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An initiative by the Anns club of Rotary Club of Madras Industrial City to collect sweaters for residents of the Institute of Mental Health to help them weather the cold season found many supporters. There were contributions, big and small, from various quarters

Every drive matters, every drop counts

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Everyone is talking about a nip in the air. Marghazhi is usually cold to the touch, but this year, it is widely believed to have been a smidge colder. Giving the air-conditioners and ceiling fans an all-night break proving not entirely helpful, some headed to their hibernating, forgotten woollen wear, retrieving them from the lowermost, less-opened compartment in their chest of drawers.

Against this backdrop, the Anns Club of Rotary Club of Madras Industrial City (RCMIC) sought that this "compartment" be drawn further to look for any old, sparingly-used sweater sitting deep inside. It could be packed off for charity. Instead, if one chose to open their heart wider and not the compartment, they could buy a new sweater and hand it over to charity.

RCMIC's Anns Club was making this plea to meet a need at Institute of Mental Health (IMH) at Kilpauk. If one were to be detailed, 700-plus needs, that being the number of residents at IMH receiving treatment.

As this collection drive had a steep deadline – what good is a sweater that arrives after the chilly weather had quit the scene – the dragnet was being thrown deep and wide.

The RCMIC Anns Club launched the collection drive in association with the NGO Goonj and Rotary eShakti.

Communication wrapped in words exuding warmth -- "Kindness is the warmest gift we can share" – and with details presented in lines led by sweater emojis, were sent out "Donate new or sparingly used sweaters. Front open sweaters with buttons preferred. If you want to get new ones, you can send your donations. Sizes can be M, L, XL" – thus read the instruction note.

The plea was splashed across the walls of RWAs' online groups.

Eight sweaters out of what was finally collected (650) might seem



RCMIC Anns Club members during the distribution of sweaters.

like a crumb, but generosity is still generosity irrespective of its size. Trellis South, a two-tower gated community in Vadapalani managed those eight sweaters, placing two sweater donation boxes, one at each tower.

Trellis South has track record of organising an impressive clothes collection drive ahead of Deepavali.

In the past, this initiative was a jewel in its crown. Last year, Kathikeyan Rajamohan,

who is part of the community-engagement team, headed by Srikanth, made sure the community did not break away from this tradition. On the sweater collection drive, he remarks, "We were aware of this need only on January 3, and by then, the drive was coming to an end. So, we quickly collected these eight sweaters

and handed them over for distribution in IMH." Numbers sometimes do not reflect the significance of an act. In this case, it certainly does not. This small, quickfire collection drive in this gated community has loosened its muscles for more clothes collection drives.

Says Karthikeyan: "We are cur-



ently planning four drives per year covering one each quarter. This helps in decluttering our wardrobe and support the needy. Our intention is to reach out to the beneficiaries directly which gives you more satisfaction rather than going through an aggregator.

Though we have individual volunteers/ champions for each drive, all these activities come under our community engagement team, which is headed by Srikanth."

According to Nirupama Aravind from the Anns Club of RCMIC, 650 sweaters were collected and handed over to the residents of IMH. Nirupama adds, "RCMIC did a collection drive at various apartments in the city, particularly the OMR area."

Sports shoes collection drive

The Institute of Mental Health has an impressive track record in athletics. Nirupama Aravind, who is part of the Anns Club of Rotary Club of Madras Industrial City (RCMIC) notes that "IMH deserves immense appreciation for its tireless efforts in empowering the residents of IMH taking treatment at the hospital to become Paralympic athletes. IMH has 13 athletes ready to participate in a major sports meet on January 21. Nirupama remarks that they lack proper shoes, clothing and accessories. "The Anns Club and Rotarians of Rotary Club of Madras Industrial city are organising a drive to collect these essentials for these athletes, head of the tournament," she adds. "One of the residents, Venkatesh has been selected for an international participation. He needs sponsors." For details about the drive, call 7708111268

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New address for Perambur Sub Post Office

It is a fortnight since Perambur Sub Post Office (functioning for a long time at Selva Vinayagar Kovil Street, off Nelvayal Road, a lane off Perambur High Road - North) was shifted to KKR Avenue near Don Bosco School on Pallavan Salai which is off Madhavaram High Road.

According to officials, the shifting was necessary because the previous building was prone to flooding during rains.

