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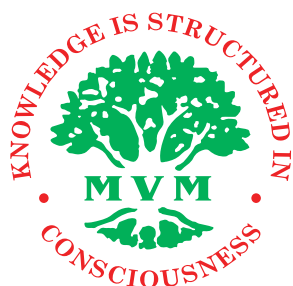
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Relay the ‘earthen strips’ on ECR Link Road

The vertical patches had earlier been opened up for CMWSSB work that is now complete. With Metro Rail work now stretching down ECR Link Road, these patches have to be relaid soon



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

An idea from ancient seafaring that has infiltrated the workaday conversations of land lubbers is “walking the plank”. Forget for a moment its connotation in the modern context and just visualise the act of walking the plank itself, of walking gingerly on an extremely narrow wooden plank that extends into the sea. Superimpose that image on ECR Link Road – to be precise, on two sections of that road impacted now by Metro Rail and CMWSSB work.

Take section one, which stretches from the Sholinganallur junction to the discontinued tollgate.

Metro Rail boards run down the spine of this section. Except for the space in the middle taken up by the Metro Rail roads, the two carriageways are intact. However, the car-

This carriageway was subjected to digging on account of a massive CMWSSB pipeline work. With the work having been completed, the massive trench has been closed with earth and made available for vehicular traffic

riageway for vehicles moving towards Akkarai from Sholinganallur junction is narrower than the other. This carriageway was subjected to digging on account of a massive CMWSSB pipeline work. With the work having been completed, the massive trench has been closed with earth and made available for vehicular traffic.

However, as is the usual tenden-

cy of motorists, they gravitate towards the strip with the bitumen top and avoid this earthen strip when they can. The result is that the used (and useable) section is as narrow as the plank from ancient seafaring. To ease traffic movement on this carriageway, the earthen strip needs to be relaid soon.

On section number two, which stretches from the ECR Link Road-TNHB Road junction to the discontinued tollgate, vehicular traffic moving both ways is routed through one carriageway. The other carriageway is closed on account of ongoing CMWSSB work. On what is now the functional carriageway, CMWSSB work was completed sometime ago, and the trench filled up with earth. This earthen strip also needs to be relaid to ensure motorists have greater latitude and traffic snarls are avoided during rush hour.



Two sections of ECR Link Road that need to be relaid for better traffic movement. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

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CYCLING AND RUNNING IN THE SHADOW OF INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cyclists and runners are known to weave through stranded vehicular traffic. But the massive infrastructure-related works sweeping through the city have meant they are now stuck too. **P4**



IS PERUMBAKKAM WETLAND WITNESSING A PREMATURE CLOSE TO THE MIGRATORY SEASON?

A vast section of the wetland has dried up, and avian presence is dropping sharply. Not too long ago, the season would end in gradual waves. **P2**

Renovated Hasthinapuram terminus still low on amenities

Recently, MTC buses started plying from the terminus

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Commuters are not absolutely impressed with the renovated Hasthinapuram bus terminus. The facility reopened recently. Except for the cement flooring, placing stainless steel roofs and illumination facilities, no other work seems to have been undertaken, commuters point out.

Last year, the terminus was temporarily shifted to Gayathri Nagar to facilitate maintenance work, undertaken under the Member of Legislative Assembly (Pallavaram) Local Area Development Fund.

The terminus lacks seating facility and drinking water. The washrooms are unhygienic. As in the past, the terminus is a resting area for cattle.

"On February 20, I stood for half an hour to board M52H (Hasthinapuram - Pozhichalur)," says R. Krithika Ramachandran, working in an

airline company. She says stench from the toilet was unbearable.

Trash is dumped in the area along the bus bays. Commuters want the area along the bus bays to be spruced up and a timekeeper office opened. A bus pass renewal centre is also essential.

Snapshots of the terminus.
PHOTO: SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT



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A view of the southern side of the Perumbakkam wetland on February 22, 2024. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

Is Perumbakkam wetland witnessing a premature close to the migratory season?

A vast section of the wetland has dried up, and avian presence is dropping sharply. Not too long ago, the season would end in gradual waves

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A view of the southern side of the Perumbakkam wetland, as mirrored in this picture clicked on February 22, 2024, belabours a point that is evident even to the superficial eye. Water dynamics at the Perumbakkam wetland have changed to the point that some sections are not sufficiently filled up at the height of the monsoon. On some sections, water drainage is far more quick with the result that migratory season is threatened with an abrupt halt.

As late as the second week of February, this patch of the wetland was hosting a huge diversity of ducks and waders. And suddenly, the picture morphed into something suggesting that a giant eraser swept through the land and smudged the picture to a point of unrecognition. The waders are now largely concentrated in the northern section that retains some water.

If this pattern continues to persist in the future and the curtains come down on the migratory season prematurely, certain implications for the wetland cannot be avoided. The migrants would become

instinctively alive to the truncated seasons hosted by the Perumbakkam wetland and look elsewhere for relative permanence and stability to their winter sojourn.

