

TAMBARAM

Chromepet » Pallavaram » Tambaram West » Rajakilpakkam » Mannivakkam » Guindy » Keelkattalai » Nanganallur » Guduvanchery » Hasthinapuram » Pammal » Tambaram East
Medavakkam » Srinivasa Nagar » Kathipara Junction » Kovilambakkam » Sadasivam Nagar » Potheri » Selaiyur » Sembakkam » St.Thomas Mount » Madipakkam » Urappakkam » Paranur



WHERE BENEFICIARY IS KING

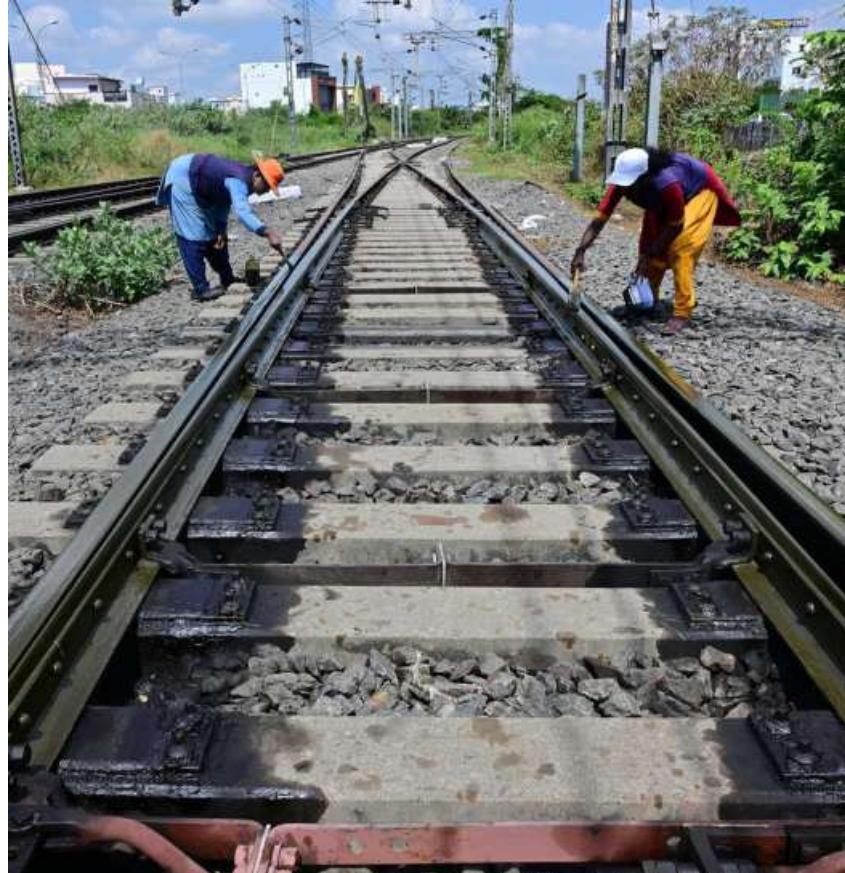
Rajasthan Cosmo Club Foundation runs five Smile Stores in Chennai; and it is focussed on expanding this social enterprise's presence not just in the city, but the whole of Tamil Nadu. **P4&5**



ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Sustainability is not just for the professionals in the environment space or for the diehard green enthusiasts. It is for everyone to pursue in their daily walk. On "Zero Waste Day" (March 30), meet two residents of Chennai who have woven green thinking into their workaday lives. **P6**

Waiting for the extended MRTS



The railway tracks near Velachery station are being painted. The expansion of MRTS from Velachery to St Thomas Mount has been a long-awaited project, which will benefit thousands of commuters when it sees the light. Southern Railway is hoping to complete all pending work on this five-km stretch soon. This image was taken on March 18.

PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B

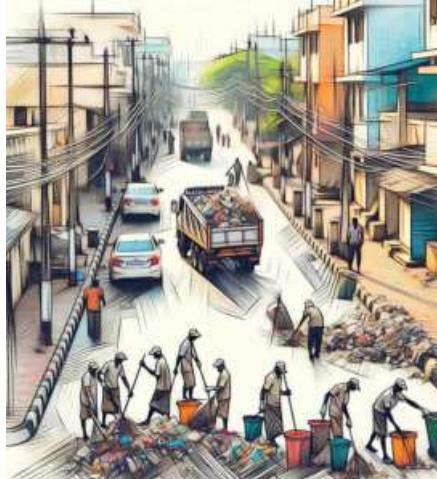
Waste collection drive in Perumbakkam

Nesamani Nagar Residents' Welfare Association, in coordination with Perumbakkam Village Panchayat, is organising a waste collection drive on April 5 and 6.

