



Madurai Marathon

Run for Heritage Water Bodies

January 13, 2008

Madurai, the temple city of Tamil Nadu is rich in culture and heritage. It houses many tanks which serve as lifelines of the community for decades. In the era of urbanization and increasing population growth, Madurai is becoming one of the industrial hubs of Tamil Nadu. It poses biggest challenge to meet the increased water needs. On the other hand the recent decades witnessed a great decline in the quality of life saving water bodies. There is a lot more to water bodies than just the pleasant sight of brimming water. For centuries, water bodies were common properties that supported the community. Historically, kings, local chiefs and philanthropists developed and conserved these living heritages.

These heritage structures, which served the humanity for decades are now neglected and are being converted as drainage channels, garbage bins, and open toilets so on. It's the responsibility of every citizen to restore these ancient properties to serve for generations. The evidence of existence of Gruthmal River,



once served the water needs of Madurai is found no more. Many heritage water bodies including Vaigai River are losing their glories due to ignorance about the value of it. In this juncture DHAN's Centre for Facilitating Philanthropy takes efforts to sensitize the society on community issues and find solutions for it. We firmly believe that sensitizing the community to own and preserve the water bodies would offer a long-term solution to today's daunting challenge of water scarcity.

Building a Public Private Partnership model to preserve and restore the water bodies is increasingly felt by all. It demands the participation of various stakeholders to join hands



for this noble cause. The first Madurai Marathon was organized in 2007 on the theme of water. That attracted the attention of youth and public to refine and redefine the knowledge on water. Last year experience has brought greater focus and confidence to take the theme of water forward. It paved way for creation of water fund at people organisations like Gangai Vattara Kalanjiam, Pothigai Vattara Kalanjiam, Sellur Vattara Kalanjiam,

ThenMadurai Vattara Kalanjiam and Jaihinpuram Vattara Kalanjiam. The Gangai Vattara Kalanjiam, a federation of self help groups adopted the Puliankulam Chinna Kanmoi, wherein the SHG members have extended *shrmadan* (donating through physical work) to start demonstrating the need and importance of reviving the tank. The SBI Life, Kalanjia Iyyakkam and Vayalaga Iyyakkam's contribution for the cause of water helped to renovate the water bodies like Immayil Nanmai Tharuvar temple tank, etc. A Centre for Urban water Resources (CURE) has been established to act as a resource centre and for expanding the works on urban water bodies based on its need and importance.

DHAN Foundation organized the second Madurai Marathon on 13 January 2008. The event focused on bringing awareness and action related to Heritage Water Bodies. The event was a marking one for Madurai with the support and active participation by various stakeholders of Madurai like Madurai Corporation, Corporates, NGOs, Academic institutions, people organisations and general public.

Cause dissemination was taken more intensively this year to reach the message to all the cross section of the society especially the youth for action. The cause related thematic essay and painting competitions were organized for the school and college students to kindle the knowledge on heritage water bodies. The academic institutions in and around Madurai actively participated in it. About 1041 students from 50 academic institutions have participated in the essay competitions. The essays were invited on six topics expressing the theme of Madurai Marathon 2008 *ie.* Heritage Water Bodies. Mr. Krishna Kumar, Branch Head, Radio Mirchi presented the prizes for the district level winners with book gift vouchers and a certificate of appreciation.



A drawing Competition was organized at district level at Fatima College on 06 January 2008. About 259 students from 66 schools and colleges participated and reflected their thoughts in the drawing competition. Mr. Vijayan, artist led the panel when finalizing the prize winners. Mr. K. Sakthivel, Superintending Engineer presented the prizes for the winners of drawing competitions. The prize winning drawings and essays were displayed in an exhibition stall arranged on the Marathon day. The Kalanjia Iyyakkam sponsored the thematic competitions.

Signage boards depicting the history and importance of the heritage water bodies were placed at 10 water bodies. The signage boards were prepared with the support of Heritage Consortium and the Centre for Urban water Resources (CURE). Madurai Corporation sponsored the signage boards as part of JnNURM.





