



# PRécis

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## A celebration of the old and the new

*PRSI, Chennai Chapter, celebrates Madras Week with two sterling presentations by G. Sundar, director, Roja Muthiah Research Library, and V. Sivaramakrishnan, president, Consumer Marketing and Portals, Sify Limited. While Sundar's presentation on the early imprints of the Madras region takes the audience back many years, Sivaramakrishnan's thrust on the benefits of the Internet lead many to wonder what the future might have in store.*

The first meeting of the Public Relations Society of India, Chennai Chapter, after the installation of the new committee coincided with the celebration of Madras Week. Quite befittingly, it was a celebration of the old and the new, with G. Sundar, director, Roja Muthiah Research Library making a presentation on the early imprints of



*G. Sundar makes a presentation on the early imprints of the Madras region.*

Madras City (from the Library collections), and V. Sivaramakrishnan, president, Consumer Marketing and Portals, Sify Limited, talking about how to build an Internet community around Chennai.

Sundar had set up the micrographics unit at the Roja Muthiah Research Library and has been associated with several preservation projects there. Consultant to archives and libraries in South Asia, he is now working on his thesis 'Textbook Culture in Colonial Tamil Nadu'. The Roja Muthiah collection is named after Roja Muthiah Chettiar in

Kottaiyur; the collection, which covers ancient, medieval and modern literature, as well as indigenous and popular culture, was later shifted to Madras. The earliest in the collection was a publication from Jaffna. It was in 1994 that the University of Chicago bought the collection comprising 100,000 items such as books, periodicals and newspapers, and decided to bring it to Chennai; the

### Meet the new chairman



*Daniel T. Dass*

Daniel T. Dass was elected chairman of the Public Relations Society of India, Chennai Chapter, at its annual general meeting on 26.7.2007.

Born in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, East Africa, Daniel arrived in Madras in 1968 to complete his higher education. He graduated in public relations from the University of Madras 1980, and went on to obtain a post-graduate diploma in marketing and sales management from the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Madras.

Dass captained his school and college athletic teams and the hockey teams as well. He represented the Madras junior hockey team in 1975. Dass was active in the NCC during his college days and passed out as a cadet under officer. He also underwent para-training at the Agra Para Training School in 1978.

Dass started his career as advertisement executive at the *Sun Weekly* magazine, selling ad space for three years. He then joined Adept Advertising & Marketing Services as client service executive. In 1988, he moved on to Advertising & Sales Promotion Co. (ASP), part of the C.K. Birla group, as client service executive. He was promoted as branch manager in 1995.

He has been associated with PRSI, Chennai since 1979, joining as student member. He was elected to its executive committee in 1998 and has served as joint secretary, secretary (six years) and vice chairman. He received the All India Best Secretary Award for 2001-02.

His hobbies: reading and listening to Western music.



*V. Sivaramakrishnan, Sify Ltd., lights the kuthuvilakku as Suganthi Sundararaj, Daniel Dass and R.K. Dharan look on.*



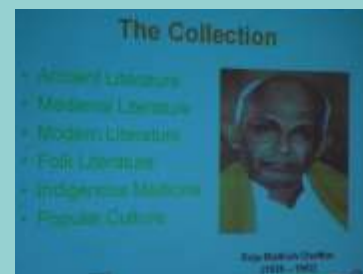
G. Sundar, Roja Muthiah Research Library, Daniel Dass, R.K. Dharan and Suganthy Sundararaj (right) listen intently as V. Sivaramakrishnan makes a presentation on chennai.live.in

University not only provided funds but also arranged funds from other institutions including the Ford Foundation.

While making his Power Point presentation, Sundar mentioned that there were 207 printers in Madras in 1908-09, and 35 in Madurai. He showed the audience the official publications of India brought out by the British Government, the primary source for researchers studying 19th and 20th centuries' history. While one set was sent to England, another was retained by the Tamil Nadu State Archives. These included a Public Instruction Report (1885), Progress of the Madras Presidency (1892) and Information on Seaborne Trade (1914).

Sundar proudly presented the 1812 edition of the *Thirukkural* published in Madras, the first edition ever printed. He pointed out that F.W. Ellis, the English officer in charge of the Mint, had translated portions of the treatise. He then took PRSI members on a journey through Tamil folk literature and newspapers and magazines, a late 19th Century-early 20th century ballet on toddy shops; ballet on the Emden bombing; a people's park; the Railways when trams were introduced; *Thatva Vasani* (1885), published by Munuswamy Naicker; *The Mail* (1868),

published by Arthur Hayles and taken over by Anantharamakrishnan of Amalgamations in 1945; *The Hindu* (1878), which was first a weekly and had its first page full of advertisements; *Swadesamitran* (1882) that was produced to create political awareness; *Logopakari*, the reading of which was considered equivalent to reading several magazines; *Dinamani*, published by



The Roja Muthiah Research Library collection (some old copies of Tamil magazines are seen below) is named after Roja Muthiah Chettiar (seen in the picture above) in Kottaiyur.