The drive will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Panchayat Community Hall, near the panchayat office.

The public can drop off books, papers, clothes, e-waste, pillows, mattresses, footwear, toys, ball point pens, tablets, strips, handbags, and accessories, X-rays, and footwear.

For details, contact N. K. Raja at 91764 53025.



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.



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'Provide bollards on pavement'

The Zone 12 (Alandur) of Greater Chennai Corporation should install bollards and railings on the pavements on Sixth Main Road in Nanganallur.

This should prevent vendors and motorcyclists from occupying and parking on the

space.

Some commercial establishments have put ramps and use the space to park customers' vehicles on the pavements. In some places, even residents do the same.

R. Anand
Nanganallur

Water tankers cause traffic snarls in Chromepet



At Kumarasamy Salai in Chromepet.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Decrease the height of the bench at this bus stop'

Recently, the State Highway Department relaid the pavements along the ITC Grand Chola stop in Guindy.

Earlier, the pavement slabs were shaky and uneven, which looks fine now and is a relief for pedestrians.

But Greater Chennai Corporation has to reduce



the height of the bench at the bus stop.

S. Narayanan
Guindy

The water supply tanker that comes to Lakshmiapuram Kumarasamy Salai and Sangam Road in Chromepet between 8 and 9 a.m. creates traffic congestion on these stretches.

As a result, school students and office workers cannot reach their destinations on time. The tanker should not be driven into these areas during rush hour.

N. Ramya Natarajan
Thiruneermalai

'Operate cut services to Chemmanchery'



In recent weeks, Metropolitan Transport Corporation has been operating route number 99C (earlier operating between Chemmanchery Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board - Tambaram (West) to Tambaram Sanatorium bus terminus).

While extending the services, the MTC should ply cut services to Tambaram (West). I have raised the issue with the MTC through X. In reply, MTC stated that it will bring the issue to the attention of higher officials.

N. K. Raja
Perumbakkam.

You can be our volunteer-writer

'Chitlapakkam lake: drop the boating plan'

Tambaram City Municipal Corporation recently proposed in its annual budget introducing boating in Chitlapakkam lake. A section of residents are unhappy with the announcement. They say boating can impact water bodies through pollution and noise disturbance, potentially harming aquatic life and water quality.

Chitlapakkam residents say the discharge of grey water (from washing and cleaning the boats) can contaminate the water with pathogens and pollutants. Already, the lake area has shrunk. Bringing a boating facility will further reduce the water-holding area, say residents.

This was one of the resolutions passed by the residents at the recently held 34th Annual General Body meeting of the Chitlapakkam Muthulakshmi Nagar Welfare Association. They wanted the Corporation to drop the plan. The association president, L. Sundararaman, presided over the meeting in the presence of S. Sekar, vice president.

Text: T.S. Atul Swaminathan

Culverts get buried in construction work

The Federation of Perumbakkam Residents' Welfare Association (FPRWA) has requested the Chengalpattu District Collectorate to ensure that a property developer restores the provision for rainwater flow from the region to the Perumbakkam wetland.

Along Classical Language Road in Perumbakkam, the developer has raised the land by four feet above the ground.

Three culverts, each measuring 6 feet wide and 8 feet deep, are buried under the earth.

The culverts were constructed by St. Thomas Mount Panchayat Union to carry rainwater



from the region's localities to the marshland.

K. Sarangadass, president of FPRWA, says, "Last year, the developer had put up barri-

cades, which led to flooding in Moogambikai Nagar, Perumal Nagar and Kailash Nagar during rains. Around 200 families were affected."

N. Nalla Sivam, a social activist, says: "If the culverts are not restored, residents of Indira Priyadarshini Nagar, Cheran Nagar, Gurudev Colony, Mookambikai Nagar, Perumal Nagar, Sairam Nagar, Kailash Nagar, and Embassy Residency will be affected due to flooding."

