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# MADRAS MUSINGS

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

Vol. XXVIII No. 4

June 1-15, 2018

## Proceeding insidiously with City expansion

(By The Editor)

The expansion of the Chennai Metropolitan Area to 8,878 sq.km thereby making it the second largest metropolitan region in India, the National Capital Region being the first, appears to have become reality. This is evident from the way the State Government is pressing ahead with it despite claiming that it is only an idea, subject to public approval. That this is being planned despite the misgivings of environmentalists and independent city planners is lamentable and is likely to prove hugely detrimental to Chennai and its neighbourhoods in the decades to come.

It was in August last year that the Government announced this expansion, to include all of Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram Districts, apart from Arakkonam Taluk. All of this, it was claimed, was being done to boost infrastructure and maintain uniformity in development to counter the effect of ever-increasing population in the city. This was roundly criticised on several counts. Civic agencies in charge of the city have proved completely incapable of managing even the existing area of 1,177 sq.km.

Public consultations were held in April this year and those who attended raised several concerns. Foremost among these was the impact such a move would have on several ecological hotspots and around 4,200 water bodies. The very word 'expansion' was anathema to many who felt that the city had to manage with what it had and not look to gobble up everything in the vicinity. The impact of urbanisation of heritage spots such as Kanchi and Mamallapuram was also highlighted as also the risk of many designated agricultural areas

becoming agricultural layouts. To all of this the Government officials in attendance had just one response – that the idea was still in the concept stage and that nothing would be done without further consulting with the public.

How then are we to explain the next announcement that was made early in May to the effect that consultants would soon be appointed for going ahead with a plan for the expansion? The terms of reference for the consultant include creating a master plan that would be done after surveying land use, spatial planning, infrastructure and transport facilities. In short, the Government has decided to implement its plan, no matter what the public feels about it. What is expected from the consultant is a master plan for the city, which will be Chennai's third. The second master plan, whose term was to be from 2008 to 2026, will therefore be abandoned.

It is interesting to note that the second master plan had a public consultation in 2008

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Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a college. (Photos by R. Raja Pandian) Note the bars rising from the very short separator wall that existed for many years.



Bars to beautify the Marina.

## Education reforms cannot wait

(By A Special Correspondent)

The National Achievement Survey 2017, based on a study of 700 districts in the country, has identified staff crunch, crowded classrooms and inadequate funds for poor learning outcomes. To what extent this diagnosis is applicable to Tamil Nadu would be interesting to examine.

Taking fund insufficiency first, we find that it may not be the major factor affecting the quality of education in the

State. Tamil Nadu Budget speeches show that Education received Rs.11,899 crore in 2010-11 and Rs. 30,762 crore in 2017-18, a 2.6 times increase, the share keeping pace with rising total revenue at 15 per cent. This may appear inadequate set against a norm of 6 per cent of GSDP, estimated as the requirement to fulfil the Right to Education (RTE) till the VIII class. The current provision for

education should be doubled to meet the RTE requirement. Larger allocations are constrained by the fact that State employee salaries and pensions take away 70 per cent of the State's own revenue which, after meeting other pre-committed expenses, leaves only six per cent for spending on social welfare.

The cost of salaries is the cost of delivering services. The

high unit cost of delivery can be brought down only by expanding the range and depth of services without a corresponding increase in staff and salaries. Downsizing the establishment and contracting out services are politically infeasible. It is time to cut out freebies which displace social welfare investments. Scope for increasing investment in the short-term being limited, focus must be on

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# Education reforms cannot wait

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making the existing infrastructure more productive through tighter supervision and governance.

For perhaps the first time in many years, we have the Hon'ble Minister for Personnel and Administrative Reform displaying political will to tell Government teaching staff that they are paid well and that they should not keep asking for more but instead focus on cooperating with the Government in running schools better. Teacher salaries range from Rs. 48,423 to Rs. 83, 085 per month with practically no accountability for performance.

The Survey cites crowded classrooms and staff crunch as another reason. The pupil-teacher ratio in Tamil Nadu has improved from 28 pupils to a teacher in 2010-11 to 19 in 2012-13 compared to the national ratio of 25. The *Education Development Index (EDI)* assigns Tamil Nadu the 3rd place for the entire elementary education at all-India level. Government has taken several initiatives to encourage children to complete school education. Free issues of text books, uniforms, laptop computers, footwear, bus passes and nutritious noon meals have reduced drop-outs. These show that while there may be room for more facilities it cannot be said that infrastructure has been neglected.

The next question is whether the infrastructure and teacher strength already on the ground have produced desired outcomes. According to the Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER) 2016, the percentage of children in Class V who can read a story of Class 2 level was only 32.3 in Tamil Nadu compared to the country's 48.2. Among the Class 4 students covered in the study, only 40.6 per cent could perform subtraction of two-digit numbers, while they ought to be able to do multiplication and division. In other words, the outcomes are not satisfactory.

The reason for poor outcomes, and high percentage of unemployables observed by recruiters, are not due to constraints of funds, infrastructure, teacher strength or teacher salaries. It seems to do with poor teaching standards, teacher commitment, methodologies and, above all, enforcement and governance. Larger investment in teacher-training backed by hand-holding on the job and close monitoring could go a long way to improve teaching standard.

The system does not produce employable student candidates

and we need good teachers for this, it looks like a vicious cycle but, indeed, true. Major investment in teacher training is the circuit breaker.

Many surveys showed how children move to higher grades without having learnt basic reading and writing skills. The no-detention policy linked to the Continuous & Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) concept has been distorted in implementation. The idea was to group children by learning levels instead of standardising them into classes consisting of varying learning capabilities. The advantage of grouping by learning levels is that teachers are focused on a goal, freed from the pressure to finish the textbook by a deadline. Critical evaluation of the efficacy of current teaching practices is needed to make teaching easy, and learning an exciting experience

Reserving 25 per cent of seats, in private schools for the poor and disadvantaged, does create additional seat capacity for implementation of RTE but practical problems have arisen which need to be resolved urgently. By doing away with income certificate for SC and ST, the more affluent among these categories monopolise private seats, depriving the poor the opportunity to send their children to a private school instead of a government school under RTE. In effect, the affluent SC, ST, who would normally have paid the full fees, are now enabled to transfer the cost to the Government using up the sum meant for the poor under RTE. Income disability alone should be the criterion for free schooling under this Act.

ASER 2017 Study has identified positive behavioural aspects that can be built upon to improve education quality. Many children continue after Grade 8 although RTE benefit is unavailable. Large numbers work while they learn in school. These are very good signs, indicating a pronounced desire to persist with education. They create opportunities to strengthen skills wherever they have been left deficient up to Class 8 – weak English, for example, reducing employability.