A Water Literacy Programme was launched to spread the message on water and water bodies. The teachers from schools/colleges and public would be trained by resource persons from DHAN People Academy. Training materials for use in reaching the message to the target group would be given to the trained volunteers. The first Water Literacy Programme was conducted at the Madurai

Corporation premises on 5 Jan 2008. About 121 teacher volunteers from 25 corporation schools participated in the event. Shri. S. Ramachandran, Deputy Commissioner of Madurai Corporation inaugurated the programme. All the corporation schools celebrated the “Water Awareness Week: January 7 – 14, 2008”, herein students were sensitized to understand the issues involved in water bodies and the need for preserving them.



More than 22,000 people from all sections of the society participated in the various events organized as part of Madurai Marathon. The variety of events provided the participants space to run, walk or skate to highlight the cause of Heritage Water Bodies. There was a Half Marathon for about 21 kms for the athletes, a Mini Marathon from two different places for the youth and students, a Walk for a Cause to the general public and elders, a Walk for the Differently-Abled and a Roller Skating gave opportunity for all to join the effort. The events started from various points and finally converged at Madurai Medical College grounds. The marathon routes were designed in such a way that it touched important heritage water bodies in and around the Madurai city to give the participants a feel and bondage for the cause. The signage boards placed at the water bodies added to stimulate the interest of the participants and appreciate the heritage water bodies.



A “Half Marathon” for about 21 kms from Madurai Medical College was flagged off by Mr. K. Nandabalan, Commissioner of Police, Mr. B.T. Bangera, Managing Director, Hi

Tech Arai, Mr. Manohar Devadoss, Artist and Author of book “Multiple Facets of My Madurai” and Ms. Nirmala Jeyaraj, Principal of Lady Doak College. Mr. P.V. Parthasarathy, Madurai District Athlete Association, Mr. R. Elangovan, Director of Physical Education, Madurai Kamaraj University and Mr. S. Usman Ali of Madurai District Athlete Association coordinated the event. The participants were provided with a certificate of participation and a T-shirt carrying the event logo and logo of Vayalaga Iyakkam, the sponsor of the Half Marathon. Cash prizes were distributed to winners of first 10 places.



A “Roller Skating” run followed the Half Marathon, wherein skaters from various institutions participated in the event. Mr. Chokkalingam, Madurai District Skaters Association coordinated the event. The participants were provided with a cap and a certificate of participation. The event started at 7:15 am. Mr. K. Nandabalan, Commissioner of Police and Mr. B. T. Bangera, Managing Director of Hi Tech Arai Ltd flagged off the event.

A “Walk for the Differently Abled” was organised from Thallakulam Perumal Koil tank. People from 13 differently abled organizations participated in the event. Mr. Manohar Devadoss, Artist and Author of book “Multiple Facets of My Madurai” and Mr. C. Sundar, Chief Manager, State Bank of India flagged off the event. A musical troupe of visually challenged students from UPKAR, Madurai led the event participants to the venue.



The Mini Marathon started from two places namely Fatima College and Saravanapoigai (Thiruparankundram). Ms. Thenmozhi, Madurai Corporation Mayor, Mr. P.M. Mannan, Deputy Mayor, Mr. D. J. Dinakaran, Commissioner, Ms. Fatima Antony, Principal, Fatima College flagged off the event at Fatima College. Similarly the Mini Marathon from Saravanapoigai was

flagged off by Mr. Abhai Kumar, Principal, Thiyagaraja College of Engineering. Students and youth from various academic institutions actively took part in the Mini Marathon. All the participants were provided with a cap and a certificate of participation.

A “Walk for a Cause” began from Mariamman Theppakulam. People from Kalanjiam and Vayalagam federations, employees of reputed business houses, government officials and members from various residents associations and general public participated in the walk for the cause. The participants were provided with a scarf. Mr. Ramamoorthi, Dean, Agriculture College and Research Institute, Smt. Chinnapillai, Kalanjia Iyyakka Leader and Shri. Duraisamy, Vayalaga Iyyakka Leader flagged off the event.