"However, the post box at the previous building has not been removed yet. It will stay there for a few more weeks and the department will be attending to it," says an official.

To notify the customers about the shifting, a good number of posters have been pasted at the building that previously housed the post office.

At this juncture, Perambur Neighbourhood Development Forum, a citizens group, pointed out that the particulars mentioned in the notification are not adequate. It does not mention Pallavan Salai on Madhavaram High Road.

"Only the door number and the name of the interior lane are men-



Perambur Sub Post Office at KKR Avenue off Pallavan Salai.

tioned. It is important to mention Pallavan Salai and Madhavaram High Road which will help in locating the facility easily. Also, the poster mentions "opposite Brinda theatre" as landmark which is wrong. The new post office is not opposite the theatre. It is located in a lane of a different road which is a few metres away," says Raghukumar Choodamani, convenor of the forum.

Customers at the post office also

complained that Greater Chennai Corporation's street name board was not found at KKR Avenue which makes it difficult to locate the post office.

They also suggested notice boards announcing the shift along with direction signs at the entrance of KKR Avenue and Pallavan Salai.

Following the shifting, the forum has emailed a letter to the Post Master General - Chennai to house the post office

with-in the railway station.

"First, the Perambur post office was operated from Thiruvengadam Street, that is from mid 1970s to 2007, which was closer to the railway station. Then it was shifted to Selva Vinayagar Street a decade ago. Relaying of the road without milling caused inundation at the post office. Hence, it has been now shifted to another location.

We find the new location still farther for Perambur residents, especially for those living near the bus terminus and the railway station. We suggest that the post office be housed within the premises of the railway station. Earlier, that is in November 2024, we made a representation to the Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting, L. Murugan, requesting that the post office be accommodated within the Perambur railway station.

We have received a reply from the Minister's office and also from the India Post authorities stating that our suggestion would be considered. Such a move would save the department from rental expenditure," adds Raghukumar Choodamani.

Text: L. Kanthimathi

Drinking water facility at Avadi bus terminus unhygienic



The basin of a drinking water facility at Avadi bus terminus is clogged. Regular commuters say, this is the condition of the facility most of the time. The basin is full of stains and unhygienic and the odour of bleaching powder makes it worse, they add. The image was taken on January 6.

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Sustainable fashion brand bows out in style

Oh Scrap! Madras, which has carved a niche for itself by upcycling fabric scraps to make clothes, jewellery, home decor, toys and a variety of other fabric-related creations is officially shutting down on January 15

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

The inexorable clock has quickened its feet, rushing through a final countdown for Oh Scrap! Madras. On January 15, the Chennai-based upcycling enterprise would have officially retreated from the sustainability stage, one it filled admirably for five years. Until the *coup de grace* is delivered to it that day, Oh Scrap! Madras would be kept on "life support", its website (www.ohscrapmadras.com) open for a clearance sale with prices marked down by 50 to 60 per cent on all products.

While it lasted, Oh Scrap! Madras enunciated the shibboleths of sustainability flawlessly. The finery and artsy trinkets and home decor and utilitarian bags and a spectrum of other fabric-related creations it shipped from a well-appointed but unpretentious 2BHK flat Thiruvannmiyur were born of upcycled fabric scraps. Women constituted more than ninety percent of its workforce. On top of that, both co-founders were women. Designer Priyanjoli Basu and demographer-epidemiologist Dominique Lopez, the co-founders, made sure the fabric scraps came from local addresses, drawn from the godowns of textile factories, local fashion brands and the wardrobes of individual donors. The employees got to work from home not as an occasional perk, but by default. A tailoring machine was parked at home.

Oh Scrap! Madras' work processes could have gone into a primer on United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, painting an illustrative picture of them – not all the 17 goals, but some of them certainly.

Beyond the gravitas of meeting SDGs, Oh Scrap! Madras brought a levity to its business.

The name carried a chant-



A glimpse of the product line.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



ed on the former (discarded fabric scraps) and often altogether missed the latter, the creative treatment it received.

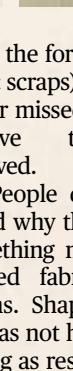
"People did not understand why they should buy something made from discarded fabric," Priyanjoli sighs. Shaping the fabric was not half as challenging as reshaping perceptions. Have they succeeded in the attempt? Yes and no. They have made many proselytes having won them over to sustainable fashion, but the naysayers still abound. The business of upcycling discards is largely viewed with bown-knitting suspicion, often brusquely cast in the domain of des-

peration, not innovation. The market for sustainable fashion remains niche. If Oh Scrap! Madras with 100 products on its catalogue now and a product shipping history covering four major metros in India (Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi; besides, of course Chennai) even parts of the United States should decide to throw in the towel, surely, there is still considerable work on perception engineering to be done.

