

# An inimitable institution of excellence

The Madras Christian College, the institution considered by many as an intellectual powerhouse, will be launching its year-long 175th year celebrations on January 7.

CHITRADEEPA A.

*"May God grant us continuing courage and faith to so transform and regenerate our college that she may serve Him and our country in an ever-widening circle beginning with our immediate environment and reaching out to the far boundaries of the world till all mankind is knit together in one great, universal fraternity."*

— CHANDRAN DEVANESAN,

First Indian principal, Madras Christian College. (1962-73)

An institution known for pioneering education and research in the country since 1837, The Madras Christian College (MCC), is all geared up to celebrate its 175th year. Located in 365 acres of sylvan scrub jungle in Tambaram, the college today has 6,000 students and 32 academic departments. The college campus is bustling with activity as the students' union office-bearers, along with the core committee is working out elaborate plans for the great event. The MCC will, beginning in January 2012, celebrate its glorious past, and prepare itself for a promising future.

## 175 glorious years

The MCC will kickstart its year-long quartoseptcentennial celebrations with an inaugural worship programme on January 7. The event will be graced by the dean of Canterbury. He holds a very high spiritual office in the church of England. It was the English missionaries from the U.K. who founded the MCC and therefore it is apt that he will bless the institution at the worship service. The same day, a two-week exhibition on the legacy of MCC will be inaugurated.

"The celebrations are on throughout 2012. We will have two events per month and it will culminate in a grand alumni meeting during the last week of December," says R.W. Alexander Jesudasan, college principal. The prime minister will partici-



**MAGNIFICENT:** Students outside Selaiyur Hall, Madras Christian College, East Tambaram.

pate in the founder's day celebrations on April 3, 2012. A national conference on 'Indian higher education: new perspectives for future' will be organised in July.

## Sylvan campus

Says Sooraj S.V., cultural convener of the college: "This year many new events will find their way into 'Deepwoods', our annual cultural festival and it will be a grand gala celebrations. Apart from this we are organising an inter-district football match in March. We will attempt to enter the Limca book of records for the longest human chain sometime in 2012."

MCC has always been actively organising various cultural events and also involved all of its students in some activity or the other and thereby providing them a learning experience during the student says, PWC Davidar, IAS, Commissioner of Chennai Corporation, and alumnus of the MCC. "Even today the campus has retained its vibrancy and vitality and most importantly the flora and fauna have been well preserved. The MCC campus is incomparable to any other campus in the country," he says.

## The hangouts

"The traditions, the legacy, the buildings, the flora and fauna, the landmarks — nothing much has changed in MCC. Alumni who visit the campus even after 50 years could



**READYING FOR THE GREAT DAY:** MCC Tambaram students' union office-bearers discussing the 175th year celebrations near the Millar statue on the campus. PHOTOS: A. MURALITHARAN

still relate to the campus of their days," says K. Vigneshwara, chairman of the students' union. "The students bond with the institute so well that they relate to their alma mater forever," says Mr. Davidar.

The Millar statue, the quadrangle, sun-dial, botany tank, zoo tank, the bell tower, Anderson hall, college union society, stone bench, pavilion and the gutters have been the most happening hangouts within the campus for many decades.

Selvaraj, secretary of the Alumni Association of MCC, says, "Apart from the landmarks mentioned here, what used to be also popular were the tea shops outside the campus.

Students and lecturers thronged these tea shops till late in the night and used to have discussions on a range of topics for hours together."

## Green campus

Professor D. Narasimhan of the department of botany, MCC, says the most remarkable 363 acres of green campus that we see today is 60 years old. This tropical dry evergreen natural vegetation is one of the few green patches found in the East coast of India. The forest was allowed to regenerate naturally by giving simple protection. The campus has 150 species of birds and 75 species of butterflies listed. "The biodiversity here is very well balanced and it's the best green campus in the country with ample facility for rain-water harvesting," he says.

Students' involvement in protecting the biodiversity is highly remarkable, says the college principal. A very important agenda during the 175th year celebration is to construct a multipurpose auditorium and an indoor stadium within the college campus.

"We are undertaking studies to identify the most suitable location to construct these buildings without affecting the biodiversity of the campus," says Mr. Narasimhan.



RW Alexander Jesudasan  
PHOTO: V. GANESAN

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## Celebrating history

With the theme for the 175th year celebrations being 'Celebrating history, Serving humanity', the principal, management, staff and students of the institution are striving with a vision to ensure the institution grows further. "We will be celebrating the 175th year of founding of MCC and 75th year of moving into the Tambaram campus. The alumni around the world are involved in the celebrations and actively raising funds to build the auditorium," says Mr. Jesudasan. The vision for MCC is two-pronged: academic innovation and infrastructure development. This will be implemented without deviating from the original founding principles of MCC.

Many doyens and stalwarts who worked in the MCC have immensely contributed to the state of higher education in India. "One of the earliest to organise a workshop on the feasibility of autonomous status was the MCC and was also the first to get the autonomous status in 1978," says R. Sridhar, associate professor, department of political science, MCC. The institution that pioneered many new concepts must leap forward, he says.

"The MCC's strength is its infrastructure and competent faculty. It must evolve into a university in the course of time and serve the society at large," says Prof. Selvaraj. "The MCC has huge potential to grow further. By realising its strength in the past and by ensuring a glorious future, the institution can grow manifold," says Mr. Davidar. The MCC needs to upgrade itself from time to time and also collaborate with other institutions around the world and sign MoUs and be in sync with the latest developments around the world. Most importantly the college must play a vital role in shaping the individual profile of the students and ensure that the students are well-rounded personalities, he says.

## New buildings, new courses

- Academic innovation includes international MBA to be offered in collaboration with a U.K. university. Both regular and executive models will be offered.
- Korean language will be offered and an MoU signed in December with a Korean University.
- M. Phil in social work to be launched.
- A community college will be set up in West Tambaram and it will

offer courses based on the need and requirement of the local people.

- Infrastructure development includes restoration and renovation of all the buildings on the campus. A new multi-purpose auditorium to be constructed on the campus at a cost of Rs. 12 crore.

New building to be constructed for the commerce department.

- International guest house on the

campus will be extended.

Library will be renovated and reformed.

- The campus to have LAN, enabling WIFI for students free of cost. One smart classroom will be provided for each of the department.
- The UGC has sanctioned Rs. 70 lakh towards construction of indoor sports stadium within the college campus.