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Villivakkam subway on January 2. PHOTOS: VEDHAN M



**P**edestrians need to exercise extreme caution while taking the footpath of the vehicular subway on Red Hills Road in Villivakkam as water keeps seeping from its walls.

Motorists also need to be careful as the carriageway is slippery.

Residents of the area say, water seepage persists even during dry weather.

"Water springs from the walls. This has caused moss growth in

some steps making it slippery," says M. Senthil, a resident of Villivakkam.

Another resident S. Venugopal, notes the problem has been there for the past many years but it has become more conspicuous and

## Water seepage at Villivakkam subway



persistent in the last couple of years.

As the Villivakkam railway station, MTC bus termini++us and a vegetable market are in the vicinity, the subway witnesses good traffic during peak hours.

Regulars also see the need to increase the number of lights at the subway and to attend to the potholes on the carriageway.

Text by L. Kanthimathi

## Garbage greets commuters at Villivakkam railway station



Garbage is dumped at the Rajaji Nagar entrance of Villivakkam railway station. The place is misused for dumping all kinds of garbage including plastic items, clothes, mattresses and discarded furniture and washroom sanitaryware, says a commuter. The image was taken on January 2. PHOTO: VEDHAN M

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SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

**S**ustainability exercises can scream their heads off. A typical case: massive biomining machinery massed up at a landfill to segregate and process legacy waste. You can tell what is going on from a mile away.

Sustainability exercises can also speak in soft tones, the message gently dropped into an ear here and another there. A typical case: a guild of volunteers sharing a club affiliation squirreling away pre-loved items (that have turned white elephants to their owners) and, finally, quietly placing them in fresh pairs of hands. In rare instances, the whispered syllables of this unobtrusive initiative would multiply and assume the intensity of a scream.

Hold that idea in the crook of your palm and flesh it out with a name, an address, a date, people on both sides of the poverty line, wants and needs, and add a snippet of a back story to it, and the picture is inviting. On January 5, Thillayadi Valliammai Madhar Sangam would have dusted off a vast collection of items, painfully accumulated over months knocking on many doors, and line them up for a sale, a Jumble Sale. In a zeitgeisty twist to the Robinhood legend, this sale would declutter the lives of the haves and fill those of the have-nots with essential items, creating a win-win situation. These volunteers are ruling out the alternative for these pre-owned items: slipping into the maw of a landfill. Initiatives of this kind might be moving inchmeal, their results hard to see, let alone quantify, but their significance cannot be pooh-poohed: they reduce landfills even before they are formed.

It is the third edition of the Jumble Sale by Thillayadi Valliammai Madhar Sangam, a ladies club with coordinates in Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur.

Jayanthi Premchander, a member of this ladies club and one of the masterminds behind the Jumble Sale, explains how, between the first and the third edition, the initiative has grown in stature and reach and acquired something approaching a scream.

In its second edition, when the sale was scheduled to start at 2 p.m., the crowd had already begun to form by 1:30 p.m., eagerly standing outside like a tide waiting to crest.

"We were all a bit anxious," Jayanthi recalls with a chuckle. "We had no idea that so many people would show up. It was like a floodgate opening!"

That crowd signalled the transformation of what began as a modest attempt to declutter a few homes into a full-fledged community tradition, one that attracts families from near and far.

What to expect from the Jumble Sale?



## A sale with a social focus

**T**oday, a Jumble Sale at Valmiki Nagar in Thiruvanmiyur would give a modern twist to the Robinhood legend by decluttering the lives of the haves to fill those of the have-nots with essential items, creating a win-win situation

It is the kind of event where pre-loved clothes, well-worn toys, and gently used household goods, including furniture, find a new home. It plants on the faces of donors the warm glow of knowing their discarded treasures will be cherished once more, and places within easy reach of the underprivileged, items they would think multiple times before buying spanking new off the shelves of a showroom.

### The cost factor

It is close to free, not entirely free – a sale presupposes transfer of currency, but the figures are on the lower side.

