

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

Vol. XXXIII No. 24

April 1-15, 2024

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Before we gloat over Bangalore's water shortage...

The last few weeks have seen several news items on Bangalore city's water crisis. It is indeed a sad spectacle to see what was once a green city now grappling with appalling shortage of one of life's most essential elements. What was even more saddening was the spate of posts on social media by seemingly delighted Chennai citizens who congratulated themselves over how their city had weathered such crisis long ago. Nothing could be more self-deluding than that. Firstly, Chennai's water crisis is not over and will never be. Secondly, for a city that had water scarcity from inception, we seem to be nowhere near a solution.

Chennai's water supply history can be divided into many phases. The first of these was

the longest – lasting over two centuries when the challenge was more of obtaining water of good quality. That was handled in piecemeal fashion – the ruling elite and the upper classes obtained water from

● by The Deputy Editor

great distances while the poor simply managed with what they had. The problem was mitigated to an extent by the availability of lakes and natural ponds in plenty though during peak summer these tended to go dry. The second phase, which was defined by a drive

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The Veeranam Tank – it is only by relying heavily on water sources like these that Chennai has managed. And not because of any discipline among its citizenry.

Questions arise over structural safety assessments following nightclub collapse

News about collapsing of buildings is not new in our city. If the victims are of the kind whose kin can be tapped for votes, then solatium will be forthcoming at once from the Government. What is of concern is that the fundamental cause for such accidents is not being addressed. Unless of course it is a high-profile case as in the collapse of the Moulivakkam building in 2014 or the more recent episode of a structure in Saligramam that needs to be demolished

owing to safety issues. Just last fortnight, the ceiling of a private club fell all of sudden and killed three people. This is the

● by A Special Correspondent

kind of event which after a few weeks will fade away unlike the earlier ones mentioned. And it is these and not sensational collapses that are indicative of a huge malaise – lack of proper

structural assessment owing to rampant corruption.

The owners of the club building took the easiest way out – blaming Chennai Metro Rail for the fall. The structure had weakened owing to deep drilling by the latter organisation in the vicinity they said. Unfortunately for them, CMRL had not yet begun drilling and boring in the neighbourhood. Now, newspaper reports reveal that the structure was unsound enough to actually vibrate when high decibel music was

played within the premises. The employees had apparently brought this to the notice of the owners who had dismissed their fears as unfounded. With the result that is now there for all to see.

CMRL in all fairness to its functioning, has improved on its assessments when you compare it with the track record of the first phase. This time, a team has come and inspected every building in the vicinity of its routes. Structural conditions have been made note of

and also shared with building owners. This was not so in the first phase when collapses did take place. Of course, this time around with much of the work expected to pass through highly congested areas, we need to wait and watch as to the eventual performance as regards safety.

To revert to the building collapse, it is quite interesting to note that the club in question has been functioning at the premises for some time and

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Before we gloat over Bangalore's water shortage...

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to ensure water supply at the doorstep by means of pipes, began in the mid 1800s. The Kosasthalaiyar was tapped and from then on began a long chain of events, the first of which was the Cooum running dry. But we did embark on purified water supply and tapping water bodies at some distance to supply water to the city. This in a sense is still work in progress – you need to realise that most new areas of the city, including the so-called new world OMR do not have piped supply. Water tankers are the lifeline there and long before Bangalore, they showed us what they were capable of by going on strike.

That ground water could run dry became manifest to Chennai residents very early on and this marks the third phase. The first such crisis was in the early 1970s. We learnt of deep and deeper borewells and there was talk of bringing water from further away – the Palar, Veeranam and later the Krishna all became possibilities and each would become a source for the city, though only after decades and enough and more political and bureaucratic bungling. And our population continued to grow, far in excess of the water we could supply to it.

Prayer and miracles were also sought out. And long before the term became common, we knew of cloud seeding.

Come the 1990s we got onto rainwater harvesting (RWH) – our fourth phase and even now, only a miniscule population believes in it. But even that small percentage has helped mitigate the city's water crisis to an extent -an indicator as to what full-scale RWH can do. It is compulsory on paper but most real estate developments give it the go by, obtaining compliance certificates by unfair means. Our fifth phase sees us dependent on technology -desalination is now the new mantra though at what environmental and energy cost remains to be seen.

