

T. NAGAR

Saidapet » West Mambalam » Vadapalani » Porur » Kattupakkam » Irungattukottai » Nungambakkam » Manapakkam » Ashok Nagar » Valasaravakkam

Gerugambakkam » Mangadu » Choolaimedu » Egmore » K K Nagar » Kodambakkam » Virugambakkam » Somangalam » Poonamallee » Chetpet



CHEMBARAMBAKKAM LAKE HAS A RARE VISITOR

The previous documented sighting of a dollarbird in Chennai was at Guindy National Park in 2016; as far as the city goes, this species is among the rarest of rare passage migrants. **P2**



SUSTAINABILITY IN A NUTSHELL

Kamarkat Srinivas and his team give out-of-work coconut shells a fresh new start in kitchens, cafes and restaurants. **P6**

Duraisamy subway: messy once again



Residents who depend on Duraisamy subway for navigation dread the monsoon as this facility always gets flooded. This time was no exception.

On November 30, Duraisamy subway was closed to light vehicles due to waterlogging caused by Cyclone Fungal.

The carriageway on the lane towards T. Nagar is battered and sports a trail of potholes.

R. Murali Balaji, a motorcyclist, says, "Because of the water dripping through the cracked ceiling, the subway is always slippery."

Even the walkways need attention.

G. Pavithra Giridharan, a pedestrian, says, "The walkway is slippery. The water drips from the cracked ceiling and the walls. Many of the lights are non-functional for years. GCC must lower the height of the stormwater drain manhole lids on the walkway as pedestrians can trip over them due to poor illumination."

Text: T.S. Atul Swaminathan

Be our chronicler



It is the fag end of the year, a time to look back on the year that is ebbing away, and greet the one that is looking at us fresh-faced, a smile of optimism glittering in its eyes. At *The Hindu Downtown*, this sense of reflection and expectation is further amplified by the fact that the hyperlocal supplement crosses another milestone: it celebrates its twenty-sixth anniversary. On this occasion, it urges residents welfare associations across

Chennai, many of which stand for the values *The Hindu Downtown* espouses and promotes, to chronicle their achievements in the year that went by and their expectations for the approaching year. The write-ups will be carried in the December 29 year-end issue. They can send the write-ups to downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in



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SHOWROOM INAUGURATION BY

KARAMBAKKAM Shri. K. GANAPATHI, M.L.A
Member of Maduravoyal Constituency

LIGHTING OF THE LAMP BY

Shri. S. SANKAR GANESH
151st Ward Council Member, Porur

Smt. SHANTHI RAMALINGAM
153rd Ward Council Member, Porur

FIRST SALE BY

Shri. T. KALIYASUNDARAM
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A dollarbird photographed from different angles by Saravanan Manian and S. Sivakumar at Chembarambakkam lake on December 15, 2024; and (below) the three birders (from left to right) S. Sivakumar, Saravanan Manian and S. Sathyakumar.



Chembarambakkam lake has a rare visitor

The previous documented sighting of a dollarbird in Chennai was at Guindy National Park in 2016; as far as the city goes, this species is among the rarest of rare passage migrants

PRINCE FREDERICK

The birding community's relationship with any rare passage migrant is best outlined by the connection with an estranged, implacably bitter friend. If a meeting happens, it would be unplanned and fleeting. Often, the chasm would have grown wider than a hippo's fully extended maw, the last interaction would be as removed from memory as the star Earendel from earth, that when a chance encounter does materialise, the person might go unrecognised at first sight.

On the morning of December 15, 2024, at the Chembarambakkam lake, an Oriental dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*), at first clasp of a pair of eyes, did not cause a sharp intake of breath. Instead, it caused the viewer's brow to be knitted in mystified concentration.

Two brothers, S. Sathyakumar

and S. Sivakumar and their common friend Saravanan Manian had been poking around (as only birders can) in a moderately wooded section caressing the outer perimeter of the Chembarambakkam lake.