Educational reforms cannot wait. Youth seeking jobs would continue to rise as improving healthcare reduces mortality rate amongst the younger segment. A growing number of unemployable graduates, without jobs, is a potential fuse for social unrest.

Syllabus reforms alone are not enough. There has to be systemic reforms in education in Tamil Nadu.

## How to look positively at summer

By the time you read this column by *the Man from Madras Musings*, the designated peak hot weather aka Agni Nakshatram aka Kathiri will be over. But before you begin to air your winter woolies let MMM assure you that this is not the beginning of Chennai's long and severe winter, which as you all know is world famous by its mere absence. More often than not, June is hotter than May in our city and here are a few tips on how to make the most and if possible also derive some joy out of it.

1. Remember that summer is also mango season – this segment is applicable to you provided you are not one of those people who dislike mangoes or worse, like them but cannot

experiences no cyclones and sudden bursts of torrential rain. So you are least likely to be flooded out of your house owing to Chempampakkam lake bursting its banks. As a converse to this, you are not likely to find much water for bathing. But then you cannot have the best of all worlds can you. Come on sir, this is not New York. Also if you are worried about body odour owing to your inability to bathe, please see point number 2.

7. You get hot water for free from the taps, between 7.00 am and 7.00 pm. That is if you are one of those lucky people who do get water in your taps during summer.

8. You, who as a true blue Madrasi have been taught to dislike Bangalore from birth,

age. Several tries later, the man behind the computer informed MMM's friend that there was nothing that could be done, but there were workarounds for such problems of which he would be intimated later. And that was that.

MMM's pal was surprised to find an Aadhar (or is it Adhaar) card delivered at his doorstep a couple of weeks later. On opening it he found his name there with all other details correct, except for the photograph which was of someone else altogether. He rushed off to the local registry to register concern, horror and whatever other emotion and apply for correction. The officials there went into a huddle and then came up with what

### SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

have them owing to some medical condition, real or imaginary. If you do belong to that category please give this section a miss and go on to the next. If you are the kind that can have mangoes and loves them, then this is where you begin savouring the fruit and move on to the next segment.

2. You don't have to take steps about your body odour – the whole city has it at this time and what with it also being IPL season, wears those yellow T shirts that are stinky even before wearing. So go on, forget your body odour problems and be one with the masses.

3. This is when you can reminisce about past summers and find a ready audience. That is if you are not one of those people who are forever stating that the present summer is the worst in living memory. You can correct them with your superior knowledge and more venerable age by telling them that this is nothing compared to what happened in 1967 or was it 1968?

4. You can cover your envy of people who speak airily about going off to the hills for summer by sneering that all the hill stations have become a byword for poor civic amenities and are full of garbage anyway. You tell them that to you, your air-conditioned room is the best. Better still you tell them that summer is also a season and the heat is to be experienced and not avoided.

5. This is that part of the year when you learn to look positively at the weather that Chennai experiences for the rest of year. You learn to yearn for December of course but even August appears to be a lot better. As for February, what joy the city was that month!

6. In summer Chennai

suddenly begin to appreciate that city's weather. This is also when you look down at distant Delhi and take comfort in Chennai's temperature not quite touching those heights.

### Adhaar card and other travails

These are days when our citizenry, if not perpetually in a state of elections of some kind, is forever registering itself somewhere or the other. The Man from Madras Musings shudders each time he receives an email or letter asking him to furnish details as per sub section number such and such of clause number so and so of rule number this that and sundry which as we all know was made mandatory due to Act of Parliament. Of course, Act of Parliament by itself is quite an oxymoron in our country. But be that as it may, MMM as he said earlier, is filled with a nameless dread each time something of this kind is needed.

But his travails are nothing compared to what some others are going through. One such is of a dear friend who despite being well stricken in years is young at heart and whose company is a delight. This person went to get his Aadhar (or is it Adhaar?) card registration. All went well till the point where he had to get his fingerprints recorded and lo, and behold, there were none. Apparently you get that way at a certain

would appear to be the correct explanation, which was as follows.

Once MMM's friend had been turned away because his fingerprints were not readable, the next man to register had turned up. The clerk behind the computer had not bothered deleting the earlier record and had simply uploaded the new man's photo and fingerprints on to the same. Thus it was that MMM's friend acquired an Aadhaar/Aadhar doppelganger. Last heard, the matter was being sorted out though what that means is not clear to anyone.

All of this of course is nothing compared to what MMM's chauffeur went through. This was at the Public Provident Fund office where he has an account and on applying for a loan found his father's name had changed quite inexplicably in the records. He applied for a correction and was asked to come on a particular day and when he duly arrived was asked in a loud voice by the counter clerk if he would like to revert to his old father's name or make a change in the record to the new father's name. And if that was not embarrassing enough, was asked to write down the reason for his wanting to make a change of father. MMM's chauffeur has not yet emerged from this conundrum and if and when he does, MMM will make sure to update all of you readers.

–MMM

### 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](http://www.madrasmusings.com)

– THE EDITOR

## • An appeal

# Wanted: material for a Mylapore archive

— Mylapore Times launches a social history project to source and collect material that document life in Mylapore.

At the 2018 edition of the annual *Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival*, one of the shows which got a big response was at the base of the shed for the chariot of Sri Kapali Temple.

Displayed there were things people used to have in their kitchens and drawing rooms not too long ago.

A Murphy radio set. A two-set coffee filter. A set of *khoojas* and one that was used to carry drinking water on train journeys. A gramophone record player and a vinyl records, a cassette player, a wooden walking stick, a iron safe which weighed 20 kilos and more.

All these items were lent to the Festival by Mylaporeans and well-wishers. And when they were displayed on the four evenings, children, adults and seniors took long looks at them — some nostalgically, some very curious, some plainly unimpressed.

This exhibition has now triggered a project which *Mylapore Times* has just launched. To collect anything in print that can be valuable for a People's Archives.

This project is a collaboration with the Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL) based in Taramani. RMRL has a vast collection that reflects Tamil print heritage and culture. Spanning a period of 200 years, the collection is of more than 3,00,000 items comprising books, journals, newspapers, printed ephemera and audio records.

RMRL will shift the collected documents, collate them and archive them. *Mylapore Times* will help to secure material from Mylaporeans who wish to donate to the archives.

Says Sundar G., head of the Library, "Anything which records local history and development over the centuries is of great value to such an archive. The donation must be voluntary."

So the project will look for photos of weddings and temple festivals, political meetings and campus red-letter events, land documents, invitations to weddings and *arangetrams*, brochures and annual day reports of institutions, film and concert songs, books, posters and handbills, even shopping bills - or the text-books your grand-dad brought at a local store or rations bought in the 1950s.



