

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

INSIDE

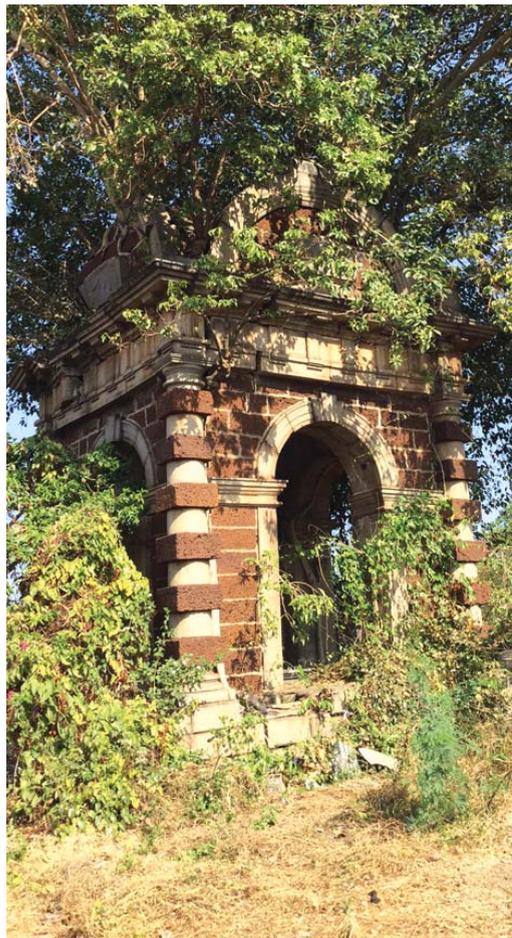
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How many more cracks, CMRL?

Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), which had thus far restricted its depredations to heritage structures, extended its scope recently to include a part of Mount Road. Even as a bus with 35 passengers in it and a car were driving side by side, the road beneath them caved in. It was a good thing that the subsidence happened on a Sunday afternoon when traffic was light. More importantly, the passengers in the bus and the car driver had time to clamber out to safety. But the episode has once again brought to light the question that refuses to go away – how much does CMRL



● by A Special Correspondent

care about safety when it goes about its work?

As in all the cases of cracks in heritage structures, the sinking of Mount Road too was dismissed as a minor matter by those who are laying our underground transport facility. All the safety precautions are in place, they say, and the problem has occurred owing to a sudden change in soil characteristics, which can escape attention despite the best possible assessment. At least that is the official view. However, it is quite reliably learnt that initial studies had predicted that many areas of our city would be prone to subsidence and this included locations in the proximity of some of our heritage structures. Work went ahead nevertheless, chiefly because it was felt that such occurrences (including the possibility of a collapse) are small sacrifices to be made in the larger interest of affordable public transportation. Affordable, did someone say? (see alongside.)

(Continued on page 6)

How we treat heritage!

● Our two pictures focus on two historical structures and reflect how we treat such relics of history. On the left is the Dr. James Anderson tomb in the St. Mary's Cemetery on the Island. This tomb today sports trees growing for it. Some may say that's appropriate for Anderson was the first of those Madras medico-botanists who pioneered the study of flora in India and established what could well be considered the first botanical gardens in the country (see page 4).

The second picture is of the Salt Bungalow in Ennore Creek, where rowing and sailing as a sport were born in Madras. This house, occupied by the Excise Inspector as home and office (it also commemorates the salt pans in the area), was often used by spectators during regattas to watch the action.

The Madras Boat Club plans to shortly row down memory lane at Ennore Creek where the Club had its beginnings many years before its official functioning 150 years ago, in 1867. The Salt Bungalow may well again host spectators watching the action.

Fair fares? Not for filling trains

(By Our Business Correspondent)

The likely fare structure for the 45 km Phase I of the metro project has been indicated. The base fare is said to be Rs. 10-70 for the 45 km stretch compared to Rs. 10-30 for 213 km in Delhi. Size of investment is quoted as justification for the proposed high fares.

High fares could confront user resistance and consequent low utilisation of the rolling stock asset, defeating the very purpose of fixing rates high. In fact, the trick lies in going for high volume usage and full or near-full utilisation of the asset to generate large aggregate revenue that could cover variable expenses and as much of the

fixed expenses as feasible – it is possible, and even probable, that low fares and large revenues would meet investment considerations.

The Metro in Mexico City was, at one time, priced so low that what was paid was useful more to count usage – it encouraged mass usage. Going beyond considerations of financial viability, public utility projects of this kind elsewhere in the world are assessed for economic, social and environmental benefits they yield in the form of relieving traffic congestions, reducing pollution and its

salutary effect on health and absenteeism, savings in road upkeep costs, conservation of forex on reduced fuel usage, timeliness, punctuality at work, and so on. Many of these benefits are reflected in financial savings to the public authority in the medium- and long-term and cannot be ignored in any viability assessment. Limited financial analysis is for individuals and firms, but looking at indirect and longer term, but nevertheless tangible, benefits, is for public authorities.

In our society, the culture of travelling by public transport is

yet to acquire respectability and acceptability. It should be promoted. Wasteful use of private transport – just one person travelling to work by personal car – needs to change. In Jakarta, for instance, during peak hours, usage of main arterial roads is allowed in select sections only if the car has a minimum of three passengers. The Metro is one component of the transportation system. Attractive pricing and integration of Metro stations with feeder services with common ticketing are necessary for the Metro to make a visible impact on Chennai's traffic environment and citizens' daily lives.

A fascinating document

● One of Madras's first department stores, Oakes & Co., founded in 1843 had its main shop, *Exchange Hall*, on Popham's Broadway, now Prakasam Salai. Oakes also owned, in neighbouring premises, Beehive Foundry, a name that survives to this day as part of India Commerce & Industries Co. P. Ltd., a business started by Kowtha Suryanarayana Rao in 1907. Suryanarayana's will is a fascinating document about the devolution of the Oakes & Co. property where Beehive Foundry still remains in business.

1. Kowtha Suryanarayana Rao, son of Subbaryudu garu residing at 95, Broadway, Madras declares this to be my last will and TESTAMENT which I make this Eleventh day of August 1960 in my 84th year in good health and of free will.

2. Nothing in this will is intended to revoke or in any wise affect the Will I had previously made providing life-time maintenance and residence (1) to my eldest daughter Nagaraja Lakshamma which shall therefore continue in force.

