

T. NAGAR

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You can be our volunteer-writer

Dear readers, you can be our volunteer-writer by writing to us about issues and events in your neighbourhood. You should send the write-ups to downtownfeedback

@thehindu.co.in. Letters must carry the postal address and contact number

'Thirumoorthy Street plagued by sewage overflow'



Sewage overflow is a recurrent issue near SS Stores at Thirumoorthy Street which is off Thirumalai Road in T. Nagar.

For the past one month, there has been continual sewage overflow

Repeated complaints to the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board were to no avail. Besides, the road is battered.

J. Prince,
T. Nagar



Wrong side driving is a common sight on Dr. Ambedkar Road in Kodambakkam. The image was taken on December 13. PHOTO: AKHILA EASWARAN

'Lorry staying put on busy road in Virugambakkam'



A resident of Venkatesh Nagar Main Road in Virugambakkam sent this photo drawing attention to a lorry that has been parked on the road for six months. The resident notes that this road is busy, and this vehicle's presence is causing hindrance to traffic movement. Besides, the vehicle remains a screen for miscreants to carry on with unsavoury activities. The resident adds that authorities concerned should attend to this issue and have the vehicle towed away from that area.

Safety concerns on Dr. Ambedkar Road

Regulars at the junction of Karnan Street, Dr. Subburayan Nagar Fourth Street, and Dr. Ambedkar Road and the junction of Rathinammal Street and Dr. Ambedkar Road seek traffic signals. Both these junctions are busy and located close to each other.

Residents say the junctions become chaotic during rush hour. Traffic signals and speed breakers are therefore necessary.

They also raised the issue of

frequent occurrence of accidents on the section of Dr. Ambedkar Road that functions as a one-way for more than a year, aimed at facilitating metro rail construction on Arcot Road. Both these junctions fall within the one-way stretch of Dr. Ambedkar Road.

"There are many interior streets on both sides of Dr. Ambedkar Road. Violating safety rules, that is by driving on the wrong side of the road, motorists try to cross the road. This has

caused many accidents, including cases where the victims have sustained serious injuries. It should be noted that there are many schools in the vicinity. I have noticed people travelling triples on motorcycles. Besides, many continue to drive without helmets. Haphazard parking of vehicles adds to the problem. Only imposition of penalty will bring about a change," says a resident who wishes to remain anonymous.

Text: L. Kanthimathi

A 19-day celebration of Carnatic music

The magic of Mylapore is being recreated in Valasaravakkam through a 19-day Carnatic music extravaganza, beginning on December 18 and concluding on Ja-

nuary 5, 2025.

The event, to be held at Jyothi Indira Thirumana Mandapam in Valasaravakkam, promises to showcase young emerging talent in the sphere of Carnatic music.

On each of these days, the concerts would take place between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

The carefully curated lineup

features a diverse and inclusive range of Carnatic music, with artists from the United States and across Tamil Nadu, says a press release, adding that the platform is being offered to these talented musicians, free of charge.

Traditional cuisine

To complement the soulful music, the organisers have part-

nered with a leading caterer for supply of traditional food for lunch and dinner.

Entry is open to all. Date: December 18th, 2024 - January 5th, 2025

Time: 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Location: Jyothi Indira Thirumana Mandapam, Valasaravakkam
For details, call 9884997667

Alumni meet on December 21

The Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda College (RKMVC), Mylapore, shift - II, started in 1974 with 140 students, has completed its golden jubilee this year. More than 2,500 students have passed out of the institution from more than 10 degree courses.

To commemorate this milestone, the college is conducting an 'All Alumni Meet' for both shifts on the campus on December 21 between 3.30 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Interested alumni can register for this reunion on the college website rkmvc.ac.in.

The Grand Master of GLI, Gutha Krishnan Selvarajan; and (right) he is seen with T.N. Manoharan, Regional Grand Master of Southern India.