As Oh Scrap! Madras bows out of the scene, its co-founders strike a positive note. There is something comforting about this ending.

"Ending something is not the same as giving up," Dominique notes. "It is about knowing when the work you set out to do has been completed."

The journey would have ended, but it was on track when it lasted.



This section spotlights initiatives undertaken by residents of Chennai to minimise the waste that reaches landfills



donation service where people could donate their old clothes. We conducted upcycling workshops, both offline and online, regularly; and we organised talks about sustainability. In a generous final act, Priyanjoli and Dominique donated piles of fabric scraps to up-and-coming designers who had been following Oh Scrap! Madras for years.

Back to the recap note, it says "we were a wonderful team of 12 out of which 11 are women and seven are local women artisans."

"The women we empowered are no longer just part of the brand – they are the brand," Priyanjoli says with quiet pride. These women, once bound by societal constraints, now hold the tools to write their own stories. Priyanjoli continues: "What we were creating was not just art from scraps. We were giving women a voice, an identity and a chance to reclaim their own story."

"What we have done," Dominique reflects, "is not just upcycle fabric, but upcycle lives."

Some of the women were house helps, and what they earned from Oh Scrap! Madras was a big boost to the family income – in fact, during the pandemic it was a lifeline, says Priyanjoli.

Would Priyanjoli and Dominique want to recreate the magic, but in a different form?

To answer that, Dominique goes to the very beginning of this initiative.

Through a chance encounter, the duo had met – Priyanjoli back in Chennai after her studies in fashion design in London; and French national Dominique who had settled down in Chennai with her family – and discovered they were on the same page about how to put sustainability ideals into practice. And Oh Scrap! Madras was born in 2019.

They want to recreate the magic, but individually, each taking a different road to purpose, one paved with sustainability-driven goals.



How to host a collection drive

Meet volunteers in Chennai who have thrown open their homes for NGO Goonj to take up relief work for families affected by Cyclone Fengal

LIFFY THOMAS

Just before Christmas when homes were getting decked up with colourful lights and cribs, Mangala Chandran's home at Sriman Nagar West Street in Alwarpet was getting ready to accommodate old but useful stuff.

She was receiving cartons and bags of gently used clothes, dry ration, stationery and other usable items – the entrance of her house could have been mistaken for a go-down.

This drive for NGO Goonj that Mangala initiated racked up a decent collection. This old stuff could have ended up in landfill, but now they are being diverted them to families that lost much due to Cyclone Fengal.

Would Priyanjoli and Dominique want to recreate the magic, but in a different form?

To answer that, Dominique goes to the very beginning of this initiative.

Mangala is regular in conducting such collection drives, sometimes it is held once in three to four months, opening up her house for people to drop in items that could touch somebody else's lives," says her neighbour L. Hariharan, who has been actively volunteering for Goonj for more than 11 years now.

Until a year ago, his home was the drop-off point for people in and around Alwarpet to donate reusable items. The donated items would then be transported to Goonj's main centre in Kovilambakkam.

During the Christmas week last year, at Karpagam Avenue in RA Puram, The Little Caterpillar, a play school, also assumed the responsibility of conducting a collection drive for people affected by the cyclone. The school also played host to the Goonj team who interacted with visitors at the centre and had a stall selling upcycled items.

While many residents have been throwing open a section of their house to stock items for those affected by Cyclone Fengal and other natural calamities, NGOs working on the ground say they still need more helping hands.

"Since Cyclone Fengal made landfall on December 1, we have had nearly 10 collection drives, a majority of them in the central parts of the city," says Anisha Bauar, team member, Goonj.

Our plan is to reach out to



Items kept in front of a house in Alwarpet; and (below) the Goonj stall at The Little Caterpillar. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

sportation has to be borne by them," says Anisha.

Hariharan, who helps people set up camps, says many volunteers sign up through conversations on WhatsApp groups. "With one's network it is possible to find interested people," says Hariharan, who has helped collect more than 20,000 garments so far and is secretary of Sri Ram Nagar Association.