Sathyam Studios in Luz.

A couple of years ago, in the office of the headmaster of St. Bede's School, San Thome', we spotted souvenirs in a distant shelf. And located a great find - the souvenir celebrating this school's Silver Jubilee. The school was then called St. Bede's European Boarding High School. That souvenir has lots of stories to share of academia and sport in early 20th Century Madras. The *Mylapore Times*

project would like to connect with all local schools with histories; to locate copies of souvenirs, certificates, marks books and photos.

Years earlier, we came across a treasure of photographs. In the house of a leading Marwari family of Bazaar Road, Chandra Prakash's family members (now residents on New Street) were staunch Congress party members. His father headed the Party's South Madras unit and at meetings held in the Bazaar Road residence, K. Kamaraj was a regular.

Leading up to the 1965 war with Pakistan, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri undertook

a nationwide campaign to raise funds for the war. He visited Madras and Chandra Prakash owns a photo of Shastri seeking donations outside the east *gopuram* of Sri Kapali Temple.

The project's success depends a lot on Mylaporeans or ex-Mylaporeans and their willingness to part with documents, photos, souvenirs, even handbills and invitation cards. All these are valuable for social history.

*Mylapore Times* intends to act like a field researcher and postman. Its mandate is to collect materials from Mylaporeans and deliver to the library.

Hopefully, this project will help archive Mylapore's social history.

To reach *Mylapore Times* Social History project call the newspaper's office at 044-24982244 to arrange for a date and time to collect your stuff. Even a single souvenir of your school or a bill of notebooks and texts bought in the 50s is valuable. If you possess great photos but cannot part with them allow us to copy these visuals.



Prime Minister Shastri outside the Sri Kapali Temple.

## • A tribute

# A scientist ignored for the Nobel



Sudarshan.

It is a matter of profound regret to note the death of Sudarshan, popularly known as EGC in the world circle of physics and science, who belonged to Madras in more ways than one.

Sudarshan graduated in Physics honours from Madras Christian College, Tambaram, in 1951. He completed his MSc from the University of Madras in 1952. Sudarshan received his PhD from the University of Rochester in 1958 working with Robert Marshak. He directed the MatScience Institute in Madras for five years in the 1980s.

Sudarshan's proposal of the universal VA theory (read 'VA' as 'vector minus axial') of the weak interactions in particle physics was an extraordinary contribution to world science. Sudarshan along with Marshak, his mentor and supervisor at Rochester, highlighted the failure of mirror symmetry and reinvigorated the study of nuclear beta decay. This was significant because 1950s was the time when the decay properties of elementary particles were just being understood.

EGC's most significant work is his contribution to quantum optics. His theorem proved the equivalence of classical wave optics to quantum optics. The theorem made use of the Sudarshan representation. This representation also predicts optical effects that are purely quantum, and cannot be explained classically. Sudarshan was also the first to propose the existence of 'tachyons', the particles that travel faster than light.

Sudarshan believed in *Vedanta* and he experienced many conceptual quantum physical theories and explanations in this Hindu element of theology.

Similar to the other Madras's science giant, Gopalamudram Narayanan Ramachandran, Sudarshan too was ignored by the Nobel Committee. Reasons most of us can imagine and relate to.

Madras, India and the US have lost a great thinker and an all-round scientist.

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## City expansion

(Continued from page 1)

immediately after its release. Madras Musings reported on it and documented that it was criticised on the grounds of having no zonal and regional development plans, being silent on waste disposal and drainage, not focusing on affordable housing, having no information of water supply, ignoring the claims of the Pallikaranai Marsh and heritage structures and not having consulted the Government agencies that were responsible for managing the city. None of these problems have gone away since then.

The Government is of the view that Master Plan 3, being made by a consultant will be markedly different from the earlier two that were made by CMDA officials. However, it also states that it is entrusting the task to an external agent only because it has serious staffing problems at the planning body. If this be the case, how are we to expect anything new from the consultant? When the city does have a planning body, namely the CMDA, is it not the duty of the Government to staff it with people who are responsible for the city's welfare?

## Thank you, Donors

We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period upto 24.5.18.

— The Editor

Rs. 100: Premilla Rajan; N. Ganesan; T.V. Kalyana Sundaram

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## • The ice makers we once had – 2

# A plentitude of ice-makers

(Continued from last week)

In 1859, we read of the Superintendent of the Madras Ice House appealing to the public to increase their off take of the commodity. He requested greater demand as it was only backed by this could he build additional storage facilities at the Ice House. Till then, the availability of ice was dependent on the safe arrival of each ship bearing its load of American ice. The cost had recently doubled and the freight of one cargo amounted to Rs 11,000. By then however, it would appear that the locals had developed other means of making ice though details were not available.

By the mid 1860s, we read of companies being floated in Madras for making ice. The first of these appears to be the Madras Ice Company, established in 1865 with a high profile set of directors – Charles A. Ainslie of Binny, John Charles Loch of Parry and the barrister John Bruce Norton. Based on the profits made in similar companies in Bombay and Calcutta, the entity promised that a single year's profit would exceed the capital of Rs 50,000. For all this tall projection there is no record of how it fared and we must assume that the project ended in failure.

By the 1870s, the Royal Navy showed that ice could be made using what was called the steam process. The International Ice Company was established in Madras in 1874. Nothing much is known about it. Also equally inchoate is the history of the Madras Ice Manufacturing Company, which ran at least between 1879 and 1882, with Frederick James Walker as its resident engineer and manager. In 1886, Subramania Pillai, of the firm of P. Vencatachellum's, along with two other shareholders, began the South India Ice Factory located at 2, Poona-mallee High Road, Periamet. Becoming sole proprietor in 1889, he modernised the facility. A new plant, capable of making 5 tonnes of ice a day, was imported from England. A store-room for 80,000 pounds of ice was constructed, as was a cold storage. From 1895 to 1901, the plant was leased to Binny, which retained the ice from a depot in



Edinburgh House – home of South Indian Royal Ice Factory.

## LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI – SRIRAM V

Nungambakkam. When the lease ended, the company changed its name to P Vencatachellum's Ice Factory, reflecting its connection with the world-famous brand name in curry powders and condiments. Ice from

here was supplied to all the clubs, hotels, messes and hospitals.

