How smart are Smart City projects?

by The Editor

It is now around five years since the Central Government announced its Smart City Project, under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The mission, aimed at 100 cities of India, was meant to make them function better under various heads such as Mobility, Energy, Water, Technology, and Environment. It was expected that these initiatives would improve the quality of life, get people to participate in governance, bring about transparency in the functioning of those in authority and promote public consultation. It is a moot point as to whether any of this has been achieved.

The Short and Snappy column in MM (June 1st (The Isthmus of T’Nagar) featured a write up on the inordinate expansion of footpaths at the expense of carriageway at Sir Theagaraya Road. The subsequent week, a prominent business daily of the city carried a photograph of the same thoroughfare that showed cars parked on the broad sidewalk. The caption below asked if Chennai was really ready for such smart city solutions. The implied message was that it was not. We would readily agree with that sentiment.

A year back, we had the much-publicised launch of a bike-sharing initiative, promoted by a worldwide company. Chennai was one of seven Indian cities where this was taken up. The operations were wound up within six months. It was rumoured that continued theft of bicycles hit the company hard. This year the Corporation of Chennai has reintroduced the same scheme, under its auspices, thereby becoming the first civic body in the country to promote cycling in a big way. It is still early days to comment on how the plan has fared but we need to only look at our roads wonder if cycling safely is at all feasible. The announcement of the Smart City initiative has seen many consultants descend on the city, but the plan is still in its early stages.

The illustrative proposal is as follows, which is not necessarily the ideal or only solution. The调整 must take place in four possible situations simultaneously and finally, its feasibility. The desirability of One Poll is left to constitutional pundits and political parties to argue out. It is the feasibility that is an interesting puzzle and the focus of this piece.

Some quarters tend to dismiss the idea of One Poll outright on the ground that it is complex and not feasible. This note indulges in some speculative thinking on the feasibility of One Poll, which should be considered before debating its merits and demerits. If found infeasible, the One Poll idea need not be pursued, saving time and energy. If it is found feasible, it is worthwhile evaluating the merits, demerits and deeper implications of One Poll. The illustrative proposal is as follows, which is not necessarily the ideal or only solution.

A framework is necessary within which to explore the feasibility of One Poll.

State elections should fall in line with the Lok Sabha election, not vice versa. Lok Sabha election years are, by and large, predictable. Therefore, it qualifies to be the reference point for State Assemblies to synchronise with. The adjustment must take place over a full 5-year cycle for its completion.

It is a one-time adjustment of the term of assemblies to initiate the combined cycle. Future General Election Dates (GED) are 2024, 2029, 2034 and so on. Currently, the GED 2024 can be the reference point for adjusting the duration of State Assemblies, as practically, the entire cycle of 5 years is still ahead. Thereafter, both State and Central elections become due together every 5 years.

State Assemblies can be held in four possible situations depending on the remaining

(Continued on page 2)
Implications of One Nation, One Poll

(Continued from page 1)

duration for the next Lok Sabha elections. They are as follows, with the recommended synchronising “adjustment” for each.

Situation A: When the current term of the elected government expires beyond GED 2024 – The term will be terminated during GED 2024.

Situation B: When the present term of office expires before GED 2024, with less than 2 years still left for GED 2024 – The term of office of the ruling government can be extended till GED 2024 or, if the remaining duration is only a few months, the President’s Rule can be proclaimed.

Situation C: When the present term of office expires before GED 2024 – It is in sync with the new GED and the election. No special action is needed.

By following the above rules, all State elections will have aligned with the One Poll in GED 2024. Such simultaneous elections will take place every 5 years thereafter. By-elections for vacancies will be as usual and will not affect or be affected by the synchronisation plan. But certain unavoidable contingencies would, even if occasionally, occur. Would these disturb the initial situational settings listed above, and take us back to the closest possible initial conditions almost throughout the year?

There could be one or more of four such contingencies.

One, a State Government falls with want of confidence of the House and an alternative government is formed from among the members of the same House. This does not disturb the initial settings.

Two, the State government falls without alternative government formation. The resultant situation is analogous to Situation B. But the new elections will be imposed for the remaining period till GED 2024. This also does not disturb the initial settings.