Residents say even the colonies along the lane towards Sholinganallur, Sekaran Nagar, Anandammal Nagar and Sri Krishna Nagar will be affected. We have sent several representations to the CM's Cell and the Chengalpattu District Collectorate.

Text: T.S. Atul Swaminathan



Convocation held



More than 100 students from Aananda Yogam, an institute offering Diploma in Acupuncture in Madipakkam, received their degrees recently. The certification enables the students to start their practice, said a release. For the coming academic year, the institution aims to train over 400 students, and admissions are under way. For details, call 9994955109, 9840277589.

Life support awareness programme conducted

An awareness workshop on Basic Life Support (BLS), focusing on Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was held recently in Madambakkam.

A team of volunteers led by Dr A. Ruckmani, a medical practitioner in Madambakkam, organised the programme at Bhai Garden Park in Madambakkam, in collaboration with Tambaran branch of Indian Medical Association.

Doctors used visuals to explain the various steps of CPR and also demonstrated BLS.

The IMA team discussed the factors contributing to heart attack and the importance of timely intervention, said a release.

The organisers displayed informative charts about junk foods, healthy dietary and personal habits necessary for maintaining good health.

Entrepreneurship development programme launched



A six-week Technology-based Entrepreneurship Development Programme (TEDP) on 'A Roadmap for Bioentrepreneurship' was launched.

The programme was organised by the School of Life Sciences, B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, and sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology and the Tamil Nadu

State Council of Science.

The programme seeks to train graduates and diploma holders to establish their own businesses.

TEDP 2025 is a knowledge-sharing platform that equips participants with valuable insights into technology-driven entrepreneurship and biotech-driven business models, said a press release.

Alumni join hands to stage a play

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Schools Alumni Association is hosting a play on the life and message of Swami Ramakrishnananda who established the Madras Math in 1897.

Written and directed by K. Vivekshankar, an alumnus of the institution, the play will be staged at Infosys Hall on Bazullah Road in T. Nagar on April 5 (from 6 p.m. onwards).

Titled 'Sarvam Gurumayam', the drama

will be staged by members of Prayatna Theatres. Swami Ramakrishnananda was specially chosen by Swami Vivekananda to start Ramakrishna Math in Chennai in 1897 soon after the establishment of its headquarters in Belur Math, near Kolkata. His dedication and unwavering hard work ensured the growth of the Math and Mission not only in Chennai but in other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Exhibition on complex systems

It was conducted by The Reading Club of the Department of Economics, MCC

The Reading Club at the Department of Economics, Madras Christian College (MCC), recently hosted an exhibition on complex systems, bringing together students, academics, and enthusiasts to explore this interdisciplinary field.

The exhibition was inaugurated by A. Duraisamy, former

Head of Department of Economics, MCC, and Dharmaraj Navaneetha Krishnan, senior manager, Hubbell India Private Limited. A comprehensive introduction to complex systems, covering various domains, key concepts, and their real-world implications were covered.

Visitors were guided through engaging visual displays, interactive models, and presentations, illustrating how complexity governs everyday life.

The exhibit showcased chaos theory, stock market mechanisms, agent-based modelling, and weather systems as examples of complex and interdependent structures, added the release.

Free health camp today

The National Federation of the Blind in collaboration Sri Ganapthy Sachchidananda Trust is conducting a free camp at its premises in Velachery on March 30. Cancer screening for women, vaccination and eye testing can be availed. This is being offered to 100 individuals, said a release. For details, contact Dr Siva at 94440 58596.

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 Chittlapakkam

A glimpse of a Smile Store.



1.
Nungambakkam
September 20, 2020



2
Avadi
January 26, 2021



SMILE STORE
Launches

4
Walltax Road
February 19, 2023

5
MC Road, Washermanpet
April 8, 2023



SALES FIGURES
(April 2024 – February 2025)

Nungambakkam:
₹6,19,160

Avadi:
₹3,79,220

Purasawalkam:
₹5,67,140

Walltax Road:
₹3,67,440

MC Road, Washermanpet:
₹4,78,280

MC Road, Washermanpet:
₹4,78,280

BENEFICIARIES
(April 2024 – February 2025)