Divisions in the Venkatachellum family saw the closure of their ice facility in 1920. A rival was the Crystal Ice Factory, Whannel's Road, Egmore, run by

## From India's Digital Archives

– Karthik Bhatt

• The Digital Library of India (DLI) project, an initiative of the Central Government, aims at digitising significant artistic, literary and scientific works and making them available over the Internet for education and research. Begun in 2000 by the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India and later taken over by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, it has to date scanned nearly 5.5 lakh books, predominantly in Indian languages.

The archives of the DLI contain a huge collection of books on old Madras and various institutions that were part of its landscape. While these include the more famous ones, such as the *Madras Tercentenary Commemoration Volume*, *Story of Madras* by Glyn Barlow, and *Madras in the Olden Times* by James Tallboys Wheeler, several out-of-print publications too are part of the collection. This column will profile some of these.

W.B. Keene and John Ramsay Unger. Venkatachellum's heyday was when Crystal went bust in 1904. But it revived in 1913, as the South Indian Royal Ice Factory (SIRIF), run by Unger. Legend has since persisted that he was Ramaswami Iyengar who converted but the Ungers were of Indo-Austrian origin, the first Unger serving as a gunner in the Madras Army. Later Ungers were civilians with John Ramsay Unger promoting Ramsay & Co, one of the contractors who built Ripon Buildings.

John's son, S. Ramsay Unger, trained in refrigeration at Louisville, USA, ran the ice business. The Unger residence, *Edinburgh House*, was in the same compound. By 1916, the plant had a 7-tonne capacity. John Ramsay Unger died in 1929. The business expanded under his son and by 1946, included cold-storage facilities for fish, meat and fruit. The South Indian Railway Company, whose terminus was at Egmore Station, was a big customer. Indians would discretely visit Unger's for alcoholic refreshments on the sly and that was good business too. Demand waned in the 1960s thanks to domestic and industrial refrigeration. Unger's factory changed hands, closing thereafter due to erratic power supply. The Albert Theatre stands where its cooling tower was. But *Edinburgh House* survived till recently and its surrounding compound hosted several eateries, catering to the passengers of the railway, to which Unger once supplied ice. Work began on the demolition of the building a few months ago.

Co-ventured to the SIRIF was the City Ice Manufacturing Company, located at 10, General Patersons Road, Royapettah. Promoted by NK, II, HJ and JK Irani, its origins were due to HJ, who is also written of as JH in some accounts. As per actor Mohan V. Raman, JH came to Madras in 1931 and found the city perennially short of ice. He convinced his Poona-based family to set up business here and it prospered. By then, ice manufacture was more or less a Parsi monopoly across India. A theatre owner, also Parsi, got into ice manufacture and the Iranis felt this was violation of territory. They decided to get into film screening as a counter and leased the Star Theatre in Triplicane for a while. By then JH's son Phiroze graduated from the College of Engineering Guindy and he was given the task of building a theatre. Thus it was that Casino on Blacker's Road came to be built.

In 1938, Rustom F. Mazda set up the Mazda Ice Manufacturing Company. This came up on 14 grounds of land rented from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). Business prospered till the 1990s according to the founder's grandson Syrus, with "every pottikadai needing blocks of ice. Thereafter refrigerators became really widespread and oft-taken was restricted to fisherfolk from the Kasimedu harbour. Soon this too dwindled as ice units began coming up in their vicinity. We decided to close the factory in 2002 and return the land to the SPCA."

With that ends the chronicle of the ice factories of Madras. It would be interesting to know how many large units now exist in and around the city.

# Labour in Madras

Amongst the many distinctions that the city has to its credit is the fact that it was here that the first organised labour union in the entire country, the eponymous Madras Labour Union was founded in 1918. Commemorating the centenary of this pioneering movement, the book featured in this issue traces the origins and the early days of the Union through one of its torchbearers, noted Theosophist BP Wadia.

With the expanding industrial landscape of Madras in the late 19th and early 20th century, labour started voicing out its concerns and agitating against what it felt were unjust working conditions. As early as 1889, the workers of Binny's Carnatic Mills went on strike demanding that Sunday be made a weekly holiday. Over the course of the next

few decades, labour unrest would manifest in the form of sporadic incidents of agitations, such as the one in the Perambur Railway workshops in 1913.

In his foreword to the book, Wadia says that the idea for an association that would fight for the rights of the labour took seed when one day in early 1918, two workers from the Buckingham and Carnatic mills met him and complained about the insufficient time allowed to them for lunch in the factory. On observing the conditions, he found it fit to take up their cause and use it as an opportunity to form a movement that would be the voice of the labour class.

On April 13, 1918 the workers of the textile mills assembled under the auspices of the Venkatesa Gunamrita Varshini Sabha (probably a religious and

# A pioneer of sea turtle biology

In the early 70s the Madras Snake Park became a local hangout for young folks from nearby campuses like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), AC College of Technology, the School for Architecture and Madras Christian College. One of them was a soft-spoken engineering student named Satish Bhaskar. He was a teetotaling non-smoker, a real ascetic compared to the rest of us. His passion was the sea, and he spent more time swimming than in the IIT classroom. It's not for nothing that his hostel mates called him Aquaman (privately)!

I was concentrating on crocs at the time. At the same time, we also wanted to know the sea turtle status: which species come to Indian shores, where, when and in what numbers. So, we really needed a full-time sea turtle man.

Opportunely (for the turtles), Satish was getting disenchanted with his IIT course (after finishing most of it) and yearned to be a field man with a mission. The Snake Park had a tiny research budget, but it was enough to hire Satish as Field Officer (Rs. 250 a month) and get him out on his first few survey trips. When the fledgling WWF-India saw the good work he was doing for en-

dangered sea turtles, Satish landed his first grant which really set him in motion.

About this time, the Madras Crocodile Bank was being born and Satish was its first resident. He helped to build the place (in between the sea turtle trips) but funds were so tight and sporadic that there were times when he had no work. So what did he do?

• by  
Karthik Shanker

He kept in shape by filling a bag of sand, carrying it to the other end of the Croc Bank, dumping it and starting again! Villagers still remember Satish hoisting a 50 kg sack of cement over his shoulder casually as if it were no more than a sleeping bag. This was the training that made him so tough in the field; it enabled him to walk most of India's entire coastline, more than 4,000 km, over the next few years looking for sea turtles, their tracks and nests! He loved going to remote places which few Indians have the stamina or stomach for. "To him, swimming in shark-infested waters was the most normal thing to do," declares Shekar

Dattatri, who has known him since the early Snake Park days.

In 1977, Satish conducted the first surveys in Lakshadweep and zeroed in on an uninhabited island, Suheli Valiyakara, as the place for a focused green sea turtle study. The only problem was that the main nesting period is during the monsoon and no one goes there when the sea is so rough. In 1982, Satish left his wife and three month old daughter, Nyla to maroon himself on Suheli for the whole monsoon, from May to September. It meant making elaborate preparations,

picture and an invitation to visit him in Sri Lanka. The 'bottle post' was very romantic, but of course Satish's spin was that he was trying to see if he could study ocean currents using this technique!

