming in "with no commercial motive". It is noteworthy that just a couple of days previously the same agency was blamed for the mess as it was claimed that it had withdrawn its facilities far too rapidly and that it had been doing its work in a lackadaisical fashion after the contract period expired.

The Corporation has also served a show cause notice on Neel for its poor showing. There is expected to be plenty of thunder and lightning over the issue in the Corporation Council meeting. Clearly, a proper and due diligence in respect of the whole changeover process was not done before the new contract was awarded.

Some questions on new Assembly complex

After a 25-year journey, passing through a series of proposals, like a New Administrative City near Tiruchi in 1981, a New Assembly Complex along Beach Road opposite St. George Fort in 1983, a New Secretariat Complex at Queen's Mary College in 2003, later, due to strong opposition, shifted to Anna University Campus area, along with a simultaneous, long-term Administrative City along the Old Mahabhalipuram Road (OMR) beyond Thiruporur, etc., the Government has currently settled on coming back to its original site at Governments Estate, Anna Salai, before it was shifted to its current St. George Fort premises in 1957.

Official sources confirm that the project will be taken up in the fast mode to complete it within this regime. However, the Government is keen to issue a global tender for design. The Indian Institute of Architects-Tamil Nadu, on hearing the news, made a representation to the Government to conduct an Architectural Design Competition open to all architects, in order to obtain a wider choice to select the best design solution.

In a communication to the Government, the Chairman of IIA-TN, R. Ramaraju, also raised questions on:

- the suitability of the site while keeping the Rajaji Hall and new MLAs' Residential Apartments at the centre and also running of elevated MRTS track on the eastern stretch of the site.
- the decision to demolish the beautiful architectural piece, Government House, behind the Rajaji Hall, which was also recently renovated.
- Analysis and auditing urban and environmental impacts due to such a large development in the existing settings.
- Above all, cutting of large trees that are thickly spread over the site.

All this needed to be reviewed seriously, keeping in view the heritage and environmental issues, it was pointed out — (Courtesy: TAL).

Through artists' eyes

(Continued from page 5)

after the onslaught of the tsunami of December 2004.

Disturbed by the rapid changes that have taken place in her immediate environment in the recent past, Benitha Perciyal reflected on the new culture of consumption and considered return to the days of old. Her works are didactic in trying to propagate the idea of protecting nature and saving the city's resources, especially its green cover. Also mindful of the changes around him, B.O. Sailesh in his paintings attempted a satirical take on his environment, recording what he saw as the drastically transformed urbanscape of Chennai, where, with the expanse of the city and the proliferation of man, there seemed to be no space left for indigenous fauna.

In a lighter vein, cartoonist Keshav caricatured the conservative image of Madras, detailing the quirks of tradition. In *Penn Paarkiraar*, while the potential bridegroom sits bored, it is the *maamis* who are busy at work, checking the quality of the girl's jewellery and saree, thus literally, '*paarkiraar*'.

Beauty lies in the details of Biswajit Balasubramaniam's cartoons. His portrayals of the reality of the streets are liberally laced with tongue-in-cheek humour.

Demonstrating open-mindedness through their ability to laugh at themselves and their city, their confident lines demonstrate familiar perceptions of an ever-evolving Chennai.

Displayed on three levels, the works are on show at Forum Art Gallery, Adyar until September 8th.

Answers to Quiz

1. Astronomers regard it as largest known planet in the universe. It circles the star GSC 02620-00648 in the Hercules Constellation; 2. The Mexican tycoon Carlos Slim; 3. The Yangtze river dolphin; 4. Switzerland; 5. Democratic Republic of Congo; 6. Quit India Movement; 7. East Timor; 8. Novell; 9. The U.S. toymaker Mattel; 10. P. Sainath.

* * *

11. Clive and Duplex; 12. TRR; 13. *Pudupettai*; 14. G. Nanchil Kumaran; 15. *The Hindu*; 16. Stanley Medical College; 17. 1990; 18. Adichanallur; 19. *Cinema*; 20. 'Captain' Vijayakanth.

WE, THE PEOPLE...

(Continued from page 2)

Land use

The proposed land use change is vague. There is a lack of clarity in the plans as it is not prepared at the zonal level or neighbourhood level.

Suggestion: The SMP should include details of proposed plans in specific localities, accompanied by easily readable, clear maps of the areas affected by changes.

OVERARCHING SUGGESTIONS

- Disseminate the informa-

tion (including issues and strategies) at the zonal / ward level.

- The document should be made into a simple, understandable version in order to solicit more public comments on the plan.
- Proposed changes to the transportation network should be based on analysis of current usage and impact studies.
- Proposed changes to land use must be prepared based on data collected at the zonal or neighbourhood level, taking into account the specific needs of each area's residents.
- A comprehensive plan for the poor should be prepared. Relocation plans for the urban poor must be considered as a service, not as a project.
- Clarity of maps should be improved.
- The plan should be written and disseminated in a manner that it both solicits and incorporates people's mandate on the development proposals in the city.

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