Nungambakkam: 5,666 people

Avadi: 3,383 people

MC Road: 4,018 people

Walltax Road: 3,283 people

Where beneficiary is king

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

In five years, Rajasthan Cosmo Club Foundation (RCCF) has established as many Smile Stores in Chennai. An introductory note: a Smile Store is a thrift cloth store with a heart-warming twist in the coat-tail. RCCF wants this social enterprise to find newer addresses in Chennai and extend its presence to the rest of Tamil Nadu, essentially hoping the smile widens into an ear-to-ear grin. And here is why the grin might not be a far-fetched idea. Smile Stores have one thing going for them straightaway: they might be underpinned by charity, but they denounce an idea that usually tags along with charity – beneficiaries passively receiving handouts. It is charity offered on a platter of dignity. Though the clothes come in a ridiculously nominal price range, the beneficiaries are still offered a shopping experience.

A Smile Store feels nothing like a typical charity outlet. With barcoded tags, organised racks, fitting rooms, and even clothes from premium brands such as Louis Phi-

lippe and Arrow making it to those racks, the experience mirrors that of an upscale boutique. The gently used clothes are worked upon to look brand-new. Prices range from a mere ₹20 to ₹50; but clothing purchases made at highly subsidised rates do not cost the beneficiaries their self-respect.

"When items are given for free, many individuals – be it a driver or a cook – hesitate to accept them. But when they walk into a store that resembles a premium retail outlet and make a purchase themselves, they experience a sense of ownership and dignity," explains Manish Chowdhury, chairman of Smile Stores.

Taking

inspiration from the renowned Goodwill Stores in the United States, the first Smile Store opened its doors on September 20, 2020 in Nungambakkam. Since then, it has expanded impressively, with four more outlets across Chennai, and a clothes collection kiosk at the airport to boot.

To maintain fairness and prevent misuse, purchases are closely monitored. A five clothes per month limit per family ensures that garments reach those who genuinely need them, while mobile number tracking helps pre-

vent stockpiling or commercial exploitation. tee of Smile Stores. Every donated item undergoes rigorous laundering, sanitisation, and ironing before it reaches the shelves. Clothes that are stained, excessively worn, or damaged never make it to the racks. Among its outlets, Nungambakkam has registered the highest sales – ₹6,19,160 (from April, 2024 to February, 2025). The impressive numbers across the five stores are an attestation to the demand for dignified giving.

The airport kiosk In 2022, RCCF took an unconventional leap – launching a kiosk at Chennai airport. This initiative allowed travellers to donate excess baggage instead of paying hefty fees, providing a meaningful alter-

native to discarding clothes.

"The airport kiosk was a game-changer," notes Suresh. "Frequent travellers often dispose of clothing to manage luggage weight." Even in cases where items bought at a Smile Store are resold, Manish sees a silver lining: "If someone resells a piece of clothing, it still provides them with a means of livelihood. The essence of giving remains intact."

Beyond Chennai

Smile Stores thrive on community collaboration – a factor that should naturally facilitate its growth. Schools organise donation drives, religious institutions facilitate collections during festivals, and retailers contribute surplus inventory, all playing a crucial role in sustaining the mission.

With existing outlets in Avadi, Purasawalkam, Washermanpet, Walltax Road, and Nungambakkam, and a new store set to launch soon, the dream is to expand across Tamil Nadu.

DESIGN:
M ARIVARASU

Special stories and a message

V-Excel Educational Trust invites schools to a cultural event on April 5 and 6 at Kalakshetra Foundation



Scenes from a rehearsal.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

made by V Excel towards advocacy and awareness of neuro-diversity.

"The Golden Fruit" is a story woven around human pursuit and how each of us is looking for our golden fruit. This time, the writers and directors are experimenting with comedy. As with any V-Excel production, this one is home-grown, with rich music and visuals, groups of teachers and therapists and trainers painting humongous backdrops, the release says.

Close to 120 students and their teachers will bring the production alive with their movements, expressions, group dances, attire, music and art. The event requires the audience to come with an open mind and heart so that they could use their imaginative lens to watch the performance. This is an offering

On April 5, the organisation invites schools to bring their students to witness the unique production. On April 6, it is open for parents, well-wishers and friends of V-Excel.



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

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Heavy-laden bags hanging down like gyves, from a motorcycle. And a man seated astride that vehicle hitting a meandering early-morning road he need not take, but did anyway. Those images were singular because of the regularity with which they occurred. They were intriguing because of the unusual volunteering effort they signified.