There was an exhibition depicting the current year theme and the theme of the coming year. The Heritage Consortium arranged a stall on Heritage Water Bodies and the Kalanjiam Foundation arranged a stall on the theme of Aneamia. The Union Bank of India also arranged its stall at the venue. The certificates for the participants were distributed on the spot at the exhibition stalls.

The participants in all the events converged at the Medical College Grounds. The participants of each event excitingly shared their feelings and reflections of their experiences. Everyone expressed that they felt proud to run for conserving heritage water bodies. Mr. D. J. Dinakaran, Madurai Corporation Commissioner, Mr. K. Sakthivel, Superintending Engineer, Mr. B.T. Bangera, Managing Director, Hi Tech Arai, Mr. M. P. Vasimalai, Executive Director, DHAN Foundation, Mr. Manohar Devadoss, Artist, Mr. T. Srinivasan, Vice President (P&A), TVS, Mr. V. Abhai Kumar, Principal, Thiyagaraja College of Engineering, Mr. L. Krishna Kumar, Branch Head, Radio Mirchi, Prof. C.R. Shanmugham, Vayalagam Foundation, Bankers and Academicians participated in the event.

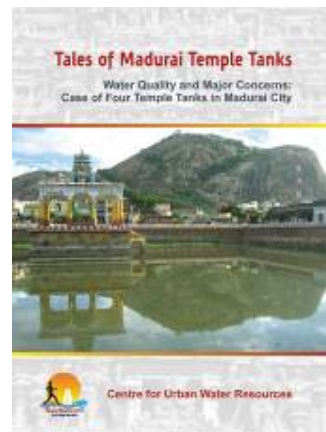


Madurai Corporation, Kalanjia Iyyakkam, Vayalaga Iyyakkam, Hi Tech Arai, Union Bank of India, TVS, Canara Bank, State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Central Bank of India, ICICI, Indian Overseas Bank, HDFC,

Ramraj Cottons, Rajmahal, Viswas Promoters, Humane Trust, Kalanjiam Tholizhagam Ltd. extended support for the conduct of the event. Appollo Hospital, Vikram Hospital and SUHAM Hospital provided the ambulance and health care services for the participants. The Latha Madhavan Polytechnic College, Fatima College, Madurai Kamaraj University and Thyagaraja College of Engineering provided the volunteer support. Radio Mirchi and Taj Hotels provided the drinking water booths for the event. Radio Mirchi ran water literacy programmes and publicity prior to the event and also made live coverage of the event. All the dailies gave a good coverage of the event and highlighted the cause.

There were brief presentations by the Centre for Facilitating Philanthropy, Centre for Urban Water Resources, DHAN People Academy and Heritage Consortium. It oriented the participants to carry the message home. Voices of practitioners like Prof. C. R. Shunmugham, DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation, Ar. Balaji, and Er. Chandran, from Thyagaraja College of Engineering enriched the audience with content on heritage water bodies. Presence of Manohar Devadoss and his speech on Madurai Heritage and role of water bodies in it added flavour to the event.

A book titled “Tales of Madurai Temple Tanks” from DHAN’s Centre for Urban Water Resources was released during the occasion. The book presents about water quality and major concerns and cases of four temple tanks in Madurai City.



The Corporation Commissioner appreciated the initiative and he added that we have lost many water bodies due to the ignorance about its value and we cannot do much for the lost water bodies, whereas it is important to protect and conserve the remaining ponds. He requested the public to join hands in this effort.

It was a pioneering effort and a memorable moment when the People Organisation, Corporates and Academic Institutions came forward and declared on the stage to adopt water bodies in Madurai. TVS, Fatima College, Lady Doak College, Thyagaraja College of Engineering and Kalanjiam - Vayalagam Federations. Mr. D. J. Dinakaran and Mr. M. P. Vasimalai called for the role of public and private partnerships in taking this initiative forward



The theme for the Madurai Marathon 2009 has been declared as “Run for Anaemia free world”. We look forward your support and encouragement to create a world free from anaemia.