Sadanand; the Little Magazine movement that published magazines like *Shakthi* (1939-54); and *Jagan Mohini*, one of the earliest magazines edited by a woman.

Sundar rounded up his presentation with a display of old issues of *Kalki*, *Kumudam* and *Ananda Vikatan*, and film magazines such as *Cinema Ulagam* (1935), *Pesum Padam* and

*Gundoosi*. The Roja Muthiah Library had been able to trace only five magazines pertaining to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (*Madras Courier*, *Madras Gazette* and *Hirkaru*), he said.

Sivaramakrishnan brought PRSI members back to the present with his take on the

(Cont. on pg-3)



A packed hall marked the first meeting of the PRSI, Chennai Chapter, after the installation of the new committee. The meeting also coincided with Madras Week celebrations.

# First city of modern India needs more PR

PRSI, Chennai Chapter members gladly welcomed S. Muthiah, senior journalist and author, but better known as Madras historian. Muthiah has been actively associated with the Chapter for several years; he is a past president. Not one to lose an opportunity to speak about the “first city of modern India” and the need to preserve its heritage, Muthiah addressed the members:

“Madras has been my passion. For 30 years and more, I have been fighting losing battles trying to get recognition for Madras. So, when Vincent D'Souza very successfully organised the Mylapore Festival the past seven or eight years, I tried through one of the high-powered organisations to get a Chennai festival going, long before politically backed Chennai festivals started. Unfortunately, the organisation was not able to get it going, and Vincent and Sashi Nair turned up one evening in June four years ago and said, 'Why don't we get a Chennai festival going?'

August is Madras's anniversary. By the time we drew up plans there were 15-20 programmes during the first year. Madras Day had become Madras Week. Since then,



S. Muthiah explains what Madras Week is all about.

it has been growing. We have about 60 programmes this year. Madras Week is the Sunday-to-Sunday bracketing August 22 (the day the city was founded).

In 1639, the Nayaks of Poonamallee and Wandiwash, representatives of the last vestiges of the Vijayanagar Empire, gave a grant of three sq. miles of 'no man's sand' to representatives of the East India Company in this region Andrew Cogan, Francis Day and

Beri Thimappa. Four walls were built, with a small building in the centre and a few thatched huts. In 1640, this area was grandiosely called Fort St. George, Madraspatnam inside and Chennaipatnam outside.

Significantly, every single institution in modern India had its beginnings in the city be it medicine, engineering, the Municipal Corporation, or the educational system. Today, everybody has forgotten that. We are the first city of modern India. It was to focus on this that I have been campaigning over the years, and we decided the best way was to get Madras Day going and create a consciousness in people.

A significant aspect of Madras Week is that almost all of it is done with no support at all from government or the corporates. It is purely based on voluntary efforts by organisations like the PRSI organising something or the other. There is no financial support. This year, a few colleges and schools are taking part on their own.

It is very well to have the PRSI organising this. But what about the practitioners of PR in all the organisations doing something? Each organisation must think of organising some programme next year.”

(Cont. from pg-2)

Internet medium and the dot-com community. The Sify.com portal, he said, contains more than 520 gigabytes of data. More than 3.3 million users walk into Sify Iway cyber cafes across the country everyday. Sify, which was established in 1999, is the first company in India to get the Internet service provider license and the first to get listed on NASDAQ. “I am extremely proud leading an international company based out of Chennai. We compete for revenue and profitability with others. Chennai accounts for the largest chunk of its e-mail transactions. Our vision is to make the Internet work for you, enable you to stay in touch and to connect. We have a horizontal portal, *chennai.live.in*, which provides information, news and entertainment. Our objective is to build a community of citizens or netizens, or a community of people online.”

Sivaramakrishnan said that *chennai.live.in* would help users get information about the city's traffic, entertainment spots, and enable them to book cinema tickets or reserve tables in restaurants. India, with 50-60 million Internet users, is the fastest growing in the world, he said. Infrastructure, or the connecting factor, is the only limitation, he added. “With Internet, you can watch and react instantly, and that is why it is so interesting”.

Sivaramakrishnan pointed out that history is not one of Sify's top categories yet. “Today's youth wants to share information via email and chat or download ring tones, songs and movies. We provide them a platform. For instance, film directors or publishers are able to interact with their fans.” Sivaramakrishnan promised a series of promotional activities from Sify for Madras Week in 2008.

