



Heritage Centre, IIT Madras presents

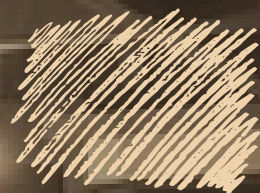
Volume 4 - Issue 3

# GLASS PANELS

May  
2026



Heritage Centre  
IIT Madras



## *20 Years of the Heritage Centre*

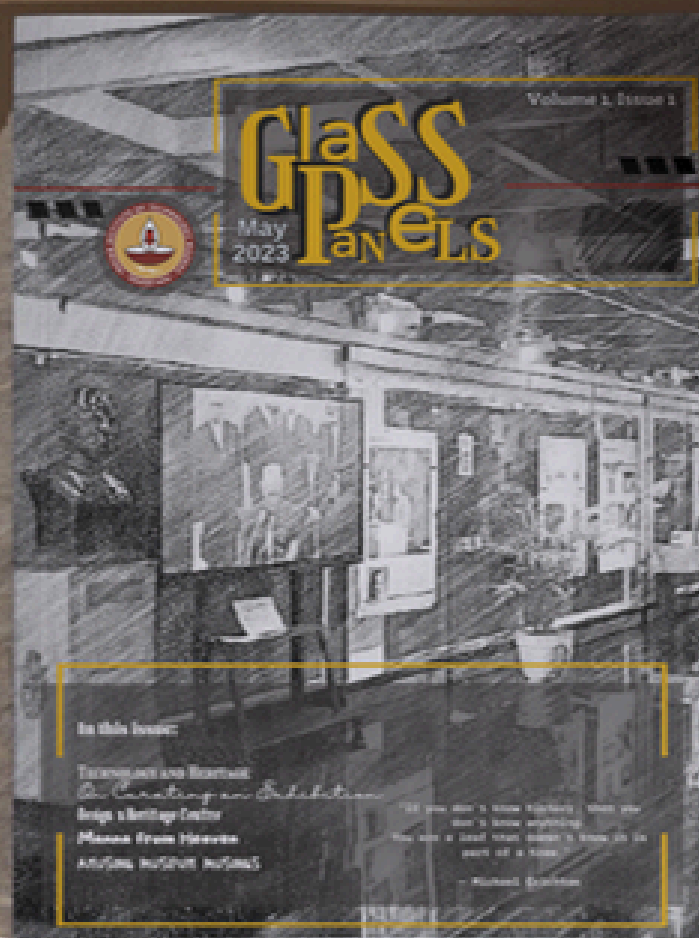
**INSIDE** An Introduction to the IITM Heritage Centre

**THIS** The Geometry of the Egg

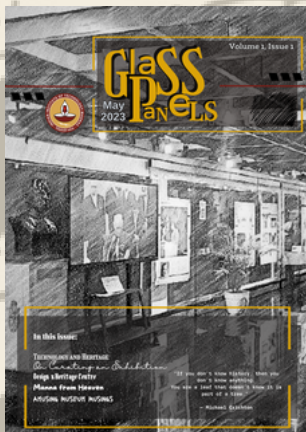
**ISSUE** The Green Hercules

Heritage in Madras: Past Stormy, Present Fair, Future Where?

Three years of heritage, tradition,  
and culture - it all began here.



# Celebrating 3 Years of Glass Panels



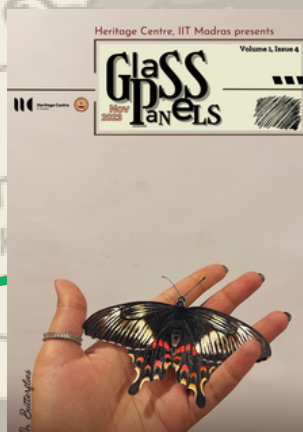
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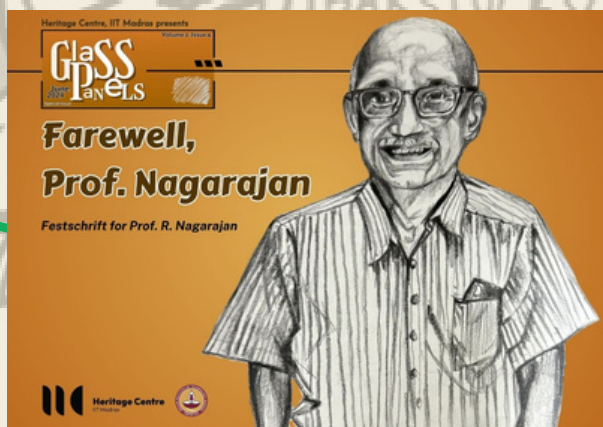
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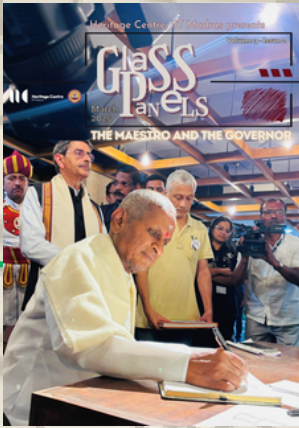
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16. September 2025



19. March 2026



18. January 2026



17. November 2025

*Glass Panels* is a one-of-a-kind magazine that was started in May 2023 by the Heritage Centre. The inaugural issue cover featured an image of a section of our exhibition. The photo was stylized to appear as a sketch. While the future of the magazine was uncertain back then, we decided to play it by ear and see how it went.

As the months rolled by, we began learning, unlearning, and improving through our mistakes and blunders. No articles? No problem! We would bring in our fictional friends Left-Hook Lokesh and Snappy the Snail to write articles for us. As our readership grew, the IIT Madras community began accepting and appreciating our efforts. It was not an easy task to maintain a consistent readership. It called for unerring communication skills with readers and contributors, and an open mind, when it came to accepting criticism. This helped us create something beautiful together for the IIT Madras community—not just for the staff members, students, and faculty members, but also its campus residents and huge network of alumni. Today, we have reached great heights, all thanks to our community, and you are one of them!

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Anika Chinnu (Archive of IIT Madras)  
Gopinath R. (Archive of IIT Madras)



The Heritage Centre was formally inaugurated by Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, former Director of IIT Madras, on 3 March 2006. It is a repository of material of heritage value and historical significance to IIT Madras. "Heritage Centre - Reimagined" was inaugurated on 18 December 2022 by Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, Honourable Finance Minister of India.

Located centrally on campus, the Heritage Centre has an exhibition space that enjoys an abundance of natural light. The Centre also has a small theatre and a particularly pleasant reading area that offers incomparable views of the green campus.

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Heritage Centre or IIT Madras.



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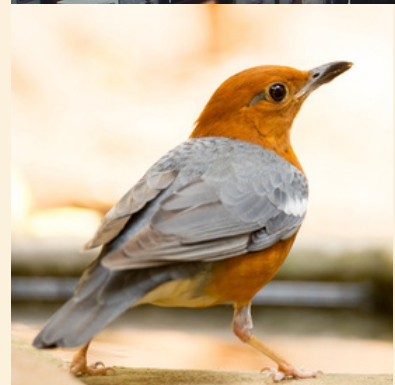
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*"In a thought-provoking talk delivered on 6 March 2026 at the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras, Mr. Sriram V. used his trademark blend of facts, figures, and humour to highlight this question, which has been a bone of contention for decades."*

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*Prof. N. Rajagopalan's association with IIT Madras spanned over four decades, during which he served as Associate Lecturer, Lecturer, Assistant Professor, and Professor. He also served as Chairman (Engineering Unit) and Dean (Administration).*

# Letter from the EDITOR



This issue of *Glass Panels* is very special. We celebrate three years of the magazine. From humble beginnings and many failed design attempts, we are gradually getting there.

Before we set out to create this magazine, I had pitched the idea to Prof. R. Nagarajan, the then Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre. He gave me a thumbs up and told me to go ahead. Ashlin Deena Mathews, my colleague, Swati Pariath, our intern from Ahmedabad University, and I began the work for the inaugural issue. It was a commendable team effort, and the first issue was a reflection of that. Fast-forward to today, and we have come a long way. This is the 20th issue of *Glass Panels*! As Bruce Lee famously said, "Long-term consistency beats short-term intensity." I can only hope there is still a long way to go, because I think we have plenty more stories to tell.

A *Campastimes* cataloguing project has been underway for the last few months. We have over 90 issues of the publication on our website. For those unaware, *Campastimes* was a student-run publication, much like *The Fifth Estate* of today, which enjoyed great readership and popularity starting from 1962, up to the mid-1990s. This project aims to create a detailed spreadsheet with information such as the title of the article, author(s), keywords, volume number, issue number, and date of publication. Through this exercise, we intend to make it easy to search for names, places, and published content from *Campastimes*. For instance, if you want to, let us say, search for a caricature made by Mr. Gnan or Mr. Saha, you will be able to locate it within a matter of seconds through this comprehensive spreadsheet.

Similarly, if you are in the mood to read something about sports, but aren't sure what exactly you would like to read, you can simply enter 'sports' in the search option. You will find a whole bunch of articles and photographs about the topic in the spreadsheet. While AI tools are able to rapidly assess content and extract text from documents, we found that a manual approach was far more efficient for this project. I am sure it won't be long before AI can efficiently catalogue publications without errors.

Several other projects are being pursued simultaneously, but I would rather not reveal all of them here. Let us leave some room for suspense.