Nikita Viswanath, founder, The Little Caterpillar, believes creating a buzz around some drives is of paramount importance or people would otherwise be unaware of them. "We are planning another soon with some interesting take-away workshops for visitors," says Nikita. They also invite volunteers to participate in its other activities which includes packing of items, creative writing to promote a drive and designing posters for the same.

Unleash your creativity at the lit fest

The Hindu Lit for Life will host six workshops for different age groups. Ranging from creative writing to traditional games, these sessions take you on a journey of discovery and learning. To register, visit <https://newsth.live/LFLWSYW> or scan the QR Code



The partners

The Hindu Lit for Life event is presented by KIA India and is in association with Christ University.

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From Fact to Fiction

"From Fact to Fiction: A Creative Writing Workshop" would transform real-world events into compelling stories and blend fact with imagination in a session with award-winning author Vibha Batra.

Facilitator: Vibha Batra Date & Time: January 18, 3:00 - 5:00 PM Participants: 30 | Age Group: 13-17 Venue: The Annexe, inside Lady Andal School premises Registration fee: ₹799



How to read a Mughal painting

"How to Read a Mughal Painting: Understanding the Mughals through Their Art" would take participants into the vibrant world of Mughal miniatures and decode their secrets with Ashwita Jayakumar, author of *The Book of Emperors: An illustrated history of Mughals*.

Facilitator: Ashwita

Jayakumar Date & Time: January 18, 12:00 - 2:00 PM Participants: 30 | Age Group: 14+ Venue: The Annexe, inside Lady Andal School premises Registration fee: ₹799

Crack the Calm Code

"Crack the Calm Code: Learning to Regulate Your Nervous System" would help participants discover how to manage stress through functional medicine and Ayurveda. Deepa Kannan, allied functional medicine practitioner and author, will guide participants through techniques to calm an overstimulated nervous system.

Facilitator: Deepa Kannan Date & Time: January 18, 10:00 - 11:30 AM Participants: 30 | Age Group: 18+ Venue: The Annexe, inside Lady Andal School premises Registration fee: ₹799



Just play

Those enrolling for "Just Play: Life Lessons from Traditional Games" will get to experience the wisdom of India's traditional games with Vinita Siddhartha. They will also learn strategies, synergy, and survival tactics derived from age-old pastimes.

Facilitator: Vinita Siddhartha Date & Time: December 19, 3:00 - 5:30 PM Participants: 40 | Age Group: 14+ Venue: The Annexe, inside Lady Andal School premises Registration fee: ₹799



The mischief of math

"The Mischief of Math: Paradoxes, Patterns, and Life's Little Logic Tricks" will have participants exploring the playful side of maths through hands-on activities and quirky tutorials. They will discover how numbers intersect with narratives along with mathematicians Nivedita Ganesh and Inavamsi Enaganti.

Facilitators: Nivedita Ganesh & Inavamsi Enaganti Date & Time: January 19, 10:00 - 11:30 AM Participants: 30 | Age Group: 15-25 Venue: The Annexe, inside Lady Andal School premises Registration fee: ₹799

Tree of confidence

"Tree of Confidence" is a workshop where participants will join Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan in a creative exploration of confidence-building through stories, reflections and activities inspired by Nature

Facilitator: Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan Date & Time: January 19, 12:00 - 1:30 PM Participants: 25 | Age Group: 8-11 Venue: The Annexe, inside Lady Andal School premises Cost: ₹799



STATUS REPORT

Parking facility at Vyasarpadi Jiva railway station in a sorry state



The vehicular parking lot at Vyasarpadi Jiva railway station is desolate with a broken fence. The parking facility is earthen and there is no roof. Therefore, it is prone to waterlogging during rains. Besides, the place is covered with leaf litter. This shows lack of daily maintenance. Here, a good number of motorcycles are lying abandoned. Commuters complain that there is none to man the parking lot. Further, it is not adequately lit.