At the start of the programme, Daniel Dass, newly elected chairman of PRSI, Chennai Chapter, thanked outgoing chairman V.S. Ramana for coordinating with the Hotel Accord Metropolitan (sponsors) and the organisers of Madras Week and making possible the function. He introduced to the audience the newly elected members of the PRSI, Chennai Chapter (see page 6). R.K. Dharan, southern regional vice president, exhorted members to participate in the PRSI National Conference scheduled for December (see page 3).

**Note:** The Roja Muthiah Research Library collection includes matchbox labels, postcards, letters, wedding invitations and posters. The Library is using its facilities to collect as much material as possible and microfilm it. It also welcomes old material from people for documentation.



Time for mementoes (l-r): S. Muthiah (right) receives a memento from Raju Arumugam; V. Sivaramakrishnan (right) from Daniel Chellappa; and G. Sundar (right) from V. Kalidoss.

# PR in the land of the Mahatma

*V.S. Ramana, former chairman, PRSI, Chennai Chapter, who attended the recent National Council meet, recounts his experience.*

It was the overwhelming hospitality of the hosts in Ahmedabad that caught all the PRSI National Council members by surprise. Members had gathered sharp at 10 am on September 28 at the Hotel Sarovar Portico in Ahmedabad to attend the National Council Meet.

Leading from the front, and not just in hospitality, was Bhavesh Upadhyay, chairman, PRSI, Ahmedabad Chapter (who I discovered was my erstwhile colleague in the Cadilla Group), Rupal Marthak and others.

The National Council agenda was ably conducted by the national president Dr. Ajit Pathak, while the various Chapter chairmen highlighted PR activities and initiatives. Vivek V. Shah was named the vice president of PRSI, West Zone.

The focus then fell on PRSI, Chennai, especially its resounding success with two major seminars (on hospitality and tourism, and healthcare) and the ensuing 29th All India PR Conference in December 2007. National Council members were keen to know more about the plans for the Conference. Programme folders were given to the members and plans were discussed.

An overview was also presented of the proposed June 2008 Indo-USA Conference on Business and PR to be conducted by the Chennai Chapter; Prakruthi, Chennai; and the University of Findlay, Findlay, Ohio, U.S.A.

Later in the afternoon, the Ahmedabad Chapter organised a talk on 'Communication' by Jayanarayan Vyas, Gujarat's former Minister for Major Irrigation and Narmada



*PRSI Chennai Chapter members V. Kalidoss, G. Krishnan, Suganthy Sundararaj (foreground), V. S. Ramana, Krithika Shukla and R.K. Dharan (seated behind them) at the National Council PRSI meet in Ahmedabad.*

Development. He electrified the audience with his wit, citing of episodes, and quotes from the Vedas. Vyas inaugurated the Web site of PRSI, Ahmedabad.

A grand dinner was arranged at Rajvadu. The lawn here was decked in typical Gujarati style; there were artistes in costumes, and puppet and magic shows. Gujarati folksongs rent the air and the multi-course menu was really the mother of all Gujarati thalis. What a finale!

The following morning, the PRSI team visited the Gandhi Ashram near the Sabarmathi and paid a silent tribute to Bapu. Just a visit to the place, the ambience and the reverberations were enough to touch your heart. We toured the ashram. The museum there displayed messages of ahimsa and non-violent revolution that the Mahatma

spearheaded. It was a learning for all of us, of the Mahatma's effective PR initiative. And what a PR person he was!

In Ahmedabad, PRSI, Chennai Chapter, was represented by R. K. Dharan, vice president (south), V.S.Ramana, past chairman; G. Krishnan, jt. secretary; V. Kalidoss, treasurer; Suganthy Sundararaj, secretary; and Krithika Shukla, executive committee

1. Drummers entertain the visitors.
2. Being charmed by a magician.
3. A sumptuous multi-course meal.
4. Before the Gandhi Ashram.
5. Cottages in the Ashram; (inset) Gandhiji's room.



# PR and Infrastructure Development in India

## Countdown to 29<sup>th</sup> All India PR Conference begins

The Chennai Chapter of the Public Relations Society of India plays host to the 29<sup>th</sup> All India Public Relations Conference 2007 at Hotel Green Park on December 13, 14 and 15. This is only the third time in nearly 40 years (the first PRSI conference was held in New Delhi in 1968) that Chennai (erstwhile Madras) is playing host. The theme of the conference this year could not have been more relevant: PR and Infrastructure Development in India. It is a subject that members of the PRSI, a 49-year-old body that has national and regional chapters across India, will try to grapple with.

PRSI members believe that there is need to take the subject of infrastructure beyond industrial boundaries, to impress its importance to as many as possible. And what better than by using PR as a tool and as a platform to deliberate on the subject?