- **Bhuvanesh Santharam**



Send me your feedback at  
[ic35226@imail.iitm.ac.in](mailto:ic35226@imail.iitm.ac.in)

## Our readers write...

RESPONSES TO THE MARCH 2026 ISSUE



Did you know the meaning of 'sarang' in Korean is love? All kinds of love including wanting to make a loved one happier. Found it interesting how the word means beauty in Sanskrit; and in both languages it connotes something positive. No wonder the festival of India in South Korea is named "Sarang."

- **Jyoti Ramesh**  
Museum Expert,  
Docent Trainer  
and founder,  
Crossfluence Consulting



This is a very seriously precious edition of *Glass Panels*...so many memories and so much information here...the cover page image is a classic representing this 'era'...Step cut, microphone, bell bottoms, and the unforgettable iconic chappal! This team is really doing an excellent job!!

Keep it up!

- **Dr. Mymoon Moghul**  
Former IIT Madras Campus Resident,  
Alumna of Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Chennai



Thanks for the *Glass Panels* issue of March 2026. I am glad that my 1969 batchmate Thomas Tharu has featured in the article on the basics of engineering education.

There is one bit of information about Thomas Tharu that I would like to share with you all. While writing the 1964 IIT entrance exam, he chose to take up Drawing as one of the subject choices, and did extremely well and ranked very high in the South Zone. Of course, our then being offered the option of choosing Drawing (instead of Physics or Chemistry needs to be reconfirmed from IIT official/archival sources. His obsession with solving all engineering problems from basic principles only was well known amongst our batchmates. He was very much against trying to solve engineering problems via computers, and/or making drawings using CAD/CAM software.

May his soul continue to rest in peace.

- **K. Sashi Rao**  
Alumnus - 1969 B.Tech., 1971 M.Tech.



# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE IITM HERITAGE CENTRE



A view of the Heritage Centre, 2006

*(This article is reproduced from the IIT Madras Alumni Association newsletter Journeys dated April 2006 to commemorate 20 years of the Heritage Centre.)*

**S**everal years back, anticipating the arrival of the golden jubilee year of the Institute in 2008-09, it was found appropriate to look into our past and formally record the milestones of its brief history. Accordingly, the then Director Prof. R. Natarajan wished that an attempt be made to "collect, preserve, and exhibit materials of heritage value of the origin, establishment and development of the Institute." Thus, the idea of the Heritage Centre was born. Now, under the very enthusiastic and inspiring guidance of our Director, Prof. M. S. Ananth, the Centre has finally taken shape.

**...the then Director  
Prof. R. Natarajan wished that  
an attempt be made to "collect,  
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materials of heritage value of  
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development of the Institute."**

As a first step leading to today's inauguration, efforts were put in to collect and identify materials of heritage value, and this is the most crucial aspect of the whole process. It is usually possible to clearly distinguish between a Heritage Centre and a mere centre for documentation of routine data. But it becomes quite challenging, if not impossible, to separate the routine information from that having heritage value, for a relatively young Institution as ours, which will become apparent only as time goes by. An element of subjectivity is almost inevitable. So it is possible that some information which could be considered as of heritage value by some at some point in time may not find a place in the scheme of things, and vice versa. However, today is only the beginning of the Centre, and we will endeavour to strive to enhance the stature of the Centre by making appropriate improvements in its concept and implementation, in the course of time.

basically covered various events organized at the Institute. I would like to mention here that only yesterday we received five volumes of the *Institute Annual Number*, which is a storehouse of authentic information and some interesting photographs of the period 1961 to 1966. We will incorporate relevant information from these in the second phase of the Centre activities.

An analysis of available materials revealed that while some vital information and photographs were still missing, there was substantial information regarding the important aspects of the origin, the establishment, and the development of the Institute in the first fifteen years, which could be integrated into an interesting but factual story. One problem that arose was the identification of personalities and events in the loose photographs. Prof. P. Sankaran of the Electrical Engine-



Prof. S. Narayanan, Prof. Ajit Kolar, Prof. M. S. Ananth, Dr. A. E. Muthunayagam, and Dr. Arcot Ramachandran at the Heritage Centre

The chief sources of information turned out to be two bound volumes of convocation brochures covering the first 15 convocations, and a souvenir volume published during the visit of President Heinrich Luebke on 3 December 1962. Small brochures brought out on different occasions in the Institute added important information. But what was a pleasant surprise was the availability of about 50 well-preserved albums and about two hundred loose photographs. These albums

-ering Department and Prof. Majhi of the Department of Mathematics were of great help in this regard, solving the problem to a great extent.

An exciting, and as it turned out, a very fruitful attempt was to approach *The Hindu* and *The Indian Express* newspapers for possible information on the 1950s and 1960s. While *The Hindu* has digitized its archives, and it is not very difficult to locate the required information,

*The Indian Express* is only now in the process of doing so; hence, we had to sift through the archives in person, for which permission was readily granted. We could locate and obtain very interesting and important information. For this, I would like to express my thanks to *The Hindu* and *The Indian Express* authorities and especially to Mr. Rajendra Babu, the librarian of *The Hindu*, Mr. Partho Ray, journalist, Mr. Sunil Saxena, the Head of the Internet Division of *The Indian Express*, and Mr. Joseph, Officer in the Archives Department of *The Indian Express*.

The Heritage Centre, at this point, mainly consists of 82 visual display panels, each with an average of four photographs selected from the hundreds available. The display panels are classified into 12 sections, starting from a serious section on "Early History", and ending with a light section on "Potpourri." A few historic artifacts are also part of the Centre. A short video clip, which attempts to capture aspects of the early history,

made in-house, is also a component of the Centre. A booklet titled *Glimpses of Heritage*, which will be released today, is the fourth component of the Centre.

We hope that the visitor to the Centre will experience the "Spirit of Heritage" of our Institute, even if in a small measure, as he or she meanders through the Centre. It is our wish that while senior people would enjoy a bout of nostalgia as they go through the Centre, the younger generation will be inspired to dedicate themselves to the upward climb of the Institute in the global context and vow to redouble its efforts to fulfill, nay, exceed the dreams of the pioneering stalwarts of this great Institute, because of whom we are, where we are today.

A guest book is placed in the Heritage Centre, and we invite constructive comments and suggestions from the visitors.



A film screening at the Heritage Centre's opening day, 2006.



### **Ajit Kumar Kolar**

*a retired faculty member of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at IIT Madras, was the first Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre and served as the Institute's Cultural Advisor from 1992 to 1996. In addition to his academic and administrative contributions, he is remembered for his abiding interest in classical music.*

# THE GEOMETRY OF THE EGG

AN AVIAN EXHIBIT AT IIT MADRAS



*Orange-headed Thrush (Geokichla citrina). Photograph by Dr. Mymoon Moghul.*

**M**ore than a hundred species of bird have been recorded in the IIT Madras campus. Recently, we made an exhibit that celebrates this rich avian fauna. We made replicas of the eggs of campus birds to display, museum-style, in our nature section. We learnt a few lessons in the process.

To begin with, we came to appreciate the great size range of the eggs. Our birds include the tiny purple-rumped sunbird, maybe 10 grams in weight, to the spot-billed pelican, which tips the scales at 5 kilograms or more. And it is only natural to expect that the dimensions of a bird's eggs will be commensurate with its own size, isn't it?

But however large an egg may be, it seems ridiculously small relative to the bird that laid it. I was struck particularly by the egg of the darter. The darter is a bird that measures some three feet from its bill to its tail. It has a very long neck, something that has given it the name of 'snake bird'. Admittedly, the newborn chick is much smaller than the adult. But the darter egg is only 5 centimetres, or 2 inches if you would, long. I think it is a wonder how Nature packs birds' chicks into such compact parcels.

Something that struck us forcefully is that eggs come in a variety of colours. It is true that a number of bird species have predominantly white eggs. But the eggs of some bird species are far from white: for instance, those of the white-headed babbler are turquoise blue. There are birds, such as the stone curlew, whose eggs are earth-coloured, overlaid with dark blotches.

And the shapes. Repeated exposure to the chicken egg perhaps has created a stereotype of something that is broader at one end and pointed at the other. Apparently, this shape affords some advantages. One of them is that eggs of this shape tend to roll in a tight circle and remain in one spot rather than move right away if dislodged accidentally. This saves eggs laid on exposed nesting sites, such as cliff ledges, from dropping to destruction.

But there are some birds that lay oval eggs—elliptical or spindle-shaped ones.

And there are even some eggs that are quite round—reminiscent of table tennis balls or rossogollas, depending on your worldview. The spotted owlet is one round-egged species. It uses a hollow in a tree trunk or branch for its nest. On reflection, there is no reason for an egg laid in such a situation to be 'pyriform'. And it is as if the eggs know this and have chosen to enjoy the option to be nearly perfectly spherical.

**It is true that a number of bird species have predominantly white eggs. But the eggs of some bird species are far from white.**

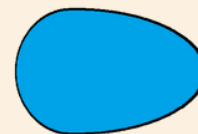
After having toyed with the idea of producing the replicas out of wood, turning them on a lathe, we decided to get the eggs made by 3D printing them in plastic. We approached the Central Workshop, now known as the Central Skill Training and Fabrication Facility, with the job. When it comes to the engineering, the 'manufacturing process' of making 3D printed eggs, you need to provide the printer with the dimensions. The standard measurements made on bird eggs at museums are the length and the breadth. We got the measurements of the eggs we were interested in from the Bombay Natural History Society.

Apart from the measurements, you need to provide the shape. This is because the measurements alone are not sufficient. You need to provide the information where exactly along its length the egg is broadest.