When Chennai barely stirred, that man, A.K. Kannan, would leave his home in Choolaimedu and visit temples on that motorcycle, picking up floral waste, coconut shells and other discards of worship, cram them into bags, drop them at Corporation's compost yards and be at his office on time, which was Doordarshan's Chennai Kendra in Chepauk.

When Kannan, civil engineer with Doordarshan, was transferred to Guwahati, Assam in 2023, that scene dropped out of sight abruptly. And with Kannan's return to Chennai in February, 2025, that early-morning scene has now returned. An additional responsibility requires Kannan (56 years old now) to divide his days between Chennai and Guwahati offices: ten days in a month here, and the rest in Guwahati.

Whenever he is in Chennai, he diligently performs this self-imposed task. The worship-related leftovers he collects at temples he drops off at certain locations earmarked by Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) for effective garbage disposal, including composting.

A GCC facility in Chintadripet is his main drop-off point. With GCC closing down some compost yards and material recovery centres now, his options might have dwindled, but Kannan is not complaining. He continues to make the most of the options still open to him.

Beyond temple waste, Kannan also takes it upon himself to ensure recyclable materials such as plastic bottles reach the right hands. Instead of allowing ragpickers to sift



Back in Chennai after a job transfer had taken him away from the city, A.K. Kannan has resumed a "green exercise" that had earned him the admiration of sustainability enthusiasts.

ciates with Namma Ooru Foundation (NOF) to ensure composting of floral waste gathered from her events, and also for sourcing bio-cleaning products.

"In the case of smaller events, I take the flowers home dry them, and compost them with my kitchen waste. It is a small step, but at least I know they do not just end up in the trash," says Riddhi, who runs Beyond Bling Events, an event management company. By ensuring flowers take the right form after they are discarded, she ensures their aroma lingers on.

Bringing sustainability into large-scale events is a challenge, one often only partially met. "Clients love the idea when I suggest it – but when they see the cost, they hesitate," she admits.

She has found that intimate gatherings offer more room for conscious choices.

"In our friends' group, we try to bring our own plates, cutlery and glasses. It sounds simple, right? But out of 50 people, maybe two will actually do it," she observes, adding: "It is not about going zero-waste overnight. Even if just 20-30% of an event is done consciously, it is still something. Small steps add up."



In the case of smaller events, I take the flowers home, dry them, and compost them with my kitchen waste. It is a small step, but at least I know they do not just end up in the trash.

Riddhi Khandhar

All in a day's work

Sustainability is not just for the professionals in the environment space or for the diehard green enthusiasts. It is for everyone to pursue in their daily walk. On "Zero Waste Day" (March 30), meet two residents of Chennai who have woven green thinking into their workaday lives

through garbage bins, he directly hands over the collected bottles to scrap dealers in Kodambakkam, Chintadripet, and Saidapet. "Good materials should not end up in the wrong place," he says firmly.

Despite his demanding job and frequent travel, Kannan remains steadfast in his mission. "I do what I can," he says. "But real change will come when more people take responsibility, not just watch from the sidelines."

A lingering aroma

As an event manager, Riddhi Khandhar brings celebrations to life, and the remains of celebrations to new life. She makes sure floral decorations are not shoved into trucks and discarded mindlessly; she has them put away carefully to be collected and composted. She asso-

AI GENERATED IMAGE:
M ARIVARASU



STATUS REPORT

WHAT RESIDENTS WANT

'Construct speed breakers below the flyover'



A section of residents want speed breakers on GST Road in Pallavaram, near a petrol bunk and a post office. N. Mahesh Naganathan, a pedestrian, says, "The speed breakers are a must as a good number of pedestrians and commuters cross the road and go to the railway station and bus stops on GST Road, and rash driving is common." Although there are lights below the flyover, illumination is low after sunset.

'Regulate this section of Agaram Main Road'



On a section of Agaram Main Road (Agaramthen) in Selaiyur, outside a hospital, there are vehicular and pedestrian crossing signals, which are as good as non-existent.

Motorists frequenting the section outside Bharat

Medical College and Hospital have requested the Greater Chennai Traffic Police to regulate the area.

S. Bhairavi, a resident and a college professor, says that accidents are a miss and waiting to happen.

A u-turn signal for motorists from Thiruvanchery, Agaramthen, Puthur, and Vengambakkam has to be facilitated on the lane towards Camp Road. Thinking the signal doesn't exist, the motorists negotiate at their own risk.