The images were taken on December 17



Planetarium closed on January 14

The Periyar Science & Technology Centre and B.M. Birla Planetarium at Gandhi Mandapam Road in Kotturpuram will remain closed on January 14 on account of Pongal holiday. The centre can be reached at 044 - 24410025

Commuters complain of abandoned vehicle near Hindu College railway station

Commuters at Hindu College railway station in Pattabiram on CTH Road complain of a mortuary van lying abandoned for many months. There is a bus stop nearby and these commuters also want it removed as it can provide a conducive environment for illegal and criminal activities



READERS WRITE

'Small bus services needed from SIDCO Nagar'

Public transport commuters at SIDCO Nagar in Villivakkam see the need for a small bus service connecting Nathamuni junction on MTH Road, Villivakkam MTC bus terminus, and Villivakkam railway station. All the three places are one kilometre away from SIDCO Nagar. Private transport operators charge exorbitant fares.

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The Pongal rush: special buses, help desks, helpline numbers

The State Transport Department is plying special long-distance buses on January 12 and 13 from three bus terminuses in the city.

On these two days, more than 7,000 buses will be operated.

The buses are operated from Kalaignar Centenary Bus Terminal (KCBT), Mofussil Bus Terminal, and Metropolitan Transport Corporation Bus Terminus in Kilambakkam, Madhavaram New Bus Terminus, and Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus (CMBT) in Koyambedu.

From KCBT, buses to Vandavasi, Polur, Puducherry, Cuddalore, Chidambaram, Tiruchi, Madhavaram terminus, Andhra Pradesh, Salem, Kumbakonam and Tiruvannamalai, and CMBT, East Coast Road, Kancheepuram, Vellore, Bengaluru and Thiruttani. People travelling by



private transport have been requested to drive through the Thiruporur - Chengalpattu route or the Vandulur - Outer Ring Road route to avoid traffic congestion on Grand Southern Trunk Road, Tambaram and Perungalathur regions, said a release.

Reservation counters

To help passengers book their tickets, nine reservation counters have been set up on the premises of KCBT and CMBT till January 13.

The counters will function from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Public can also book the tickets online through www.tnsc.in and on the official app of Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation.

The numbers

To know about bus routes and register service complaints, the

public can contact the number 94450 14436 (24X7).

To register complaints against fleecing Omni bus operators, public can call 044 24749002, 044 26280445, 044 - 26281611, and a toll-free number 1800 425 6151.

For the passengers' safety, a control room has been set up on the premises of the Kilambakkam bus terminus, which will function round the clock. Besides, 'May I Help You' booths (buses and routes) have been set up in the terminuses.

The public must use the reservation counters and app, and online facilities for safe and hassle-free travel.

Metropolitan Transport Corporation will operate connecting buses from the Koyambedu bus terminus round the clock to reach the other two bus terminuses.

Veedhi Viruthu Vizha 2025 held at Velammal Nexus



Velammal Nexus in collaboration with the Alternative Media Centre, presented the 12th edition of the vibrant Veedhi Viruthu Vizha on January 4 and 5, 2025.

This cultural extravaganza aims to recognise, revive and promote Indian traditional art forms.

The event was inaugurated at Velammal Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Mogappair East with great enthusiasm in the presence of Col. Prof. N. S. Santhosh Kumar, Vice Chancellor of TNDALU, M. V. M. Velmohan, Correspondent of Velammal Nexus, Prof. R. Kaleeshwaran, Founder of the Alternative Media Centre, Nasar, President of the Nadigar Sangam, says a press release.

The festival featured mesmerising performances of Tamil Nadu's traditional folk arts, including Karagattam, Poikkal Kuthirai, Paraiyatram, and Oyilattam. These distinct cultural expressions were brought to life with vibrant colours and rich, resonant music, creating a truly immersive experience, the release adds.

In addition to the entertainment, the event also honoured Tamil cinema's trendsetters who have made significant contributions by conveying social awareness messages through their films, thus educating the public on important social causes, says the release.

Humour Club meets today

Members of Anna Nagar Humour Club will have their first meeting for 2025 on January 12 at Shri Krishnaswamy Vidhyashram 2, Vaigai Colony, Anna Nagar West at 4 p.m.

Rangadurai Ramanujam, retired DGM of BSNL, will be the guest of honour.

For details, call Hariharan (president) 90802 55081 or Balu (secretary) 97910 80791.

Reliance launches electrolyte drink

Reliance Consumer Products Limited (RCPL) has launched a beverage product under the brand called RasKik Gluco Energy, an energy boosting and rehydrating drink. According to a press release, it is packed with electrolytes, glucose and lemon juice and is priced of ₹10 per single-serve SKU. The other flavours include: mango, apple, mixed fruit, and coconut water. This marks RCPL's entry into the rehydration segment, adds the release.

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