3. I most humbly make this will treading the Vedic path in silent reverie of thought of Bhagawan Sri Krishna, the ultimate Reality, the Lord of the Universe, who is all Love and Beauty and Truth, Goodness and Joy forever, who has been in all activities of my life my Sole Guide, Friend, Philosopher and Preceptor, whose Identity I have realised in my spiritual quest of Truth and whose teachings in the following lines in the Blessed Gita have influenced and permeated my daily life in this material plane

*"Janma Karma cha mē divya
mēvam yō vētti tatwataha
Thyaktwā dēham punarjanma
Naiti nāmēti sōrjuna"*

Chapter 4 – Sloka 9

*Idam Gnāna muṣāsritya
mama sādharma māgathāh*

Chapter 14 – Sloka 2

*"gumēbhyascha param vētti
madbhāvam sōdhigachhati"*

Chapter 14 – Sloka 19

*"Gunānethā nathītya thrin
Dēhī dēhasamudbhavān
Janma mṛityujarā dukhai
rvmuktō mṛita masnutī"*

Chapter 14 – Sloka 20

I have a life reading of mine from 3000 years old Dhruvanadi of Satyacharya which gives a glimpse of the realisation by me of the Truth in this birth. There are too the letters to me from late Sri Valiveti Bhaskara Lakshminarasimha Sastri Garu, Advocate Philosopher my father-in-law and my terrestrial garu giving me daily lessons from the Gita, letters which in the course of my interview with Mahatma Gandhi in the Yarravada Jail I read out and were greatly appreciated by him. I have maintained diaries from 1889 to this day which give an account of my spiritual and occult experiences.

4. My beginnings were humble. I started life as a school teacher and within a few months left it to enter business as my life occupation with a capital of Rs. 40 saved by me from my earnings as teacher. Through the grace of Bhagawan Sri Krishna the business flourished and all the Wealth I earned and accumulated from my business of half a century I have held and possessed only as belonging to Bhagawan Sri Krishna to be disposed of as guided by Him.

5. The business concern I started and nourished with care and caution with the loyal and brotherly co-operation of my friend and partner Sri C. Audikesavalu Chettiar for nearly 50 years, is the industrial organisation called The Indian Commerce and Industries Co., (Private) Ltd., Madras which has attained countrywide reputation.

6. Parallel to the above industrial concern, I founded in 1930 a religious and charitable association incorporated in the name and style of the Swadharma Swarajya Sangh (Orthodox National League) Ltd., under the Indian Companies Act of 1913 for the revival of the declining spiritual and cultural values of Bharateeya life, dharma and religion. The Sangha is a non-dividend declaring

(Continued on page 4)

R(upee) K(eep) Nagar where joy abounded

The Man from Madras Musings has never visited RK Nagar, the locality that is forever in the throes of an election. He did toy with the idea of visiting this hotspot some days ago, but then along came the news that the election had been cancelled and, so, MMM decided to do the same to his planned visit.

One of the chief reasons that MMM wanted to go to RK Nagar was that he had come to know that the place rained cash. Apparently, the Gross Domestic Product of this particular constituency of India has risen so sharply in one week or so that there were rumours of it soon declaring itself an independent nation and, if that was not feasible, looking at the possibility of electing a representative to the US Senate. Families of, say, four, suddenly found themselves earning in five figures, each member being showered with cash. Whoever disbursed the moolah was most democratic, for the money was given

group. Let's fight the honest fight, they said. There was, however, a strong rumour that a cashless man from Delhi was not too happy with the quantity of cash floating around in RK Nagar. This way, he feared, RK Nagar could become a tax haven of sorts rather like those shady islands and tiny European nations. And that led to the RK Nagar elections being cancelled.

The people of RK Nagar are happy. They get to keep their rupees and, as and when the elections happen again, there will be more money. Not so happy is the rest of the city for it never saw the colour of the money and, what's more, lost the one opportunity of a public holiday.

The hat party is, so MMM understands, hopping mad. The electrical pole group is looking for a warehouse to store the effigy and coffin. The boat has at present weighed anchor. As for rising sun, it is temporarily in eclipse, but hopes for better times.

out. Imagine being in a social gathering and the conversation turns to places where people stay. The majority give out names such as Mylapore, Triplicane, Purasawalkam, etc, then pipes up a lone voice that says Baby Nagar. There is a dead silence followed by hurried and loud conversation even as the person who said Baby Nagar slinks out into the grim outside world and from there moves on to Baby Nagar. There is also the other question, do residents of Baby Nagar refer to themselves as Infants? And is their municipal councillor Peter Pan?

These and other questions of similar pith and moment jostled MMM's brain as he drove to Baby Nagar one evening. For those who do not know, it is close to Velachery, another locality that lots of people in the older parts of Chennai know about but have never visited. MMM has, and let him tell you that there is nothing to be afraid of. The

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Baby Nagar beckons

Can you believe that an area with such a name really exists in this, our city? *The Man from Madras Musings* would have also been incredulous had he not had the opportunity to visit the place a couple of times previously. But then, Madras has no dearth of funny names. How else can you account for a place called the Belly Area? It has a housing colony in it that rejoices in the name of Belly Court. Or for that matter have you heard of BRA Road and SOB Street? We also have ROB Street that leads to a bank!

MMM has puzzled for long as to how Baby Nagar acquired its name. Having no success in his researches, he finally decided that it must be because reaching it from any part of the city, unless you are already in Baby Nagar, in which case you don't count, takes so long that it feels like nine months. It could also be because pregnant women, if driven at great speed across its rutted and pitted roads, could be induced into labour. But be that as it may, some developer of land decided that the colony that he was laying out would be known as Baby Nagar and that was it. MMM is sure that if this person was asked 'why Baby Nagar', he would most likely reply with a 'Why not'. Perhaps he was also fond of infants.

Whatever the reason, MMM is certain that it is a very embarrassing address to give

natives are friendly and you can spend the night there in case you so feel like it. MMM had, however, no such intention; his visit to Baby Nagar was mainly to attend a concert in which his favourite singer was performing. The event was scheduled for 6.30 pm and MMM set off a couple of hours earlier, but at the time when the curtains would no doubt have been rising, he was still a good two kilometres away. In short, MMM would arrive late, rather like a full-term baby that decides to stay on some extra time in its mother's womb.

Reaching Baby Nagar, MMM's mind came up with another possible reason for the area's name. Its entire layout reflected the infantile capabilities of our city planners. This is a new area and you would expect it to have broad roads, sidewalks, proper street lighting, underground ducting and street signs. Not one of these was in existence. For good measure, you also had huge gaps in what must have once been a pavement, giving you direct access to the drains below. Now these are all supposed to be problems associated with old localities, planned at a time when the horse carriage abounded. What prevented the planners from laying out localities such as Baby Nagar in a better way? There is, however, no doubt that the place lends itself to adventure sports.

—MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Greater care needed

Radha Padmanabhan's letter (MM, March 16th) was interesting, informative, directional and deeply touching. The world-famous Marina is more mis-used than used.