An emergency situation did arise on the deserted isle, and one that none of us could have predicted: a huge dead whale shark washed up on Satish's little island and started rotting. The nauseous stench became so over-cueing that our intrepid sea turtle man had to move to the extreme other end of the tiny is-

• This is a tribute to Satish from Rom Whitaker as narrated to Janaki Lenin:

Satish Bhaskar is a pioneer of sea turtle biology and conservation in India. Satish conducted the first surveys in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, in Orissa and in fact, most parts of the mainland coast of India. His surveys and sojourns on many uninhabited islands in Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep provided the first (and in some cases, only) information on sea turtle nesting on these beaches. His published and unpublished reports have formed the basis for current sea turtle conservation initiatives and it is thanks to his data that interventions were made possible to protect beaches in the Andaman Islands which were otherwise slated for tourism development.

Satish started with a survey of the Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu in 1977. In 1978, he visited the Lakshadweep and surveyed several islands. He then surveyed the coast of Gujarat, and, later that year, the Andamans for the first time. Over the next few years he would survey most of the mainland coast of India, including the states of Kerala, Goa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. In 1982, he revisited the Lakshadweep islands, spending several weeks alone on an uninhabited island. In 1984-85, he spent some months in West Papua, then Irian Jaya, and was the first outsider to visit some of the villages on that coast; he was, of course, the first to survey Jamursba Medi and Wermon beaches. In the early 1990s, Satish focused his work on the Andamans and monitored the hawksbill population on South Reef Island for several years.

In 2000-01, the Wildlife Institute of India coordinated a large UNDP-funded project on sea turtle conservation in India. Sea turtle surveys were conducted in every state by different institutions. Remarkably, in most instances, these surveys provided the first update on Satish's original work done a decade or two before. Satish and C.S. Kar from the Orissa Forest Department attended the first world conference on sea turtles. Kar and Bhaskar's paper in the *Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles* (edited by Karen Bjorndal) serves as a comprehensive and still relevant account of sea turtles in South Asia. Satish was an intrepid explorer and untrained biologist, but inspired a generation of researchers and conservationists. He has set a so far unmatched example of tireless, passionate effort to fill our huge gaps of knowledge in sea turtle status, distribution and biology in India.

He retired a few years ago and is no longer active, but deserves to be recognised for his lasting impact on sea turtle biology and conservation in the region and beyond. In April 2010, the International Sea Turtle Society awarded its annual Sea Turtle Champions Award to Satish in recognition of his pioneering surveys and research on sea turtles in South and Southeast Asia.

like calculating the amount of food he would need. We sat with Satish and talked about things that could go wrong during this isolation – chronic toothache, appendicitis, malaria were just a few sobering thoughts. The Coast Guard provided some signal flares and there was talk of a two-way radio but eventually Satish just set sail and that's the last we heard of him till September.

Actually that's not true. A few months later, his wife Brenda back in Madras, received a loving letter from him. He had launched his message in a bottle on July 3rd and 24 days and more than 800 km later it was picked up by a Sri Lankan fisherman, Anthony Damacious, who very kindly posted it to Brenda along with a covering letter, a family

land to a somewhat precarious, wave lashed spit of sand.

That year the monsoon abated late. So though Satish was packed and ready to go home by September 1st, (after 3 ½ months with only turtles and a radio for company), the relief boat from Kavaratti Island, over 60km away did not arrive. Satish had run out of rations and legend has it that he survived on milk powder, turtle eggs, clams and coconuts for weeks. Fortunately, the lighthouse on neighbouring Suheli Cheryyakara needed servicing and a Lighthouse Department ship, the *M V Sagardeep*, arrived on October 11th. As Satish clambered aboard, Capt. Kulsreshtha's first words were, "Take him to the galley!"

For a person with a gargantuan appetite, Satish could live

on very little. On a trip to the Nicobars, Indraneil Das and he ran out of rations and water and they still had a day's walk ahead of them. The former was half-dead when they ran into a party of Nicobarese who tried to feed them but Satish politely and firmly declined saying they had just eaten and didn't allow Neil to eat either. Later he pointed out that they had nothing to repay the poor people's kindness! (This trip yielded five new species – two frogs, two lizards and a snake.)

On another occasion, on Little Andaman, Satish had again run out of rations and was surviving on "only biscuits and vitamins for 4 days." He came upon an empty Onge tribal camp with some freshly barbecued turtle meat. He took some of the meat and left two biscuit packets in exchange mainly to avoid a spear through his back! Just counting the number of times he ran out of food in remote areas, we suspect that he deliberately starved himself to see how far he could take it.

Through the 1980s, again thanks to WWF and other funds, Satish visited many of the islands of the Andamans. His were the first recommendations on sea turtle nesting beach protection. These helped give the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Forest Department a solid conservation basis to resist the efforts of big business and other Government Department interests in "developing" beaches for tourism.

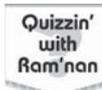
By this time, Satish's work was being appreciated by sea turtle biologists worldwide. Papers on the species inhabiting this region were very scarce indeed and his publications helped to fill that big gap. In 1979 Satish was invited to give a paper on the status of sea turtles of the eastern Indian Ocean at the World Conference on Sea Turtle Conservation, in Washington D.C. In recognition for his contributions to sea turtle conservation, Satish received a fancy watch and award from Rolex in 1984.

When Ed Moll came to India to do a freshwater turtle study, Satish became a key collaborator. He surveyed extensively for a highly endangered Batagur baska which nests on coastal beaches along with olive ridleys. Sadly the Bengalis have eaten the terrapin to near extinction and there are no known wild nests in India. It was at this time that he was nicknamed "Batagur Bhaskar" – Courtesy: *Indian Ocean Turtle Newsletter*.

(Inputs from Aaron Savio Lobo, Allen Vaughan, Arjun Sivasundar, Atma Reddy, Manish Chandi, Manjula Tiwari, K. Munnu-swamy, Nina and Ram Menon, and Shekar Dattatri.)

(To be concluded)

(Continued on page 6)



(Quizmaster V.V. Ramanan's questions are from May 1 to 15. Questions 11 to 20 relate to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Which world-leading Chinese banker has launched China's first India-dedicated publicly offered investment fund called 'Industrial and Commercial Bank Credit Suisse India Market Fund'?

2. Which state-run lender recently became the first to face curbs on lending under RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework?