What is distressing is that Chennai still does not want to look at solutions that are sustainable. The failure of RWH implementation has already been mentioned. We continue to encroach on natural lakes and reservoirs. And we don't have new reservoirs to trap and store rainwater from the rivers and roads. Much of this goes to the sea. In reality we have survived because we have not had in recent times the kinds of prolonged droughts we faced in the 1970s and 1980s. And yet we seem to be happy making fun of Bangalore.

Questions arise over structural safety assessments following nightclub collapse

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is quite a popular place. It must have obtained a commercial licence before it opened and that must have meant an inspection by authorities concerned. If so, how is it that a licence was given if the building was not adhering to safety norms? We would be most happy to stand corrected but surely a structure that was shaking to high decibel music could be easily identified by trained personnel to be unsafe. Which in turn means that either the inspection was perfunctory, or it was done by novices.

In most cases of building collapse and loss of life, action is immediate as far as the promoter/owner/builder is

concerned. There is usually a high-profile arrest, followed by a trial which can take forever. The tenants/buyers pay the price of uncertainty, prolonged trial and at times forfeiture of their investment though it cannot be denied that in most instances they were actively in collusion. It is the third element, namely officialdom, which goes scot-free. Take the earlier building collapses, have we heard of anybody in the relevant government departments responsible for permission being brought to trial? It is high time that the law catches up with the third group that is equally culpable and brings it to book. That should go a long way in cleaning up our building safety standards in practice.

On the benefits of tobacco

Cigarette smoking is injurious to health as we all know. Many of us can, *The Man from Madras Musings* is quite sure, repeat this message in many regional languages as well. Tobacco in any form, be it just a wad, or a cigar, or pressed into a pipe, or puffed from a beedi, causes more harm than good. MMM has believed in this dictum all along and has abstemiously stayed away from the temptations of the leaf that kills. But such are his present circumstances that he must take to it and probably use it for a long period of time.

It all began with MMM's good lady, also known as She Who Must Be Obeyed, instructing MMM to go forth and purchase a car of German manufacture. The vehicle in question duly arrived and was installed at Chez MMM, reposing regally

a rat guard which would prevent rodents from claiming easementary rights on the vehicle. This was done and all was well.

That was until the rats managed to evade the guard and get in once more. This time, the vehicle being regularly in use, the damage was minimal (not so the cost of repair) – just one flashing indicator which according to those in the know meant a cable somewhere was cut by the rats. It was back to the workshop and after a week the car was back. It came late in the evening and was lodged in its lair. The next morning when revved up the light was back to flashing which meant the rats had come back and had celebrated with a rowdy party the return of their car. After some further expenses, the car is scheduled to be back in a day or two but MMM brushing aside suggestions of gadgets and ultra-violet lights enquired if some native

here for they are very well known. But in MMM's view, the place has its advantages, one of which is its compact size. You can go from one end to the other very quickly. As it happened the other day to MMM and his good lady.

MMM is of the kind that believes in being present hours ahead at the airport when it comes to taking a flight and his good lady is of the variety that thinks it is a waste of time unless the entry is just when names are being announced over the PA system together with the warning that it is the last and final call. And so between MMM and good lady there is a compromise – arrival at an airport is invariably late enough for MMM to bite his nails in anxiety but not so bad as to have search parties sent out to look for the two.

It was thus that the duo reached the Chennai airport one morning, only to be informed that the flight they

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in the garage. This being just prior to the COVID lockdown, the vehicle did nothing but repose for many months, during which, and this is where it all bit sharply, MMM kept paying the monthly instalments on the purchase and the amount was not small. That however, as it transpired, was not the only aspect that was biting. Prolonged idleness had made the car a convenient haven for rats, these rodents apparently having a partiality towards cars of German design. MMM guesses that rats as a community are now ISO certified and so prefer vehicles of a certain quality stamp.