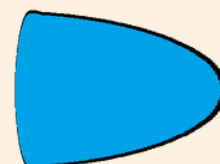
Consider this. If your replica were printed broadest at the middle, you might get something that looks like this:



But if you made it broadest close to one end, your model might turn out more like this:



What would an egg look like that you 3D printed broadest right at one end?



I do not think there exists such an egg, though. Even if there were one, you would have a hard time convincing yourself, let alone visitors to the Heritage Centre, that it is indeed an egg!

Anyway, joking apart, the point is that you need to get the shape correct, apart from the size, if you wish to make an egg replica that is realistic. And the only way of doing that is to copy the original, the real bird egg.

We requested the Bombay Natural History Society to provide us with photographs of eggs of the species we were interested in, taken from the correct angle, from directly above. It turned out that they had an ongoing digitisation programme, and so they had these pictures ready with them. They provided us with these.

We took these images to the workshop, where they did a bit of technological magic. They produced what they

called digital models from the outlines of the eggs. It was child's play (for the experts at the workshop, that is) to feed the digital models to the 3D printing machine and produce plastic eggs and as many clones as required.

With 'eggs' of the right size and shape created, we set to work on the texture and colour. That took a fair amount of effort and skill.

But in the end, the results were astonishing. Well, do not just take my word for it. The egg models are now on display at the Heritage Centre. Come and see them for yourself. Treat yourself to an oological experience.



**Kumaran Sathasivam**

*is an alumnus (B.Tech, 1985; M.S., 1989). He is the operational head of the Heritage Centre. Soon after his student days, his prize-winning book A Forest in the City, about his experiences with nature on the IIT Madras campus, was published. Kumaran is the author of IITM's coffee table book, Campaschimes. He has written a number of other books also.*

# CLUES, CURIOSITY, AND CHAOS

HERITAGE TREASURE HUNT 2026



**W**e assembled at the Heritage Centre early one morning on 1 March, 2026. The organising team, of which I was a part, had to reach extra early before the registered participants arrived. Soon, we saw students and residents cycling into the compound of the Administration Building with their morning faces. Can you believe they gave up their Sunday sleep for this?

The excitement had started days before with all the anticipation and preparation for the Treasure Hunt. The Google Forms were filling faster than we imagined, and even after it closed, students and faculty walked into the Centre hoping for a slot. We were happy to see the enthusiasm, although we could not accommodate everyone.

Treasure hunts organised by the Heritage Centre have grown into a cherished tradition within the IIT Madras community, bringing together a shared sense of curiosity and love for campus history.

Prof. Parag Ravindran from the Mechanical Engineering Department and Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Operational Head of the Heritage Centre, set the bar high with their challenging clues every year. This year's Heritage Treasure Hunt was no exception.

The treasure hunt began at 7:00 a.m. Teams were required to submit their completed clue sheets at the Heritage Centre by 8:30 a.m. As the timer kicked off, participants dove right in, channelling their competitive spirit. They were determined to crack every clue that came their way.

The instructions were simple: Solve clues, locate spots across the campus, and answer questions tied to them. Movement was restricted to walking, bicycles, and campus buses. Although participants could use phones, laptops, and other resources to solve clues; all answers had to come from within the team. No outside help allowed. And of course, the clock mattered.

Submissions past 8:30 a.m. were not accepted. We could see participants running, huddling with teammates, and showing off admirable team spirit. As the deadline approached, groups came rushing in to hand over their sheets.

Soon after, the participants gathered at the entrance, buzzing with discussions about the clues and waiting for the results. Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, led both the clue discussion and the announcement of the winners.

When the answers were revealed, participants eagerly guessed along, and the mix of right and wrong responses sparked plenty of laughter. The young participants, in particular, were a delight to watch, jumping with excitement when they got it right and wearing comically disappointed expressions when they didn't.

It was certainly not a typical morning at the Heritage Centre, but one that felt genuinely wholesome.

After all the exciting moments, a hearty breakfast at the Taramani Guest House was arranged for all the participants and the staff members of the Heritage Centre. Altogether, it was a memorable experience, one that left everyone with fond stories and smiles to carry forward.

### A conversation with the winning team

I had the opportunity to speak briefly with the winning team—Janvi, Abhimanyu, Atharva, and Pranav—who shared their own experiences of solving the clues.

**Pranav:** “We see so many things on campus every day, yet we rarely stop to notice or remember them. For example, I pass by the dog symbol near the Research Park almost daily, but when it came up as a clue, I couldn't recollect it, and spending a Sunday morning roaming around the campus with friends turned out to be such a fun experience. Since it's my final year, I felt I had to take part in the treasure hunt. Events like these shine a light on parts of the campus beyond our own departments, and as students, we'd love to keep bringing in fresh perspectives and new stories.”

**Janvi:** “It all started as a random team-up; we didn't even know each other beforehand. We simply wanted to participate, so whoever was available joined in. We became really good friends in the process, thanks to the treasure hunt. And one of the clues was related to our department; there was something near the corridor that I had always overlooked, but that day I stopped to read it carefully. Even though I couldn't find the answer, the silver lining was that I discovered some new things about my own department.”



*The winners of the treasure hunt receive their certificates and prizes from Prof. Parag Ravindran and Prof. Arun Menon during Heritage Centre Day 2026*

**Abhimanyu:** “As a Ph.D. scholar, I’ve mostly stayed within the Maths and Computer Science departments and rarely explored beyond it. This treasure hunt made me realize that IITM has so much more to offer than just my own department. The very first question had a QR code, but when we tried scanning it, it didn’t work. That’s when we had to channel our inner Sherlock Holmes and figure out that it was actually Morse code. Luckily, we cracked it within the first two minutes. What surprised me most was stumbling upon a stone carving in the Mechanical Department. It was something I had been completely unaware of until that day. Discovering these hidden details and exploring new corners of the campus turned out to be a truly fun experience.”

**Atharva:** “This hunt turned out to be a completely different experience. Instead of chasing one ultimate prize, it felt like we were uncovering many little treasures along the way, each clue revealing something new and exciting in its own right.”

For those who couldn’t join the treasure hunt, here’s a chance to give it a shot.

Clue 4.



**Verification (Location 4):**

The number of windows along the adjacent staircase is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 5 (Location 5).**

The first part of this building was inaugurated on a date that has ‘7 J’ in it. A second part was inaugurated in the next millennium on a different date that also has ‘7 J’ in it.

The official name of this building as marked on its foundation stones is \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 6.**

Behold notes

**Verification (Location 6):**

The archaeological site-name displayed close to this place is \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 7.**

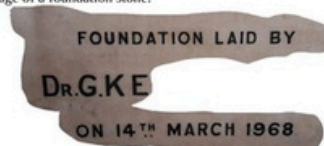
Banners five @ the passage of Tasseled Winding Monkeys

**Verification (Location 7):**

Metallurgy is to grey as solar energy is to \_\_\_\_\_

Clue 8.

This is part of the image of a foundation stone:



**Verification (Location 8):**

The stone was carved by \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 9.**

I am a keeper of fragments, small yet profound  
Silent in storage, where secrets are found  
Not jewels nor coins, but samples I hold  
To aid in discoveries, both new and bold  
Researchers seek me when questions arise  
For within my vault lie tomorrow’s replies

**Verification (Location 9):**

On the floor directly above, you will find \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 10.**

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!  
Little? Not really that!

**Verification (Location 10):**

What the person in the middle is doing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 11.**



**Verification (Location 11):**

This is written in black on a yellow background on the nearest lamp post: \_\_\_\_\_

**Clue 12.**

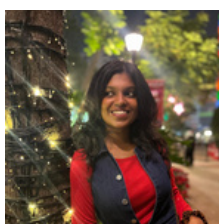
Bearing large red blooms ephemeral  
In a phenomenon phenological  
And protected by many a spine  
Is this singular botanical porcupine

**Verification (Clue 12):**

Where the road branching eastward from here leads to: \_\_\_\_\_



Scan this QR code to send your answers! The answers will be revealed in the next edition of *Glass Panels*.



## M. Krishna Priya

is a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. A postgraduate in history and an aspiring singer, she finds joy in performing. She also inclines to pick up new facts, untold stories, and conversations that spark discovery. Apart from this, she loves dabbling in video editing and watching movies. She can often be found skipping around the Heritage Centre, looking for new subjects to make Instagram reels about.



m.\_krishnapriya



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# A DAY IN MY ACADEMIC LIFE

## CONVERSATIONS WITH A CABBIE

I like to talk to people, especially those who are from other professions. Cabbies are the ones with whom I generally engage in conversation. And I tend to ask them a question or two when the traffic is bad on the road, and I feel motion sickness. It is just my way of handling travel-related challenges.

Today I was out in the city for a conference. On my way back home with a memento I had received from the conference, I booked an Uber, and the middle-aged driver appeared to be a nice person. He didn't react at all when I said my booking is for the IIT Madras campus. Never asked for 100 rupees extra, which is what generally cabbies do (for the speed limit on campus roads). I sat in the car happily. Roads were not very crowded, but my motion sickness didn't spare me. Maybe it's the extreme heat that made me feel sick. To calm my nauseous brain, as I generally do, I tried to initiate a small talk with the driver. As usual, it started with the weather and went on to other topics like traffic chaos and the recent election.

The conversation was on, and we crossed Anna University gate. One more flyover, a U-turn near Madhya Kailash road, a little more traffic, and then we were on campus. The Main Gate security asked about my purpose of visit, to which I proudly said that I am a campus resident. The cab got in with an entry token and a cautionary warning to drive slowly, and the speed limit was 20km/hour.