3. Bangladesh's first communication satellite was recently launched by a SpaceX Falcon rocket. What is it called?

4. The world's second oldest rock, estimated to be 4240 million years old, was discovered at Champua in Kendujhar district. In which State is it located?

5. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has approved which colour licence plates with numbers in white fonts for private e-vehicles?

6. According to a recent released report of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India was the fifth largest (in the world) and third largest in Asia as far as military spending in 2017 was concerned. Which Asian country comes second behind China?

7. Which social media site recently made a global appeal to all of its users to change their passwords after a glitch temporarily caused some passwords to be stored in readable text on its internal computer system?

8. Which Nobel Prize won't be given this year because a Swedish Academy member resigned leaving the body with no quorum?

9. In a show of better relations, which Asian country changed its time zone to match its neighbour?

10. How much did Walmart pay to acquire a 77% stake in Flipkart?

\* \* \*

11. Who mooted the idea of MS singing an English song, on her historic tour of Europe and USA in 1965, when she performed at the UN?

12. Where in Chennai was the first ice factory supposedly located?

13. Who designed the imposing SBI building on Rajaji Salai?

14. Monica Felton's 'A Child Widow's Story' is about which legendary social activist of Madras?

15. Which school, established in Triplicane in 1927, moved to Mylapore and, finally, to Mambalam?

16. Name the street in Chintadripet noted for shops specialising in the making of tinsel, sandal and lace garlands?

17. The first Western theatre in Madras, which disappeared in the 1780s, was located on the Island grounds. What was its matter-of-fact name?

18. Name the Civil Servant and Orientalist, the first to put forth a Dravidian origin theory for Tamil, after whom a street of Mount Road is named?

19. Which celebrated flower's 'birthplace' is a small village called Thangachimadam on Rameswaram island?

20. Which Vaishnavite guru and scholar was born at Thoopul in Kanchipuram district in 1268?

(Answers on page 8)

# Defexpo gives Chennai an opportunity

The recent Defence Expo in Tamil Nadu was a landmark event. Over 500 Indian companies and more than 150 foreign companies attended. Defexpo 18 showcased Indian's manufacturing capabilities.

Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman deserves commendation for her initiative in organising this expo. The State Government provided 2.90 lakh square feet of land at Thiruvudanthai, around 40 km from Chennai metro, along with precious infrastructure.

The State has all the reason for welcoming this event. In recent years, Tamil Nadu has not been attracting sizeable investments in new, large ventures. The policy changes brought about by the NDA government, especially in the defence sector, opens up new opportunities for growth.

Despite the sizeable allocations made for the defence sector in successive budgets, unfortunately, there had been near paralysis in terms of enactment and implementation of policies.

Despite the head start in setting up a large number of manufacturing units under the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) right from the 1950s, with excessive secrecy, lack of accountability and a bureaucratic culture, the system lacked the expertise to select projects for research and the urge to deliver results quick. Look at the decades it has been taking to develop the main battle tank or the light combat aircraft!

Posting at the helm of Defence young and vibrant talent by Narendra Modi seems to be pulling the sector out of years of neglect. Manohar Parikkar as Defence Minister announced the defence manufacturing policy in 2016. This action substantially liberalised the procedure for procurement, stepped up the limit for FDI from 26 per cent to 49 per cent through the automatic route and even up to 100 per cent on a case-to-case basis with liberal provisions for stimulating the growth of domestic defence industry.

Nirmala Sitharaman worked to focus further on the defence procurement policy.

The procurement policy announced earlier this year opens up the sector for private participation as never before. Look at the targets set for 2025: production of Rs. 170,000 crore; investment of Rs. 70,000 crore; creation of 2.5 million to 3 million jobs; exports of Rs. 35,000 crore, more than 17 times the present level of exports of defence items! Ambitious targets; but looking at the enthusiasm of even small and medium enterprises to join the effort, it looks achievable.

● by  
**S. Viswanathan**

Inaugurating the Defexpo, Prime Minister Modi pointed to building a defence industrial complex that will have "room for everyone – public sector, private sector as well as foreign firms," and in the government establishing two defence industrial corridors, one in Tamil Nadu and the other in Uttar Pradesh.

The Defexpo, Chennai, marked a major departure from the decades-long practice of providing the platform for sellers of defence equipment from across the globe, to one to showcase the manufacturing capabilities of India. Baba Kalyani, who heads the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and its Director General, Lt. Gen. Subrata Saha, told media persons that in earlier years, sellers of defence equipment from the US, France, Britain, Germany, Israel, Russia and other East European countries used to participate in displaying their wares. "For the first time, the emphasis changed to showcasing India's manufacturing might." Large number of Indian companies exhibited their products. There was considerable enthusiasm on the part of Ashok Leyland, L&T, Mahindra, to share their optimism and interest in making attractive investments.

The defence industrial corridor for the South would leverage the base already laid in South India. There are clusters of defence equipment manufac-

ture around Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai and Tiruchi. There is also the reputation of South India as a leader in the production of precision components for the engineering industry, especially automobiles. Baba Kalyani pointed to the flourishing export business enjoyed by precision components for cars that could well fit in with the supply chain requirements for defence production. Companies like Ashok Leyland are already significant suppliers of defence vehicles and allied products. The tradition and infrastructure of Bengaluru in defence research and production and of Hyderabad with the cluster of DRDO units should enhance the importance of this corridor. L&T's shipbuilding unit at Kattupalli has already been supplying specialty ships for the Indian Navy. Add to this capabilities built over seven decades by the Hindustan Shipyard, Visakhapatnam.

Geographically the South, located far away from the border conflict zones in the



Nirmala Sitharaman.

west, north and east, is also ideal for the concentration of defence manufacture. Only a few months earlier, the Tamil Nadu Government launched an aerospace manufacturing estate near the Chennai metro.

A matter for concern is the divisive polity of Tamil Nadu that would not appreciate the significance of such a momentous event. The three million jobs anticipated will benefit a sizeable portion of the educated and skilled workforce of the State. The sophistication, technology and systems in the sunrise industries would also help in enriching the skills as had happened in Bengaluru. With the advent of new technologies like artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, solar power, internet of things... conventional manufacturing practices are set for major shifts. It is in the interest of the State to grab the opportunities thrown open for defence manufacture. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*.)

## LABOUR IN MADRAS

(Continued from page 5)

them an opportunity to allege that the Union was instrumental in bringing about indiscipline.