The net result was that when MMM switched on the vehicle there were several flashes of light and nothing much thereafter. The car had to be sent for repairs and when it returned after some major expenses, the value of which could have funded a smaller vehicle locally made, all was well. MMM was asked to install

answer was in place – short of his sleeping in the car that is.

And sure enough, there was. The car workshop came out with it rather shamefacedly. A sheaf of long tobacco if kept in the engine compartment apparently works wonders. Rats it seems take our statutory warnings seriously and avoid tobacco like the plague. The only drawback is that the tobacco must be replaced periodically as its organic nature means it decays pretty fast. MMM does not mind. He is quite happy if necessary to grow the tobacco in his back garden rather than incur those huge expenses in repairing the damage to the car. And so, tobacco has its uses. The great God did not create it owing to a mere whim.

Small has its Advantages

The Man from Madras Musings is second to none in pointing out the flaws in the Chennai airport. These need not be repeated

were to board was to take off from another terminal. Fortunately for MMM and good lady there was a battery-operated cart on hand which ferried them across in good time chiefly because the airport is small. Contrast this with what happened when MMM and good lady (they do travel quite a bit don't they?) were at the national capital. They had arrived there from some other city and were to board a connecting flight to Chennai. The first flight was delayed and there was just about an hour for the second and in the interim baggage had to be collected, a different terminal had to be reached, luggage had to be checked in and security checks had to be gone through. The baggage came quickly enough but transfer to the other terminal, so MMM learnt, could be done only by 'shuttal'. And so MMM and his good lady rushed across to the shuttle boarding point.

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Nadai paathai nadappatharkka?

Attached is a photograph of an advertisement banner for a film right in the middle of the pavement outside “Bhattad Towers” on Westcott Road, Royapettah. This was clicked at about 6.30 this morning. (Jan 11, 2024)

During our morning walks we have encountered all manner of obstructions and impediments on the pavement between our residence and Wesley High School. But this one really takes the cake!

All of which makes one wonder whether the Greater Chennai Corporation should change the script of the totally useless signboards locted all over the City to read “Nadai paathai nadappatharkka?..”

K.Balakesari

3/1, Rams Kesari Kuteeram
22, Westcott Road
Royapettah, Chennai 600 014

Harry Crowe Buck's residence

I captured this building on my mobile (on right) during my 2022 Bookfair at YMCA Nandanam.

Just thought i should bring this to your kind notice. Your magazine is doing a wonderful job on protecting our rich heritage building in Madras. Our future generation may not be lucky enough to see them as they may disappear anytime.

Thanks once again for the splendid work you and your team are doing.

Thilakan Selvanayagam
thilakans@yahoo.com

More on Higginbothams

Reading through Tracing Madras, in MM, March 1, 2024, the captivating narrative of Higginbothams, my memory went back to 1967, when I ordered two books from Annamalaiagar. They informed me that these were to be imported, one from Oxford University Press, UK and the other from NASA, USA. Accordingly they imported them without asking for any advance deposit and posted them in VPP, surprisingly at no extra cost of import and other service charges! We had a HB stall in Chidambaram Railway Station to serve the academic community of Annamalai University. I had other occasions to avail of their excellent services. That is the Higginbothams till today.

Prof. S. Sathikh

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Senior citizens and stray dogs

Medical doctors recommend that senior citizens in 60 plus age group should do exercise everyday to the extent

OUR READERS WRITE



possible. It is generally believed that walking is the best form of exercise. In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi has concurred with this view.

Accepting this medical suggestion, most senior citizens go for a walk atleast for 40 minutes everyday. For a healthy walking exercise, clean and pure air-filled atmosphere is preferred. Today, there are not adequate number of parks in Chennai for brisk walking by senior citizens. Therefore, most of them have to walk on the streets where traffic would be less. However, the problem is in many of the streets, there are a number of stray dogs moving around.

Myself and my wife walk in the 6th Cross Street near the post office every evening from one end to another for 40 minutes There are around 10 stray dogs permanently loitering in this street. Suddenly, on one evening, a barking stray dog rushed towards me and I was frightened. Being a senior citizen, I was not in a position to run away with the speed that was needed. Therefore, I had no alternative other than just remain standing, as the dog was approaching. Fortunately, the dog appeared to have

been impressed with my “stoic posture”, looked at me with piercing eyes and then moved away leaving me unhurt.