I assumed the driver would probably not be happy about driving so slowly. In instances like these, I generally try to talk to the drivers more just to tell them that it's good to drive slowly here, since the campus is beautiful with trees, temples, and the wildlife.

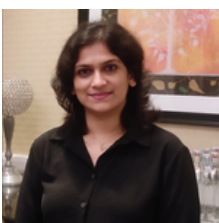
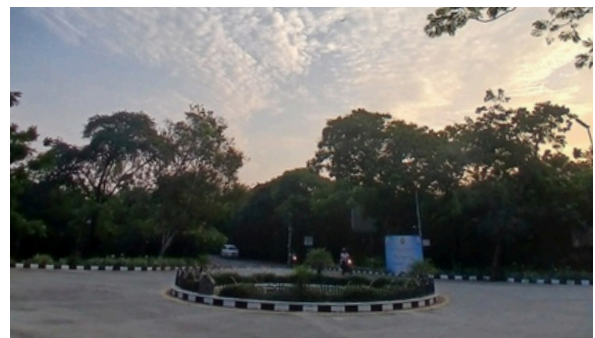
And I asked, "Anna, have you come to the campus before?" The driver nodded and said, "Yes, a couple of times. The last time I visited was about a year ago. Such a wonderful campus! Trees, temples, teachers, students, and library."

The word that stuck in my mind is 'library'. Never heard a cabbie talking about libraries before. Maybe he wanted to study but couldn't access education.

I was lost in my thoughts for a few seconds when he said, "The first rain in Chennai always falls on these trees."

His English wasn't great, and my Tamil is non-existent. But I could understand he meant to say, every year, when the first monsoon rain hits Chennai, it falls on the lush green trees of our campus. At that moment, he made me realize how privileged I am to be on this campus, to feel the rains and sun here, and to visit the temple and the library while calling myself a teacher!

I reached the destination, paid the fare, and picked up the memento I had received as a guest speaker at the conference. It was a reminder that even ordinary journeys can reveal extraordinary insights and perspectives in life.



### Anindita Sahoo

is an Assistant Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Madras, specializing in Linguistic Typology, Syntax, Pragmatics, and Language Acquisition. A Ph.D. from IIT Delhi, she leads the Language & Cognition Lab, pioneering experimental linguistics through eye-tracking and cognition studies. Her research bridges South Asian languages, cognitive science, and AI, advancing interdisciplinary understanding of language and thought. Besides researching the structure and functions of language, Anindita dabbles in creative writing in both English and her native language, Odia.

# THE GREEN HERCULES

CELEBRATING A BICYCLE OLDER THAN IIT MADRAS

**T**his bicycle, a Hercules – made in England, 24" size, Frame No. KX 15031 – was probably brought to the IIT Madras campus in 1964 by my cousin A. Subramanian when he joined the B. Tech. programme. He graduated in 1969 from the Metallurgical Engineering branch. At that time, he handed over the bicycle to his schoolmate and batchmate from Delhi, S. Palappan of 258, Krishna Hostel.

Subramanian recalls that his father had bought the bicycle in 1946 and used it in New Delhi. Later, it was sent to IIT Madras.

I joined IIT Madras as a Senior Technical Assistant on 14 February 1970. I informed my cousin, and he requested his friend Palappan to give the bicycle to me, which he did on 6 May 1970.

When I received the bicycle, it had a side stand and a carrier with a clip for holding books and notebooks. There was no cover for the chain, so my pants often got caught between the chain and the sprocket.

To solve this, I added a quarter guard to the chain. The side stand was replaced with a normal stand to provide more stability while parking. When the spring in the carrier's clip failed, I replaced it with a normal carrier, and later changed it back to a carrier with a clip because of its usefulness.

Periodically, the tube and tyre were replaced. Apart from routine maintenance, the bicycle was also given an overhaul on a few occasions. About 20 years ago, I had it repainted and chose green as the colour.

The security section of IIT Madras issued tokens for bicycles on campus. The last such token for this bicycle, given in 1996, was triangular in shape, green in colour, and bore the number 395. One token had to be fixed on the bicycle, while the other was carried by the rider. Both were checked whenever the cycle was taken outside the campus. I used the bicycle not only within the campus but also outside. The farthest I travelled was to the Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB) colony beyond Wimco Nagar, about 25 km from the campus.



A photograph of the bicycle parked outside the Administration Building in 2026.



An engraving on the frame of the cycle handlebar. The words 'Hercules', and 'Made in England' are visible.

On one occasion, while riding doubles from Adyar to the campus with my friend, a lecturer in the Humanities Department, we were stopped by a policeman near the Regional Labour Institute. He wanted to fine us, as double riding was not permitted at the time. We explained that we were heading to IITM to assist the security staff (including policemen) during the ongoing strike by the supporting staff. He let us go without a fine, but only after deflating the tyres.

Another time, I wanted to show the lake, forests, and animals within the campus to my friend's four-year-old son. I seated him on the carrier and pushed the bicycle along. At the end of the trip, I discovered that the thorns that had fallen from the trees had punctured the tubes in multiple places, and the only solution was to replace both tubes.

I remember taking my wife to the OAT for movies, with her seated on the carrier. On one such occasion, I lost balance while taking a turn, and she fell. Needless to say, that was our last doubles ride.

One early morning in 1977, a guest staying with us for a few days urgently needed medicine. I set out for Adyar on my bicycle, but all the medical shops there were closed. I continued further along C. P. Ramasamy Iyer Road, and at a junction in Raja Annamalaipuram, I found a pharmacy open and was able to get the required medicine.

In August 1979, there was a severe shortage of water on campus. Water was supplied to the quarters through tankers, and we waited for their arrival. In case of urgent need, we could take our own vessels—kudam, paanai, or drum—and collect water from the pump house. On those days, I used my bicycle by tying two kudams with a rope and placing them on the carrier.

Another time, during a heavy monsoon downpour in Madras, the city was flooded overnight, and bus services were suspended by the Government. My father-in-law, who lived in Shastri Nagar, could not be contacted as the phone lines were down, and there was no power supply. I rode my bicycle through streets filled with knee-deep water, pedalling through muddy pools until I reached his house. Thankfully, I found them safe, even though water surrounded the house, but had not entered inside.

**I remember taking my wife to the OAT for movies, with her seated on the carrier. On one such occasion, I lost balance while taking a turn, and she fell. Needless to say, that was our last doubles ride.**

When my sons were born, I added a child seat and a foldable footrest on the bar so I could take them to different places.

Although the bicycle was taller than most standard models, it was comfortable to ride. The cycle shop owner often suggested making alterations to reduce the height, but I refused such proposals. The only difficulty came when I had to dismount suddenly, but I learned to manage those situations.

After my superannuation, I left the campus in December 2011 and moved to Velachery. The frequency of using the bicycle decreased, but I remained deeply attached to it and did not want to dispose of it or give it away.

During a discussion with Kumaran Sathasivam of the Heritage Centre, I asked whether the bicycle could be added as an exhibit in the students' room. He agreed, and I am happy that the bicycle now rests in its rightful place, preserved as part of the campus heritage.

**I rode my bicycle through streets filled with knee-deep water, pedalling through muddy pools until I reached his house. Thankfully, I found them safe, even though water surrounded the house, but had not entered inside.**



*Prof. Kumaraswamy receiving an award from Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Operating Head of the Heritage Centre, for outstanding contributions to the centre, 2026. Also in the picture: Mrs. Gitanjali Kumaraswamy (extreme left) and Ms. Mamata Dash, Senior Project Officer of the Heritage Centre (extreme right).*



**Kumaraswamy S.**

*served as a faculty member in the Department of Mechanical Engineering for more than 40 years. His area of expertise is hydroturbomachines. He has also served as the Chief Election Officer for student elections, Warden of Ganga Hostel, and Chairman of the Council of Wardens. He was the first Coordinator of the RuTAG Cell, IIT Madras.*

# HERITAGE IN MADRAS: PAST STORMY, PRESENT FAIR, FUTURE WHERE?

TALK BY SRIRAM V. AT HERITAGE CENTRE DAY 2026

**H**ow does one sensitise the public about the importance of conserving heritage buildings and structures in the city?

In a thought-provoking talk delivered on 6 March 2026 at the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras, Mr. Sriram V. used his trademark blend of facts, figures, and humour to highlight this question, which has been a bone of contention for decades.

Mr. Sriram is a distinguished historian and writer who has authored multiple books, including *Chennai: A Biography*, *A Guide to Fort St. George*, *Carnatic Summer: Lives of Twenty Great Exponents*, among others. He is also the editor of the fortnightly publication *Madras Musings*. His credentials and long association with heritage activism lent weight to his reflections.

In his talk, Mr. Sriram brought several important discussions and thoughts to light to a keen and enthusiastic audience. The talk was titled *Heritage in Madras: Past Stormy, Present Fair, Future Where?* Tracing the idea of preserving heritage back to the 1980s, Mr. Sriram told the audience that it took almost four decades for heritage activities to be popularised in the city. In his talk, he highlighted his association with organisations such as the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), as well as with people, including Mr. S. Muthiah, and other prominent figures involved in the conservation of heritage buildings.

One of the most striking anecdotes he shared was about the police headquarters building on Kamarajar Salai.