The Marina is Madras's jewel and needs to be treated with love and care by both the Corporation and public.

The many parks in Chennai, too, are not being adequately cared for and maintained by the Corporation and users. The parks are unclean, plants are drying and dying, with no care and no water, and lighting is poor, making it difficult for evening walkers, particularly senior citizens who need the parks most.

It is hoped that the Corporation and the public will get the right message from Radha Padmanabhan's thought-provoking letter.

Dr. H.K. Lakshman Rao
Krishnapuri, Chennai

Pallavaram church

The nostalgic account of Veteran Lines (MM, March 16) mentions the St. Andrew's church, Pallavaram. A well-known hub of Anglo-Indian settlement, its history goes back to 1823. Since that time it has been a part of the St. Thomas' Mount Chaplaincy. The Chaplain from the Mount was granted a palanquin allowance of Rs. 70/- per month to visit Pallavaram regularly. The original church was on the site of the Main Guard of the Presidency Cantonment of Pallavaram, where the troops of the Horse Artillery were quartered.

In 1847, at the initiative of Rev. Walter Powell (now resting in St. Mary's churchyard, Fort St. George, 1853), "the question of providing the pensioners, veterans and troops at Pallavaram" permanent facilities for worship came to the front. A two storeyed building in the vicinity was made ready. The large room above was furnished as a church and the rooms below as a school. In subsequent years Mrs. Margaret Parker, the Army school mistress who was also the organist and Sunday School teacher, was the main mover and organiser of all social and religious activities in the Cantonment. Col. Henry Smalley, along with a later Chaplain, Rev. W. Leeming, was instrumental in undertaking extensive alterations and improvements to this little sanctuary.

In 1901, "the Main Guard building was demolished because a certain garrison engineer declared the building to be unsafe." The church then moved into Barracks No.4.

When the bomb-proof barrack building housing the church started developing "a crack all the way down the centre", plans for a new church surfaced in 1933, with a lot of contributions from various sources, including those of the initiatives of the four Anglo-Indian ladies mentioned by reader Peppin. The new church on the present site was consecrated in 1935. Many gifts to the newly built church included pews from St. Mary Magdalene's Church in Poonamalle and the pulpit from St. Stephen's Church, Ooty.

Rev. Philip K. Mulley
Anaihatti Road
Kotagiri 643 217
The Nilgiris

PS. Frank Penny in his authoritative work on *The Church in Madras* (1912) furnishes the photograph below, probably of the second sanctuary (Barrack House Church) of the Pallavaram establishment.



The Watch Man

On reading the tribute to that great retailer, management expert and man of several parts, the redoubtable Pradipta Mohapatra, I was reminded of the many years that I was associated with him during my tenure at *The Hindu*. The first phase was devoted to Advertising and Marketing.

The reference to Mohapatra's interest in scripophily came as a pleasant surprise to me for I had always assumed that apart from his expertise in the world of retail management, Mohapatra's passion was for watches – ancient, rare, luxury and contemporary. I resumed my contact with him when we were planning to have regular features and supplements in *The Hindu* and *Business Line* to bring the heady world of Swiss Horology to the southern part of the country. (The *Times of India* had already done some pioneering work in Bombay and it was a challenge for us to expose the cloistered Swiss players to the potential that lay in this part of the world.)

Mohapatra's ready compliance to cast his lot with us was a blessing. Despite his heavy schedule he visited our office several times and gave us a whole roster of duties to work on. He also agreed to write for us and shared some of his rare interviews with top Swiss pioneers during his annual visits to the Basel Watch Fair in Switzerland. It is the largest of

H1N1 anyone?

The ostrich-like behaviour of the Corporation of Chennai is once more in evidence. The city is rampant with Swine Flu (more respectably known as H1N1 influenza) and the Corporation hasn't bothered to directly warn residents about protecting themselves either with flu shots or taking the herbal Nilavembu Kashayam as a preventive.

A month ago I came down with Swine Flu. The symptoms were fever (102 degrees or more), extreme nausea and a very sore throat. I went to my GP who prescribed antibiotics and paracetamol. Three days later, my fever was a little better but I developed a wracking cough and obvious phlegm in my lungs. When I went back to my GP, he listened to my lungs and looked a mite worried. "All right, I am sending you to a chest specialist," he said.

It took another day to get the appointment with the chest specialist. His clinic was crowded and the doctor was a patient and thorough man. So after a tortuous hour when all I wanted to do was crawl into a hole and die (God knows how many people I ignorantly infected that day), the specialist saw me. After the usual examination he asked, "Have you been in a crowded place or travelled recently?"

"I went to Bengaluru by train for a day and, yes, I did see a movie before that."

"Get tested for Swine Flu without delay," was the doctor's advice.

This surprised me, as I didn't expect to catch Swine Flu (other people get it, right?).

The testing was interesting. The lab technician who came home, proceeded to outfit himself in what looked like a space suit before he took a throat and nose swab and told me, "You'll get the result after 24 hours."

24 hours later, the lab phoned in the result urgently. "You've tested positive. See your doctor at once," they said. It had already been six days since I contracted the virus. The thing about H1N1 is that the earlier you treat it, the better the chance of a cure. If many days have passed before treatment is started, it could easily turn into pneumonia and turn fatal. Perhaps if I had known the disease was in epidemic proportions, I would have got tested earlier.

Things moved pretty fast after that. I was at once started on Tamiflu, the proven drug for treating Swine Flu. On the same day, a health officer from the local Corporation division visited me (he had been tipped off by the lab) and handed me a sufficient stock of Tamiflu. He also instructed me to confine myself to my home, take lots of fluids and rub down every surface in my home with disinfectant. Then he smiled pleasantly and said, "You'll be fine soon!"

At that point I interrupted him to ask, "Why didn't the Corporation warn us, through TV or radio, that Swine Flu is so rampant in Chennai? I would have avoided travelling by train or going to a movie theatre, taken a flu shot or something."

The Corporation official looked a little sheepish. "The Government didn't want to panic the public, Madam. That's why we haven't made big announcements in the media about Swine Flu."

Now, is that stick-your-head-in-the-sand behaviour or not?

– Janaki Venkataraman
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its kind in the world and Mohapatra insisted that we would have to visit Basel, drink in the atmosphere and build up our contacts as a long-term measure. This was a Herculean task considering the problems that we would be encountering in persuading the Management to let us make a 'business trip' to Switzerland. (It did materialize a couple of years later – the results speak for themselves).

Thanks to Mohapatra our project became a success and the features that continue to come out now on much superior paper (to introduce which we had to run into yet another marathon struggle with the Management to switch from ordinary newsprint to paper befitting a premium product!) have their origins in the inspiration and encouragement that we drew from him.

