

## Memories of THE MAHATMA

Quirky, curious or commonplace — anything can catch a collector's fancy and turn into a lifelong passion. M L Rajesh collects Gandhi memorabilia

Sandhya Soman | TNN

**Chennai:** A gleaming ₹100 coin, a gold coin from Samoa, a plastic embossed stamp from Bhutan — M L Rajesh has picked up a variety of things over the years. From chunky coins no longer in currency to yellowing newspapers, Mahatma Gandhi is the one thing that binds them all.

Rajesh, a 32-year-old accountant, has been collecting Gandhi memorabilia for the past six years to create awareness about the leader's ideals. "I started collecting stamps after seeing the colourful scrapbooks owned by some of my friends," says Rajesh.

He became fascinated by Gandhi as the Mahatma is the only Indian to have been honoured by a large number of countries, which have brought out stamps and special postal covers.

"People in Italy, Germany and the UK have brought out pre-paid calling cards with the Mahatma's image and messages," says Rajesh. So far, he has collected nearly 400 stamps, 100 special postal covers and 20 coins issued by foreign nations as well as Indian currency notes, statues and photographs. He also has copies of publications such as 'Navjivan' and 'Young India'.

"I haven't read any books about Gandhiji," says Rajesh. As he expanded his collection, buying stamps and aerogrammes, he also picked up information about the leader. "Gandhiji never passed up an opportunity to collect money," says Rajesh.

C Suresh Kumar



**PAYING TRIBUTE:** M L Rajesh has been collecting Gandhi memorabilia for six years

He has spent a lot of money to build his collection. "It was not easy to get hold of currency notes with the same serial number as Gandhiji's date of birth," says Rajesh, who also owns a stamp issued by the US in 1961. He bought most of his collection over the internet. He also gets his friends to pick up postal memorabilia at exhibitions in various parts of the country.

Rajesh has created a website to take Gandhiji's message of peace and non-violence to the public. What he really cherishes in his collection are the telegrams and sheaves of paper with Gandhiji's handwriting gifted by the Mahatma's former secretary V Kalyanam. "They are really priceless," he says.

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### Finders KEEPERS

## assaults MTC driver, held

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** Traffic on busy Kamarajar Salai (Marina Beach Road) was thrown out of gear on Thursday morning after a tiff between an MTC bus driver and an autorickshaw driver turned violent. Traffic resumed after half-an-hour. The autorickshaw driver, arrested on assault charges, was later let off on bail.

Around 9.45am, Subbarajan, 45, driver of the bus going to Parrys from Tirupurur, annoyed that an autorickshaw was refusing to give him way, forced it on to a platform near Presidency College. Autorickshaw driver Rajasekar, 25, of Oorur Kuppan near Besant Nagar, chased the bus and abused Subbarajan.

Subbarajan slapped Rajasekar and the latter retaliated. The former sat on the road and blocked traffic and other MTC drivers and conductors joined in. They parked their buses haphazardly on the road, forcing traffic to a halt.

Police soon rushed there and pacified the MTC staff.

## More dustbins in suburbs

**Chennai:** Overflowing garbage bins in the city will soon be history — the corporation council has approved ₹4.36 crore for conservancy work in the newly-added wards of Greater Chennai.

On Thursday the council approved purchase of nine hydraulic excavators, 75 compactors, 32 mechanical sweepers and 2,807 compactor bins. Mayor Saldai Duraisamy said that the new company will be asked to recruit workers employed by Neel Metal Fanalca whose contract is coming to an end. TNN

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