That is when this dollarbird fell on Sathyakumar's eyes, magnified by his binoculars. He saw the bird perched on a tree, but did not "see" it for what it was. He dismissed it as a parakeet explaining the bluish-green tint as a filter effect engineered by the early morning light. A doubt creeping closely on the heels of this judgement, he asked himself if he was missing something.

He sidestepped the idea of raising this question with the other two birders, fearing they would mock him with friendly laughter for failing to call a parakeet a parakeet. Derisive laughter gift-wrapped in friendliness can sometimes have the effect of friendly fire, unintended but still deadly.



"I came around to asking Saravanan to look at the bird through his camera viewfinder. He clicked it. It turned out to be a dollarbird," says Sathyakumar with a half-suppressed laugh.

Birds generally get identified much before they are fully seen. A cursory look at a part of the bird – a diagnostic feature in ornithology speak – is all it takes to realise what the rest of it looks like. And out pops the bird's name. They call it GISS. With rare passage migrants, GIFF hardly works, especially when the bird has not showed up for extended periods of time. These birders travel far to bird, and they have seen the dollarbird in its wintering ground in Kerala. Else, the identification would have been

The dollarbird was seen hanging around this place for around three hours

much delayed.

The last sighting of a dollarbird in Chennai was in 2016 at Guindy National Park: that is a long period of "estrangement" from the city.

As is the case with any active migrant, the dollarbird is a "polyglot", flexing diametrically polar linguistic muscles between its breeding and wintering grounds.

Its introduction to language is either in Australia or Japan – its prominent breeding grounds – and when it comes of age and can fly to escape inclement winter, it picks up Sinhalese and Malayalam in its wintering grounds.

Given the trajectory of its route from its breeding grounds to its wintering grounds, it has to veer really off course to end up at Chennai – which explains the scant records.

And local birders subconsciously train their brain not to look for this bird – which is not the case with the chestnut winged cuckoo

(CWC), also a passage migrant but one that clearly works Chennai into its winter tour diary. CWC has become a box waiting to be ticked every winter in Chennai.

A wooded patch

The dollarbird is a creature at home in wooded habitats and is associated with Western ghats, particularly Thattekad. This patch at Chembarambakkam lake is generously endowed with wood and, to state something as obvious as sunlight on a sunny day, has plenty of water to offer. The dollarbird was seen hanging around this place for around three hours, as Sathyakumar reports.

"During winter, this patch offers many feathers, including the Indian pitta, orange-headed thrush, blue-throated flycatcher, forest wagtail and Asian paradise flycatcher. On that Sunday, we found none of these. But one sighting of the dollarbird made up for it."

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Rainwater stays put on foot overbridge in Nungambakkam

The sheltered foot overbridge connecting to Nungambakkam railway station sports stagnant water after rains.

Pedestrians have to tip-toe around the stagnant water on the walkway.

The walking surface is consid-

erably reduced due to the stagnation.

Provisions should be created to drain the water on to the road below.