Whenever, in the midst of our discussions, Mohapatra meandered into the world of Patek Philippe, Chopard, Breitling, Breguet, Hublot, Rolex, Omega, Longines, Tag Heuer – to name a few – his body language exuded the enthusiasm of a youngster and he virtually drew us into the world of Basel. During one of those discussions he happened to glance at my wrist and exclaimed: 'Hey, that is a very old Seiko watch.' I nodded and added that it was a favourite of mine, a memento given to me at an Asian Advertising Congress in Tokyo in the early 1990s! (I had deliberately worn it that day in anticipation

of a meeting with him in our office!) He quickly asked me to have it checked at a particular workshop since, according to him, the second hand was running slightly slower than normal. My colleagues and I were stunned by this remark and his perspicacity! (The servicing, done later proved him right.)

Such flamboyant personalities are a rarity these days!

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Still around?

The *Educational Review* (ER) was a landmark journal published from Sunkuwar Chetty Street, Triplicane, for more than 100 years. I was indirectly associated with this jour-

nal, when it was voluntarily edited by the late N.S. Gnana-pragasam, a brilliant chemist who taught at Loyola College, Madras, in the 1970s and 1980s.

Education Review is one professional journal of India, which silently and discreetly served the cause of Indian education in absolute total earnestness and sincerity. I would be glad to know this journal survives and performs today. I am not sure, though. Pity that Madras has failed to recognise this journal and the efforts made by its publishers.

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CHENNAI HERITAGE

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LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

— SRIRAM V

The growth overrun cemetery

Technically speaking, this vast patch of land on The Island now more or less under the great bridge to Central Station that replaced the Stanley Viaduct, belongs to the Church of St. Mary's in the Fort. In reality it appears to belong to no one, such being its state of neglect.

Formerly known as the English Burial Ground on The Island, the St. Mary's Cemetery is now accessed from Pallavan Salai (old Band Practice Road). You need to make a sharp left just after the Bodyguard Muneeswarar Temple, taking care not to get onto the overbridge that takes you to Central. The cemetery proper is accessed through a Gothic Revival gateway that has three pointed arches supported by thin pinnacles. Of the two flanking arches, the one on the right is bricked up, while that on the left is now the principal access. The central arch, through which the coffins and the mourners must have once passed, has grille gates that are permanently locked. The two flanking arches are followed immediately by the waiting rooms where mourners must have once gathered prior to the burial. Mangalore tiled sloping roofs, supported on timber frames, top these. The sexton's residence is to the left of the main gate and this is where the caretaker and his family now live.

The oldest English burial ground in Madras was at the Guava Garden, on which site now stands the Law College. That Golgotha proved to be a security risk when the Comte de Lally and his French forces laid siege to Madras in 1758. Once the attackers had been repulsed, work began on securing the city from future invasions and among the many measures taken up was the flattening of the monuments that stood in the Guava Garden.

The new burial ground came up on the Island in the early 1760s. The earliest interment



Being overrun with growth.

From then on till 1817, when St. George's Cathedral became the principal church for the city, the Island cemetery was where the powerful, the important, the rich, and quite a few commoners among the English came for their eternal sleep. Burials continued happening intermittently here till the 1880s, by when the cemetery was officially declared closed. However, a casual glance will show you that occasional burials continue to happen, especially if the dear departed is a parishioner of St. Mary's.

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(Continued from page 2)

private company and has been recently registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act 1956.

7. I own bulk of the shares in both the Indian Commerce and Industries Co., Private Ltd., and the Swadhama Swaarajya Sangha (Orthodox National League) Ltd., Being my own creations I am justly proud of them and in turn they have served as the testing ground of the great principles of right conduct I set before myself. I cherish these institutions as part of my being.

8. From my acquisitions I had already settled some properties on my son Mohanarma Sastri and son's son Lalitha Manohar and daughter's son Bulusy Venkata Surya Subramanya by deeds of gift and settlement and discharged my obligations to them as my dependents. I desire to make it known that in making such settlements of property on them, I was influenced by the confidence that my said son and grandsons will respect my sentiments and remain loyal to the two great institutions The Indian Commerce and Industries Co., Private Ltd., and the Swadhama Swaarajya Sangha (Orthodox National League) Ltd., and serve them best in all ways conducive to their continuity and usefulness to the mother country the great Bharatvarsha.



The entrance to the cemetery – partly walled-in

cemetery an ideal open-air toilet for the slums that abut the station. The number of shards from liquor bottles tells you of other uses that place is put to. A gaping hole in the wall on the northern side provides easy entry and exit to people who want to use the cemetery for clandestine purposes. A single caretaker cannot manage this vast expanse of land, and at night he may perhaps not want to stir out of the not so comfortable home he has on the premises. Certainly, he is unaware of the history of what he is supposed to protect, or its importance. The police are regular visitors here but their control is rather limited.

Occasionally, St. Mary's Cemetery springs to life. That is when the premises are allowed for film shoots, one of the earliest perhaps being the Rajinikanth starrer, *Billa*. It is indeed a pity that the Church and whoever else is supposed to be in charge of the upkeep, should allow the cemetery to languish. It cries out for basic maintenance – cleaning up of the shrubbery, proper walkways, signposts to indicate the important tombstones and if possible, a guidebook. It is understood that a University in the UK has recently come forward to assist in restoring the

place and making available all the above features. The onus is now on the church to respond. In sharp contrast to the general squalor of the cemetery is the manner in which one corner – the Commonwealth War Cemetery – is maintained. Here the stones are neatly aligned, the lawn mowed and the floral borders tended to. Close to this pocket is the grave of Brigadier Nicholson and his wife Adela Florence, who under the pseudonym Laurence Hope wrote several poems, the most famous perhaps being *Pale Hands I Loved Beside The Shalimar*.

Next door to St. Mary's Cemetery is that of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Patrick's. It is as shabby as the former and has to its dubious credit some recent hideous structures such as a square archway and a pillar of many blocks topped with an illuminated statue of Jesus. There is in addition a platform for prayer that is now put to less spiritual use. In the near vicinity is said to be a lost Presbyterian Cemetery and another one belonging to the Armenians.

St. Mary's Burial Ground on the Island and its immediate environs are classic instances of official (in this case ecclesiastical) apathy towards our heritage.

A FASCINATING DOCUMENT

9. From my other acquisitions I have already placed at the feet of Bhagawan Sri Krishna movable and immovable assets of the value of Rs. 20 Lacs donating the same from time to time to the Swadhama Swaarajya Sangha (Orthodox National League) Ltd., for the promotion and propagation of the objects and ideals of the Sangha as narrated in its Memorandum of Association.