The three-day conference will be inaugurated in the afternoon of December 13. There will be panel discussions on India and infrastructure, the National Highways Authority of India, power, and steel; as well as sessions on urban infrastructure; managing the aviation boom and airport infrastructure; managing private ports; and implications of infrastructure development on agriculture, environment and health.

Cultural programmes have been organised for the evenings.

The 29<sup>th</sup> All India PR Conference 2007 Organising Committee consists of Dr. Ajit Pathak, national president, PRSI; R.K. Dharan, conference chairman; V.S. Ramana, conference secretary; and Daniel Dass, conference treasurer. For complete details visit [www.prsichennai.org](http://www.prsichennai.org)

## Indo-U.S. business meet planned for June 2008

The Public Relations Society of India, Chennai Chapter; Prakruthi, Chennai; and the University of Findlay, Findlay, Ohio, U.S.A., are organising in June 2008 an Indo-U.S.A. Global Conference on PR and Business. This has been possible, thanks to the initiative of Dr. Nabarun Ghose, professor-marketing and business, University of Findlay, Ohio, USA. (his father Dr. Amol Ghose was a chartered founding member of PRSI Chennai in 1969).

The Conference theme will be: Business Opportunities and Challenges in the Markets of India, USA, and the World - Building Competitive Skills

The Conference will cover many relevant aspects of PR and business, with special interest / relevance to India and world business, such as marketing, management, economics and finance, and accounting, and issues related to international business, environment, outsourcing, hospitality and tourism, and services and retail.

The six-day programme will include an appreciation of the socio-cultural-economic aspects of India, and participants will be taken on trips to places like DakshinaChitra, Mahabalipuram, and companies such as L&T-ECC.

The registration fee, which covers Conference registration, activities, digital proceedings, and two dinners will be:

For U.S.A /overseas participants, academics and professionals, the fee is US\$ 950 (including VAT; for students, US\$ 475 (including VAT). Overseas participants will have to confirm latest by Jan 30, 2008.

For Indian PR practitioners, the fee will be Rs 20,000; for students, Rs. 5000. Indian participants have to register latest by January 2008.

For registration and other details, please contact:

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**Daniel T. Dass:** 044 2648 0608 or [prsinhennai@yahoo.com](mailto:prsinhennai@yahoo.com)

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**Dr Nabarun Ghose:** [nabarunghose@gmail.com](mailto:nabarunghose@gmail.com)

## Kolkata Chapter looks at the vernacular

Although the print media is fast losing its dominance in many of the developed countries, especially in Europe and in the United States, it continues to remain the dominant medium in India. Indeed, the print media in the country is flourishing, with new editions being launched at regular intervals. A significant aspect of the print media in India is that, among the top ten newspapers (in terms of circulation and readership), the vernacular newspapers account for most of the spots. Indeed, *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhaskar* are the top two newspapers read in the country. Others in the list include *Malayala Manorama*, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, *Dina Thanthi*, *Rajasthan Patrika* and other vernacular papers. The 'Growing relevance of language journalism' seminar in Kolkata attended by PRSI members from across India focused on the various aspects of the thriving vernacular.



R.K. Dharan, vice president-south, PRSI, attended a seminar conducted by the PRSI, Kolkata Chapter on the 'Growing relevance of language journalism' on June 30 this year. Picture shows Dr. Ajit Pathak, PRSI national president (seated in centre), flanked by R.K. Dharan to his left and Manoj Roy, vice president-east to his right, with members of the Kolkata Chapter.

## PRSI, Chennai Chapter, welcomes its new office bearers (2007-08)



Daniel T. Dass  
chairman  
(Advtg. & Sales Promotion Co.)



Sudha Umashanker  
vice chairperson  
(journalist)



Suganthy Sundararaj  
secretary  
(Apollo Hospitals)



G. Krishnan  
joint secretary  
(NACIL - Air India)



V. Kalidoss  
treasurer  
(K9 Technologies)



Era. Raju Arumugam  
(Shipping Corpn. of India)



K.T. Solaiyappan  
(journalist)



Mariam Andrews  
(Trailblazers)



J. Daniel Chellappa  
(Dept. of Atomic Energy)



Krithika Shukla  
(Sify Ltd.)

### Ex-officio Members



V.S. Ramana  
past chapter chairman  
(L & T - ECC Div.)



R.K. Dharan  
Vice president (southern region)  
(RK Public Relations)

### R. Somasundaram passes away



R. Somasundaram

R. Somasundaram, former chairman of the PRSI, Chennai Chapter (1986-87) passed away on Sep. 14, 2007 at his residence in Chennai. He was 78.

Somasundaram was chief general manager at Dina Thanthi when he was associated with the PRSI. He must have had a punishing schedule, yet hardly missed a PRSI meeting.

Somasundaram is survived by his wife Jayalakshmi and three children, Swarnalatha, Ramasubramanian and Krishnasankar.

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