Special trains for IPL matches

In view of Tata Indian Premier League 2025 matches at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chepauk on April 11, 25 and 30, and May 12, the Southern Railway will be operating three passenger special trains for

commuters after the matches get over.

From Chennai Beach to Velachery, 'passenger special one' will be operated at 22 p.m.

From Velachery to Chennai Beach, passengers special two will

be operated at 22.55 p.m.

From Chepauk to Velachery, passengers special three will be operated at 23.30 p.m.

For details, log on to <https://x.com/DrmChennai>

With IPL ticket, free travel is possible on MTC buses

As in the previous year, Metropolitan Transport Corporation wants more people to use public transport during IPL matches. People with tickets for IPL matches at M.A. Chidambaram Cricket Stadium at Chepauk need not buy bus tickets.

The offer is valid for three hours before and after a match starts and ends, on Deluxe, Express and Whiteboard services.

To enable commuters to reach their homes, MTC will operate buses from three points around the stadium.

The three points include Anna Square Bus Terminus, University of Madras haltover, and near Omandur Hospital on Anna Salai.

From Anna Statue on Mount Road, MTC will operate shuttle services to the cricket stadium.

A thorough cleaning

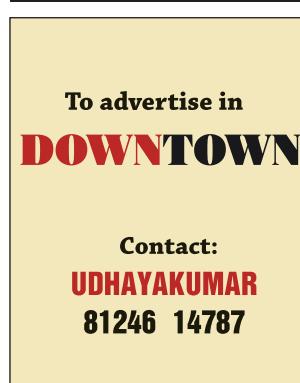


Greater Chennai Corporation is conducting a mechanised cleaning drive of various bus stops in the city using water jets. In picture, workers cleaning the National Institute of Ocean Technology stop at Pallikaranai on Velachery Main Road (on the lane towards Medavakkam)

PHOTO: R. RAVINDRAN.

Chennai Pickleball Open on April 5, 6

The Rotary Club of Madras Next Gen is conducting Chennai Pickleball Open 2025 on April 5 and 6 at the Ice Water Sports Arena, Express Avenue. This two-day fundraiser will raise funds to develop sports infrastructure at a school in Chengalpattu, benefiting over 2,000 girls and impacting 50 nearby districts and villages.



Women rally around to protect waterbody



A view of Puducherry Keni.

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Exnora International has found an ally in its effort to protect a waterbody. A 19-member team of women from Sholinganallur is keeping an eye on Puducherry Keni, a two-acre waterbody located along Tamil Nadu Housing Board Link Road.

They are members of Vibrant Women Welfare Association at Marutham Nagar in Sholinganallur. One of the initiatives by this group formed in 2023 is to ensure the waterbody is not misused by the public.

"We have also erected fences on a section of the lake to prevent anti-social elements from entering the lake," says M. Sujatha Mani, an EC member of the association.

The women have seen the lake and its surrounding areas transform over the years. Haphazard development and lack of proper sewage connection in the area was an area of concern.

They have sent letters to the Chief Secretary and Secretaries of the Public Works Department, Water Resources Department, Revenue and Disaster Management Department, and Chennai District Collectorate to remove the encroachments in the lake area and

prevent the waterbody from getting polluted.

Another member S. Tamilarasi says they want the government to remove encroachments on the lake. Years ago, Rotary Club of Madras erected fences.

However, the fences were broken by anti-social elements. Taxi drivers misuse the lake for washing clothes and bathing.

S. Karpagam, co-ordinator of Exnora Waterbodies, says the group started taking up lake cleanup in 2024. "Currently, close to 2,000 residents of the Tamil Nadu Housing Board in Balaji Nagar rely on the lake for their groundwater getting replenished."

At home in a dry patch



A brown shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) that was spotted near the Buckingham Canal in Sholinganallur on March 28, 2025. The brown shrike is a winter visitor to Chennai and surrounding areas. It prefers a dry landscape and is known to impale its prey on thorns and keep it there to ensure an extended food source.

PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

Rejuvenation of a lake under way on the IT Corridor



▼ Snapshots of the ongoing restoration of the Sholinganallur lake (opposite Infosys office) on Rajiv Gandhi Salai, on March 29, 2025.
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK