

'C P Ramaswami Iyer thought ahead of his time'

□ **Historian laments attitude of people towards heritage buildings**

NT Bureau

Chennai, Aug 21:

A few men in history are set apart for thinking ahead of their times. One such person is Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer, said V Sriram, renowned historian and columnist at an event held at CPR Foundation here yesterday.

He was delivering a lecture - 'CP at Madras' organised by the Foundation to coincide with Madras Week celebrations.

Sriram began by saying, 'we are at one of the five historic residences located in the city'. In the last eight years, we had lost about 45 such buildings to modern Chennai, he remarked. 'In 1906, Indian Bank ran by the English here was declared insolvent, forcing many into a depression. CP Ramaswami's senior, advocate V Krishnaswami Iyer, appeared for the trial. This is the story of how Indian Bank came into existence. CP was

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the first person to sign a document as one of the board of directors', Sriram revealed. 'This incident taught us that we can run a bank better than the English', he chuckled. At a few junctures, Sriram made the audience give a thought about the people's attitude towards heritage sites in the city.

'YMJA operated from Gokhale Hall located at Armenian Street was founded by Annie Besant on the premise to nurture more thinking and debating among young Indians for the welfare of country. But the grossly ill-maintained building is caught in a row with a few wanting to sell it to real

estate companies', he pointed out.

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Apart from serving as lifeline for Cauvery delta farmers, the Mettur dam helped set up bauxite, chemicals and cement companies in and around the region, he informed.

Sriram also spoke about CPR's differences with Mahatma Gandhi and Annie Besant during the lecture.