An engrossed audience listens to a talk by Sriram V. during Heritage Centre Day 2026

The building was constructed in 1839 as a Free Masons lodge and eventually taken on lease by the Madras Police. It was ultimately purchased by the government and now houses the Office of the Tamil Nadu Director-General of Police. Mr. Sriram illustrated how powerful sentiments attached to buildings can sometimes decide their fate, which was the case concerning the police headquarters, which was nearly given a modern facelift before its occupants rallied to protect it, ensuring its survival in the original form. The facelift would have drastically altered the building's appearance, causing it to lose its heritage value. Not all heritage structures enjoyed such protection. Private bungalows, for instance, often met a different fate, largely because their owners failed to show an interest in preserving them.

He then turned to the disturbing phenomenon of accidental fires that had razed some heritage structures in the city. Unfortunately, not every loss was met with resistance. In most cases, modern constructions took the place of the ruins. Examples include: Spencer's Plaza Mall, a mammoth structure that supplanted its aesthetically pleasing predecessor, Moore Market, and the destruction of Humayun Mahal. He noted that we need to take up the challenge of preventing such mishaps and putting in the effort to keep these buildings alive. Still, the story of Chennai's heritage is not only one of loss. Mr. Sriram lauded the efforts that went into preserving the Victoria Public Hall and the High Court Building during his talk.

Another issue he raised was the fate of restored heritage buildings, many of which are being converted into museums. "Unless we have a creative approach to museums, we shouldn't have them", he cautioned. Instead, he suggested that heritage buildings should return to their original uses, so that natural footfalls sustain them – much like the Museum Theatre, which continues to thrive as a space for the performing arts. He also noted that temples present the next major challenge, as many ancient structures not covered by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) face rapid



An image of Sriram V. taken during Heritage Centre Day 2026

denotification and demolition. Without an umbrella of protection and proper standards in place, the present may seem "fair," but the future remains uncertain.

In closing, he reminded the audience that conserving heritage is not merely about protecting dusty old walls and rusty old windows, but about safeguarding collective memory and civic identity. His talk left the audience with a clear message: the fate of Chennai's heritage depends on public awareness, collective will, and a refusal to let history be erased by neglect or convenience.



### **Bhuvanesh Santharam**

*is a Senior Content Writer at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. A poet and cartoonist, he published his first collection, Silence Binds Us, in 2022 and is working on future volumes. When not writing, Bhuva enjoys boxing, basketball, and long runs that spark new ideas.*



bhuva23



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# JEWELS BENEATH OUR FEET

LIVING REMNANTS OF IIT MADRAS'S WETLAND PAST

**S**ome plants have survived urbanisation through resilience, and these species quietly define the campus's unique ecological identity, which once lay close to the Pallikaranai Marshland. According to an article\* published in *The New Indian Express*, the marshland apparently measured 8,000 hectares in 1906, stretching from the East Coast Road to the Madhya Kailash junction.

\*<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/2019/Jun/05/magic-amidst-the-muck-the-story-of-chennais-pallikaranai-marshland-1986390.html>

Most of the plants are native or long-naturalised, fast-growing, classic seasonal - monsoon-associated wetland herbs, thriving in damp soil, marsh edges, roadside drains, moist grasslands, and on the campus open grounds. They complete their life cycles quickly after rain and are tolerant of waterlogging, soil disturbance, grazing, and mowing.

They flourish around the campus lakes, near stormwater drains, marshy patches, hostels, and academic zones, along forest edges and open grasslands. They bloom briefly and efficiently, shaped more by wind than by insects. Pollen drifts like breath in sunlight, and the flowers do their work without fragrance or display. To notice them, you have to slow down, look closely at what usually reads as a single mass of green, and see the delicate structures within it.



Fringed Spider-Flower (*Cleome rutidosperma*)



Spreading Justicia (*Rostellularia diffusa*)



Amboli Pipewort (*Eriocaulon sharmae*)



Touch-me-not (*Mimosa pudica*)



Amboli Pipewort (*Eriocaulon sharmae*)



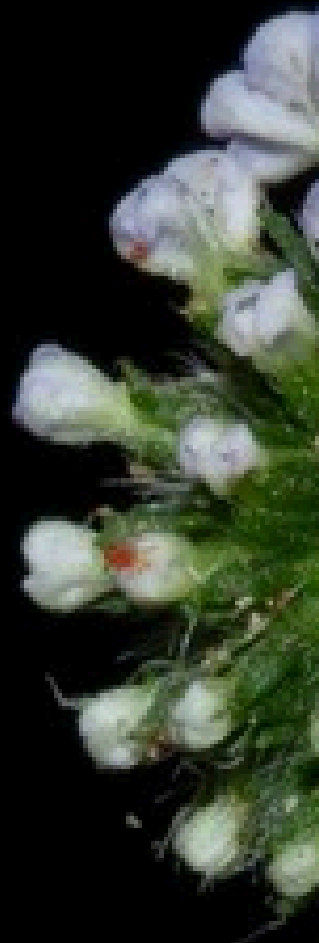
Bristly Heliotrope (*Euploca strigosa*)



Lotus Sweetjuice (*Glinus lotoides*)

The flowers of grasses and tiny plants, often the size of a freckle (a few millimetres to a couple of centimetres), are easy to miss. They grow low on the ground, where footsteps pass over them without pause—pinprick blossoms tucked into cracks of soil and along the edges of paths. They rise on slender stems or hide close to the blade itself, made of fine threads, pale dustings, soft tassels, and tiny petals—perfectly formed, though so small they ask you to kneel to be seen. The anthers and stigma are even tinier, often not visible to the human eye. Their colours are modest—pale white, soft yellow, purple, cream, faint gold, sometimes brushed with pink—blending into the landscape instead of standing apart from it. Bees, ants, and tiny insects find them. Raindrops and dew rest carefully on their petals.

What role do they play in the campus ecosystem? These plants are quiet foundations. These tiny plants and grasses play a vital role in maintaining balance in nature. They help hold the soil together, preventing erosion, stabilise soil during the monsoon, and are a major source of food while regulating atmospheric carbon dioxide. In other words, they are not weeds—they are foundation species of the campus ecosystem.



### **Mymoon Moghul**

*is a former IIT Madras campus resident and an alumna of Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Chennai. She completed her Ph.D. in Library and Information Science from the University of Madras and worked at the CSIR-Structural Engineering Research Centre as a Principal Technical Officer for over three decades. Mymoon Moghul is a passionate photographer and painter who draws inspiration from nature.*



Indian Heliotrope (*Heliotropium indicum*)

# A MEMORABLE HERITAGE WALK

FROM OBELISKS TO COURTROOMS: A JOURNEY INTO MADRAS'S PAST



At Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College: Prof. Arun Menon addresses participants of the Heritage Walk.

**A**s part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of the IIT Madras Heritage Centre, we planned a series of activities. Among them, a Heritage Walk to the Madras High Court arranged by Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, stood out.

On 21 February 2026, a group of enthusiastic students, faculty, staff, and residents led by Prof. Arun Menon set off from campus at 7 a.m. on our institute bus. The demand was so high that the initial cap of 25 participants was gradually raised to 40.

Thanks to Prof. Menon's efforts and the support of the Public Works Department (PWD) team involved in High Court maintenance, we were welcomed warmly at the High Court premises. Our first stop was the old Law College, a 133-year-old Indo-Saracenic building designed by architect Henry Irwin. Prof. Menon, who had been directly involved in its restoration, brought its history alive with his insights. While Henry Irwin was a new name to me, my younger daughter, Antara, who joined the heritage walk, pointed out that he also designed the Egmore Museum.

The architecture of the building was breathtakingly beautiful. The *chajja* (sunshade), the intricate jali work, and the dome at the top of the staircase represented a perfect blend of Indo-Saracenic architecture. Prof. Menon drew our attention to the 'Madras terrace roofing' in the building. Again, this was a new and exciting bit of information for me. The Madras terrace is a roofing construction method that uses bricks, lime mortar, and wooden or steel beams, primarily to combat hot, humid climates. This method allows for a durable and sustainable roof, which finds its roots in vernacular architecture. As I soaked in historical and architectural facts, I grew curious about the Law College.

I browsed the web to find out more about the building and the college. I discovered that it was formerly known as Madras Law College. It is also referred to as the Government Law College, or simply GLC. Established in 1855, the institution was renamed Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College in 1990 by the Government of Tamil Nadu to commemorate the birth centenary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

Seven years later, in 1997, the State Government passed an act which brought the college under the wings of the newly established Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, marking its transition from the University of Madras. The next transition came over two decades later, in 2018, when the Law College was shifted to two new premises. The reason? The structure, more than 170 years old, bore signs of damage and stood at risk of collapsing.

The risk was properly identified, and the restoration took place on time. Now, unless someone tells you, you probably wouldn't know about it! The stories of restoration shared by Prof. Menon were truly engaging and inspiring. I felt a sense of pride knowing that the Heritage Centre is headed by someone who has been involved in multiple heritage restoration projects around the world! The next stop was the terrace of the Law College.

The terrace revealed a lively view of Parry's Corner. The staircase leading to the terrace felt like a portal to a different era. For a moment, I wondered if we were in a time machine.



*The view overlooking N. S. C. Bose Road from the Law College terrace.*

I wish it were. We were all so lost in the moment that none of us realised that we had spent more than an hour in the same building. Our next spot, the Yale Monument, awaited us patiently. The Yale Monument sits at the entrance of the Law College.



By the time we got to the monument, we could feel the day getting noticeably warmer. The Yale Monument is a 17th-century tomb linked to Elihu Yale. Up until then, I did not realise that there was a connection between Yale University in the United States of America and this structure. The striking monument holds the graves of Elihu Yale's son Jacca Elihu Yale (d. 1688) and Yale's friend Joseph Hymner (d. 1680).