I suggest that all senior citizens walking on the streets carry a stick with them, to defend themselves to the extent possible, in case of being confronted with a stray dog. There seems to be no other way, since it appears that Chennai Corporation has given up its battle against stray dogs.

I live in 4th Cross Street in Besant Nagar and in my street too there are four or five stray dogs. Every night, between 2 am and 4 am, the dogs start barking loudly, in what appears to be a chorus. This disturbs the sleep and lack of sleep can create health issue for senior citizens like me. Therefore, when I go to bed everyday, I keep both my ears closed with a piece of cotton, which is not sufficient but still helps in reducing the intensity of the dog's bark.

I suggest that all senior citizens also try this experiment , if they too would be disturbed in the night by the barking of the dogs.

N.S.Venkataraman
Nandini Voice for The Deprived

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

(Continued from page 2)

A ramshackle vehicle greeted them and while boarding it MMM caught his trousers on a projecting hook leaving a large rent in the garment. There was no time to change anyway and MMM was also too busy praying to worry about the damage. The shuttle took its time, rattling over a few hundred speed breakers which given the speed of the vehicle were anyway unnecessary. The driver paused to pick up an argument with just about everyone else on the road and some choice Delhi words regarding mothers, sisters and aunts were heard. The departing terminal was reached with around 45 minutes to go.

MMM tried explaining at the baggage queue that he needed to be allowed to move ahead given the time but was brusquely told that he needed to wait his turn. But when his good lady said the same thing to the same attendant, such being her personality he simply bowed and made way, opening a special counter for the baggage to be checked in. In all the confusion MMM had forgotten to pull out a fresh pair of trousers and there was no option but to go for security check with the rear well exposed. If that was not embarrassing enough there was the good lady's running commentary about incompetents who could not explain an urgency to a 'mere' member of the airport staff. MMM had to bear it all in silence. His good lady is of the kind that parts waters. He is not. The flight was duly boarded and as was to be expected just when MMM hoped that there was nobody he knew on board there were plenty and everyone pretended not to notice MMM's torn trousers.

None of this would have happened in Chennai airport is MMM's considered opinion.

- MMM

Holi in UP as seen by a Chennai photographer

To those active on social media, young Srivatsan Sankaran is a sensation. He has evolved into a travel photographer and photography educator for the deaf. Despite being hard of hearing, he has travelled to 200+ destinations and covered 50+ festivals. He expresses his feelings through photography which helps to connect him with the world. He was selected and his work exhibited as that of a Change Maker at the WHO campus on the occasion of World Hearing Day 2023. He is also a brand influencer of Sony Alpha cameras. He runs a growing community called the Madras Photo Bloggers Foundation that aims at creating a platform for deaf artists/photographers to showcase their talents. This was established in March 2016 to benefit the deaf community on a large scale.

More than a 100 deaf students have been trained in Photography. They now work in various organizations across Chennai. Srivatsan Sankaran has received numerous awards and recognitions for his good work.

He was recently in North India to cover the festival of Holi. Those who have experienced this event will know what a riot of colours and noise it can be. Srivatsan Sankaran writes thus of his experience –

“As a deaf photographer capturing Holi, I never rely on a hearing aid due to its lack of waterproof capabilities. Despite this challenge, I have successfully captured the true essence of the festival by immersing myself in the imaginative audio and vibrant atmosphere. Navigating through the crowds and water-filled scenes requires careful risk assessment, all the while staying attuned to the underlying silence amidst the chaos. Visual cues become my guiding light, helping me anticipate movements and make informed decisions about where to focus my lens.

Although there are moments that elude my camera's capture, I persist with unwavering determination, working tirelessly to comprehensively cover the festival's diverse range of experiences. It is a challenging endeavour, but one that I wholeheartedly embrace as a conscious choice. Embracing the absence of auditory stimuli, I intensify my focus on the vibrant colors, the fluid movements of dancers, and the expressions of pure joy on participants' faces.