Even the non-migrants such as the greater flamingoes which traditionally bring proceedings to a close when the wetland sports shallow waters would give the wetland a miss. In fact, the flamingoes are conspicuous by their absence in the Perumbakkam wetland at this time of the year. It is indeed highly possible they would give the wetland a total miss and a just a clutch of them would put in an appearance.

The ruff moves over to 'the other side'



A flock of ruffs on the northern side of the Perumbakkam Wetland on February 22, 2024; and below, ruffs on the southern side on February 6, 2024. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

On the Perumbakkam wetland, the ruff was habituated to the southern side (which can be viewed from Classic Farm Main Road). The bird would take to the shallows and from time to time launch into a smaller wader in an air of belligerent territoriality. And when a bigger wader (such as the black-tailed godwit) would enter the frame, it would morph into a pacifist. During recent migratory seasons, the ruff has been unable to display the full panoply of behaviours. And it no longer chooses its patch. The water flow dynamics at Perumbakkam wetland having changed dramatically, and the water level dropping at the rate of knots, in the last few days, the ruff has been showing up on the extreme end of the northern side (viewable from Semmozhi Salai). In the past, the water would fill up in the wetland and drain with a degree of uniformity that much of the extremities on the southern side will have enough shallows for the ruff to stick to till the end of the season. Not anymore.



From an album just two weeks old



Little stints go into a tizzy over a patch on the southern side of the Perumbakkam wetland on February 05, 2024. By the third week of February, this patch began to look as dry as a bone. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK



The stormwater drain network at Chromepet region.
Photo: Special Arrangement

‘Check sewage discharge into Veeraraghavan Eri’

Despite having an underground drainage system in Chromepet, it is as good as non-existent, say residents.

The stormwater drain network on GST Road, which runs along Chromepet Government Hospital-Durga Nagar -Tambaram Sanatorium, discharges waste water to Veeraraghavan Eri.

This contaminates the lake, forcing residents to buy water cans or depend on RO plants. The stormwater drain network, which should carry rainwater, has become a sewer network, says V. Santhanam, founder and president of People's Awareness Association, Chromepet.

The network is a health hazard and a breeding ground for mosquitoes. “As a result, Veeraraghavan Eri is engulfed by water hyacinth and is not able to store rainwater, causing flooding,” adds Santhanam.

Santhanam says the stormwater drain network along GH is stagnant with sewage, and the Tambaram City Municipal Corporation has taken no action till date.

“Illegal sewage inlets should be plugged, and the civic body should punish people who discharge sewage into the network,” says Santhanam.

Text: T.S. Atul Swaminathan

An ‘open threat’ in Hasthinapuram

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

An open drain at Kakkan Street and Haridossapuram Main Road in Hasthinapuram are posing a risk to pedestrians and motorists. As these images show, motorists and pedestrians using these roads have to be extremely cautious.

V. Sivakumar, a resident of Hasthinapuram, says, “Years ago, the erstwhile Pallavapuram Municipality covered the upper and side portions of the network with slabs and boundary walls. Continuous sewage discharge from the homes to the network caused flooding, and the slabs and the walls broke. A portion of the road is also damaged. Last month, a speeding four-wheeler fell into the drain and was lifted using ropes. Students of two educational institutions in Chitlapakkam region walk and cycle to school.”

Apart from sewage discharge, the residents dump trash in the network, preventing water flow. Waste water from the network flows into Nemilichery Eri, contaminating the groundwater and the lake water.

“The Corporation should plug the illegal sewer connections. The open drain network poses a health hazard and creates a breeding ground for mosquitoes, says R. Manoharan, a resident.

Complaints to Tambaram City Municipal Corporation have not yielded a response.



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Cycling and running in the shadow of infrastructural development

Cyclists and runners are known to weave through stranded vehicular traffic. But the massive infrastructure-related works sweeping through the city have meant they are now stuck too



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

'A break from cycling'

Vicky Siva, a core team member of cycling group WCCG - Chennai Cyclists, used to cycle twice a day from his home in Pallikaranai to his workplace in Thiruvannamiyur. Along with many other cyclists from the region, he has taken a break from cycling. Chennai Metro Rail work chug-chugged into the region, cycling has taken a back seat.

Vicky notes that during the pandemic WCCG noticed interest in cycling. Its chapters increased. "Now, people hesitate to take their cycles out because of safety reasons on the road. Concerns over safety is high on OMR and Porur," says Vicky. "The OMR chapter, for instance, had close to 50 active cyclists. Now, it has reduced to 10."

East Coast Road, a favourite hangout for most fitness groups, poses its own set of challenge with bottlenecks on some of the stretches.

As the lane on ECR dedicated to cycling in the morning hours on Saturday and Sunday ceases to exist, motivation to head to this road for cycling has dwindled.

"We understand that infrastructure work is important for the city and will take time but at least ensure there is no wrong-side driving, levy hefty fines on such motorists," says Vicky.

'Safety in numbers'

"As a group, we have considerably reduced the number of long-distance runs. We have not been to Marina Beach for a run for

months," says Revathy Balakrishnan, a member of Boat Club Dreamers since 2015.

Infrastructure work, lack of safety on roads and fear of dogs are among reasons running as a group has lost its charm.

Recently, Revathy's friend was almost hit by a speeding taxi on the Kotturpuram bridge. "There is safety in numbers, so if we do not have enough people to run then I would prefer hitting the roads within Boat Club Area," says Revathy, a resident of Nandanam.

"Chamiers Road was a favourite 'running track' for the group. Now we avoid taking that road as it has reduced considerably in width due to Metro work," she says.

Members run from Kotturpuram Tree Park to AMM Matriculation School, a distance of 1.3 km.

'Scaling down activities'

"Come what may, let us train hard, run far (and sometimes fast too) and have fun," says a note on Medavakkam Dreamers's page. Due to infrastructure work in their neck of the woods, this chapter of Dream Runners has scaled down its activities.

Major infrastructure work of is under way in the three sections – Mambakkam, Thoraipakkam-Pallavaram Radial Road and Sholling-

As a group, we have considerably reduced the number of long-distance runs



nallur – that it considers its stomping ground. "This year, we must have done two to three long-distance runs," says Rajesh Kumar, a resident of Perumbakkam.

Running groups explore new places to break the monotony but after the pandemic, the choices have become limited.

With restricted road width and vehicular traffic coming in the wrong direction, Rajesh says running on roads is almost impossible.

For the thrill of long-distance runs, members meet on Medavak-

kam-Velachery flyover. "The flyover is over 2 kilometres long and we do repeats," says Rajesh, adding that ECR is another option but getting there is time-consuming.

Radha Nagar Park is where all the running enthusiasts meet for training.

A good network of roads is required to keep the runners motivated to continue running, especially those new to the group.

'New meeting points'

For running groups from Porur, hit-

Members of Medavakkam Dreamers and (below) WCCG - Chennai Cyclists. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ting the road on weekends for a long-distance run (typically, 20-km long) meant meeting at Prestige Bellavista in Iyyapanthangal around 4.30 a.m. and heading to Besant Nagar or T. Nagar. The stretches were less crowded and there was the added advantage of meeting members of other running groups. "We are missing those routes now," says a resident of Iyyapanthangal. The route to Nandambakkam is also avoided.

Since November 2023, Kathipara Urban Square in Guindy is the new meeting point of this Porur-based running group. From here they head to Besant Nagar. "Changing the destination means we lose 30 minutes but that is the only way to continue with long-distance runs. As there is no Metro Rail work on this stretch, we find it convenient to run there," he says.

The runners have identified stretches in Kattupakkam (Oil Mill Road, Noombal Road and a stretch near Aravind Eye Hospital) and Porur Toll Road to continue with their running routine. But these stretches pose their own challenges. "For the two-km stretch near Aravind Eye Hospital, we have to be careful as stray dogs chase us. Likewise unless we are a large group we avoid the Porur Toll Road as mobile thefts have been reported from that section," he says.



The relaid section of 200 Ft Pallavaram Thoraipakkam Radial Road near the decommissioned tollgate and (below) a battered section of the road. PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B

Road in Thoraipakkam being relaid

The stretch of 200 Ft Pallavaram Thoraipakkam Radial Road near the decommissioned tollgate has at last been relaid. It comes as a huge relief to regulars frequenting the road and residents of the area. They want the other battered sections of the radial road to be relaid soon.



Reunion held at Tiruporur school



Students of 1996-97 batch of Nellikuppam Government Higher Secondary School, Tiruporur had a reunion at the school recently. According to press release, the alumni ensured the school building got painted at cost of ₹60,000. Further, they donated 10 fans and 20 tube-lights to the school. Teachers who had taught them were invited to the reunion.



Chennai bus app on Apple phone

Following requests from commuters, Metropolitan Transport Corporation has launched its Chennai bus app on iPhone Operating System.

The app, launched on May 4, 2022, for its fleet of buses having 'Automatic Vehicle Location' was initially available on Android mobiles.

Through the IOS version, people new to the city can get to know their location, the nearest halting points and the details of the route numbers.

On the IOS version, commuters can plan their trips and a SOS button has been facilitated.

Workshop on bee keeping

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on bee keeping on February 28. According to a press release, the session will demonstrate management of bee hives, harvesting honey and will teach about various types of honey bees. The session will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park at Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate in Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530049 / 29530048.

Mended road in Perumbakkam waits for street lights



College Road in Perumbakkam on February 21.

College Road in Perumbakkam, which had continued as a muddy stretch over a long period of time, received a bitumen surface recently. Residents seek reflectors at the median and street lights at the earliest. Besides, they want the nearby Nookampalayam Road to be relaid.

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