Three, the Central government falls with no possibility of alternative government formation from among members of the same House. This will not change GED or the way State governments synchronise with the GED. This also does not disturb the initial settings.

Four, Central Government falls with no possibility of alternative government formation from among members of the same House. This is the only occurrence that will call for review and re-setting of all the assembly durings with reference to the new GED. For example:

- By, due to the fall of the Central Government, the Lok Sabha election is forced in 2021 itself instead of 2024, the next election after 5 years will be in 2026. State Assemblies will now be adjusted to correspond with the new GED in 2026, according to the norms spelt out earlier in this note, for the four Situations.

- How often does this fourth type of contingency occur? Is it frequent enough to render the One Poll idea too complex to undertake? In 70 years, we should have had 14 Parliaments but we had 16, indicating that such a glitch has happened twice in 70 years, that is, once in 35 years. Thus, the prema-

- Does this plan negate the right of the People? When the term is extended prematurely, it is to replace it with another elected government; and when it is extended, it is only that of an elected government enjoying the confidence of the House. President’s Rule is confined to short periods and that too only when the government falls, leaving a vacuum. Thus, it is seen that the “adjustments” – meant only to initiate the cycle and not to a permanent device - ensure the continuity of the people’s voice in every situation.

- Would there be political bias in making the “adjustments”? To provide against it, the power could be vested in a constitutionally instituted body similar to the GST Council, representing all the States and the Centre, with the same kind of voting rights and status.

- Summing up, One Poll is feasible and can be maintained successfully. The premature fall of governments does not disturb the initial settings. Only the premature fall of the Central Government is an issue, too with no possibility for an alternate formation, would call for the state schedules to be reset according to the change in GED. But the inability cannot be the reason for rejecting the idea of One Poll. If the decision to go ahead with One Nation One Poll is taken by April 2021, it may be possible to make it a reality for 2024. If 2024 is missed, it must wait till 2029.

Meandering down the Marina

It has been quite a while since The Man from Madras surrendered down the sidewalk by the Marina. Now, circumstances are such that he can do that on practically any day he wants and MMM has begun to do just that, enjoying himself thoroughly in the process. What a fine prospect the beach is, to be sure, where everything pleases but only mind is vexed.

Mind you, it is not just fel-

- how humankind that MMM has complaints about. The proverbial human is also rather high. MMM does not dispute their right to the footpath either, and would be the first person to give right of way. It is only when they begin walking behind MMM that he becomes all nervous about a tendency of speeding up. Unlike most other people, MMM can take any number of stray dogs in his stride. He looks upon the dogs and which he respects not, as the poet someone or the other said. But when it comes to cows, and more importantly buffaloes and bulls, he is all caution. Unlike dogs, they do not bark or give any prior warning as to when they propose to charge. And there is no way of predicting why they charge either. Like the Jallikattu protests, they just happen.

- Another objection that MMM has is that of the bovine with their habit of doing their ab-

- summations (to in old Chennai speak) out in the open and leaving their output behind on the footpath. What with the Marina being a place with polished granite, the presence of dung makes for dead-

- fy consequences. But here again, MMM does not have any quarrel with the bovine and for that matter, the canine, the caprine and the equine, all of whom apparently view the Marina as their favourite toilet spot. And what but excuse does humankind have to add to the collection of excrement especially when such large public latrines have been built on the sands for it to literally cavort in?

Unlike the humans on the beach however, the cat-

- does have a great traffic sense on the sidewalk, they cross the beach road in single file. MMM is informed that they do charge fees, especially when it is dark, with pedestrians and cyclists, and MMM would blame the two-legged rather than the four for such incidents.

And then what of the avian variety? Feeding pigeons appears to have become more a menace than an act of kind-

- ness. How then is MMM to explain the huge population of dozens of men and women, all of a certain regulation outside, wheezing down the walkway laden with bags of grain? They scatter these left, right and centre and MMM may not be in assuming that the Marina has made their life a lot easier on than sand. The birds descend in vast clouds and fly around repeatedly, all very pretty no doubt. We have not yet had an incident of a pack of birds making away with a human but then you can never put it past these winged creatures. Remember the old tale when they hoedwinked a hunter by flying away with his net?