By this time, everyone was hungry. But we had to cover something interesting before our breakfast. That was the High Court Museum. I am sure no one would ever imagine how beautiful a museum it is. It showcases the legal history of Madras.

At the High Court Museum, we had the opportunity to meet Mr. T. Krishnamoorthi, Retired Additional Registrar, Madras High Court, and curator of the museum. He was pleased to show us some rare historical items. We explored replicas of colonial-era courtrooms, antique furniture, and rare photographs and documents. The life-size models of Chief Justices made the place come to life. A huge 3D model of the High Court campus added to the excitement.



*A model of the High Court campus at the High Court Museum.*

I truly wish we could have stayed a little longer at the museum, but it was time for food. Refreshments were arranged for us in an adjacent hall by Mr. Kulanthaiyan, Executive Engineer, Mr. Sankar, Assistant Executive Engineer, PWD, and their team. The sumptuous sandwiches, cookies, tea and coffee gave us a new lease of energy to resume the exciting tour. I was particularly impressed by the professional arrangements made for snacks and tea. Their excellent hospitality was an additional bonus.

The next destination was the Madras High Court. At the security checkpoint, Prof. Menon read out our names, and we had to show our respective ID cards. After checking our ID cards, the security officers allowed us to proceed to the High Court area.



*The Yale Monument.*

**The Yale Monument is a 17th-century tomb linked to Elihu Yale. Up until then, I did not realise that there was a connection between Yale University in the United States of America and this structure.**



*Mr. T. Krishnamoorthi, Retired Additional Registrar, Madras High Court.*

In the High Court campus, a statue of a king riding his chariot caught my attention. I could see a human figure crushed under the wheel, a haunting detail that drew my curiosity. Prof. Menon explained the story behind the statue.

Manu Needhi was a revered king of the Chola dynasty. In an unfortunate incident, Manu's son, while riding a chariot, accidentally crushed a calf. The grief-stricken mother cow appealed to the king for justice. True to his reputation, the king delivered impartial justice by crushing his own son under the chariot. The statue, a symbol of fairness and impartiality, stands as a perfect emblem in the High Court premises.

Engrossed in the stories surrounding the High Court, we moved to the Old Lighthouse and Survey Benchmark built in 1844, once guiding ships and marking India's pioneering trigonometrical survey.

## **The statue, a symbol of fairness and impartiality, stands as a perfect emblem in the High Court premises.**

Rising within the High Court compound is a 38 metre-tall Doric column, Chennai's second lighthouse, that has watched over the city for centuries. A vital historic landmark, the base of this tower carries an important stone. The Great Trigonometrical Survey of India benchmark is engraved on this stone. The words 'Standard Benchmark of Madras' are clearly decipherable here. The benchmark was used for calculating the precise elevation during geographic surveys in the period. We also visited a photo gallery located in the basement of the lighthouse.

Finally, we stepped into the working High Court itself. The Madras High Court building is a striking example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. The structure was conceived by J. W. Brassington and completed by architect Henry Irwin. The style of the building features a harmonious mix of elements borrowed from Hindu, Mughal, and Gothic traditions. The red-brick façade, graceful domes, and elaborate ornamentation make the High Court complex one of the most recognisable landmarks in the city.



*The Manu Needhi Cholan statue in the Madras High Court campus.*



*Standard Bench Mark, Madras; Great Trigonometric Survey of India.*

**Finally, we stepped into the working High Court itself. The Madras High Court building is a striking example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. The structure was conceived by J. W. Brassington and completed by architect Henry Irwin.**

The main building houses 39 court halls, which are spread across three floors. The building features stunning painted ceilings and stained glass panels. Particularly known for its central dome, it also features a 142-foot high minaret that formerly served as a lighthouse.

A chance to see the courtroom gave us a sense of living history and heritage. It is a unique experience entering an operational High Court courtroom. The PWD deserves a pat on the back for maintaining the giant corridors and multiple courtrooms spotlessly. A terrace at the end was the next destination. I loved the staircase and the dome that stood above it. The terrace with multiple domes and the artwork that accompanied it has left a permanent mark on my memory. A third lighthouse stands at the central dome of the High Court building. The lighthouse, unlike the traditional one that we are accustomed to seeing, is a structure enclosed in glass, known as the lantern room. That made it two old lighthouses in one day!

What was planned as a two-hour visit stretched till noon—time flew as we were absorbed in stories, architecture, and heritage. Finally, we took a group photo on the terrace of the High Court. The walk ended with heartfelt thanks to Mr. Kulanthaiyan, Executive Engineer, Mr. Sankar, Assistant Executive Engineer, PWD, Northern Presidential Division, and his team, whose efforts made this unforgettable experience possible. The memorable trip would be incomplete without thanking Prof. Arun Menon. I am looking forward to having many more heritage walks in the coming years.



*Prof. Menon briefs the participants before entering the High Court.*



*Group photo taken at the terrace of the High Court.*



### **Mamata Dash**

*is a Senior Project Officer at the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras. A campus resident for more than 20 years, Mamata Dash has an enduring passion for history, heritage, and handlooms. Her keen interest in the subject makes her a dedicated custodian of IIT Madras's cultural legacy.*

# THE HERITAGE SQUARE

## CLASSIFIED DIVERTISEMENTS

**WARNING: TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY MAY RESULT IN RAISED EYEBROWS AND MILD CONFUSION.**

### CHOOSE THE BEST CAPTION

Choose the best caption for the picture on the right and stand a chance to win a car.

- Auspicious-cum-smart disposal! Why give the Organic Bin any moral support?
- While the deer are going bananas, the monkeys seem to be on a hunger strike.
- Bananas improve cognitive health. We need them more than the deer. Please dispose of waste wisely.
- It's a banana-lux, fawn-cy, deer-licious gourmet meal. But please do not feed deer. They will develop the 'Gourmet Syndrome'.

To win a car, send your best caption to @SatiricalWhistleblower and email IITM Owzone Waste Collection requesting them to add 'Organic Waste' and directions to the Organic Bin to the Campus Community Centre signboard.

- SatiricalWhistleblower

### CHAAT PROBLEM!

I am disappointed in the current *chaat* scene in Insti. Bhel Puri without the tangy chutneys is not Bhel Puri. Dahi Puri with a single drop of *dahi* cannot be called Dahi Puri. I am appalled, aghast, and astounded with the lack of a decent *chaat* spot on campus.

- A Chaat Lover



### TELEPORT YOURSELF TO JAPAN

Want to teleport yourself to Japan without a passport or visa? IITM's 'cherry blossoms' – our stunning pink trumpet flowers are offering a breathtaking, once-a-year spectacle across campus. The pink clouds are in full bloom and showering heavily now. To grab your golden ticket, register with [yourtourguideinsideiitm@gmail.com](mailto:yourtourguideinsideiitm@gmail.com) for a guided tour in our pink electric vehicle. You will explore the most scenic floral canopies and pink-carpeted walkways, and experience the magic of our very own local 'Sakura'. Hurry, seats are limited. For a free photoshoot, wear

your own kimono. We will provide unlimited cotton candy ice-creams and limited Japanese hand fans to uplift your excitement and to help you beat the heat in style!.

- YourTourGuideInsideIITM

### CAT DADS WANTED

Due to a sudden work-related emergency, I am leaving for the bottom of the Indian Ocean to conduct a survey on 'the effects of pollution on the average human living for a month under the ocean.'

Owing to personal reasons, my cat has refused to accompany me on this underwater voyage. He believes that he will be catfished by the residents of the ocean.

Applications are invited for the post of Temporary Cat Dads.

- A Concerned Cat Dad



## SUBMIT

your entries for the next issue!

## EARN

₹500 per entry if you get selected!



# The Green Vine

Photograph: Mahathi Narayanaswamy

Oh! Look at that vine growing on the wrought iron wire fence,  
Murmuring secret tales to passersby with a subtle sense.  
Long, slender, tender, a texture of bright green,  
Bathed in golden sunlight, reflecting its satin sheen.  
Like a meteor's luminous trail – a flash of sudden exposure,  
The juvenile vine glowed on the rusty mesh enclosure.

I fell in love right away with that solid grassy green,  
Could I blend pigments to mirror that color in the scene?  
The budding artist in me had been seeking this bold, fresh streak of hue,  
This vivid tone of paint was just what I needed  
To make my canvas gleam anew.

I was drawn, I must confess, to touch  
That gracefully dangling thick thread.  
It never dawned that its patterned scales,  
Would make me so afraid!  
No tendrils, blossoms, nodes, or shoots,  
No thorns, no buds, no stems, no roots,  
Only a leaf at the tip, flat and taut  
That tapered to a pointed snout.

The Nag Champa stood with white bridal bouquets  
And leaves with sparkling spear-like tips,  
Holding firm, its ancient guard, not letting secrets of the wild slip.  
Creating a bond of silence that runs in the souls so deep,  
Providing a soothing shade, where restless hissing spirits sleep.

I leaned in awe to appreciate the hanging whip  
And closed my eyes for a second,  
But logic stirred; a lurking threat – a vine snake, I then reckoned.  
Its arrowhead mimicked the Nag Champa's arrow leaf,  
Oh, goodness gracious! nature's magic, beyond all belief.