Every year, I approach Holi with renewed enthusiasm, eager to unveil hidden moments and weave them into a tapestry of visual narratives. The festival's pulsating atmosphere becomes my muse, igniting my experimentation with different angles, compositions, and lighting conditions to convey the richness and depth of this extraordinary celebration.

While the challenges I face as a deaf photographer during Holi are undeniable, the rewards far outweigh them. Through my lens, I offer a unique perspective that transcends the limitations of sound and embraces the power of visual storytelling. My photographs stand as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, the beauty of cultural traditions, and the unifying force of joy and celebration.”



The Mints of Madras – Part II

(Continued from
Last Fortnight)

Till the beginning of the 18th century the mint was, as we saw last fortnight, safely within the confines of the Fort though it had been divided into two – the gold and silver mints. But times were changing, and the East India Company was steadily coming into its own as a mercantile entity. By the early 1700s there was a change in policy – it was not enough to source cloth from weaving centres in the hinterland. They had to be set up in the vicinity of the Fort. Two colonies were created – Colletpettah near Tiruvottriyur and Chintadripettah just off Mount Road. The latter was conceptualised in October 1734 and by the next year was substantially ready. It was decided that a new mint would be set up here.

It came up in 1742. That was the year when Nawab Safdar Ali was murdered at Vellore. After the usual period of uncertainty, his son was proclaimed Nawab under the name of Muhammad Said. The long shadow of the Company was already falling on the Arcot rulers and the new incumbent, in gratitude for the protection that the EIC had offered women of the family gave it many new privileges. Among these was “Liberty of Coining Arcot Rupees and Pagodas according to the Usage and Practice of the Country Mints.” We learn that in 1743 one hundred and fourteen chests of silver were coined into about ten lakh Arcot rupees. The Mint Undertaker as the post was then known, was none other than Lingi Chetty, after whom a street still exists in George Town. Thus between the Fort Mints and the Chintadripet Mint, the EIC was coining an entire gamut of currency – star pagodas, Madras pagodas, Madras gold mohurs, Arcot gold mohurs, silver Arcot and Madras rupees and coins of lesser denominations. It must be acknowledged that the coins produced at these mints were far superior to those churned out by various country mints, and some of the latter such as the ones at San Thome (then a Portuguese village), Kovalam and Poonamallee were eventually closed.

The French occupied Madras in 1746 and left three years later. When the British returned, they found that the Fort Mints were much affected, in fact the Silver Mint had been demolished to re-align the western wall of the Fort. Lingi Chetty

was consulted as to whether a new mint could be constructed at the same site, and he opined against it, preferring a new location, near the Company (Chennakesava Perumal) Temple then standing where the High Court now is. This was more or less agreed to but the new Governor, Saunders ordered a fresh survey, and it was decided to build the Silver Mint at the old location on the North West Bastion of the Fort, by taking over some godowns



LOST LANDMARKS OF CHENNAI

– SRIRAM V

Entrance to the Govt Printing Press, formerly The Mint.

belonging to the Armenian Coja Petrus Uscan. The new mint was ready by 1751 but suffered extensive damage in a cyclone in November 1752. It was brought back to working order sometime later.

The Gold Mint in the Fort was entrusted to two unskilled people when the British returned in 1749 but the output was so poor that there was serious loss of credibility. This was when the Company hired Edward Edwards, who had passed his examination at Goldsmith's Hall in London and was working in a gold smithy in that city.

He was interviewed at the Tower Mint and on being pronounced satisfactory, was sent to Cuddalore and then Madras. That his uncle was Josias Dupre, Secretary to the Company in England, must have played an important role in the decision. It is clear that when it came to minting its own coins, as was being done in the Fort, the EIC preferred to have Englishmen as assay masters while the facility for other currency was entrusted to an Indian, namely Lingi Chetty. That this soon became a hereditary job is evident from the fact that in the 1750s, the Mint Shroff, for the Fort and other Madras Mints was Tepperumal (Devaperumal) Chetty, son of Lingi Chetty. Their relationship is clear from

a verse that Arunachala Kavi of the Rama Natakam fame wrote in honour of the former. Tepperumal reported to the Assay Master and had under him gold- and silversmiths.