10. As a further humble act of my life in this world I now bequeath by this instrument, as an additional donation, to my beloved Swadhama Swaarajya Sangha (Orthodox National League) Ltd., the following properties all of the value of about Eight Lacs, the balance of the bounty to me from Bhagawan Sri Krishna namely

i. House properties: (1) Beehive Buildings bearing Door No. 95, Broadway, Madras together with all the furniture, vessels, iron safe, almirahs and whatsoever contained therein and (2) 40, Broadway, Madras known as Luck Buildings.

ii. One gold plate or tray
One gold cup and saucer
One gold spoon
One gold Doppa

Rambling in our museums (3) ... with N.S. Parthasarathy

Exhibiting ancient Tamil culture

Different from other museums, in respect of display content and style, is the 'Exhibition of Ancient Tamil' at the International Institute of Tamil Studies in Taramani. Re-created depictions of ancient Tamil culture, customs and practices, in a variety of forms, constitute a colourful and impressive collection. As to why the term *exhibition* is used to refer to this display complex, as distinct from *museum*, is explained later in this article. That, by itself, was a new insight on museum display options and policies the writer could pick up in the course of his visits to Chennai museums.

The exhibition consists of seven spacious, brightly lit, air-conditioned galleries. There is a well-equipped auditorium where visitors can watch documentaries before going round the galleries. The documentaries are an imaginative blend of photographs of forts, sculptures, animations re-enacting past battles and events, battle scenes from

movies to impart realism, quotations from literature – *Purananooru*, *Thirukkural*, *Silappadhikaram* – voice-over commentary in picturesque Tamil and soft music, all combined to create a powerful impact on the audience. The commentary explaining different defence strategies, supported by diagrams, was educative. Code of conduct in war and diplomacy, explained through quotes from *Sangam* literature, are indicative of a high degree of civilisation in ancient times.

The most impressive of the documentaries is that on water management. It depicts scientific methods of water management and conservation in use in early



times and which form the basis of even today's practices. Through documentaries and clay models, the operation of dams, aqueducts, watersheds and environment protection practices are vividly demonstrated. Worship of trees was meant to educate people on the importance of tree planting for a better environment.

The model of the *Kallanai* (meaning, stone dam), an engineering marvel, is of special appeal. The dam was built two thousand years ago across the Cauvery in Tiruchirappalli District. Known also as the Grand Anicut, it is said to be one of the oldest water-regulating structures in the world to be still in use. It diverts the river to the delta districts, facilitating irrigation for agriculture and controlling floods. The dam has a strong foundation and a solid structure which holds good even today. It is made of unhewn stone and is 1,080 feet long and 60 feet wide, across the main stream of the

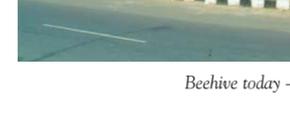


Manuneedhi Chozhan laying his son under the wheels of the chariot to punish him for depriving a cow of its calf, Porkkai Pandian cutting off his own hand to comply with the judgement of a scholar, and King Sibi giving a piece of flesh from his thigh to the hawk from which a dove sought refuge with him.

The exhibition is an impressive demonstration of ancient customs and practices in the form of paintings, figurines, prototypes of tools, weapons and other articles in wood, metal and terracotta, and reproduction of historical scenes and life styles in three-dimensional colourfully painted "doll" forms. To the lay

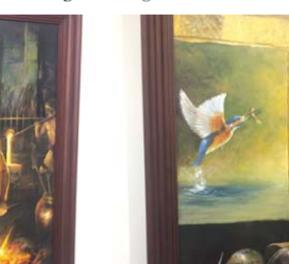
visitor, young or old, unschooled in the appreciation of artefacts and art pieces, understanding and visualising the past is made easy.

This museum visit led the writer into a mini-research to understand the distinctions and objectives of diverse display policies and techniques. The term *museum* is derived from the Greek *muses*. There were nine Muses, protecting different arts. "A museum is an institution that conserves a collection of artefacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance." These *original specimens* are symbols of the past and have to be connected and visualised for the



visiting the Beehive Buildings today – still going strong.

(Continued on page 6)



Quizzin' with Ram'nan

Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's questions are from March 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.

1. Which small Central American nation has become the first country in the world to ban metal mining?
2. Which famous tiger reserve has become the first in India to officially introduce a mascot – Bhoorsingh the Barasingha?
3. The first fully Indian-made train was flagged off at Dadar station recently. Name it and where was it made.

4. Name the legendary American guitarist, singer and writer of such classics as 'Johnny B. Goode', 'Roll Over Beethoven' who passed away recently.

5. On March 20th, the Uttarakhand High Court in a momentous decision declared which two water bodies as "living persons" and gave them the same legal rights as human beings?

6. *Asperitas Undulatus*, *Flammagenitus* and *Fluctus* are among the 11 new varieties of which natural formation that we see on a regular basis?

7. India's biggest river festival, 'Namami' was held recently. Fill in the blank with the name of a river.

8. The diamond jubilee of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (TEEC) was observed on March 25th. What is this treaty commonly called?

9. Which team won the Santosh Trophy, the symbol of supremacy in National football, for a record 32nd time recently?

10. The recently announced blockbuster merger between which two telecom companies will create the world's second largest and India's largest telecom company?

* * *

11. Why was Justice Indira Banerjee in the news recently?

12. Which facility in the State is said to have the longest military runway in Asia?

13. By winning which tournament did Tamil Nadu become the first State to win all BCCI senior level trophies?

14. Where in the State is the Cosmic Ray Laboratory?

15. The Sahitya Akademi award winner for *Appavin Snegidhar*, who was born Thyagarajan, passed away recently. What is his famous nom de plume?

16. Name the chess player from Chennai who recently became India's latest and 46th Grandmaster.

17. The 114-km-long Manamadurai-Rameswaram stretch of the railways is India's first 'Green Corridor'. What does that mean?

18. During the Kapaleeswarar Temple *utsavam*, on the night Kapali rides the Naga *vahanam*, what does the Amman travel on?

19. Apart from Kanniyakumari and Kancheepuram, which two other districts of the State start with a K?

20. Chinnaiah, Ponniah, Sivandam and Vadivelu, who lived during the early 19th Century and contributed to the development of Bharata Natyam and Carnatic music, are collectively called....?

(Answers on page 8)

April 20-21: A two-day workshop on glass sculpting for adults (at DakshinaChitra).

April 22: *Textures Textiles Weaves, Yarns & Dyes* by Jagda Rajappa. The exhibition will explore the textures and effects of natural dyes with different kinds of weaves (Apparao Galleries).