P. Rajalakshmi
Ambattur

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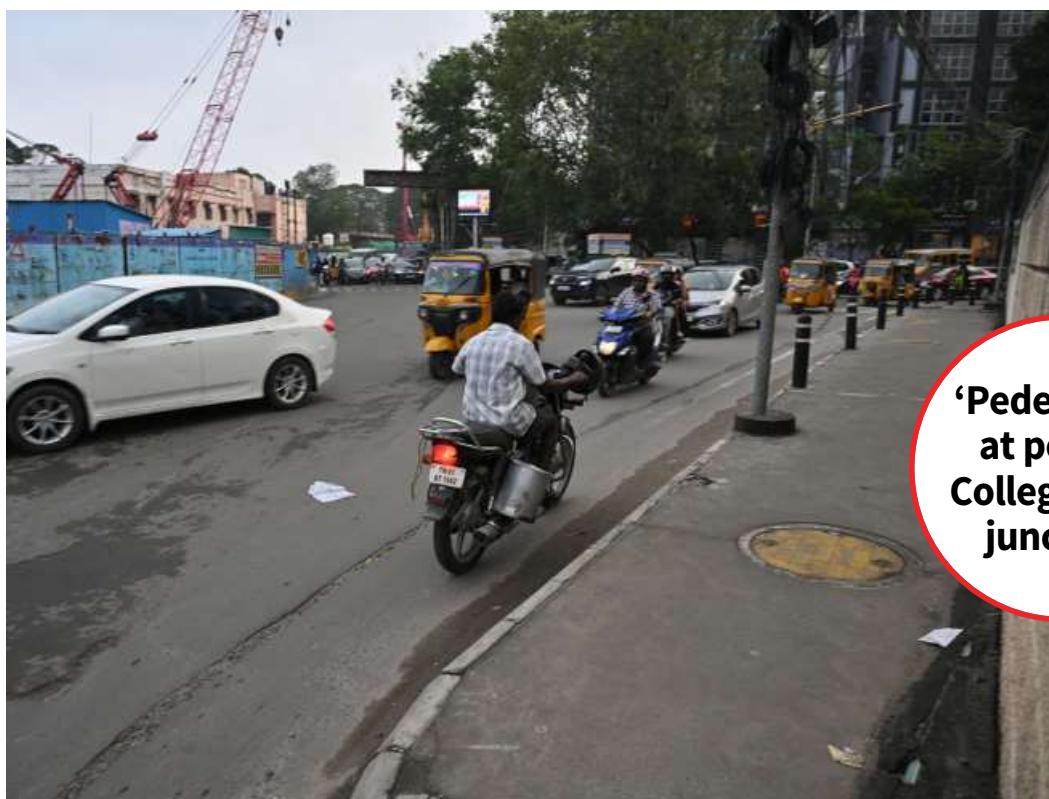
Letters must carry the postal address and contact number.

'Construction materials obstruct flow of water'



rains. Construction materials including bricks, rods, sand and poles stocked near Kausikam Flats at the street adds to the waterlogging problem.

P. Balakrishnan
T. Nagar



Traffic violation at College Road junction.
PHOTOS:
SRINATH M



Pedestrians find it extremely difficult to cross the road at the junction of Valluvarkottam High Road, Sterling Road and College Road. This junction witnesses continuous flow of vehicles and it has got blind turns. Here, a pedestrian signal is required and traffic police personnel need to be deployed. The junction also witnesses violation of rules by way of wrong-side driving.

Kripasagar J,
Chetpet

RAJALAKSHMI V.

Every Saturday, a group of theatre artists transform public parks and living rooms into rehearsal spaces, where lines are perfected and performances take shape. At the heart of this group is Simon Roy D.S., a 24-year-old who juggles a full-time job as an investment banker and his passion for acting, mime, screenwriting and direction. He leads Nadigan Daa, a two-year-old theatre group.

With over 20 core members, Nadigan Daa has working professionals and college students. The team stages plays, conducts workshops for theatre and mime enthusiasts, including training students at Stella Maris College. A memorable collaboration with the college was during International Women's Day 2024, where students of Social Work Department performed a street play for a self-help group.

"I was fascinated by mime from my middle-school days at St. Vincent's Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Aminjikarai, where we were encouraged a lot. Later, at Loyola College, I served as the cultural secretary of the Commerce Association from 2019 to 2020. During that time, I performed in over 100 theatre productions and helped secure 12 overall championships. After graduation, I wanted to create my own team to support small-time artistes like me, alongside my work as a judge for college events. That is how Nadigan Daa came to life," explains Simon.

Simon loves to be invited as judge for events as he gets to scout for new talent; some of them eventually join his group.

The plays staged by Nadigan Daa draw much of its inspiration from real life events and social issues, often using them as the foundation for the screenplays.

"One of my works, *Kalai*, was inspired by the multi-talented Jyothikalai, a differently-abled



Keeping it real

musician. It was a challenging project because it required extensive research to authentically portray a real-life story. I always strive for this level of authenticity in my work, as many of my stories are based on true events," says Simon.