It appears that the job of Mint Shroff or Manager had prior to Lingi Chetty been held by Brahmins but the practice was done away with in the 1730s by Governor Benyon, on the advice of his Dubash Audiappa. Lingi Chetty was a rank outsider, looked upon with suspicion by the goldsmiths and silversmiths but he soon gained their trust. Not so his son, who would come into conflict with his subordinates.

Arriving in Madras, Edwards was designated Factor and Assay Master. He quickly re-established the Fort Mints but proved intractable on another matter – imparting his skills to others. Time and again the Council tried to force his hand, but he remained. He was suspended twice, one in 1755 and again in 1758 for this disobedience but such was his skill that he had to be reinstated both times. He received a salary of GBP 110 (whether pa or pm is not stated, it is more likely the former), and a fee of half a pagoda for every ‘cake’ of gold brought to the Mint and likewise, half a rupee for every bar of silver. The Governor it

must be noted, received 2,000 pagodas per annum as his fixed emolument from the Mint.

The presence of the Gold Mint in the Fort Square led to complaints of intense heat radiating from it. There was nothing to be done about it and in 1798 we read of the two mints being in the same locations in the Fort, with expansions underway to double their capacities. But by the early 1800s, a decision was taken to move the Mint to the extreme north of Black Town. It is not clear if the Chintadripet Mint was merged with the new facilities but that would seem the most likely conclusion.

The new mint came up on the site of an old powder mill, built in the 1770s. This was part of the property known as the Seven Wells, in commemoration of the facilities from where water was supplied to the Fort. Sadly for us, we have very little information on what became known as the Black Town Mint apart from the fact that it lent its name to the street on which it stood. The southern end of it, now known as Mint Street South, was earlier known as Washers Street, reflective of the time when the Elambore River flowed by what is now NSC Bose Road. The Black Town Mint was certainly in operation by the 1820s but its initial years

were marked by uncertainty. In June 1835, the Governor General Lord Auckland ordered its closure and the transfer of all its machinery to Calcutta or Bombay, a reflection on the way our city had slid in importance. The Mint was closed but within two years was back in operation, the reason for reopening not being clear. By 1843, with the formation of the Bank of Madras it had a printing press attached, for bank notes, the first step in paper currency.

Lord Auckland's proposal had been to convert the Madras Mint into a bullion depot. The plan remained in circulation and in 1854, Major TJ Smith, then Mint Master was asked to submit a report on why the Madras facility could/could not be closed. Finally, in April 1868 the idea was revived, and the Mint was ordered closed. The Government of Madras remonstrated and cited various benefits of having such a facility in the city but these fell on deaf ears. The Mint became a bullion depot in 1869. This lasted a mere two years for in 1871 the Government of Madras suggested to Calcutta that given that bullion deposits were a mere trickle the space could be put to other uses. It became a Medical Store. The press which had once churned out bank notes became the Government Printing Press, a function it still fulfils. The Medical Stores seems to have vanished.

Madras-lace garlands presented to the Duke and Duchess of York and the Prime Minister of Australia in Canberra in 1927

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH, Sydney, Australia) of 11 May 1927 features a news item entitled the Decorative collar (lace garland) presented to the visiting British royalty and the then Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce on 9 May 1927 during the opening of Provisional Parliament House in Canberra. The news item further says that it was presented by Diwan Bahadur T. Rangachariar, Representative of the City of Madras in the Legislative Assembly and former Deputy-President of the Indian Central Assembly of the British Indian Government. After the official opening, those representatives from diverse segments of the British Empire spoke. During Rangachariar's turn, he — from Madras — presented the lace garlands to Duke of York Albert George and Duchess of York

Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, and to Prime Minister Stanley Bruce. The SMH also mentions that Rangachariar read a Sanskrit poem, composed by him, entitled *India's message to Australia*. The poem offered formal greetings and reiterated the bonds formed between Australia and British India during the First World War.