New Grand Master of Grand Lodge of India installed

Gutha Krishnan Selvarajan is the 19th Grand Master who will serve for a period of three years

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A new pair of freemason hands has taken over the reins of the Grand Lodge of India (GLI). Freemasons from dozens and dozens of lodges across the country descended upon Chennai Trade Centre on December 7 to witness and celebrate the installation of Gutha Krishnan Selvarajan as GLI's 19th Grand Master for a tenure running from 2024 to 2027. And he is taking the baton from Anish Kumar Sharma.

He is GKS to both freemasons and the wider world outside freemasonry's perimeter.

According to a press release shared with *The Hindu*, GKS is as multi-faceted a



personality inside the freemason movement as he is widely known to be in the larger world.

He has had various calling cards, as lawyer (particularly in the area of arbitration), as a bold entrepreneur not shying away from new challenges.

The release notes that he has forayed into real estate business and has many notable projects to his credit.

His association with freemasonry spans 42 years and he has held significant positions in both regional as well as the Grand Lodge, where he is now donning the biggest role possible.

GKS is an admirable ritualist with the rare ability to reproduce verbatim, pages and pages of rituals fluently without a flaw, says the release.

GKS was also instrumental in restoring the free masons hall at Ethiraj Salai way back in 2000. In recognition of his efforts in building freemasonry, he has had a lodge named after him, says the press release.

According to a note on

GLI's website, "The Grand Lodge of India, with the approval of the Grand Board of General Purposes, consecrated a Craft Lodge in the name of 'Lodge G.K.SELVARAJAN No.365' at Chennai on July 11, 2009."

During his tenure as Regional Grand Master of Southern India (from January 2005 to March 2008), GKS "introduced the innovative concept of Area Meetings for each Area under the ARGMs, to enable the Lodges to perform better and to strengthen the bond of brotherhood. This concept was followed not only by his successor Regional Grand Masters, but also by the RGMS in other Regions as well. He introduced the office of "Officer-in-Charge" for the superior degrees to streamline the administration," says the note on the website."

GKS has also had a long association with the Rotary movement.

'Rangarajapuram subway unfriendly to pedestrians'



On both sides of Rangarajapuram subway in Kodambakkam, the staircase is in a bad condition. Water pipes lying on the footpath are an obstacle. Besides, there is water seepage in the walls of the subway even when there is no rain.

Sita R
Kodambakkam

Scant respect for pedestrian space



A section of the footpath near Valluvarkottam on Nungambakkam High Road is out of bounds for pedestrians. This road witnesses heavy traffic and pedestrians are at the risk of being hit by vehicles. No respect is shown to the signboard which insists that footpath is meant for pedestrians. There is a bus shelter near this footpath. But vendors have occupied the space under the benches, and this puts commuters to inconvenience. PHOTOS: AKHILA EASWARAN

STATUS REPORT

Walkers disappointed as Semmozhi Poonga is closed for maintenance work

Regulars at the botanical garden have sent letters to the horticulture department seeking an alternative space for walking

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

If you are planning a trip to Semmozhi Poonga then better be aware that the botanical garden on Cathedral Road is closed for the next few weeks.

Regular walkers to the sprawling garden were in for a rude shock as the gates were shut for them on December 9 morning. A banner displayed at the entrance by Tamil Nadu Horticulture Development Agency says that the botanical garden is undergoing beautification and maintenance

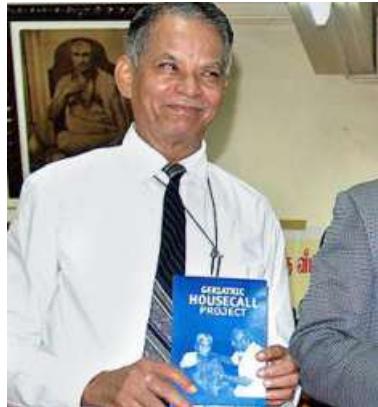


Former Senior Citizens Bureau chairman M. Singaraja passes away

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A long-time resident of Nungambakkam and former chairman of the Senior Citizens Bureau Dr. Captain M. Singaraja passed away at the age of 87. A well-known voice in the city speaking up for the welfare of senior citizens, Capt. Singaraja was one of the early members of Probus Club of Chennai when it was established in the city in 1992 before joining the Senior Citizens Bureau where he last served as chairman emeritus.