Some of his well-known works include 'Confused Kadhal' and 'Payanigalin Kanivana Gavanathirku', the latter being a recent production. "Payanigalin Kanivana Gavanathirku was based on a personal experience when a friend left his keys in his vehicle. We panicked searching for them, only to find the keys right there in the bike. I wanted to write a story that captured that moment of chaos and realisation," he says.

Nadigan Daa performs charity shows at day-care centres and old-age homes. "We are not profit-driven," Simon says. "Most of us have full-time jobs and theatre

Ahead of his theatre group's play today in the city to raise funds for teachers from low-income schools, Simon Roy D.S. discusses the journey so far

is a passion for us. Not every member is available every weekend, so we practise with the available people, often using a dummy to fill in for missing actors.

Our practice sessions start months before a show. In the days leading up to an event, we also make use of early morning practice slots. We do not have an office or studio, so rehearse in parks like Anna Nagar Tower Park or Bougainvillea Park, or even on our terraces."

Simon credits fellow theatre

artist Maya Krishnan for guiding him in shaping his work. "I have always been fascinated by Maya's performances, especially Kindhan Charithram," he says.

A particularly memorable moment for Simon came during a recent show, when an artiste from Bangalore, who had missed all the

During a rehearsal; and images from Payanigalin Kanivana Gavanathirku.

PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

practice sessions, managed to attend the performance despite arriving late and being ill. "It is a team effort where every member's contribution is crucial. From the draft of the storyline to the final show, it is all about the collective effort to capture the audience's attention," Simon recalls.

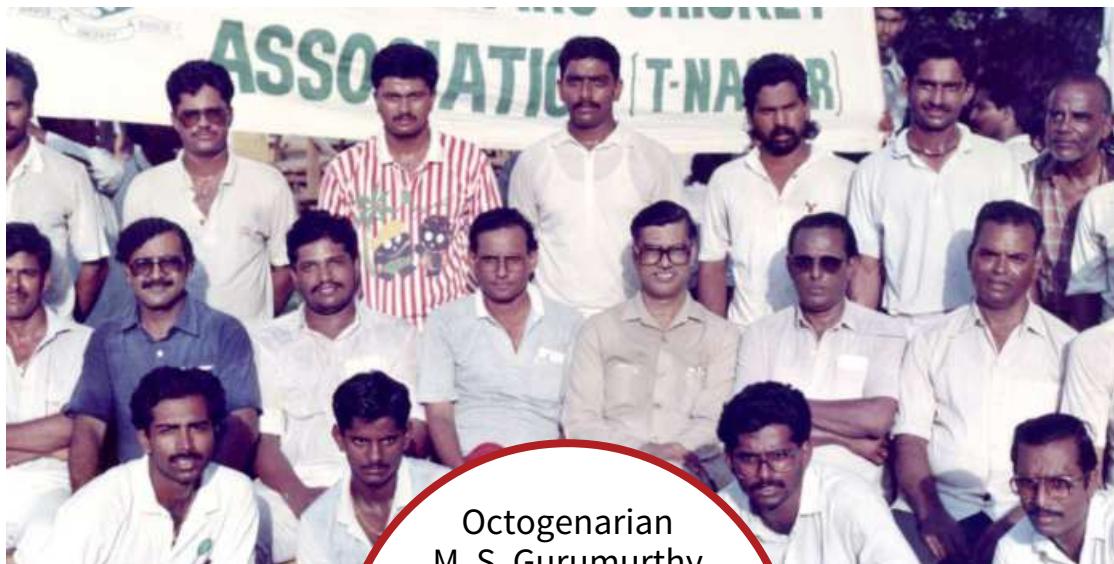
When asked what advice he would give to aspiring performing artists, Simon says, "Make sure you have financial stability through a paying job and pursue acting alongside it. The team you are part of also plays a major role in your success."