Know your statute

The Man from Madras also notes that there has been a considerable effort on the part of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to make the Marina an integral part in MMM’s view does nothing) to put explanatory notes on the various statutes as the Kingmaker in Indian politics during the 1960s! The most significant detail about the Lighthouse is that it has an elevator! It provides alongside some of the kiosks so that you can read them and get an idea.

There is something so innocent about this text, just like a third stan-

- der student’s essay.

Grammar please. –MMM

- Is that all they could think of? And if he used non-violence, he clearly discouraged violence. Then why repeat it?

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The Lonely Gate

As a girl, I was not an adventurous sightseer; when I travelled (which wasn’t much), I stuck to the usual paths and never stayed beyond the lines. Authorities figures terrified me and I always took care never to antagonize them; staying in my place usually worked. Despite visiting the Museum Theatre in Egmore in 5th Std and then a few more times later, I never thought to step beyond a few feet on either side of the door.

But my fascination only grew over the years – that perfectly round edifice with its beautiful red-brick face and the clear aura of history cast a never-fading allure. Once I’d explored the theatre itself, I began to venture outside the boundaries I’d drawn for myself, which is where I saw this beautifully designed gate. It stood quite alone, waiting for what or whom, I never quite knew.

No one seemed interested in opening it; it seemed to be guarding a gateway to nowhere. How many people have stood here, Indian or English? What conversations had happened as people leaned negligently against it? Who had passed through, and when? It wasn’t just this one; Madras itself seems chock-full of enigmatic places and monuments like this – once important and relevant, now forgotten.

The idea of it was enchanting, not to mention the intrigue of working as well. It was surprisingly easy to draw, and I finished it within two hours.

Description: 3.5” by 3.5” approximately
Medium: Black Micron pen.

The Smart City projects

(Continued from page 1)

Indian cities and Chennai is no exception. It is rumoured that there are as many as ten different organisations simultaneously working on the scheme, all of them claiming to be in collaboration with the Corporation. It is quite likely that none of them is working with the others and therefore most of them may be at cross-purposes. Have we not had the same problem and suffered enough with Government agencies negotiating each other’s work for decades?

Most of these consultants and the NGOs they have spawned appear to be working hard at bringing in international solutions that have no truck with ground reality. Take for instance the footpath widening scheme at T Nagar - it is all likely that vehicles would be parked on them in a western capital or for that matter even in a neighbouring country like Sri Lanka? And yet people in Chennai do it. Would it not have been better to first influence people in the law before embarking on such solutions? The same applies to creating artistic and recreational spaces beneath flyovers. Given the weather conditions and the chaotic traffic, who in their right senses wants to relax under a flyover?

And given the level of poverty and homelessness, will the less privileged people not make bedfellows to these spaces? It would be far better to focus on certain basic factors than on such eye candy schemes that gather immediate publicity and are then forgotten or misused or worse, cause harm.

Can there be smart solutions to water management, property encroachment, traffic, rather than just dole out public transport, coordination between Government departments, local area planning, river cleanups and social welfare schemes? If these are managed by small groups of people who have a great city, one that can justify its listing a few years ago among the 52 most liveable metros of the world. Everything else we are sorry to say, is mere eyewash.

Thank you, Donors

We today, publish donations received with thanks for the period upto June 1st.

Rs. 150: George Joseph
Rs. 400: Capt. R. Shankar
Rs. 500: R. Balasubramanian; T.K. Sriniva Chari
Rs. 900: V. Ramnarayan; Benjamin Chetan; T. Santha- nam; K. Nirmala
Rs. 1000: Gopal Raj C., Girija Viraraghavan
Rs. 1500: N.S. Parthasarathy

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The Ayurveda Hospital in Madras

A painless surgery on a mesmerised patient

The history of most of the famous hospitals of the city of Madras is not well documented. But it is certain that the institutions that provided healthcare the Indian way through the three principal streams of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani. Not much is known about the early years of these institutions. However, their names can only be reconstructed through scants records found in public archives. One among such hospitals was the Devasthanam Dharmo Ayurveda Vidyapeetha, established in the first decades of the 20th century and faded away thereafter, though it continued to act as a very famous successor institutions in its wake.