Under his leadership, the Bureau took various initiatives to develop inter-generational bond and support home-alone seniors. With students of Ethiraj College for Women, 'Talk to your granny', a phone-only initiative was launched to connect with seniors who needed companionship. Well-known geriatrician Dr. V.S. Natarajan, who was also past chairman of Senior Citizens Bureau, recalls Capt. Singaraja as a dynamic disciplinarian and a man of action. "Some of the best initiatives that we started for senior citi-



zens were successful because of the support I received from Capt. Singaraja when he served as chairman from 2001 onwards," says Dr. Natarajan, a Padmashree awardee.

The 'Geriatric House Call Project' launched in 2008 was popular in Chennai as immobile senior citizens could seek services at their door steps by calling a geriatrician or para medical staff. "Inspired by the initiative, the Government of Tamil Nadu later introduced the doctor on call initia-

Some of the best initiatives that we started for senior citizens were successful because of the support I received from Capt. Singaraja when he served as chairman

tive in most city hospitals," says Dr. Natarajan.

Vaccination for elders was introduced when Capt. Singaraja was at the helm. "From 100 members, the strength of the Bureau grew to 1000 under his leadership," says the doctor.

The Captain was instrumental in starting Link Age, a monthly newsletter for service and advocacy to all age groups. Thilak Desingh, his grandson, says as per Capt. Singaraja's wish he had moved to his home town in Rajapalayam more than a year ago.

"He always liked to do something and was working to start a chapter for the Senior Citizens Bureau in Rajapalayam," says Thilak.

work and public cannot access the space until new dates are announced by the State Government.

The walkers group are upset as they were not informed in advance and an alternative space to walk has not been offered to them. The group have made a written representation to the Horticulture Department requesting if they could be allowed to walk inside Senganthal Poonga or Kalaignar Centenary Park.

"We should have at least been told when we came to renew our monthly passes or be allowed to use the next closest park with the same pass," says Goutham Marlecha, a resident of Royapettah and a regular walker.

Seventy-four-year-old R. Balasubramanian walked to Marina beach from his home in Gopalapuram on December 11, but he does not find it safe as there are no footpaths. "Most walkers hit the parks early, so allowing us to use either of the other closest parks such that we leave before 8 a.m. should not cause any inconvenience to other activities happening inside the space," says Balasubramanian.

Goutham suggests that as Senganthal Poonga is located in a residential area and closed for nearly a year it could be opened for morning walkers.

Regarding the decision to keep it out of bounds for walkers, an of-

▼
File photo of the park and the banner announcing the decision.

ficer says that there is a plan to conduct flower show and the proposal is that it will cover a larger area of the botanical garden. "The plan is to have arrangements across the eight acres of the garden, so we have a lot of preliminary work happening. There are people working in shifts and more than 15,000 plants are being unloaded every day," says the official.

Public taking photographs while the flower arrangements are on is another reason for this decision.

In February 2024, when Semmozhi Poonga hosted the flower show the public including walkers were not allowed. "But as the Kalaignar Centenary Park was not opened then, walkers were asked to use the premises for their daily routine," adds the official.

A senior official when contacted said the work that is currently underway is not in preparation for the flower show.

"We are taking up civil and irrigation work as this has been long pending, where we are digging across the land and getting new plants as well," says the official.

The work is expected to be completed in two to three weeks. Regarding opening of other gardens for walkers, the official says that as Chennai received good rainfall the other parks also need dewatering.

"The lawns in these parks are comparatively fresh and we don't want it to be damaged allowing public in the early morning hours," added the official.

Achievements of the differently abled celebrated

Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust in association with Team Community Services Development 2024-25, Rotary International District 3234 and Doctors Citizens Forum, Indian Medical Association Chennai South organised a function commemorating "World Disability Day" recently at Bala Mandir Cultural Hall, G. N. Chetty Road, T Nagar.

The event themed "Accessibility to the disabled" addressed the challenges in the sector and showcased examples of how the students have overcome these challenges and made a mark for themselves.

Parents of students such as Muthperiyanayaki Krishnan, mother of Lakshay Kumar, a Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre (BM MNC) alumnus who was part of the team which set the World record in swim-

ming from Rameswaram to Marina, spoke about the achievements of her son, says a press release.

