Do Global Meets keep their promises?

by The Editor

T he State Government has announced that it will be hosting a Global Investors’ Meet to attract business into Tamil Nadu. The event is scheduled for January 23 and 24, 2019. Rs. 75 crore have been sanctioned for the conduct of the event. It is seen as an effort by the present administration to change the perception that it is not friendly towards industry. The Government hopes that around 5,000 industrialists will participate in the programme.

All this is to the good. But analyses of the performance of various States in India have consistently shown Tamil Nadu to be dropping on the investment front. These reports are not necessarily always accurate, given that a State like ours, which already has a large industrial base, cannot boast of huge growth rates unlike a State that is just beginning to modernise. But then perceptions do matter, and what with it being considered lacklustre on many fronts, owing to reasons largely beyond its control, the current regime is really making an earnest effort with this Investors’ Meet.

The question, however, remains as to what was achieved in the previous meet, which was held in 2015, at a cost of Rs 100 crore. It is seen as an approximate three per cent of the investment made.

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A mess: Property Tax and reciprocal services

The increase, however, should be examined on two aspects – one, the size of increase, over 100 per cent in many cases, and, two, the failure to phase a large increase, assuming it is justified.

First, the need for a “large increase”. The increase in revenue to the Corporation is estimated to be Rs. 580 crore, doubling the pre-revision amount. If the current increase recognises future inflation and obviates the need for revision for the next five years, the new rates in effect cover a span of 25 years – 20 years lost without revision and till next revision five years hence. Implicit in this is an approximate three per cent (Continued on page 2)
Property Tax mess

This is that time of the year when the mind of The Man from Madras Musings naturally turns towards music and other related festivities. Like Good King Wenceslas (or any other kind of Caesar who MMM likes to see smiling faces about him. But what he brings instead is a barrage of caregrown visages going around. The principal cause of worry appears to be school admissions from the tests and grandchildren, and, in an odd case or two, great-grandchildren. All over the city, you see people talking to the teachers about who people are related to people on school boards. This is that time of the year when a second cousin to the wife of the brother of a man who knows a committee member or two in a school acquires tremendous importance.

Before the School Admissions Demand Society (SADS) or the Shikshayatan body, registers a formal protest against what it may see as MMO’s unwarranted fees. Parents, let MMMM assure you that he well understands what it is going to be through this trauma. MMO has now seriously considering advising the parents that names too matter and that nobody took note, not even the valet, a reasonable tip withstanding. The car makes the man.

The school admissions saga

New cars for old

The Man from Madras Musings had driven up for a meeting at one of the better class of hotels in the city. He was in a hurry and having handed over his keys to one of the valets in attendance, took the token and hurried after his rendezvous. MMO returned an hour later and handed back his token at the counter to a harassed looking valet who appeared to be the only person on duty. The man duly set off and MMO waited, spending time on other pursuits. People are helpless without a prompt, sensitive grievance redressal mechanism. That is why, the moment a valet who appeared to be the reason for abuse, it is ultimately irresponsible to campaign for a free rider. To make up for an unavoidable. The police is set to move from its sylvan location to somewhere else. The principal cause of worry appears to be school admissions from the tests and grandchildren, and, in an odd case or two, great-grandchildren. All over the city, you see people talking to the teachers about who people are related to people on school boards. This is that time of the year when a second cousin to the wife of the brother of a man who knows a committee member or two in a school acquires tremendous importance.

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Short ‘n’ Snappy

As you may be aware, our beloved airport recently declared that it was going to be a silent one. That was no surprise, as people have been hearing falling tiles and cracking glass panels in time to duck for announcements of when flights are taking off or landing. You need to keep your eyes peeled for spotting the announcements on the electronic display boards.

At least that was the expectation of The Man from Madras Musings. But when he got there and found the decibel levels had only increased. What with the way airports function and the general chaos that prevails, the staff manning the counters have taken to relying on pure lungpower. The general effect airports function and the general chaos that prevails, the staff manning the counters have taken to relying on pure lungpower. The general effect
The formidable contribution of Iraivanath Mahadevan, who passed away on December 31, 2018, was in two fascinating fields: the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions and the Harappan script. He devoted 50 years of his life to visiting, documenting and deciphering the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions engraved on the brown of natural caverns found on hills in Tamil Nadu and on pottery, coins and rings from Second Century BCE to Third Century CE.

Mahadevan himself told this writer in 2009: "Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions are important not only for the Tamil Nadu and the rest of South India but for the whole country. They have many unique distinctions. They are the oldest written language in South Asia. They are also the oldest Jaina inscriptions in India. I believe that the Mankulam Tamil-Brahmi inscription of 190 years of dedication and penmanship." His dedication to Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions was evident from the day he started them.