On December 22, Nadigan Daa, in collaboration with the Bhumi Foundation, will stage a play to raise funds for teachers from low-income schools, supporting their mental well-being.

The play is being staged at the Foundation's office in Alwarpet. For details, call 73582 18673



A gutsy and long innings



TARUN SHAstry

Octogenarian M. S. Gurumurthy is the driving force behind Young Stars Cricket Association and the tournament that takes its name

What do cricketing legends Gundappa Vishwanath, Syed Kirmani, Rahul Dravid, Javagal Srinath, Venkatesh Prasad, R. Ashwin and Dinesh Karthik, among others, have in common other than the fact that they have all excelled for the country at the highest level? All these players have competed

in the Young Stars Cricket Association (YSCA) Trophy, a tournament that began way back in 1970. It has

been held for 54 years (barring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Octogenarian M. S. Gurumurthy is the driving force behind YSCA as well as the competition. He has devoted a significant portion of his life to assisting young people in realising their aspiration of turning professional cricketers.

"We started the YSCA tournament back in 1970. There was no private competition at that time.



From the *The Hindu Archives*; and (right) YSCA skipper V. Naveenkumar receives the G.R. Kuppuswamy memorial trophy from former India player Hemang Badani.; M.S. Gurumurthy is on the left.

The growing interest in cricket helped the YSCA Trophy become popular. There are quite a few top players from the country who have been part of the YSCA journey. This is the only private tournament to be recognised by the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association," Gurumurthy told *The Hindu*.

On conducting tours for the YSCA students, Gurumurthy said, "I wanted the boys to gain exposure and raise their game. Just because they train in the nets every day doesn't mean their game has improved. The more matches they

play, the better for their progress. That's why we started organising tours as they would help them gain match awareness." Incidentally, the boys had gone on a tour of Kerala recently.

"I want to thank the TNCA for the big support in helping me conduct the YSCA Trophy and also the tours. The TNCA's encouragement has been immense in our journey," said Gurumurthy. Given his passion and commitment to the game, there is no doubt that the YSCA flame will keep burning for years to come.

Skill development programme held



The Department of English and other Foreign Languages, Faculty of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Ramapuram campus organised a comprehensive Skill Development Programme on topic "Skirmishes and Tenacities in Effective English Communication" recently. The event aimed at enhancing the English communication skills of the participants.

The chief guest, Bharath N, a Learning and Development Analyst at Accenture Solutions Pt. Ltd., shared his extensive knowledge and experience in the field of learning and development, focusing on overcoming challenges and building resilience in effective English communication. Bharath's insightful address provided valuable strategies and practical tips to the attendees, which included students and faculty members, fostering an interactive and engaging learning environment, says a press release.

Rotaract Club of Stella Maris brings joy to specially abled children

The Rotaract Club of Stella Maris College organised Project Prathibha'24, a cultural extravaganza for specially abled children, under the guidance of faculty coordinators Evangel Aazhima and Indumathi.

The event was led by president Lincy Catherine, secretary Ashley Rose and chairpersons Pavithra, Nancy Thomas and Aro Nisticca, with seamless coordination by board members and volunteers, says a press release.

The event was inaugurated by Rtn. Muthu P., president of the Rotary Club of Madras East, as the chief guest, and Rtr. Sasi Kumar, District Rotaract Representative of RID 3234, as the guest of honour.

The participants hailed from prominent institutions, including MGR Home & Higher Secondary School for the Speech & Hearing Impaired, The Clarke School for Children with Special Needs, and Avvai Kapagam, the release notes.

Project Prathibha'24 featured a variety of on-stage and off-stage events designed to showcase the children's creativity and enthusiasm – Soulful Echoes (Group Singing); Dance Your Heart Out



(Group Dance); Craft Corner (Art & Craft); Sketching Smiles (Drawing) and Walk the Dream (Fancy Dress).

The highlight of the day was Walk the Dream, where children dressed in colourful costumes,

portraying their dreams, favourite characters, and creative ideas. Every participant was awarded medals and certificates, ensuring all children felt equally valued and appreciated for their efforts, the release adds.