Sankalp, another alumnus of BM MNC was accompanied by his mother and he shared his experience in the journey of life in academics.

To commemorate World Disability Day, the Rotary International District 3234, The Tamil Nadu State Branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA)'s Doctors Citizen Forum got together at the Bala Mandir Cultural Hall.

Public awareness was created by a walkathon at the Jeeva Park by the special children of Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre (BM MNC) alumnus who was part of the team which set the World record in swim-

Shards of hope

Chennai-based entities representing a reasonable cross-section of the waste recycling community explain why broken glass and even fully intact glass bottles have a difficult journey to make before they can enjoy a new life and purpose

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Shards bring luck. The efficacy of that Germanic superstition is restricted to porcelain. It takes a beating when the shards are of glass. Take a poll among local kabadiwalas: they will vote broken glass out in a brutal landslide verdict. Many a reputed recycler from the organised sector would also turn down broken glass in polite but unambiguous terms.

In Chennai's circular economy, Spreco Recycling Pvt Ltd is a recognised name. Its director Krishnapriya A. weighs in with her company's stand on broken glass: "While we recycle almost all types of waste (including glass bottles), we avoid broken glass entirely. It is hazardous for our manpower, who handle waste directly, and transporting it is a logistical nightmare."

Even when it is in one piece, glass – which includes glass bottles – is made to feel unwelcome at the hyperlocal level, with many kabadiwalas operating around the street corner spurning it for the challenges that go with just accumulating it, not to mention the low returns that hardly just the efforts.

P.S. Jayaraman, a resident of SSM Nagar, a 2500-unit gated community in New Perungalathur, spearheads a recycling initiative involving residents of the massive enclave. Jayaraman repeats the sentiments about fully-intact glass bottles, expressed by K. Gopal, a local kabadiwala operating in SSM Nagar. "The local kabadiwala mentioned that he no longer collects glass bottles unless they are accumulated in large quantities for recycling, which poses a space constraint for him. He stated that transparent glass bottles fetch anywhere between ₹3000 and ₹4000



per tonne, while brown bottles are valued lower. Bottles of other colours have no resale value and are typically broken down before being sent for recycling."

Gopal reportedly operates on a measly 300 sq.ft which comes at a rent of ₹9,000 per month, and if he were to foray into glass bottle accumulation, he would need a minimum of 10,000 sq.ft.

These realities trace a picture of disappointment. Glass lends itself to closed-loop recycling, capable of being recycled 'n' number of times without registering a drop in its quality. But glass is only rarely allowed to go on this journey, as it is up against obstacles and its amazing potential is trapped in the shards and cracks of a broken recycling system. It is a pity that as most recyclables, ranging from plastic to paper, receive a second bite at the cherry, glass remains a fragile and dejected outsider.

Given these systemic hurdles, even glass aggregators are likely to be thin on the ground. Let us track the typical day lived by one of those aggregators: Antony Arul Xavier. Operating out of his modest facility, Seeman Bottles in Chitlapakkam, and focussing exclusively on glass, broken and intact in a variety of forms, Xavier is

Any conversation surrounding glass recycling should include a pointed look at our consumption patterns

taking a road seldom taken, and he knows it.

He collects glass bottles from various locations across Medavakkam, Perumbakkam, Guindy and Alandur. His work is methodical – broken bottles are sent to JBA Group in Pondicherry for recycling, while unbroken bottles return to manufacturers like SNJ, Carlsberg and Elite, beginning a new cycle of use.

Xavier's operation is beset with nicks and sometimes gashes. His team of 15 works on a rotational basis, but despite their care, the risks remain. "Despite being careful, we still end up with cuts," Xavier admits, underscoring the ever-present threat of glass shards in collection bags.

The transportation process adds another layer of complexity: Xavier makes the delivery of bottles to manufacturers and recyclers.

With these difficulties checking in and out unfailingly every work day, Xavier's venture remains a small boat that is hardly on an even keel.