He established that the language of these Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions was Old Tamil. He dated these Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions found on the rock face in natural caverns on hills, pottery, coins and rings from Second Century BCE to Third Century CE.

Dr. K. Rajan, Professor of History, Pondicherry University, said: “Although Mahadevan and Askp Arpola (a world-renowned Indologist and a scholar on the Harappan civilisation and its script) had differing views, both tried to read the Harappan script based on the premise that it encoded a Dravidian language. Recent developments in the subject support and strengthen this Dravidian hypothesis.

“With regard to Tamil-Brahmi, Mahadevan’s major contribution was that he faith-fully, in the correct spirit, in the correct manner and with utmost dedication, wrote his monumental work called, Early Tamil epigraphy… The research methodology that he employed in writing it was of international standards. He led the way for further re-interpretation of these inscriptions by providing photographs, drawings and copies of stanzas of these inscriptions in the book. This has enabled scholars, who have any doubt about the original source or readings, to read the inscriptions without visiting the sites where they are found. Dr. Rajan said. He added, “It was in Mahadevan’s interpretation of the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions that the magnitude and in-depth knowledge of his scholarship in Tamil literature and linguistics were revealed. He used literary references, especially from the Tamil Sangam literature, Jain and Buddhist literature, and linguistic formulas to study the structure of these inscriptions, their grammar and syntax. His unbiased approach, without any self-glorification, made his research in the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions par with international standards. Another important contribution he made was the methodology he developed in reading the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions in a simple manner. It was popularly called TB-1, TB-2 and TB-3. It was Mahadevan who fixed the chronology of the Sangam literature, based on his reading of the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions found at Pugalur, near Karur, which had mentioned the names of three generations of the Chera dynasty. His identification of this Chera genealogy indirectly helped in deciding the date of the Sangam literature (the early part of the Common Era).”

As Professor R. Champakalakshmi, former Professor of History, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, says, Mahadevan’s book entitled, Early Tamil Epigraphy: from the Earliest Times to the Sixth Century AD, published in 1987, he made important contributions to Tamil journalism. He was 24 years old when he entered the Tamil Nadu Government. He was 88 years old when he passed away in Chennai.

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On the Harappan front, his work The Indus Script: Text, Concordance and Tables, first published by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1977, continues to provide scholars the base for further, advanced research into the Harappan script. Mahadevan wrote a book called, The Sacred River, Fish Swarn in the Great Bath: A new solution to an old riddle, and Dravidian Proof of the Indus Script via the Rig Veda: A Case Study, both published by the Indus Research Centre, Roja V. Chettiar, Chennai. He wrote scores of papers on the Harappan script.

In his conversation address titled, “Interpreting the Harappan Script to the Modern Scholar”, he argued that “the language of the Indus script is an early form of Dravidian. I do not claim to have deciphered the Harappan script completely. But I sincerely believe that I have discovered important clues for interpreting many of the frequent signs and sequences, proving conclusively the Dravidian character of the language and the survival of the Dravidian.”

Indeed, in documenting these Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions carved on the brow of caverns on steep hills in remote villages, especially in Madurai district, he achieved what mass-ive organisations such as the ASI, the Central universities or State-funded universities with their enormous resources could not do. Young, dedicated epigraphists such as Dr. S. Rajagopal and the late C. Bose travelled with him to these sites and provided valuable inputs in deciphering these inscriptions.

Industrialist Pollachi N. Mahalingam generously helped him with the logistics. Mahalingam provided Maha-devan the scaffolding on which to document the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions which were carved at a height on the rock face of natural caverns in Madurai district, he achieved what mass-ive organisations such as the ASI, the Central universities or State-funded universities with their enormous resources could not do. Young, dedicated epigraphists such as Dr. S. Rajagopal and the late C. Bose travelled with him to these sites and provided valuable inputs in deciphering these inscriptions.

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Toward the end of his life, Mukund Mudali embarked upon a tour of Thanjavur and its environs. He had composed the song in praise of his patron, the chieftain, Ramaswami Dikshitar, who had patronised his composing activities. It was thanks to this that the Tamil writer U. R. Nadar came into the fold of the clan of Chidambaram. The composer was not without a musical family. His father, Ananda Ranga Pillai, was also a composer of repute. His son, Venkata Ramasamy Pillai, the 19th Century Sanskrit writer, was also a composer. His daughter, Muthuswami Dikshitar, was a great composer. The two sons, Muthukrishna Mudali and Baluswami Dikshitar, were also great composers. Muthukrishna Mudali was patronised by the chieftain, Ramaswami Dikshitar, and his two sons, Venkata Ramasamy Pillai and Venkata Ramasamy Pillai, were also patronised by the chieftain. The Madras Mudaliar still remain trustees of the chieftain’s family. They are Pandalur Mudaliars. The chieftain’s son, Ramaswami Dikshitar, was the composer of the great composer. The two sons, Muthukrishna Mudali and Baluswami Dikshitar, were also great composers. Muthukrishna Mudali was patronised by the chieftain, Ramaswami Dikshitar, and his two sons, Venkata Ramasamy Pillai and Venkata Ramasamy Pillai, were also patronised by the chieftain. The Madras Mudaliar still remain trustees of the chieftain’s family. They are Pandalur Mudaliars.
Dengue – once reported on

