



Chennai's broken shoreline

The city's seashore is often remembered as beautiful thanks to the 12-km-long Marina, which got a face-lift after the 2004 tsunami. But sea erosion has been reducing North Chennai's coastal strip to tiny strips, writes **G Pattabi Raman** in his photo essay



For the average outsider, Chennai's seashore usually means beautiful pictures of the Marina. The 12-kilometre stretch of sand looks even better now after a face-lift following the devastation of the 2004 tsunami. But few are aware that the coast goes northwards to less glamorous places such as Kasimedu Harbour all the way up to Ennore. And this part really looks as if it has been in the war, being battered by an unrelenting sea.

Chennai harbour was built more than 125 years ago, giving the Marina beach — located in its southern side — the scope to grow continually. The northern part of it, on the contrary, was neglected and its once-wide beaches have today been reduced to tiny strips in several areas. In most places, the walls made of boulders just about manage to hold the seawater.

A groyne is a rigid structure built from the shore so as to interrupt the flow of water and sediment. Its purpose is to create and maintain a healthy beach on its updrift side, which in turn provides protection to the land behind. The profile of the area is slowly, but distinctly, changing. Recalls young Mahendran, a resident of North Bharathi Nagar: "When I was doing my schooling I could never to see the sea from my home. Today, the expansion of the harbour has led to increased erosion as a result of groynes. In fact, my house was washed away last year."

North Chennai has more than 10 groynes constructed between Kasimedu to Bharathi Nagar. This has led to the erosion moving northward of the fishing villages. As many as 13 hamlets were severely affected by the erosion caused by the groynes. In Central Chennai, the Adyar river mouth was blocked in Pattinapakkam seashore after a groyne was constructed near it. Equally bad is the case with Srinivasapuram, further north of Pattinapakkam, which is losing land heavily to sea erosion.

"Even the tsunami did not trouble us this much," says sexagenarian Joseph, feeding his pigeons on the terrace of the Miracle Church of Jesus Christ in Srinivasapuram, near Foreshore Estate, which is facing severe damage — again — as a result of erosion.

In neighbouring Tiruvallur district, coastal villages like Thazhankuppam and Mugathuvarakuppam, displaced families are grappling with poor facilities and shortage of drinking-water. "We are sandwiched between the erosion on one side and the work of the Express highway (which will connect Chennai port with Maduravoyal) on the other," says Marriappan, a cycle-rickshaw driver living in Palagai Thotikuppam, north of Chennai. For Mariappan, the summer heat is punishing, but he shudders even more at the mere thought of the arrival of rains.

— The pictures were shot by *The New Indian Express* photographer under the aegis of a Centre for Science and Environment media fellowship. pattabiram@gmail.com



CRASHING IN (Anti-clockwise from top)
1. Trees seen uprooted (a couple of months ago) as a result of sea erosion at Chinnamudaliar chavady kuppam, one of the worst affected hamlets near Pondicherry; **2.** Joseph feeds his winged friends on the terrace of the partially destroyed Miracle Church of Jesus Christ, Srinivasapuram, Chennai; **3.** A lonely family at Palagai Thottikuppam, a hamlet in the northern part of Chennai. The backyard has gone as a result of sea erosion while the front portion of the house has been demolished for the Ennore Express Highway project; **4.** Baiyamma, in Thazhankuppam (North Chennai), makes a living by providing water to families displaced due to erosion. Because of erosion, the sea water has seeped into the shallow ground water. **5.** Shashikala with her baby near the demolished Hamlet at Chinnamudaliar, near Ennore; **6.** Boys pass by the shore (where their houses once were)

Letters to the editor

We need a vigilant police force to combat video piracy

I wish to point out that it is opportunity that makes a thief ("Harsh reel-less reality", April 23). Therefore, we need tighter security and proactive policing to stop video piracy. In a country like India, where counterfeit currency notes are printed as easily as printing notices or pamphlets, how can one stop video pirates? Of course, it is an organised crime done with the help of insiders. — **Sunny Joseph, Thrissur**

A shameful success

It has become a successful business model to make pirated CDs and market them with negligible investment. However, it is perilous for the film producers whose income is based on the collection from movie theatres. This unscrupulous practice exists in all regional and foreign languages and it is difficult to weed out the perpetrators since there are so many of them. They and the public who avail their services are dishonest.

— **O B Nair, Kochi**

Pot calling kettle black

As long as the filmmakers solicit and accept funds from the underground mafia and from other unknown sources and in the absence of transparency and accountability, film

producers and film stars raising a hue and cry to put an end to piracy is like beating about the bush without making any effort to find a lasting solution.

Making an appeal to the viewers to watch films in theatres, when the film world is still unorganised and insincere in paying taxes, is amusing because they themselves are to be blamed for the predicament.

— **K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad**

Advanced technology a must

Video piracy has been the scourge of Indian film industry. The menace can be tackled by public support alone, but the general public seems to enjoy the bonanza of watching latest releases in the comfort of their drawing room. The Anti-Video Piracy Cell can function effectively, only if it is given extra powers to con-

tain the crime. The film industry must employ advanced technology to counter piracy, by producing films with digital cinema encryption. The crime must be treated on par with printing counterfeit currency, which will effectively discourage the mafia.

— **K V Raghuram, Wayanad**

A special hell for traitors

'Bringing up little girls in America the Andhra way' is well scripted and deserves appreciation! Her views clearly outline the double standards and acute disparity between the upbringing of boys and that of girls! There is indeed a special place in hell for women who do not help other women — the author rightly quotes Madeleine K Albright, the former US Secretary of State!

— **Jaya Venkitachalam, Chennai**

Wrong accusations

Farwa Imam Ali's article belittles our culture and gives a wrong impression that girls are brought up as second-class citizens back home in Andhra Pradesh. It is far from the truth since we place mothers first as evidenced in 'Matrudevo bhava' preceding 'Pitrudevo bhava'. In fact, the child understands the status of mother in the house as a caretaker, mentor, philosopher and guide right from infancy.

Simply because we migrated to another country in search of greener pastures we should not be accused of forgetting our traditions and culture. In fact, many Andhra children in the US are sent to learn traditional dances and music, while their counterparts in India play cricket. Parents impose different 'curfew timings' for boys and girls because

they do not want their daughter in her early teens to become an unwed mother. If the British who stayed for almost three centuries in India did not adopt our culture and traditions, why should we?

— **Padma Kanakadandi, Visakhapatnam.**

Writing for the young?

I second the sentiment voiced by Ravi from Kerala (letter to the editor on April 17 about the article "Who is the gee oh gee"). I experienced the same helplessness in comprehending the article. Maybe the writer's articles are meant for a minuscule section of the readers called the young intelligentsia.

— **Sheila Jayaraj, by email**

Your feedback can be sent to zeitgeist@expressbuzz.com