I stepped back out of intuition,  
Creating no sound or commotion,  
Shocked to see the slithering beauty,  
Bold, yet in complete tranquility,  
Frozen on the wire with nary a motion.  
A quick electric shiver ran in my frenzied mind,  
A flash of its keyhole pupil,  
And 'eye-plucker' monicker it did remind.

I walked away in wonder,  
Leaving the wild chord undisturbed,  
This 'Laudankia – a bottlegourd's stem'  
Hung alone, unperturbed.  
Though mildly venomous, its mild nip is not much to fear,  
Do not harm nature's living jade  
Whenever you sight one near.



## Jyoti Sahu

*is an accomplished professional with nearly two decades in IT and business innovation, contributing to Deloitte, DXC, HP, HCL, and STMicroelectronics. Skilled in product development, market strategy, and sales enablement, she has driven strategic growth across industries. With an MBA from the University of Missouri and a B.E. in Electronics & Telecom Engineering from Odisha, she also publishes Odia poetry and paints narratives that let colours bloom beyond data.*

# DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

It is always a privilege and delight to welcome eminent personalities to the Heritage Centre. From ministers and entrepreneurs to authors and Nobel laureates, the Centre has never been short of inspiring stories of distinguished visitors. Presented below are glimpses of some of our most notable guests in September and October.



## **Prof. A. Parasuraman**

Professor & Chairman, Marketing Dept., University of Miami, USA  
1970 batch alumnus (Mechanical Engineering)

**02 March 2026**

*"Thank you for showing your wonderful hospitality and for showing us around this nostalgic Heritage Centre! Thanks also to IITM for grounding me in all the fundamentals that served as the foundation for my professional and academic career in business."*



## **Dr. Asit Kumar Barma**

Director, Bharathidasan Institute of Management, Tiruchirappalli  
1984 batch alumnus (Electrical Engineering)

**02 March 2026**

*"Highly impressed with the Heritage Centre, a unique experiment by the institute trying to capture the past and its rich legacy."*



## **Mr. Sriram V.**

Historian, Writer, Entrepreneur

**06 March 2026**

*"It was a pleasure to be at the IITM Heritage Centre - a centre of excellence in a centre of excellence."*



## **Mr. Anoop Shankar**

Playback Singer, Songwriter

**07 March 2026**

*"An absolute honour to visit the IITM Heritage Centre - wishing all the very best!"*



## **Sant Rajinder Singh Ji**

Spiritual Master  
1967 Batch Alumnus (Electrical Engineering)

**10 March 2026**

*"It is wonderful to be back here in IIT Madras and see the tremendous development here. May all who go through here lead lives in harmony with the divine, and may this great institute provide leaders in all spheres of life."*



**Ms. Elavenil Valarivan**

Olympian, Indian Sport Shooter

**13 March 2026**

*"Always a pleasure visiting IITM ever since my childhood, for having an alumnus parent. Forever inspired by the happenings and the culture showcased by the university. Glad to be a part of the extended family."*

*(Ed. – Ms. Valarivan's father, Dr. Valarivan Ruthrapathy, a scientist, earned his Ph.D. in Catalysis from IIT Madras in 1994.)*



**Prof. R. Senathiraja**

Professor in Management, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

**25 March 2026**

*"It is always a pleasure to visit IIT. It really represents the transformation of modern technology and the changes happening around the globe. From multiple perspectives, the team from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka had a golden opportunity to visit IIT Madras. We explored the best of innovations and the best practices of retaining the heritage of the IIT. Wish you all the best for a bright future and we hope to keep a strong bond with IIT Madras."*



**Prof. Shrikrishna V. Kulkarni**

Dean, R&D, IIT Bombay

**17 April 2026**

*"I am quite impressed by the Heritage Centre of IIT Madras. It has been nicely designed, which clearly displays the history and achievements of IITM. Many innovative ideas have been used to make the Centre attractive, meaningful, and memorable for visitors."*



**Dr. Sankarasubramanian K.**

Principal scientist of Aditya-L1, ISRO

**19 April 2026**

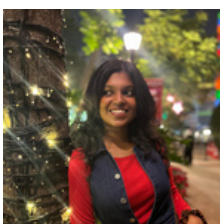
*"An amazing recap of IITM history. So glad that I am a part of this legacy. Feels like I came home. IITM is my alma mater and my identity. It gave me everything, including my husband. Forever grateful."*



**Prof. Madhavi Latha G.**

IISc Bangalore  
2000 Batch Alumna (Civil Engineering)

**25 April 2026**



**M. Krishna Priya**

*is a Project Associate at the Heritage Centre, IIT Madras. A postgraduate in history and an aspiring singer, she finds joy in performing. She also inclines to pick up new facts, untold stories, and conversations that spark discovery. Apart from this, she loves dabbling in video editing and watching movies. She can often be found skipping around the Heritage Centre, looking for new subjects to make Instagram reels about.*



m.\_krishnapriya



ic43868@imail.iitm.ac.in

# The Heritage Herald

May 2026

<https://heritage.iitm.ac.in/>

## Heritage Centre Day 2026 celebrated at IIT Madras

### Mr. Sriram Venkatakrishnan and Prof. Ajit Kumar Kolar were invited as chief guests at the event

**Chennai, March 6, 2026:** Heritage Centre Day 2026 was celebrated with grandeur at the Heritage Centre on 6 March 2026, bringing together students, faculty, alumni, and enthusiasts of heritage and culture.

The event began with high tea, followed by the official proceedings. Mr. Bhuvanesh Santharam, Senior Content Writer, opened the evening with an address and introduced the MCs, Ms. Sushmitha Sathasivam and Ms. M. Krishna Priya. The felicitation of the chief guests set the tone for the evening.

Prof. Arun Menon, Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, delivered the welcome address, followed by Mr. Kumaran Sathasivam, Senior Manager, who spoke about the various activities undertaken at the Centre over the past year.

The cultural segment featured Ms. Krishna Priya's soulful rendition of *Rivers of India*, composed by Dr. Kanniks Kannikeswaran, and the screening of a short film, *20 Years of the Heritage Centre: A Journey in Glimpses*, curated by Ms. Priya.

Prof. Ajit Kumar Kolar, one of the visionaries behind the Centre, shared the story of its establishment and unveiled a preview of the upcoming IITM Zanzibar book, produced by Ms. Mamata Dash and Ms. Sathasivam. Ms. Dash offered insights into the making of the book.

A highlight of the evening was the inauguration of the new exhibit, *The Eggs of IITM Birds*, a set of 3D-printed natural history artifacts, introduced by Mr. Sathasivam and inaugurated by Dr. R. Mahadevan, a first-batch alumnus.

Mr. Sriram Venkatakrishnan, historian and writer, released the latest issues of *Glass Panels* and *Letter from Heritage Centre*. The winners of the Heritage Treasure Hunt, held in February 2026, were honored, with the team of Janvi, Abhimanyu, Atharva, and Pranav taking top honors. Recognition prizes were awarded to Prof. S. Kumaraswamy, Prof. Prasad Patnaik, and Mr. Mani Kandan for their invaluable contributions.

The much-anticipated keynote by Mr. Sriram, titled *Heritage in Madras – Past Stormy, Present Fair, Future Where?*, captivated the audience with insights into the challenges and triumphs of heritage conservation in Chennai, supported by vintage photographs.

The evening concluded with Mr. Santharam presenting a caricature of the chief guest, leaving the audience inspired and proud of the Centre's journey and vision.

Mr. Sriram V.'s talk captivated the audience with insights into the challenges and triumphs of heritage conservation in Chennai



Prof. Arun Menon addresses the audience as Prof. Ajit Kolar and Mr. Sriram V.



Event attendees interact with Mr. Sriram during high tea



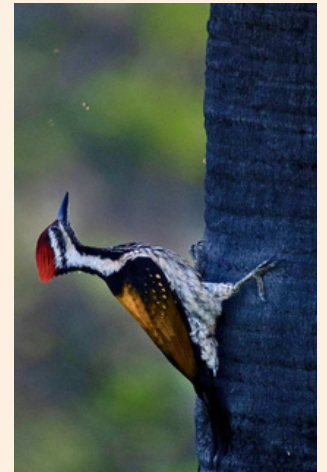
Dr. R. Mahadevan inaugurates The Eggs of IITM Birds exhibit

# Triple woodpecker surprise at IIT Madras



## Dr. Mymoon Moghul captures rare 3-in-1 photograph

**Chennai, April 20, 2026:** Dr. Mymoon Moghul, a former campus resident, shared a series of photographs she had captured inside the IIT Madras campus in an IITM birding group. One of the images showed three black-rumped flamebacks (*Dinopium benghalense*) on the trunk of a tree. The woodpeckers are noted particularly for their bright vermillion crests and golden-yellow wings.



Dr. Moghul stays in a uniquely positioned house just outside the IIT Madras campus, towards the Velachery side. The location of the house allows her to view birds inside IIT Madras.

Dr. Moghul has long been associated with IIT Madras's flora and fauna. She has documented birds, animals, insects, and flowers on campus.

In 2017, she compiled a report titled *Butterflies, Bees, Bugs, and Blossoms*. A copy of the printed report has been placed in the reading room of the Heritage Centre.

IIT Madras has a vast avian population, with more than 100 species of birds recorded on campus.

One of the images showed three black-rumped flamebacks (*Dinopium benghalense*) on the trunk of a tree.

# Inventing a better tomorrow at IIT M

## Special Arrangement

**New Delhi, May 05, 2026:** A book titled *Inventing a Better Tomorrow: 25 Years of IIT Madras Impact* was released by the Union Minister of Education, Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, during the first-ever IIT Madras Technology Summit held in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

The book highlights innovative contributions by IIT Madras faculty over the past 25 years, showcasing how scientific projects have been transformed into impactful applications in industry and beyond.