The break-up of his earnings as reported by him – 50 paise per bottle after deduction of operational expenses – seems hardly anything to wire home about. Yet, as Xavier himself puts it, he finds satisfaction in doing something many others have overlooked. "The profit is minimal, but I feel satisfied doing something most people would not even consider," he shares.

Despite its undeniable environmental benefits – such as conserving raw materials, reducing energy consumption and minimising waste generation – the process of glass recycling remains as incomplete as a book with missing pages. From collection to transportation, from sorting to processing, the challenges of glass recycling are numerous and varied, and need to be addressed.

At the basic level, lack of enthusiasm among local kabadiwalas (who set the recycling process in motion) for glass products increases the chances of glass slipping into landfills, together with other waste.

And therefore, any conversation surrounding glass recycling should include a pointed look at our consumption patterns. The change can happen in households. Reuse glass bottles. Accumulate used glass bottles and even broken glass carefully, over a period, and hand them over to an aggregator.

Does this work as a new year resolution? It well could, if you realise every time you take a sip from a bottled beverage, that it is in your power to get that glass bottle to live on. And that your small action could tip the scale toward sustainability.

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

AI IMAGE
GENERATION:
M. ARIVARASU

The power of learning and sharing

As the year 2024 draws to a close, *The Hindu Downtown* features two initiatives, one related to waste management and the other to fitness, that have gone beyond the communities they originated in

LIFFY THOMAS

Multiplier effect in Thalambur

Gated communities in this locality come together to create a robust waste management ecosystem

Every Saturday, between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., a tempo trundles down the streets of Thalambur, stopping by gated communities and by the end of this tour, it carries a heavy load of dry waste on its back. The dry waste largely consists of plastics of various thickness, shapes and colours.

These are carefully segregated plastic waste by environment-conscious residents of these societies. With each community influencing another to engage with the vendor, Spreco Recycling Pvt. Ltd., the initiative has covered considerable ground.

What started with one community seven months ago has now expanded to cover at least six other villa and gated communities in the region, so much so that recently, the tempo started visiting these communities twice a week.

Each of these communities has brought something of a pioneering spirit to the table. While Casa Grand Elan took the lead in ensuring dry waste was sent to an authorised recycler, Casa Grande Pav-



lion was early in setting up community composting of biodegradable waste. Arihant Heirloom Apartments took the first step in finding a reliable recycler for e-waste and followed it up with regular drives in the community before passing on the contact to their neighbours in the region.

"In the ewaste and plastic waste initiatives, there was an incentive given by the vendors for the segre-

gated items which was an advantage for the management community members to bring them on board," says P. Navaneethan, an active resident of Arihant Heirloom.

While many of these gentle nudges are through WhatsApp messages and calls, in some situations, residents also visit each of their neighbours to be more forceful influencers.

"Our community has launched

a pilot programme in composting wet waste with four composters, so we visited Casa Grande Pavilion to take lessons from them," says Navaneethan.

As per reports, Thalambur village panchayat has 7,358 households of which 3,813 are apartments. If each of them installs bulk community composters then this panchayat could be a model for many other areas to follow.

From the past

* When it travelled quite a distance in its green journey, Ashiana Apartments in Alwarpet initiated 'Swachh Venus' to keep the neighbourhood surrounding the apartment clean. Led by a group of residents, they covered Venus Colony 2nd Street, 1st Street and Sriram Srinivasa Road going from house to house talking about the importance of source segregation.

* They first lined their streets with potted plants, painted the walls and then went bin-less. The transformation of Thiruveedhi Amman Kovil Street in Mandaveli with the efforts of Thiruveedhi Amman Kovil Street Residents' Association led to expanding the green initiatives to other streets in the region that later came to be called RK Nagarra.

* Sabari Terrace, an apartment complex in OMR, has served as one of the best examples for a city where any water conservation solution is welcome. When residents of the community showed the success of rainwater harvesting methods through data, neighbouring apartments in the OMR belt started to implement it as well.

* Apartment complexes around Model School Road in Sholinganallur are a heavy weight when it comes to managing waste and conserving water. With Central Park East seeing the rewards in investing in solar technology, some of their neighbours are discussing the pros and cons of adopting it.