Apart from Tiru-Vi-Ka and Wadia, mention also has to be made about the contributions of G Selvapathy Chetty and Ramanujulu Naidu, two businessmen who would be the first general secretaries of the Union. Selvapathy Chetty is remembered even today in a park named after him in Strahan's Road, Pattalam. A striking fea-

ture of the park, which was opened in August 1948 is its beautiful art-deco clock tower. The Union's own building, which stands in a derelict state even today was inaugurated in 1931 and is named the Selvapathy-Ramanujulu building. Another interesting piece of information, which is recorded in the Madras Labour Gazette of 1959 is that in a tribute to Ramanujulu Naidu, 12436 out of 14721 workers of the B&C Mills struck work on October 2, 1959 for less than a day to mourn his demise.



**June 7-30:** *Journeys to the Centre* – an exhibition of paintings by Sovan Kumar – at Dakshina-Chitra.

**June 16:** Sitar performance by Sriram Kaushik – at Dakshina-Chitra.

**June 23-24:** *Gramiya Makkal Thirunal*. The annual village fes-

tival is back with its myriad activities of the village community. Various competitions have been organised. A wide spread village delicacies will be available at the food stalls. This year, the women are also encouraged to display the handicrafts made by them – at DakshinaChitra.

# Heydays of Royapuram

It was a guided tour of the Royapuram I never knew, the Anglo-Indian quarters, but which others related nostalgically to. Maureen wistfully says, "Nine out of ten houses on the four Mada Church streets around St. Peter's Church, Arathoon Road and P.V. Kovil Street were Anglo-Indian homes, man. All the old popular English songs, Jim Reeves, Pat Boone and all would blare out from the Radio Ceylon channel from each home." Marie butted in with a smile, "My, it was the same song from every house." Maureen hadn't finished. "The smell of curries cooking was everywhere," she said with more than a touch of glee. Cedric remembers sauntering off to play in the by-lanes with his pals. Not to be outdone, Gillean said, "After school, my cousins and I would go to my grandmother's house on P.V. Kovil Street and play in the little compound of her house and on the street. It was time for rounders, seven-tiles and hide and seek." There was far less traffic on the streets then and Royapuram was one big playground for the young. It was common to find groups of friends gathered at street corners engaging in the social necessity of those days, just chit-chatting.

Young children of both sexes learnt to dance almost mandatorily as this was a prime social activity for Anglo-Indians. Social events and sporting events where friends and family members gathered to cheer on their respective teams all offered platforms for the young to meet and form partnerships. Gillean said, "In the afternoons, after an enforced siesta, our grandmother would get us all together to learn dancing. The elder and better dancers would help the younger ones."

From somewhere in the background we could hear a guitar strumming and voices singing a few bars of a popular song. Singing was a way of life for the Anglo-Indians. Marie said as she interrupted her humming, "My family loved music. My maternal and paternal uncles and my brothers George and Tony played the guitar, violin and piano. I have beautiful memories of my sister Ethel and me singing together from the age of five. Uncle Eugene would accompany us on the guitar or piano. We also sang at the periodic amateur nights conducted at the Parish Hall."

Marie added, humming and smiling at the same time, "In the mid-1960s, mid-70s my two childhood friends, Philo Scurville, May Noronha, and I formed a singing group called 'The Cascades' and we were invited to sing at most Anglo-Indian functions all over Chennai."

There was much of the life of old Royapuram that I had let slip by but I can never forget the Sunday evenings at the Mater Dolorosa Parish club where 16mm movies would be screened on the premises of the church. We got to see some very good movies and enjoyed them very much. The tickets for these shows were four annas to sit on the ground and watch and eight annas to sit on a chair but you had to bring your own chair. "Remember the movies at Mata Dolorosa Church?" I asked the group, "Oh yes," they said unison. Cedric chipped in, "The projector used to be operated by Rudy Watts, who had strict instructions from the priests to block off kissing scenes with the help of a small cardboard piece that blanked the screen during these "objectionable" scenes. He was popularly called Cardboard Watts."

The Mater Dolorosa Parish club was a beehive of activities; something I observed from afar in those days. Whist drives, tombola, dance sessions, amateur music festivals and much more took place at regular intervals. Desmond Hold said, "MC D'Souza, who was for over a decade the secretary of the club, was instrumental in keeping the club active. Picnics to Mahabalipuram, Kovalam beach and Ennore among other places of interest were popular and well-attended activities."

You always associated the church with social activity, though memories linger of Anglo-Indian friends setting off for church on Sunday mornings dressed, as they say, in their Sunday best. The church would overflow and many people could be standing around outside. The choir represented the best of singing talent in the days leading up to Christmas.

At Christmas time, "It was so much fun as the carol singers went from house to house in a gaily decked and petromax-lit open bus singing carols," said

cart was hired and decked up for the occasion along with a marching band from the local police force." There was always an organiser or two and when they emigrated, there was always someone to take their place.

Marie recalls, "One year they organised a Christmas pageant. Mada Church Street was blocked at both ends (with police protection) for the entire evening and was transformed into a magical fairyland; a carnival where Santa slid down a rope from one of the rooftops. There were carollers, Christmas music from loudspeakers, food stalls, laughter, singing and dancing. The entire street was illuminated with Christmas lights and decorations, with excited kids running freely all over the place without any fear of being knocked over by motor vehicles. It was open to everyone."

Not to be outdone, the young brigade added immensely to the Xmas gaiety. They improvised on old hymns and made up new hymns to the beat of

● Excerpted from Hari Baskaran's  
*Those Bloomin' Anglos*  
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Gillean. Marie recollects, "Bleary-eyed folks would switch on their house lights to acknowledge our group and hand over envelopes with donations which were used to buy clothes and provide Christmas lunches for the less privileged families."

Maureen Nash talks fondly about Christmas time when dhol dhols, cookies and cakes were made. She said, "The dhol dhols required the entire family to help as it was difficult to stir and cooking on the wood fires also took ages. My mother cooked roast turkey and the thick gravy that was made from the extras. She ran the Bishop Corrie school's canteen for over a decade in the 1960s and 70s and definitely knows a thing or two about cooking." Christmas time was when every family eagerly awaited plum cakes laced with rum, kulkuls and home-made red wine from our Anglo-Indian friends.

Cedric and Marie said almost together, "The Band Wagon, organised by the Anglo-Indian Association, was the highlight of the Christmas parade with Anglo-Indians and non-Anglo-Indians joining in the festivities." Desmond Holt added, "Participating families handed over their presents to the organisers to be distributed by 'Santa,' a local or a visiting expatriate, as the parade went around the streets of Mada Church from house to house much to the enthusiasm and excitement of the young and old alike." He added, "a bullock

pop music ('Beat Masses', as they were called), which attracted a huge crowd for Sunday Masses. They formed the youth band, 'The Winds of Harmony,' and sang for many Royapuram weddings. Sharon Sharman wistfully says, "Those were the best fun times we had till most of the crowd either moved to Australia or out of Royapuram."