April 22: Workshop on terracotta mask-making for children (at DakshinaChitra).

April 23: Ceramic Wall Mural Workshop for adults (at DakshinaChitra).

Till April 30: An exhibition of ancient *Lithographs* by Balthazar



Solvyns (6 July 1760–10 October 1824). A Flemish marine painter, his collection of etchings provide a portrait of Calcutta's 18th Century history, and the people and customs of Bengal (Apparao Galleries).

Till May 10: Exhibition of paintings and metal sculptures by Juergen Puetz & Saravanan, two artists from Auroville. Juergen is a German artist influenced by the teachings of Ramana Maharishi and Sri Aurobindo. His paintings are abstract works

in meditative colours and forms.

Saravanan is a young sculptor who has been experimenting with various kinds of metal pieces, mostly junk, and creates realistic three-dimensional sculptures by welding them. His peacocks, hens and temple cars have won him many admirers (at DakshinaChitra 10 am-6 pm).

Till June 30: *Under the Radar – Abstractions in two Dimensional Forms* by R.B. Hole. Hukum Lal Verma, Jyoti Kolte, Rajesh Patil, Sabbir Hasan Qazi, Apparao Galleries@sandy's (Cenetoph Road) and Sandy's (Nungambakkam).

Exhibiting Tamil culture



(Continued from page 5)

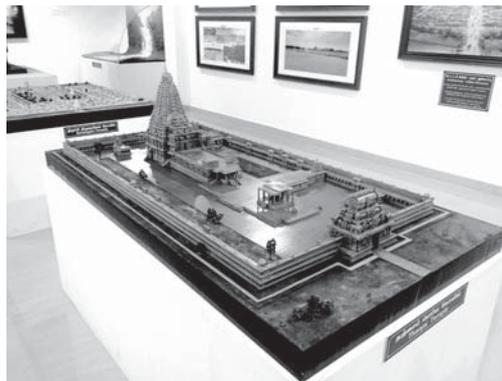
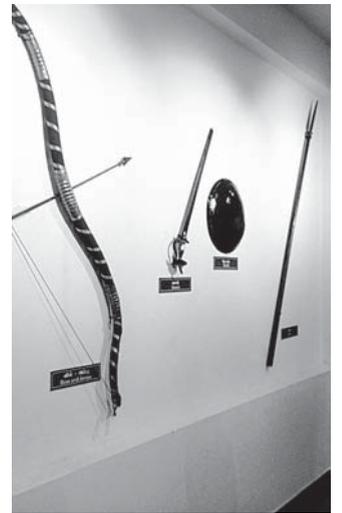
reality behind them, in order to understand life in those times. For this we often need a qualified guide who can interpret and put them together to make a coherent, authentic and meaningful account of the past. An exhibition, on the other hand, **re-constructs** the past through multi-media techniques to make the objects self-explanatory. Considerable research into the literature and history of those times precedes their transformation into visual form. The exhibits are developed from a concept through to a physical, three-dimensional, multi-media exhibition. They enable the audience to understand the messages and stories without the help of a guide. "Exhibit designers work closely with graphic designers, content specialists, architects, fabricators, technical specialists and audio visual experts." While there is, thus, a distinction between a museum and an exhibition, the former term is often used loosely to refer to both.

Choice of display options are influenced, in the last decade or so, by the visitor profile and the experience they seek. Some museums in the world are reported to be shifting to exhibits that tell stories rather than display artefacts. Museologists are questioning the need for displaying artefacts, the interest in which is confined to researchers and which do not often

mean much to general visitors. The latter need more of educational, self-explanatory – even interactive – type of exhibits and a minimal display of artefacts sufficient to authenticate the re-constructed models. The selective display of artefacts also ensures security for these objects of unimaginably high antique value. Exhibitions ensure that a family looking for entertainment, through a trip to a local

"museum", gets the desired experience besides receiving an incidental, but useful, educational value.

This is what the new Exhibition of Ancient Tamil Culture offers. The writer was practically the first visitor to the new building, which unexpected distinction earned him the privilege of being personally conducted through the galleries by the senior Officer in-Charge himself.



How many more cracks?

(Continued from page 1)

How else can we explain the fact that drilling work has continued within five feet of places such as the Law College, *Ripon Building*, *VP Hall*, *Siddique Serai*, *Bharat Insurance (Kardyl) Building* and several other heritage properties? In the process, some have proved lucky while others have not. Structural experts have informed *Madras Musings* that *VP Hall* and *Siddique Serai* have sunk in uniformly all around. This explains the absence of any cracks in these structures but they have gone down in level by as much as five inches or so. Not so fortunate have been *Ripon Building* and the Law College, both of which have seen sections go out of plumb, thereby causing cracks. These fissures are now being monitored closely so that they do not get out of hand. The point to be noted, however, is that these could have been prevented in the first place if only the observation on possibility of

subsidence had been taken more seriously.

Problems regarding heritage structures have, of course, never figured in the agenda of the powers that rule over our State. Such edifices are largely viewed as impediments to progress. But what price human life? If an entire bus can fall into a chasm that suddenly opens up, how can we be confident that all passengers will escape to safety every time? There are also the accident statistics. Among the four important Metro projects in the country, Chennai ranks second, till 2016, on casualties, immediately after Delhi. Thus far

eleven people have died and sixteen injured in the work. If incidents such as those on that recent Sunday were to repeat, we may see those figures going up. CMRL would also do well to remember that many of the threatened buildings house offices and so cracks can endanger lives there as well.

CMRL has, of late, been more interested in stating that the Metro project has incorporated all safety standards to ensure trouble-free operation. But what price trouble and casualty-free construction? If that latter was assured, potential passengers would have greater confidence in the former too.

MADRAS MUSINGS ON THE WEB

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition.

Madras Musings is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

– THE EDITOR

JP and Dr. Mani

(Continued from last fortnight)

Although his stay in Australia was a brief two years, Dr. Mani learnt a good deal in his field of specialisation while thoroughly enjoyed working in Sydney Hospital. Known popularly as the Rum Hospital (the local governor had given the builder the monopoly for alcohol imports – hence the name). Sydney Hospital had been built in 1788 and was almost as run down as Madras's Stanley. But it did have a very good renal unit. As Dr. Mani observes, "The clinical load in any Western hospital is far less than that in India." So he could at last savour the pleasures of a 9 am to 6 pm job after getting over the initial confusions resulting from the Australian accent.

But the hospital tried to persuade him to stay on, with promise of excellent pay and facilities. However, once Dr. Mani felt confident of having

learned enough to set up his own renal unit back home, and decided to leave, explaining his decision. "...India had given me a medical education and I felt I owed it to India to give her some service in return. Also, there was no dearth of trained nephrologists in Australia, and there were very few such in India, so there was a greater need for me at home."