Pedal power

On January 4, when the Thiruverkadu chapter of WCCG will celebrate its first anniversary, it will have a remarkable campaign to look back on

When two childhood friends residing at a 400-unit gated community in Thiruverkadu decided to bond with others in the society, they took the cycling route.

"Thiruverkadu is cut off from the city with not much entertainment options and it was difficult to pull out people for any activity," says Arun Kumar S. who along with Vinod M. started VGN Cycling Group in January

2023.

With a small group of cycling enthusiasts from the community, the group explored new cycling routes and also enjoyed the rewards of doing it together. After a satisfying year they were invited to join We Are Chennai Cycling Group (WCCG).

As one of the youngest chapters of WCCG, this group from Thiruverkadu has its own ways of drawing people for fun and fitness.

"We are flexible with people, but we follow certain rules before including a new cyclist," says Arun, a software professional who moved from Ayyapakkam to Thiruverkadu for his children's schooling. Interested cyclists are part of a trial group for three days, after which they are felicitated and added to the main group.

He used to ride sometimes with the Porur or Ambattur

chapter but both were far for him and so he started riding alone.

Currently, the Thiruverkadu chapter has 30 active riders, a majority of them residing two to three kilometres from VGN Temple Town where it all started.

Arun says associating with the WCCG brand played a big role in getting more members, and some of them were looking for such platforms but did not know how to get connected.

"We are a motley group of cyclists with chartered accountants, defence persons and a college student as well," he says.

Besides the temple town that this neighbourhood is famous for, the group happy to just pedal 5 to 10 km to take in the scenery dominated by paddy fields.

On January 4, the chapter will celebrate one year of bringing a neighbourhood together for fun and fitness.

From seeing its lane composters on the streets of Kasturba Nagar yield a rich harvest to having a bio-gas generation unit established at a Chennai High School, this residents' association has had a remarkable 2024



Snapshots of ROKA's initiatives through 2024.
PHOTOS:
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



ROKA rewinds through a watershed year

JANANI VENKITESH

Year 2024 has had a depressingly long list of floods and forest fires across the globe. After all the hand-wringing, one realises it might not be possible to control, let alone change a vast number of things, but one's backyard is thankfully not among them. One's backyard lies within one's sphere of control. And that backyard to us is Kasturba Nagar. And so, as it has in previous years starting 2018, ROKA applied itself to fixing environmental issues in its immediate world. As the segregation in Karturba Nagar had gone up by a notch or two, the next obvious and organic step, by the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024, was to figure out the decentralisation of waste management at the community level. Inspired by the SWMRT-Bangalore model of community composting, we set up three lane composters to process organic waste in Kasturba Nagar. With financial support from Resilient Cities Network, The Circulate Initiative and the Ocean Conservancy through our knowledge partners, Okapi Research & Advisory under their Urban Ocean programme, We Segregate was launched.

How can any waste management initiative be allowed to continue without addressing plastic waste? We Segregate project also focusses



on the low value and multi-layer plastics that have always been an irritant and a challenge in the whole collection and processing cycle in plastic recycling. Under this project, multiple events involving the residents who were behind its success were conducted throughout 2024.

Rallies were held. A cricket match was organised: on the side-

lines of the match, in the dugout area, ROKA was promoting the tenets of waste segregation among spectators. A discussion group consisting of residents sought to work out ways to increase segregation and make it a self-sustaining model. The Urban Ocean Summit happened in June 2024, which had many foreign delegates visiting Kasturba Nagar to

understand GCC's model near zero-waste ward. And now, when we look at the actual impact of this project, we are talking about three cycles of harvest of the compost from the lane composters which equals to 1750 kg of compost distributed to residents and a total of 5250 kg of organic waste locally processed in the year 2024. Low value plastics amounting to 365 kg was diverted and sent for processing through our aggregators Spreco Recycling. GCC and Urbaser Sumeet are looking at emulating ROKA's model in ward 168, and we have been more than happy to support and guide them in making model wards across Chennai.

Deutsche Welle, DW Eco-India made a documentary on ROKA's work: 2024 has indeed been an encouraging year.