It was, as it was suggests, a charitable Ayurvedic hospital, more of dispensary, attached to the Sri Kanyaka Parameswari Devasthana Dharma Ayurveda Vidyapeetha. From Kesari’s writings we get to know that this hospital was laid out. There were no assistants, though he was awarded a gold medal. He resigned and opted to start his own, Konar Kesavatterumar. But there was no stopping the man behind the success of the Ayurvedic College, teaching the students of Sanskrit and the student had been taught by Gopalacaryulu and taught by Gopalacaryulu. From Kesari’s writings we get to know that the institution came into existence on August 14, 1849 and in the first year attended about these and their histor...
Tamil Journalism  

A flavour of distinct political leanings

Compared to many other Indian languages, journalism in the Tamil language was rather slow in growth initially. There were not many Tamil newspapers till the end of the 19th Century. The early Tamil journals were non-political and mostly promoted by missionar ies who used them as vehicles for proselytising.

The first Tamil journal Tamil Patruka (1831), a monthly, was published by the Religious Tract Society. Although it had government support, it did not survive long and closed down after two years. Another journal of the period was Rajavvurtha Bodhini (1885), which specialised in publishing news items translated from newspapers received from England. Dinavarthamani, its contemporary, was a weekly edited by Reverend P. Percival and published by the Devidayan Press. It had government support and was reputed to have had a circulation of 1,000 copies, which was considered large in that age.

But his mature patriotism had given greater importance to literary and educational subjects than to current events and news. Viveka Vilasa appeared in 1885 and its main object was to counteract the missionar ies’ propaganda. It was promoted by non-Christian Tamil scholars. Madras was the home of these journals and it was also the centre from where newspapers in several other regional languages were published. In 1876, nineteen journals were published from Madras (now Chennai) in four languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi.

Aiyer’s youth, he had wholly neglected his mother tongue like most people in this country who claim to have been ‘educated’ in English schools. But his mature patriotism had given greater importance to literary and educational subjects than to current events and news. Viveka Vilasa appeared in 1885 and its main object was to counteract the missionar ies’ propaganda. It was promoted by non-Christian Tamil scholars. Madras was the home of these journals and it was also the centre from where newspapers in several other regional languages were published. In 1876, nineteen journals were published from Madras (now Chennai) in four languages: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindi.

The first Tamil newspaper in the real sense was the Swadesamitran which was started as a weekly in 1882 by G. Subrama nia Aiyer, who was also one of the founders of The Hindu. It became a daily in 1889 and dominated Tamil journalism until 1934. It was a pioneering effort for Subramania Aiyer and very soon he was equally at home in Tamil journalism and in English. The poet and patriot, Subramania Bharati entered the portals of journalism through the Swadesamitran where he served as a sub-editor for a short period.

He paid this tribute to Subramania Aiyer in a letter to The Hindu from Pondicherry in December, 1914: “Unaided he (Subramania Aiyer) had made Tamil journalism a fact of the world, in spite of his very imperfect early training in Tamil literature. Learn, says the Tamil aphorist, while you are yet young. In Subramania Aiyer, Dr. U. Rangaswami Iyengar in 1928, his strongest weapon was his editorials in which in simple language and style, he explained to his readers political and economic issues, which until then had remained beyond the cognitive reach of large masses of Tamil readers. In his hands, the Swadesamitran proved to be both a teacher and a leader for the Tamil literates whose political consciousness was stirred by its relentless campaign for the social development and political emancipation of the country.

CRS, as he was affectionately known in journalist circles, was a brilliant commentator in English, too. His frequent contribution on matters that appeared in The Hindu and were greatly enjoyed by its readers. The Swadesamitran declined after his passing away in 1962 and folded up some years later. It was revived under another owner but did not pick up. The old magic was gone.

In 1917, V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar started a daily, Deshabhumik, which had a short life of three years. Its aim was to present a new and refined style in display of news, and one of its editors was the revolutionary VVS. Aiyer. It did not have much of an impact. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar’s weekly Narasuktchi, which was a political and literary magazine, was an instant success.