It was a regular meeting of our Rotary Club at a star hotel. Members started arriving early to afford themselves the right to the High Tea that precedes all our meetings. Usually during our meetings we get visitors from other clubs to make up their attendance. On this particular day, we saw a well-dressed, educated man walking in and proceeding straight to the buffet table. He was filling his plate with a generous helping of every item on the table. When some members tried to find out the Club to which he belonged, he replied that he was from Trichy but was even more familiar with the High Tea as he had spent hours there with his friends. He was obviously a gate-crasher, or free-loader as I call them, who shamelessly visit meetings in star hotels with the sole intention of eating free meals. In my long experience of managing scores of meetings and conferences I have come across many such despicable characters, who, with the backing of their friends, who were not genuine book-keepers, found out that by paying the annual membership fee, which probably covered the cost of 5 or 6 meetings, they could get free meals at 15 meetings. Very good value for money.

Free-loaders at marriages are very common. When suspicious organisers question them they get away by saying that they belong to the girl's party or the boy's party depending on who asks them the question. But an incident that I witnessed at a friend's son's wedding at a well-known marriage hall floored me. While I was having my meal, sitting in the pandal, I noticed an old couple with two big tiffin carriers filling the container with the items on the serving table. A few servers from the catering team were even helping them. When a suspicious family member from the girl's party tried to question them, they replied that they were taking the items to serve some old people of the boy's family in the rooms as they were not in a position to come down. When the family member tried to prove them further, they realised that they had been tricked and were rushed out with whatever they had taken from the table. It was a sad sight to see an old couple indulging in such a cheap act. I thought that they should have bargained in without the collusion of someone in the catering team.

I think free-loaders are more despicable than the beggars we see on roads! — (Courtesy: Adyar Times and republished in Rajan's Random Reflections)

(Answers on page 8)

The Art of Free-Loading

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(Answers on page 8)

Welcome articles

Thank you for enlightening us on the statue and plaque in front of General Hospital (MM, June 16). I've been seeing it for decades while using the bus stop opposite Central, and often wondered who this illustrious person was. I was pleased to see the interesting article by publishing such articles – so many others too, like the series on our Museum's Wealth, or the Lost Landmarks.

Though the content is also available on the internet, there would be others like me who are not computer-friendly, and find the print version far more palatable and convenient. I suspect the PC/mobile-savvy generation may be too rushed to read such articles, but I do hope I can be proved wrong.

Thomas Tharu
Kasiyur A-7, Nehru Nagar
19th Street, Adyar, Chennai 600 020
Rs and $

N. Parthasarathy writes: A thoughtful article on 'Heritage Restoration', (MM, December 1st). On page 6, in column 4 line 2 from the bottom, the editors should read "dol-

ars". A couple of billion Rs is hardly 200 crore but a couple of billion dollars is Rs. 10,000 crore – which is the money needed for the whole State.
It happened one Music Season

It must have happened in 2001 or it could have been 2002, 2003 or 2004. Maybe 2005. I know it was within those years because I was still running Sangeetham with Sanjay Subrahmanyan. That year he was to perform at the Music Academy, as usual in the evening slot. And accompanying him was this senior mridangam artiste, a Sangita Kalanidhi to boot. I would happily reveal that maestro’s name here but for the fact that these are sensitive times and you never know what can get blown out of proportion.

It was a packed hall as usual and the curtain went up on the stage and the concert began. It was a TV Sanakaranarayanan concert at the Academy. During the season of the very stage where you got the highest accolade for your art. Unlike his brother, who was a pillar of the establishment, Kannan was a man about town and quite notorious at that.

The promises of Global Meets

(Continued from page 1)

Planned, repeatedly postponed and, finally, held, replete with last minute work and shoddy execution that pass for event management in Government circles, it also proved to be an occasion for much deification of the then Chief Minister, with even laser images bowing to her from screens. Critics panned the event as a political party show. A laser display on the riverfronts of the city showcased the State’s ‘heritage’, much of its buildings of the Raj era that the administration was doing little to protect. The colours of the laser, however, could do nothing to take away the foul smell from the rivers themselves.