How can ROKA go without its bi-annual collection drive of 2024, one in the beginning of the year in January and another mid-year, in June or July? Both the drives saw more than 400 people from across Chennai depositing their waste over two days. In January, it was close to 10 MT and in July 7.6 Metric tonnes of recyclable waste was collected and sent for processing.

A new space for Anna Nagar and neighbouring areas to deposit their waste was set up in the month of November at Euphoria World along with Wasted 360.

The rain this year might have affected the greens at the ROKA-run kitchen garden at The Chennai High School in Adyar, but the vegetables compensated for this loss. We harvested 12 kg of vegetables in 2024 and some of these vegetables were harvested by children. Multiple awareness sessions at schools, colleges and corporate houses were a routine affair this year for volunteers at ROKA. In the last couple of events that we were a part of, we tried to stress upon "WASH THE DABBA" campaign along with our SWM and sustainability talks.

At the school, food remnants in food delivery boxes pose a challenge at various levels. They cannot be sent for recycling. It is not fair to let conservancy workers deal with food remnants. These challenges had to be addressed. And it was, in the following manner. At The Chennai High school, ROKA along with EFI (Environmentalist Foundation of India) have installed a 75kg capacity in situ food waste processing unit.

The bio-gas generated by the unit would be used in the mid-day meal cooking. The children would get first-hand experience of how food waste can be converted to gas and that every form of waste is a new resource.

EDUCATION

M.O.P. Vaishnav helps set up computer lab at Assumption School

As part of its social responsibility initiative, M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women helped Assumption School in Nungambakkam set up a computer lab with 19 computers along with computer tables and chairs on December 11, 2024.

Assumption School now has a fully equipped computer lab, says a press release. Archna Prasad, principal of M.O.P. Vaishnav College, expressed gratification at being able to create new opportunities for the bright, young minds at the Assumption School, as she inaugurated the lab on Wednesday. The correspondent and headmaster of the school, and the vice-principal and head of administration of M.O.P. Vaishnav College were present at the inauguration, the release adds. Besides the 19 computers, tables and chairs, a few steel cupboards, staff tables,



and chairs were also given to the school. In addition, the college undertook the complete infrastructure conversion of a classroom into the computer lab, including the installation of electric sockets, data sockets, new flooring and painting.

This social initiative, one of

several that the college undertakes to empower its neighbourhood, fits perfectly into M.O.P.'s community service plan for the year, themed 'Gyaan' or 'knowledge', says the release. The various programmes have been carrying out service projects in accordance with this theme.

Academy of Performing Arts celebrates 26th annual day

Sri Madhurakalashetra Academy of Performing Arts, which has centres in Palavakkam and Adambakkam, recently celebrated its 26th annual day celebrations at Dakshinamurthy Auditorium.

Students gave a Bharathanatyam dance performance titled "Thamizhum Bharathamum" wherein they depicted Lord Shiva's Pancha Sthala Puranas through a dance drama. They also danced for select verses of Thirukural to do justice to the title Thamizhum Bharathamum. A Tamil dance drama on Sri Andal Nachiyar's Vaibhavam was also performed. Tamil folk songs including those of gypsies, fisher folk and kummi song were the other highlights. The students also revived the steps of *pinnal kolattam*, a Tamil art form, that has almost become extinct, said a press release.

The students were guided by their guru Vaijayanthi Venkatesh, who imparts both Bharthanatyam and folk song dance along with Carnatic music and yoga.

Vaijayanthi Venkatesh can be contacted at 9444414958

College pledges to be a tobacco-free institution

M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women has declared itself a 'tobacco-free institution,' committing to advocacy efforts among students and strict enforcement of a tobacco-free zone in and around the campus.

The UGC had issued a circular on September 11, urging educational institutions to effectively implement the Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions guidelines, which was first issued in 2019. Citing the Global Adult Tobacco Survey, the circular observed that 55 percent of lifelong tobacco users begin before the age of 20, leading to significant health risks over a lifetime of use. The UGC guidelines require prominent signage declaring the zone 'tobacco-free'; designated student and staff tobacco monitors; prohibition of the sale of tobacco products including e-ciga-

rettes within 100 yards of the premises; action against violators; and awareness efforts on the initiative, said a release.