Some of the subjects covered in the book are AI4Bharat, the Shakti Microprocessors, AMOLED Research Centre, Microbiomes,

Lab-grown diamonds, and India's indigenous 5G testbed.

One of the topics covered is the conservation of heritage structures done by the National Centre for Safety of Heritage Structures (NCHS). The project, headed by Prof. Arun Menon, who is also the Faculty-in-Charge of the Heritage Centre, features prominently in the book.

The book also contains messages from the Director of IIT Madras Prof. V. Kamakoti, the Dean IC&SR Prof. Manu Santhanam, and also a brief history of the IC&SR.

A copy of this book has been added to the Reading Room of the Heritage Centre.



**Top:** Prof. V. Kamakoti, IITM Director, with Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Education.  
**Left:** Cover of the book released during the IIT Madras Technology Summit, New Delhi.  
**Below:** A section of the book.



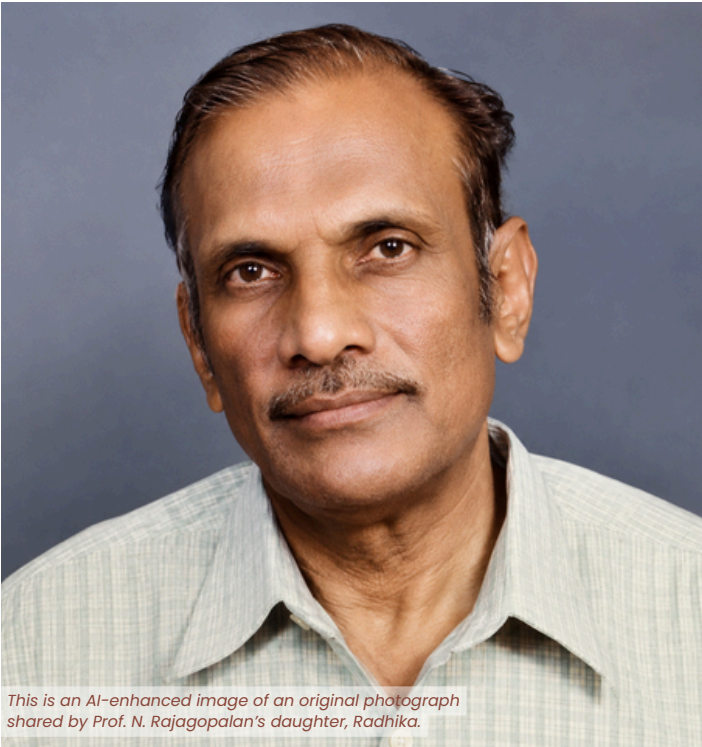


# Tribute to Prof. N. Rajagopalan

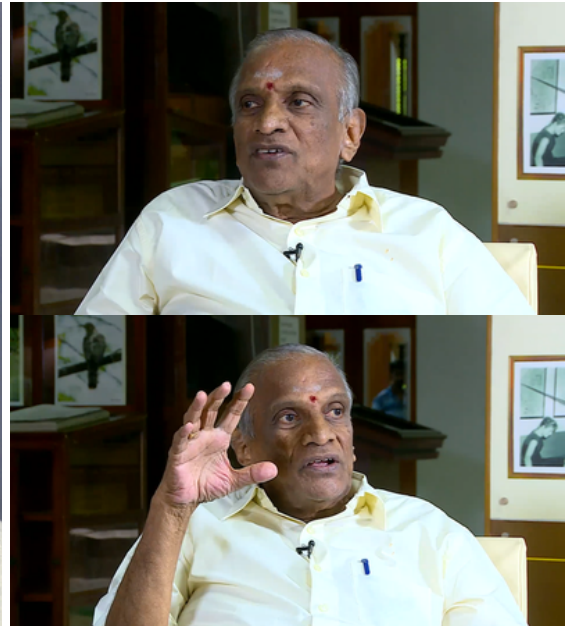
## Department of Civil Engineering

Prof. N. Rajagopalan passed away on the morning of 10 April 2026 after a brief illness. His association with IIT Madras spanned over four decades, during which he served as Associate Lecturer, Lecturer, Assistant Professor, and Professor. His leadership as Chairman (Engineering Unit) and Dean (Administration), coupled with his invaluable contributions to teaching and research, left a profound and lasting impact on the academic community.

He will be remembered not only for his scholarship and dedication, but also for his guidance and mentorship to generations of students. His legacy of excellence will continue to inspire us. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues. May his soul rest in eternal peace.



This is an AI-enhanced image of an original photograph shared by Prof. N. Rajagopalan's daughter, Radhika.



Oral History Interview of Prof. N. Rajagopalan and Prof. R. Radhakrishnan in conversation with Prof. V. Kalyana Raman.

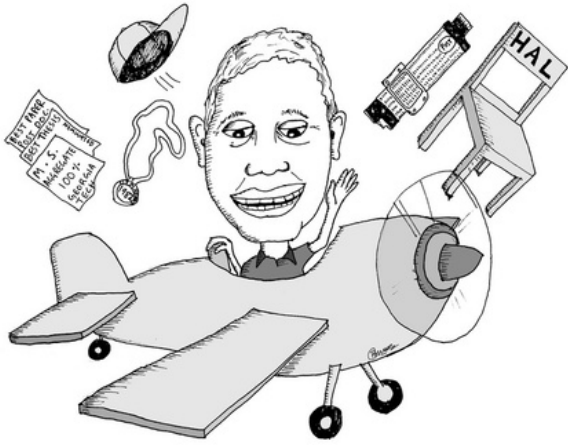
## Biography of Prof. N. Rajagopalan

Prof. N. Rajagopalan joined IIT Madras in December 1961 as the eighth faculty member of the Civil Engineering Department. Before this, he worked at the Irrigation Research Station, Poondi, as part of the Public Works Department (PWD). His connection to IIT Madras began even earlier: as a student leader at the College of Engineering, Guindy, he attended the inauguration of IIT Madras in 1959. Inspired by the event, he resolved to become a member of the Institute one day.

With no prior experience in teaching, research, or industry, he applied for a faculty position at IIT Madras. In his oral history interview organised by the Heritage Centre, he recalls being selected by a panel that included Prof. B. Sengupto, the first Director of IIT Madras. Though the position was for Associate Professor, he was chosen despite having only completed his B.E. Honours degree. He simultaneously enrolled in a part-time M.Tech. program in Civil Engineering, becoming the first part-time M.Tech. student at IIT Madras. He specialised in structural engineering, though hydraulics had initially been recommended to him by Prof. Rouve.

Prof. Rajagopalan later pursued his Ph.D. at Stuttgart in Germany before returning to IIT Madras, where he held several key positions, including Head of the Concrete Laboratory. As Dean of Administration, he oversaw faculty recruitment and the selection process, shaping the academic fabric of the Institute. Prof. Rajagopalan served as Chairman of the Engineering Unit from 1990 to 1993.

Prof. Rajagopalan's journey from being inspired at IIT's inauguration to becoming one of its most influential faculty members stands as a testament to his dedication, foresight, and unwavering commitment to education and research.



Prof. P. Sriram is ready to take the Heritage Centre to greater heights!  
P.S.: We look forward to working with you!

# 3

Years  
of  
Cartoons

We  
spare  
nobody!

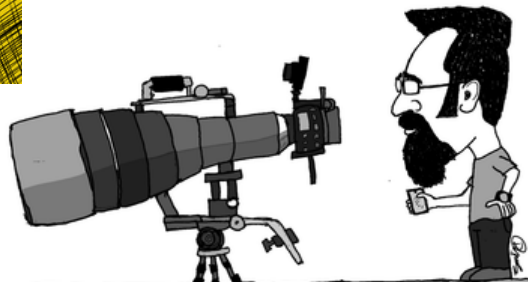


സ്വാഗതം, സാർ!  
*Swagatham, sir!*

The Heritage Centre welcomes Prof. Arun Menon as Faculty-in-Charge!



Heritage Centre Day



Sripad Sridhar with his camera



Prof. R. Nagarajan: Donning multiple hats



Dr. Pons: The Key-per of Secrets,  
Guardian of the ancient parchments.



IIT Madras Bhashai le sollanum na  
"Willkommen, Herr Sriram!"







A Nawab in IIT Madras



Well, well, well! Mr. Saha, you have finally been caricatured! Thank you for the inspiration! ❤️



No EGG-xit! Diya's never-ending egg project! The myth of Sisyphus will remain a myth, but Diya's story is real! Will she ever complete her study of nidification? Only time will tell.



Ah. Here comes the curator.

*Blume*



Sigh. this is the only way that I will get my hand raised.



*Blume*



THIS IS HOW WE BROUGHT THE REFRESHMENTS ON HERITAGE CENTRE DAY!



An Elephant in Europe

Preoccupied with a single leaf... You won't see the tree.  
Preoccupied with a single tree... you'll miss the entire forest.  
Don't be preoccupied with a single spot. See everything in  
its entirety... effortlessly. That is what it means to truly "see."

- Takehiko Inoue



Art: @soulkadhistudio / Bhuvan

Ran out of subjects, so I looked into the mirror!

To know more about the work we do,  
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Stay up to date with the latest events, activities and exhibitions through our social media pages. Schedule visits by writing to the official email or by calling us!



**Heritage Centre**  
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