Theresa Waples, the senior person who shuffled along with the group as we walked along the old haunts of Royapuram, stopped the group by the old railway station and said with a touch of gravity, "The Anglo-Indian colony in Royapuram originated around the railway station like most other Anglo-Indian colonies across the country. The Railway Institute club was home to many Anglo-Indian jam sessions and other social events." She also recalled the merry-go-rounds and food stalls that would come up along South Mada Church Street during Easter. Everyone would go around greeting each other and "If you miss meeting anyone they would tell your mother and you would get a good kicking."

No narrative of Royapuram can neglect the role that W.J. Fernandez played for decades as he encouraged the less privileged of the community to complete their education and to study beyond high school. WJ was a philanthropist at heart and initiated several measures to raise funds to support the education of needy children.



W.J. Fernandez on his 100th birthday.

Errol and Cedric were active members of the group that helped WJ in these fund-raising activities. Bunny Peters said, "WJ was also the secretary of the St. Mary's Old Boys Association, which unfortunately split from the official alumni association of the school on what might have been differences of opinion with Rev. Father Whyte and some of the teaching staff of the school."

It was inevitable that a group filled with nostalgia would stop by at the Kunhiraman's corner shop, a popular meeting place for all the little groups, hanging around and talking as they ordered mango ice cream or grape juice or fresh lime soda. Kunhiraman's store is an institution that time has left unchanged over the last 50 years or so. It was amazing to see that the shop had not changed one bit. We all ordered grape juice and mango ice cream; both tasted just the same as it did years ago. Bobby ordered tiny samosas which everyone gobbled up. Kunhiraman's store lives on.

Persian Bakery was another institution of the day. Errol fondly remembered, "Gajapathy, who spoke English with distinctive Anglo-Indian slang and bits of Tamil thrown in, was the popular owner. Persian Bakery made excellent wedding cakes that were popular all across Chennai among the community." Royapuram was blessed with two excellent bakeries, the second being Royapuram Bakery on East Mada Church Street. Errol adds, "Royapuram Bakery was run by Moorthy and their wedding cakes too were the talk of the town, with people coming from as far away as Arakonam, man, to buy cakes." Royapuram Bakery also offered the additional service of baking home-made cakes and also roasting turkeys during Christmas times.

We meandered towards Ideal Stores where we would once go to pick up gifts and knick-knacks from time to time. Who can forget the barber shop on West Mada Church Street? That nondescript place where all of us went for our haircuts; nothing fancy like the salons of today. It was another world.

(To be continued)



Kunhiraman's Stores.

# A squash player who promises much



Velavan Senthilkumar certainly has the knack of being in the news. That is not something to be grudged, because the young man has earned his popularity through his show of excellence in

Squash. For instance, he is the only Indian to have won both the Asian Junior and the British Junior Open U-19 titles. Not even the current Number One player, Saurav Ghosal, has this coveted honour.

When he left for his graduate studies to Columbia University in the USA, again thanks to his deeds in the sport, it seemed

one more brilliant player from the country would fade away to the demands of studies. However, to him, and he has repeated this many times, Squash remains most important. But the question is how much time would he be able to divide between serious Squash and studies to take care of his life on the professional circuit.

Not that it was beyond him. Vikram Malhotra, a non-resident Indian in the US today, is currently one of the top players serving the national team.

Last year, around this time, when he was in transition from the junior ranks, Velavan had earned plaudits for coming into the final of two successive PSA events in South Africa. That signalled his readiness to take on himself the tougher challenges in the professional circuit. But would he be able to continue this consistently was the lingering question. A year later, this Chennai man has proved he still can piece together a creditable show. That described his maiden success in winning a PSA title at Madison in the USA itself. What was significant about this win was that Velavan had come into the event via the qualifying phase. His rankings had dipped beyond the 250 mark, not surprising for an occasional participant like him, and that meant he had to take the hard route of playing in the qualifying matches to earn a passage to the main draw.

Only a week prior to Madison, Velavan had failed at the qualifying phase itself in another tournament in Rochester. Perhaps that reverse firmed his resolve to win next time, and with skill and grit in plenty, this young man scripted a memorable tale of success. There is

promise of more to come. He has just returned home on vacation and is already charting out plans for the next three-four months to play in a few PSA tournaments in Asia.

Quite a level-headed young man and one ready for hard work, Velavan has in him the qualities that any coach would yearn from his ward. National Coach Cyrus Poncha, under whom this talent grew at the Indian Squash Academy, believes that Velavan has the making of a player who can go far in Squash, now that he has shown his mettle in Madison. But, studies... And that is a big BUT.

As a child, Velavan's parents were eager to put him into sports, if anything, to channelise the child's abundant energy. Tennis was the first choice for the then Kilpauk-based boy but logistics did not work out well and so Squash came in handy for the 8-year old, says his mother Mrs. Priya. Quick to adapt and swift in what he did, Velavan was soon to draw attention and the rest is history for this former Don Bosco (Egmore) pupil. Good performance ensured he had the encouragement from the school authorities and backing him totally were his parents as he rose from a mere player to a champion.

— S.R. Suryanarayan

## Swimming the Palk Strait as a team



● Additional Director General of Police, Railways, Dr. C. Sylendra Babu, and his ten-man team swam the Palk Strait between Talaimannar and Arichalmunai in Danushkodi.

This was a couple of days after head constable M. Tulasi Chaithanya of the Andhra Police had crossed the Strait in 8 hours and 25 minutes and set a new record. The ADGP and his team, swimmers from the Tamil Nadu police, swam the 28.5 km long stretch from Oormalai near Talaimannar in 12 hours and 14 minutes. "Many individuals have achieved the feat but we are the first to swim the Palk Strait as a team," the 57-year old ADGP said.

He had been swimming with the team members for the past six years. Ten swimmers swam with him from Oormalai up to the IMBL (the international border) and five from the IMBL.

## Answers to Quiz

1. Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC); 2. Dena Bank; 3. Bangabandhu 1; 4. Odisha; 5. Green; 6. Saudi Arabia!; 7. Twitter; 8. Nobel Prize for Literature; 9. North Korea matched it with South; 10. \$16 billion.

\* \* \*

11. Gen. Cariappa; 12. Doveton House in present day Women's Christian College; 13. Henry Irwin; 14. Sister R.S. Subbalakshmi; 15. Sarada Vidyalaya; 16. Iyyah Mudali Street; 17. Playhouse; 18. F.W. Ellis; 19. Madurai Malli; 20. Sri Vedanta Desikar.

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