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Kamarkat Srinivasan. That name would likely spark a glint of recognition in the eyes, if the reader is from Chennai, salivates over traditional healthy sweets, is a card-carrying follower of veganism and pops in at organic food markets.

With a surfeit of traditional sweets on his food enterprise Kottivakkam-based Marabhu Suvai's *carte du jour*, R. Srinivasan – to whom that sweet-sounding moniker (pun intended) belongs – offers something beyond the norm for the sweet tooth.

And he also offers a novelty to the hand that wields cutlery – spoons and ladles finely crafted from coconut shells. This pursuit has in fact, put his sweets-making business in the shade – in the shade of coconut trees. His enterprise, SN Crafts makes spoons, ladles and customised teapots with coconut shells allied with handles made of teak and pine wood. Surveying these products, one is left in no doubt about which element has star billing: it is the humble coconut shell, with all the other elements smugly content playing a supportive role to it.

If the reader has not made the connection yet, Kamarkat candy, typically made from the rich, fragrant flesh of the coconut, led Srinivasan to appreciate everything associated with *cocos nucifera*, even what would qualify as chaff. The coconut shells left behind after the meat is grated for making Kamarkat and other coconut-based sweets, caught his fancy.

For nearly five years now, he has devoted himself to upcycling these shells, giving them a fresh start, a second career in kitchens and cafes; and also a place in homes. The coconuts are cherry-picked, with only mature, organic country-breed coconuts chosen for the candy, leaving the shells to be repurposed for his ladles and spoons. On the supply chain are farmers from Papanickenpalayam in Coimbatore and Udu malpet in Tirupur, and at home, an organisation in Adyar with a sprawling campus dotted with 200 coconut trees.

Srinivasan's approach to sustainability, as exemplified by his enterprise, might hark back to the traditional homegrown wisdom of reusing and repurposing,



Kamarkat Srinivasan and his team give out-of-work coconut shells a fresh new start in kitchens, cafes and restaurants



Sustainability in a nutshell



A glimpse of the factory.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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

but is driven by a fiercely modern sense of innovation.

Srinivasan's father-in-law, a skilled carpenter, was instrumental in helping him create customised machinery to carve the shapes of the ladles and spoons, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation. Kamarkat Srinivasan and his business partner Nagarajan Mani took it a couple of notches higher: spending one year in further customisation of the machinery.

The challenges
For Srinivasan, the production



process is efficient when all materials, which include wooden teak handles for the ladles, copper or aluminium rivet and wire brush are readily available.

For example, making 50 ladles in just half a day becomes possible when all the materials are sourced from wholesale traders in Parrys, particularly Kandaswamy Koil Street. He also sources some of the materials from

Moore Market, which is a part of Chennai's circular economy. When they receive large orders – such as the maximum of 300 ladles – they can make them in just eight hours if all the materials are at hand.

Srinivasan used to source coconut shells from Nagarajan Rao until the latter was operating a business named Farmcoop in Mandaveli. Nagarajan who turned his back on selling coconut-based discards for recycling and upcycling, sheds light on the challenges faced by such businesses:

"We started collecting coconut shells during COVID-19, but practical issues, pests and lack of storage space made it difficult. With 100 to 300 houses involved, we could not find land for collection. Plus, not everyone had coconut shells to offer."

The lack of processing facilities in Chennai also hindered progress. "Without proper infrastructure, making the initiative sustainable became tough," he adds.

Nagarajan Rao hopes to make a comeback to the coconut-based sustainability business: "The dream is still alive, but it requires the right resources to thrive."



EVENTS



War of DJs 2024 held at lounge in Thoraipakkam

War of DJs 2024 - Epic Night was conducted at Zebra Crossing Lounge in Thoraipakkam recently by Chiroptera Events.

In a competition that showcased an array of talented DJs, DJ Loki emerged as the ultimate winner, captivating the crowd with a power-packed set that had everyone on their feet. His seamless transitions and energy-infused beats created an exhilarating ambience, showcasing his prowess in blending different genres.

