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**PRESERVING HISTORY:** R. Venkatraman, former Professor of Art History, Madurai Kamaraj University, speaking at a workshop on 'Architectural listing' in the city on Monday. Photo: R. Ashok *The Hindu*

#### ***The documented structures to help in academic research***

There are many heritage buildings which are allowed to disappear, and the situation needs to change, according to historian V. Venkatraman.

He was addressing a workshop on 'Architectural listing in Madurai region,' organised by Indian National Trust for Art and Culture Heritage (INTACH), Tamil Nadu and Madurai chapters, at Thiagarajar College of Engineering here on Monday.

Speaking about the magnificence of Thiagarajar Chettiar Mansion in Tirupparankundram, Mr. Venkatraman said during its glory it was a structure unlike any other in Madurai.

"The mansion was constructed with heavy influences from Italian architecture, combining the best of the East and West while blending the Chettinadu style with Classical Renaissance style," he noted.

#### **Urgent need**

Uma Kannan, convenor of the Madurai chapter, stressed the urgent need to conserve heritage structures as many of them were fast disappearing due to vandalism and neglect.

"Through this workshop, we hope to initiate and hasten the documentation process. Madurai has a rich and complex monumental history and it is imperative that the original structures be conserved and they stand tall as a tribute to the craftsmen of the past," she said.

"These marvels are evidences of traditions and communities having flourished, and heritage conservation, thus, is much more than preservation of structures. The need for conservation of these buildings also stems from the fact that the emotion and bonding with a historically significant structure which is still standing, can never be replaced," Dr. Uma Kannan added.

The workshop introduced the process of architectural listing to students who were also introduced to identifying opportunities for preservation of heritage and its significance in Madurai.

"The students will be sensitised to the use of proper formats for listing as used by INTACH and will be familiarised with the process through a field visit to Thenkarai village where they will study eight houses in the 'agraharam,'" G. Balaji of the Department of Architecture, TCE, explained.

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to begin soon. “I  
tourists as well,”

arried out by INTACH in Thanjavur, The Nilgiris, C  
or of the Tamil Nadu chapter, said the study of im  
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