The two ornate, silk pads on either side of the lace garlands featured embroidered lace work expressing British India's friendship and the bonds of the Empire. On the one side it included 'the Indian Empire' and on the other 'the Commonwealth of Australia'. The garlands were made from silver sequins, glass beads, padded silks and tassels, and embroidery with twisted and tightly coiled, springy lace material.

The SMH report clarifies that news reports of this event made by other news agencies

liberally exaggerated describing the garlands as being woven of solid gold and studded with beautiful jewels. The SMH issue of 11 May 1927 clarifies that none of that was correct.

For a biographical note on T. Rangachariar, who practised as a lawyer in Madras, please see the webpage <http://www.vengrai.com/?p=56> by Vengrai Parthasarathy. I take the liberty of paraphrasing a brief section from Parthasarathy's write-up.

● by A. Raman
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His (Rangachariar's) brilliant parliamentary performance, his erudition and services brought their own recognition. He was honoured with the titles Rao Bahadur, Dewan Bahadur. For his conspicuous ability as Deputy-President, the British government honoured him with the title Companion of the Indian Empire (CIE) in 1925. This was followed by his nomination as the Representative of India at the Inauguration of the Australian Parliament and declaration of Canberra as the new Capital of Australia. While



Lace garlands presented by the Indian representative T. Rangachariar, to dignitaries on the occasion of the inauguration of the Provisional Parliament House in Canberra in 1927 – (on display at the Parliament of Australia: Icons and Collections).

in Australia, Rangachariar in his ethnic outfit stood out. The SMH's story titled 'Picturesque Indian Representative', read "The semi-circular benches around the throne in the Senate are rapidly filling up. The Indian representative Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar is in picturesque turban and his caste mark in red on his forehead. His native costume contrasts with his modern tortoise-shell spectacles".

Appendix. Tamil film actor and producer K(ishnamchari) Balaje (1934-2009) of yester-

years was T. Rangachariar's grandson, born as the third child to R(angachari) Krishnamachariar and Janaki Devi. Balaje used to live in a house on Pantheon Road, which bore the name Canberra for many years. If my memory serves right, this property is now occupied by the Egmore branch of the Indian Overseas Bank. Readers can make the connexion why the house occupied by Balaje in the late 1950s-early 1960s was named Canberra: it celebrates Rangachariar's visit to Canberra!

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– THE EDITOR

Note on Dewan Bahadur T Rangachariar

The accompanying photograph appeared in *The Pictorial History of South India for 1928* and the caption below it reads – Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar CIE, ex-Deputy President of the Indian Legislative Assembly who proceeded to Australia as India's representative.

Rangachariar lived in *Ritherdon House* on the eponymous road but he owned *Veda Vilas* on Egmore High Road and it is known that he built the house on Pantheon Road, which he named Canberra after his Australia visit. *Veda Vilas* was very well known in Carnatic Music circles for it was the residence of Rangachariar's son Tiruvengkatachari aka Muthanna who together with the vainika R. Rangaramanuja Iyengar ran the Jagannatha Bhakta Sabha from the premises (see *MM*, Vol. XXVII, No 18, Jan 1-15, 2018). It was a



formidable venue that all Carnatic music performers aspired to get a concert invite from. Many of the greats in the world of Carnatic music of the era spanning 1920 to 1950 made their reputation there.

Prior to becoming the home of Rangachariar, *Veda Vilas* was the residence of the scholar K. Venkata Lakshmana Rao and this was where the social reformer Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu breathed his last in 1919.

As for *Ritherdon House*, it had an even older history, stretching back to colonial times, well covered in the back issues of *Madras Musings* (see Vol XXIII, No 8, August 1-15, 2013) and elsewhere.

– Deputy Editor

Snippets of sports in the past from the Corporation archives

Stadium and Swimming Pool, as seen in the 1950s

'Tis that time of the year when thoughts turn automatically to the swimming pool. And it is also that time of the year when the IPL is in progress though it is debatable if this is indeed cricketing weather. We feature here two write ups – one on the Chennai Corporation Swimming Pool by the Marina, and the other on the Corporation stadium, both sourced from the *Madras Corporation Chronicle*, a quarterly that was brought out in the 1950s. These articles are from the issue dated October 1956.