At the event held to kick-off the new regime of proactive tobacco prohibition, students and staff took a pledge to uphold the initiative. In the days to come, the health and wellness student ambassadors of the College will be trained and certified in tobacco cessation and control programmes.

Ghayathri Swetha, head of the Psychology at M.O.P. Vaishnav, who is spearheading the effort on campus, said, "This initiative is not just about banning tobacco but fostering a culture of health and empowerment among our students."

The event also featured an awareness session by experts from the Department of Psycho-oncology and the Resource Centre for Tobacco Control, Cancer Institute, Adyar, highlighting the health risks of tobacco use and the role of educational institutions in creating a tobacco-free generation.

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Winners of 'Wings to Fly' to travel to Singapore



The finals of Wings to Fly, a programme initiated by the Rotary Club of Madras East in collaboration with Greater Chennai Corporation for 211 Corporation Schools, was held recently at Vani Mahal in T. Nagar.

This is the 10th edition of the programme where eight finalists are taken on a fully funded educational tour to Singapore in May 2025. Entrepreneurial skills for teens "Teenpreneurship" was the theme this year. The competition began with around 25,000 students at the school level and after a progressive selection process across rounds, a set of 32 students reached the final. A three-day workshop was con-

ducted in September first week to impart knowledge on the topic. After assessments, 32 students from Class VIII and IX and 32 students from Class IX were shortlisted, said a release. The 64 semifinalists were taken on a field trip to two industries. Later they presented their business idea before a panel of judges. The winners are: R. Yogasree, CHSS Subbarayan Street; Kirathi Maya Sree G., CGHSS M H Road; D. Yashika, CGHSS Nungambakkam; P. Oviya, CHSS T H Road; S. Shazia Banu, CGHSS Buddha Street; Sameera Fathima J., CHSS Thiruvanmiyur; Gnanaraj M., CHSS MGR Nagar; and Anushri E., CGHSS Nungambakkam



Poster competition on soil conducted

In commemoration of World Soil Day, the Centre for Environmental Studies and Eco Club (Shift 1) of Women's Christian College conducted a poster painting competition on the theme "composting worm family."

The artworks depicted the role of worms in nourishing the soil. Students from various disciplines participated, adds the release.



Two-day culinary workshop

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on ready-to-cook food items on December 18. According to a press release, the programme will demonstrate preparation of the following: rava idli, onion rava dosa, persarattu dosa, semiya payasam, bajji, arisi upma, adai, masala vadai and puliyodarai

Another workshop on preparation of

brownies will be held on December 19. Various flavours of brownies such as walnut, peanut butter, coconut, salted caramel, chocolate will be demonstrated. Also, preparation of egg-less brownies will be taught. The sessions will be held at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy For details, call 044 - 2953 0048.

Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram wins quiz contest



Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram bagged the top prize in the state-level inter-school quiz competition, organised by the SBIOA Educational Trust recently. Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan (PSBB) and Chennai Public School finished second and third respectively. The competition was conducted by noted quiz master Siddhartha Basu and saw the participation of 27 schools from across the state. Six teams qualified for the final after a written preliminary round. Basu and Anbarasu, correspondent of the SBIOA Model Matriculation School, Chennai, handed over the prizes.

Book fair from December 29

Giri Trading Co Pvt Ltd will be organise its 10th annual book fair from December 29 to January 5 at Sannathi Street in Mylapore. A discount of 20% is being offered on religious books, according to T.S.Srinivasan, director-sales of Giri Trading Co Pvt Ltd.

Webinar on chemical industry

Nandini Consultancy Centre, a firm of chemical engineers and chemical business consultants based in Chennai and Singapore, is organising a webinar on "Trends and happenings in chemical and biotech industry" on December 18. Time: From 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. According to a press release, the webinar will be about the various developments taking place in the chemical industry in India and across the world. It will help students to choose higher education and job opportunities.

There is no participation fee. Prior registration is necessary. For registration and further details, call 044 - 47662241 / 044 - 43540719.

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