Back in Madras in 1970, Dr. Mani found that he was not being posted in the newly-started nephrology unit in the GH but would be sent to Stanley as Assistant to Physician. He reported there as assistant to Dr. K. Natarajan, who, although not a nephrologist himself, helped immensely in setting up a renal unit in Stanley. The facilities were obviously basic and the unit did not get an artificial kidney for dialysis. But Dr. Mani and his hard working team managed to work around that, by resorting to peritoneal dialysis.

Dr. Mani observes, "One often hears complaints by doctors about lack of facilities in India... This is an obvious fact but many (doctors) have demonstrated that good work can be done in the worst of conditions, if one has the will. I know of nephrologists who do not dialyse because they do not have a sterile dialysis room with suitably gowned and masked nurses, for fear of infection. We did dialysis in the crowded open wards of the Stanley Hospital, with no higher infection rate than that occurs in the most sophisticated centres."

Despite his good work, Dr. Mani did not get governmental recognition as a nephrologist and continued to remain an Assistant. He got plenty of advice on how to get his promotion and much of it was not to his liking. A friend advised him to ingratiate his way into the home of one of his politician patients, become his family doctor and once that happened, it would be easy to get his own nephrology unit with the help of the politician! "How we had fallen!" comments Dr. Mani. "What a far cry from the days of Dr. Sanjivi, who refused to see me, the Health Secretary's son, because he had to go to his GH out-patient clinic." Frustrated by the increasing amount of bureaucratic hurdles in his way, he decided to accept the offer of being chief of the renal unit in Jaslok Hospital in Bombay in 1973.

Jaslok was India's first multi-disciplinary hospital, with enough facilities so that no patient had to go abroad for treatment. It had the best medical talent in India. The hospital was inaugurated in 1973 and Dr. Mani joined the hospital some months before it formally

opened and had plenty of time to settle in. As a result the renal unit was the first to function in the hospital.

Dr. Mani was quick to observe that the best and worst of Indian medicine could be found in Bombay. "With an admission system based on merit, and with a larger exchequer... the Government and Corporation ran medical colleges of a higher standard than others in the country. There is money in Bombay and large, private hospitals thrived and had funds to buy the best of equipment. Bombay's doctors always looked to the West... and the public were willing to espouse the new, whereas conservative Madras

● Yamaraja's brother – II by Janaki Venkataraman

tended to remain a step behind. So much for the good... On the other hand, there is only one yardstick by which people are measured in Bombay, and that is money." This meant that even doctors were not above adopting practices that were strictly not ethical but good for business, like getting commissions on referrals. The trend of pampering wealthy patients while ignoring the poor had also started.

Among all the people Dr. Mani treated in Jaslok, and many of them were VIPs, Dr. Mani chooses to remember Jayaprakash Narayan, the Sarvodaya leader. JP's kidney disease and its treatment proved to be a challenge for Dr. Mani, given the hectic schedule of the leader.

JP had been a diabetic for twenty years. He was constantly on the move, ate a variety of foods at odd hours and never had one constant medical attendant, because he never stayed long enough at any one place. He also had high blood pressure, his heart was beginning to buckle under the strain, but no one suspected kidney disease when he was incarcerated in 1975. He came out five months later, almost dead from kidney failure. Rumours spiralled, of course, that he had been poisoned during his confinement, or that his kidneys had been deliberately damaged. "I must state categorically that JP had kidney failure due to diabetic nephropathy and not due to negligence or foul play. There was no medical means by which his kidneys could have been saved between June and November 1975, for the disease process must have started long before 1975," Dr. Mani states.

Why had JP's kidney disease not been detected earlier?



JP and Dr. Mani.

"People with kidney disease are often not aware of its presence till it has advanced too far for cure," Dr. Mani says. This is apparently what happened to JP too. "When I first saw JP, he was a sick man indeed. He could not keep awake for more than a moment or two and would lapse into stupor as he was talking. He needed dialysis before he could be restored to normal mental function", recalls Dr. Mani. It took a month of dialysis before he could be discharged from hospital but he needed to be on dialysis at home too. He could have had a kidney transplant except that his blood-related donors were all too old or frail. Given JP's poor health, the doctor decided it was not worth exposing him to the risk of this major operation when only the second-best option of a kidney from an unrelated donor was available.

Too much the cost of an artificial kidney so that the JP could be dialysed at home, a get-well post card was printed and sold at a rupee a piece to the public, to be posted to JP. Lakhs of people bought the postcards and mailed them. It was easy to buy the artificial kidney from the money thus collected.

JP's secretary, Abraham, and Janki Pandey, a Sarvodaya worker (whom JP later adopted) dialysed him at home after being trained by Dr. Mani.

How much information should the doctor treating a VIP patient divulge to the outside world? No more than what he would release about any of his other patients – that is, none at all. "The case of a public figure is obviously different. The public has a right to know whether their Prime Minister is well enough to discharge his duties, or they may just want to know about an adored figure like JP... I left it to Jaslok's medical director, Dr. Shantilal Mehta... to issue a daily bulletin," recalls Dr. Mani. He himself never spoke about his patient to anyone.

As for speaking about him in this book, Dr. Mani writes that this was on JP's express directions. "He had asked me to make public the details of his illness, to settle the controversy which arose about the manner of its causation." What a differ-

ence from the mystery surrounding the illnesses and deaths of present-day politicians!

In 1977, Mrs. Gandhi announced General Elections, thereby energising a somewhat depressed JP. He wrote to Dr. Mani asking him whether he could travel to campaign for the Janata Party. Would the doctor permit this?

"Of course I would permit it," writes Dr. Mani. "In fact I encouraged him to put everything into it. Dialysis is a facility to enable a man to live. Life is of no value if one does not do what one wants to do... we would dialyse him in Patna or Bombay and he could be dialysed in Calcutta and he could travel... if he restricted his absence from these dialysis centres to not more than three days at a stretch, he would be able to work. JP embarked on an Odyssey unparalleled in the history of haemodialysis. He had a dialysis, then flew hundreds of miles to address mammoth meetings in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bombay. He moved constantly, this 74 year old invalid, snatching his life-giving dialysis on the run. Most people his age would have called it a day."

The Janata Party won that election by a landslide. As for JP, he was readmitted to Jaslok and due to the strenuous efforts of doctors there managed to survive for another two years.

In 1984, following his mother's recent death, and other family commitments, Dr. Mani returned to Madras (he never ever calls it Chennai!) and joined Apollo Hospitals at the request of Dr. Pratap Reddy. He continues to work there. Known to be a stickler for discipline and punctuality, the good doctor almost sighs as he says, "Patients are no more punctual at Apollo... so a few letters get done in the time I have to wait."