Another great name in Tamil journalism was R. V. Varadaraju Naidu, the owner of the daily Madrap in 1926. It achieved significant success. Varadaraju Naidu was a Congressman and an ardent supporter of Annie Besant’s Home Rule movement. He carried on a campaign against the Justice Party through his paper and it added to his popularity. Varadaraju Naidu, however, began to waver in his support to the Congress from 1926 and his critics said he was leaning towards the Hindu Mahasabha.

Tamil Nadu closed down in 1930. Some enterprising Congressmen started a paper India, in 1931, but it did not make much headway. Jayachand, a tabloid priced at 3 paisa, came on the scene and had some initial success. A party newspaper started by the Justice Party was the Ovada edited by J.S. Kannappaar – (Courtesy: RIND Survey, March 2019).

(To be continued next fortnight)
Falling in love with Chennai

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No. ____________________________) / I have just seen Madras Musings and would like to receive it henceforward.

We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS, as subscription to Madras Musings for the year 2019-20.

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Memories of an early win at Lord’s stadium

Thathath, my 7 year old cricket-crazy grandson said, “Tell me the story of how you saw the WC 1983. (this was the umpteenth time!)”. Everybody, just hear this!! he said turning to his cousins. It was a story, that would assure you of a rapt audience till the very end…. and one I was never tired of narrating.

I was a 37 year old chemical engineer, working in SPIC. Our team of six engineers were sent to Bombay, for the project work of ONGC, URAN. We were stationed in a hotel in Chembur.

It was June 1983! India, the underdogs were playing their semi finals against England, amusing them greatly by their poor performance. But the tides turned and India marched into the World Cup finals, surprising the whole cricketing world!

Finals against West Indies—the World Champions, who had won the last two World Cups in 1975 and 1979!

A one-sided game? Or whatever the outcome! How could I miss this! Our hotel in Chembur had a TV but in a small cramped lobby. I was determined to enjoy this eventful match in the best way possible. And what better place than our guest house in Colaba, 35 km away. But distance melted away in the anticipation of good food, great ambience and above all, our guys in the World Cup final!

Of course, no one ever imagined India stood a chance against the ruling giants! Reaching the finals was thrilling enough! So, off I went to our guest house in Colaba.

India won the toss and chose to bat. But the score they notched up!! Only 183 in 54.5 overs! I was quite sure the formidable WI, aiming for a hat trick, would easily reach this total, in much less!

Two wickets down, Viv Richards, the greatest batsman in the world, strode onto the field, in his characteristic style. He alone could reach this small total! The ball went flying all over the field and he steadily notched up 33 off 28 balls. I looked at my watch. The match would be over soon, the way things looked and I would be able to catch my train well ahead of time. I relaxed and sat back.

Madan Lal bowled to Viv Richards, who struck the ball hard, towards mid wicket, over his shoulder! VR was out!!! Incredible development!

This was the turning point and India had to take 3 more wickets!

I rushed down, all the time wondering what was happening back there and thoroughly disappointed at not being able to see the most crucial part. Jumping into a taxi, I told the driver to zip to the VT station. And lo! Bless him, he had the radio tuned to the commentary which was sweet music to my ears! Before we reached the station, at 11.35, one more wicket had fallen, leaving WI with two. As I paid him my fare, I excitedly shook hands with him.

I ran to the platform, my head full of “have our boys made it? Are they going to catch, over his shoulder! VR was out!!! Incredible development!”

I had witnessed India’s first World Cup victory, in a thunderous cheer! It was euphoria all around!

I had witnessed India’s first World Cup 1983 victory, in a different city and in three different unexpected venues!

Answers to Quiz


Guesthouse, Taxi and the Railway station! With the train out there, waiting patiently for this cricket crazy euphoric crowd!

At last the train left at 12 pm, late by 20 minutes. The only time when I was thankful and happy at the delayed departure of a train!!

The next day I read the most inspiring words, which pumped up the team’s sagging spirits, by the lion-hearted skipper, Kapil Dev, “Team, if this is not a different city and in three different unexpected venues! An_empty plat - – V asanth Manickam