The audience responded enthusiastically, highlighting his ability to read the crowd and maintain a high level of engagement throughout his performance, says a press release.

Runner-up DJ Desmo im-

pressed attendees with his professional track selection and meticulous mixing skills. His commitment to delivering an immersive auditory experience was evident, as he expertly crafted a set that resonated with both seasoned fans and newcomers. The precision in his mixing and the overall flow of his performance solidified his reputation as a serious contender in the competitive DJ scene, the release adds.

Also deserving recognition was DJ Vasanth (Runner up), who entertained the crowd with a lineup of popular commercial tracks. His impressive technical skills and smooth mixing not only kept the audience engaged but also created an infectious energy that had everyone dancing. The positive reception to his set de-

mnonstrated his understanding of the audience's tastes and preferences, making him a crowd favourite.

DJ Sam rounded out the evening, showcasing a diverse range of tracks that appealed to all. His ability to mix various styles seamlessly allowed the crowd to experience a little bit of everything, maintaining a laid-back yet festive atmosphere.

The camaraderie among the DJs and the exhilarating performances turned the event into a night to remember. Other finalists DJ Raan, DJ Kash, DJ KL did an amazing job and deserves applauds, special thanks is due to DJ Elvin, DJ Ashish Nagpal and DJ Raw Z for being amazing judges for the event, the release says.

Founders Day celebrated

Be Well Founders Day, led by Dr. C.J. Vetrievvel, celebrated unity and social welfare with impactful events: tree plantation at Dr. Natesan Park with dignitaries, a free health camp and lunch at Charu Old Age Home, a blood donation camp with VHS Blood Centre, and essential item distribution to underprivileged families, says a press release.

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Rotary Club unveils tower clock at school in Egmore



Rotary Club of Madras T. Nagar unveiled a tower clock at Don Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Egmore.

According to a press release, the tower is a symbol of Rotary's commitment to community service.

The clock is installed at the main gate so that it is visible to the general public.

Mahaveer Bothra, district



governor of Rotary International District 3233, took part in the event, adds the press release.

Stray dogs vaccinated



by A P Nambi, former professor at Tamil Nadu Veterinary & Animal Sciences University, and honorary member of the Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board.

Bhuvana Rajaram and K. Rajaraman feed stray dogs in Giri Road, New Giri Road, Paul Appasamy Street, Habibullah Road, and Vidyodaya First Street and Vidyodaya Second Street, adds the press release.

Resident of T Nagar – Shilpa Bothra, Bhuvana Rajaram and K. Rajaraman carried out a vaccination drive for stray dogs at Habibullah Road. According to a press release, around 30 stray dogs were administered anti-rabies and DHPP 9-in-1 vaccination.

A team comprising four veterinary doctors and five dog catchers assisted the operation. The exercise was supported

Eight-day drama festival from December 25

Dummies Drama, a Tamil theatre troupe, in association with Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan - Chennai Kendra is presenting an eight-day drama festival from December 25 to January 1 at Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram School in Kilpauk. Time: At 7 p.m. Entry is free, says a press release. For details, call 9381422271.

The troupe which completed its silver jubilee in 2023 was founded by Sreevathson V, R Giridharan, and G Krishnamurthy.

It has more than 50 productions to its credit which is spread across a variety of genres such as science and technology, docudramas, philosophy, comedy and family dramas. Some of its unique productions are *Prathibimbam*, a political thriller based on the Indo-China relationship; *Vaidyashala*, a play set in medical industry, *Valai*, a corporate espionage thriller; and *Hanuman*, a story set in ISRO.

For details, call 93814 22271.

Blood donation camp

SG People Trust in association with Sanjeev Blood Donation Bank is conducting a blood donation camp on December 28 at Lovik Digital Famed, Krishna Nagar Main Road, Madhanapuram near Porur. Time: From 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. For details, call 7871170736

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