– Deputy Editor

Australian Cricket Test Match to be played at the Corporation Stadium, People's Park, Madras

The biggest Test Cricket match ever to be played in the Corporation Stadium, People's Park, is going to be staged in the month of October 1956 on the 19th, 20th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th. The first Test match played at the Stadium grounds was between the S.J.O.C. and India during January 1954. This was followed by another Test match between the New Zealand and India in January 1956; but the coming Australian Test match, will prove a bigger attraction than the previous two Test matches for obvious reasons. All these were made possible because the Corporation was able to persuade the Madras Cricket Association, the Controlling Body for Cricket in Madras State, to hold Test cricket matches in the Stadium by offering all facilities. The understanding between the Corporation

and the Madras Cricket Association is of mutual benefit, offering at the same time various facilities, amenities and comforts to the spectators who watch the big cricket matches. The importance of the match has increased since there are going to be only three Australian Test matches in India the first being at Madras and the players will be fresh and it is expected that a full and powerful team of Australians will play at Madras. Though the Australian team is formidable and contain such world famous starplayers as Keith Miller, Neil Harvey, Ray Lindwall etc., we may be still confident of acquitting ourselves very well because we have one of the best spin attacks in persons like Gupte and Mankad. Tremendous enthusiasm and eagerness are prevailing in the City and as well as in the mufussil in anticipation of this match. It is understood that many people are coming to Madras for just witnessing this match. Preparations are

going ahead in the Stadium for the successful conduct of this match. The only thing is the rain and it should not interfere with the match. Even for this contingency precautions are being taken in the shape of manufacturing special device for covering the pitch etc., and other various improvements learnt by experience during the two previous Test matches, are being carried out. It is just now learnt that Mr. Poly Umrigar has been selected to lead India against the Australians. The choice could not be more fitting and happier since the last Test match played at the Stadium ended successfully under his captaincy. We can say without any fear of contradiction that the Cricket enthusiasts are in for veritable feast of high class cricket and whatever the result may be, it is sure as in the case of all games, the game will be played in the true sporting spirit and pave the way for better understanding and happier relations between the Countries concerned. This is one of the important aspects of all the sports which overcome all racial, sectarian and other differences.

– J.V.S. Rao
(Officer in Charge of Stadia)

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The Marina Swimming Pool is one of which the Corporation can be justly proud. This beautiful Pool which is the biggest in the East and second



Corporation swimming pool, photographed in the 1970s.

biggest in the World is situated on the Marina.

The Swimming Pool with the attached Marina Canteen (which was first used as a Recreation Club for military personnel) was constructed at a cost of Rs. 1.5 lakhs out of the Governor's War Fund in the year 1940, during the Second World War. After the War, the Swimming Pool was run by the Central Y.M.C.A., Madras, for over 2 years; and was handed over to the Corporation of Madras in the year 1948.

The Swimming Pool is open for 3 days in a week (viz) Sat, Sun and Mon. from 6 a. m. to 6 p.m. The Pool is of the Olympic dimensions 100 metres x 30 metres. Water is pumped into the Pool from 2 big wells. All facilities for moon-light swimming are also provided. Annual Inter Collegiate and Inter University meets are conducted in the Pool.

It may be, of interest to state that Miss. Betty Slade, world famous diving champion,

Mr. Johny Johnson the British Swimming Coach and Aquatic Comedian gave swimming and diving demonstrations in the Pool in May and Aug. 1949 Dr. Samy Lee, the world famous diving Champion performed the diving demonstrations in the Pool in the year 1953.

The recreation centre attracts many foreign visitors and tourists from different parts of the country, besides a large number of citizens of Madras, both men and women and children.

Special permission was granted by the Corporation to allow Naval Ratings from all over the world to swim free of charge whenever any ship touches the Madras Harbour. H. E. the Governor of Madras and his personal staff visited the Pool for a swim on 23rd Oct 1955. Nearly 30,000 to 35,000 bathers are using the Pool in a year.

– T. Somasundaram
(Swimming Instructor)

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