At the end of the Investors’ Meet, it was announced that the State had signed MOUs worth a whopping Rs 2 lakh crore with potential investors. Not many were willing to believe these statistics and subsequent happenings have since proved that such misgivings were not out of place. The State Government claims that around Rs 62,000 crore involving 61 companies are in various stages of implementation. But in the absence of a White Paper, which incidentally the Opposition has been repeatedly demanding, it is very difficult to believe any of these claims. One of the largest investments promised, amounting to Rs 10,000 crore, was from a company that has since gone into liquidation. Yet another was a Malaysian entity that evinced interest in Tuticorin. Nothing has been heard from it ever since. In the light of the above, how is anyone to believe what was touted as a great success?

It is also worthwhile pointing out here that the proposed Investors’ Meet will take place at a time when Sterlite Copper’s closure looms like a shadow over the entire industrial scenario in the State. We are not going into the merits of the case or the details of the plant and the matter is anyway sub judice. But what cannot be forgotten is that several lives were lost owing chiefly to administrative bungling. Such loss of human life over industrial matters puts our State back to the 1970s when similar happenings were par for the course. It is also a widely held opinion amongst those who are concerned with the industrial sector of the State that the closure of the plant was a political decision. This is not something that can boost investor confidence.

At a time when neighbouring States, such as Andhra and Telangana, are doing their best to wean investors away from our State, the party in power may be better off trying to create a good industrial atmosphere in Tamil Nadu before setting off on jambo-rees of this kind.

(To be concluded)
Rich, red hues

More than two years ago, I embarked on a quest to look for the Madras Literary Society. I’d read a lot about this striking jewel of British Raj architecture, its amazing store of books and desperately wanted to visit it – but aside from knowing that it was somewhere within the DPI Complex on College Road, Nungambakkam, I had no clue as to its exact whereabouts.

Determined to zero in on it somehow, I trudged through the sprawling campus one hot, humid afternoon, and stumbled upon another beautiful structure – graceful against the leafy sky, the rich, red colours of its walls gleaming in the sunlight. I couldn’t take my eyes off the white windows and gently curving outer walls; I knew in a second that it had to be an important landmark, even if it bore the legend of “Teacher’s Training Centre,” (for so I remember) at that time.

Later, research proved me right: the building I’d fallen in love with was one of the old edifices originally part of the College of Fort St George where the “Presidency’s Civilians were taught local languages and the art of administration during a two-year studentship” – Madras that is Chennai (by S. Muthiah). It was established in 1812 and though closed in 1854, now plays host to the Directorate of Public Education offices, among others.

I immediately determined that a miniature of this splendid building had to be in colour, and reflective of its richness (both architectural and otherwise). It seemed to me that a woman working close by, in a bright green saree, the rubble and the windows taken apart would prove a foil otherwise. It seemed to me that a woman working close by, in a bright green saree, the rubble and the windows taken apart would prove a foil otherwise.

PS: I did end up finding the Madras Literary Society – but that’s another, amazing story entirely. Description: 3.5” by 5” approximately Medium: Steadtler Fineliners, colour.

● Pavithra’s Perspective

December 20-January 2: Kalakshetra’s 65th Annual Art Festival (at Kalakshetra, 6 p.m.)
December 20: Sita Swayamvaram by Kalakshetra Foundation
December 22: Sri Rama Vanavasamam by Kalakshetra Foundation
December 23: Paduka Pattabhishekam by Kalakshetra Foundation

December 24: Koodiyattam by Sri Mangal Madhu Chakrar & Troupe
December 25: Ondisi Solo by Sujitha Mohapatra, Kathak Solo by S.Aswati Sen 7. 45 p.m.
December 26: Sauryaham by Kalakshetra Foundation
December 27: Carnatic Flute by Shashank Subramaniam; Violin: Akkarai Subhalakshmi; Mridangam: Parupalli Phalgun
December 28: Jugalbandhi by Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishna and Ustad Shahid Parvez, Mridangam: B Hanikumar, Tabla: Ravindra Yadav
December 29: Carnatic Vocal by Santiga Kalanidhi Sudha Raghunathan; Violin: Pakkala Ramdas, Mridangam: Skanda Subramaniam; Morsing: R. Raman
December 30: Hindustani Vocal by Pt. Rajan & Sajan Mishra;Tabla: Ravindra Yadavag; Harmonium: Vyasurthi Katti

December 31: Sabari Molukam by Kalakshetra Foundation
January 1: Choodamani Pradanan by Kalakshetra Foundation
January 2: Maha Pattabhishekam by Kalakshetra Foundation

Answers to Quiz


Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations

Pavithra Srinivasan is a writer, journalist, artist, translator, columnist and an editor and is fascinated with History.