"The patients pour in, the work goes on. We win many battles and lose some. We save most of our patients but we are losing the battle against disease... I would love to play a role in preventing disease, in keeping normal people healthy rather than struggling to make ill people well."

(Concluded)

Wordless Gopulu



● The late Gopulu during his Ananda Vikatan days had a series of wordless jokes that brought about loud laughter. These were brought out as a book, in 2005, and a copy was recently sent to me by Charukesi. We are pleased to publish these cartoons for a new generation of Madrasis.

– THE EDITOR



Pigeon fancier Walton Peppin takes his pigeon racing very seriously. In fact, Walton and his wife Janet relocated home to accommodate their pigeons.

Walton says, "I love my birds, the birds come first. When it comes to racing, I really like to win and do everything to ensure a win."

And win he does. His lounge is filled with over a hundred trophies proudly displayed. Walton also has a pile of certificates.

I asked Walton if he had a particular favourite cup. He said, "I have 2 cups of which I am very proud. If you win an event three consecutive times, you get to keep the cup."

Walton takes great pride in all his birds; however, he does have some favourites. Walton told me a story about one particular pigeon:

"One of my prized birds failed to return home after a race. We waited for days but still it did not return, so I gave up hope of seeing it again. Then, one day, four and a half months later, it flew home, minus one leg. We were very happy. Who knows what this bird went through to make back to us!"

His interest in pigeons started when he was five years old and he attributes this early start to his father William Peppin who was a pigeon enthusiast himself. Walton started

racing pigeons in 1989; his first pigeon was bought for Rs. 50 only. He is a long-time member of the All Madras Homer Club that has 55 members; this club holds regular racing events. There are 13 clubs in Madras and competition is fierce. For some races the birds are caged and transported up to 1,350 kilometre from Madras before being released to race home.

Walton says, "I have had be-

● by
Nigel Foote

tween 70 and 150 birds; they are kept in three lofts on the terrace of my house."

It takes great effort, care and attention to keep the birds in tip-top condition. Walton says, "We feed them the best grain we can buy, the lofts are cleaned twice a day and washed out with caustic soda every Saturday. The birds are also given exercise and training." No wonder Walton and Janet's pigeons are winners! – Courtesy: *Anglos in the Wind*.

A special correspondent adds: Pigeon racing in Madras/Chennai has a long history. In

1976, the Madras Homing Pigeon Association was formed. The very next year, the North Madras Homing Pigeon Association was founded. Unfortunately, these two organisations did not survive long. Then, there was a long lull.

In 1981, A. Baldrey, a pigeon fancier, imported two breeds of racing pigeons from the United States – Paulsion and Stassert (named after the men who bred these racers). In 1983, J. Dias shipped in seven pairs of the Sodenberg racing pigeons from the U.S. Some time later, Baldrey left Madras to settle in Coimbatore and Dias left the city to put down roots in Pondicherry. However, they left behind an invaluable treasure for pigeon fanciers (as they describe themselves) in the city. By introducing these birds in the city, the two men gave pigeon racing a new lease of life.

In 1984, the New Madras Racing Pigeon Association was born. Slowly, more and more pigeon fanciers got into the act, and four more clubs saw the light of day. Unlike the ones in the 1970s, these clubs have stood the test of time. Today, Chennai has about 200 pigeon fanciers, each of whom has no less than 75 homing pigeons in his loft.

Homing pigeons (or racing pigeons) are equipped by breeding and training to fly home, often from great distances. They have an irrepresible and uncanny instinct to come back to their lofts.

Pigeon fanciers in Chennai are not content with the birds they have. Some are bringing in more breeds. Rajasekharan of Royapuram has imported a few

more foreign breeds. Prasad, president, Central Madras Homer Club, imports eggs of long-distance racing birds and has them incubated here. Dr. Noel Kannan of Kottivakkam, who has returned after a stint as a dental surgeon in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, boasts of 250 birds in his lofts. The cream of this crop is the world-renowned Belgium Silvere Toye pigeons. He bought five pairs of them in 1992. "Belgium is the Mecca of pigeon racing. It has over three lakh pigeon fanciers," says Kannan.

A South Indian Pigeon Society was started in Chennai in 2009, mainly to unite all the pigeon fanciers under a single banner and to further improve the sport of pigeon racing in India.

"In Chennai, the racing season starts in January and usually ends in April or May. During these races, the birds are released from places such as Kavali, Kasipet, Sirpur and Nagpur. During January and February, the wind is favourable. But in March, they are confronted with side wind. They contend with the worst during April, when they fly against the wind. More often than not, it is in April that they compete in the longest race – 925 km from Nagpur to Chennai. Such a wind can disorient them and they lose direction. Due to disturbances from birds of prey, these pigeons sometimes shoot off in a wrong direction. Some such pigeons return after many days. Some others never."

Sometimes, out of the 500 birds released during races, only 50 return on time. Some of the



Walton Peppin.

'lost' birds return after three or four months. Some are known to have returned after three or four years.

Then there is a problem of medicine. "A pigeon's illness is often infectious. When such an illness hits a loft, they (pigeons) drop like flies. The disease called Ronycot is a case in point. We do not have vaccines against many such killer diseases. We have to import them," says Ravi, president, Chennai Homing Pigeon Fanciers' Club.

"To most veterinarians here, a pigeon is an unknown quantity. They do not seem to be equipped with the knowledge to treat pigeons. They just tell us, 'Nip the problem in the bud by killing the diseased bird.' We expect more from them than such an advice," says Balaji, a pigeon fancier.

Another problem is the cost of maintaining a loft with, say, a hundred pigeons. The feeding expenses alone take quite a bite out of a fancier's resources. Building a good loft can often break the bank. Many fanciers have spent a fortune on their lofts, drawing protests from family members.

Despite these problems, they continue to pursue the hobby because they have an obsessive attachment to their pigeons and a desire to see them win.

Answers to Quiz

1. El Salvador; 2. Kanha; 3. *Medha* was made at ICF; 4. Chuck Berry; 5. Ganga and Yamuna; 6. Clouds; 7. Brahmaputra; 8. Treaty of Rome; 9. Bengal; 10. Idea Cellular and Vodafone.

* * *

11. She is the new Chief Justice of the Madras High Court; 12. *INS Rajali*; 13. Deodhar Trophy; 14. Ooty; 15. Ashokamitran; 16. Srinath Narayanan; 17. There would be zero discharge of human waste on tracks in the section; 18. Kamadhenu; 19. Karur and Krishnagiri; 20. 'Thanjavur Quartet'.

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