The pricing is as accessible as it gets: 20, 50, and 100 rupees. And, of course, there are those irresistible

ble 10 rupee items – things that may not have much value in the commercial market but are worth their weight in gold for the right person.

"We keep it simple," says Jayanthi, "100 for the really great items, and then we have categories for 50, 20, and even 10 rupees." All the three editions of the Jumble Sale put together, the maximum price for an item stays pegged at ₹500. A mini fridge went for that price in the second edition.

Each item is meticulously categorised and sorted into boxes. As these items are received from donor hands, there is no telling what would make it to the "marketplace" until they do. Some items

would not "fit" into those boxes.

If a high-ticket item, something based on electronics and of intricate workmanship comes through, the price may be adjusted, but the philosophy remains: keep it affordable, keep it real. Well-maintained furniture can also fall outside the boxes.

"The pricing is part of the charm," Jayanthi says. "No one leaves empty-handed. It is about making sure everyone can find something that fits both their budget and their heart."

The Jumble Sale is a day's affair, spanning just hours – but considerable forethought goes into how those hours are orchestrated, the preparation beginning months before the event. Since its second edition, the Jumble Sale has a time table set in stone.

Planning for this Jumble Sale kicks off as early as September. By October, the collection of items starts in earnest. "We begin gathering things from all around – neighbours, friends, and even acquain-

which includes the president (Rama), secretary (Lalitha) and treasurer (Vaidehi).

Even unsold items end up finding their unique purposes. They are donated to local charities, ensuring that nothing goes to waste and everything finds its place, a place of utility. The funds raised from the sale are channelled into environmental and community projects, creating a positive ripple effect that stretches far beyond the day of the sale. "In that sense, the sale keeps giving, even after it is over," remarks Jayanthi.

The Jumble Sale is made known largely by word of mouth. "We make a poster, and then every member of the ladies' club is on a mission," says Jayanthi. "We tell everyone – our housekeepers, the drivers, security, the local vendors. The message just keeps spreading."

In the digital age, word-of-mouth communication has an extended meaning. It is about loosely framed information getting circulated in social media. By the time the Sale starts, the digital poster is a "tattered sheet" having gone through a wringer of forwarding on social media. Sustainability circles present on social media serve as repeater stations amplifying the message to those near and far.

This approach ensures that the sale's reach extends far beyond the immediate neighbourhood, drawing people from various corners of the metro. Some even make it a point to tell their friends and family to participate in the sale as a donor or a buyer, even if they are themselves miles away.

A forward button on the poster shared in social media does the trick. It is as though the Jumble Sale has become a whispered secret passed along from one person to the next. Jayanthi says the buyers largely come from the fishermen hamlets nearby – lining the Kottivakkam, Pallavakkam and Neelangarai coast. The donors come from everywhere, even from neighbourhoods as distant as Egmore, Nungambakkam and Anna Nagar.

### The origins of the Jumble Sale

In 2022, the committee at the helm of affairs at Thillayadi Valliammai Madhar Sangam were brainstorming over organising a sale (possibly, a garage sale) that would help residents of Valmiki Nagar find a fair price for their used goods. They backtracked on the idea when it became clear that such an initiative would cannibalise on an existing one, something that was running like a well-oiled machine. It was "Marketplace", established under the Sangam's entrepreneurship wing, which allowed members to sell even items as expensive as smartphones, preowned. They decided a sale with a social focus would be a better idea, and thus was born the Jumble Sale on 2 April, 2023, with the now well-entrenched philosophy of decluttering the homes of the haves and filling those of the have-nots with essential items.

The second edition of the Sale took place on 7 January, 2024.



Snapshots of the Jumble Sale from its previous editions. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tances and rank strangers who just want to declutter before the New Year," says Jayanthi.

By January, everything is carefully sorted and ready to go, thanks to the dedication of the volunteers who meticulously prepare the sale. It is no small feat, but the team's commitment is evident in every detail. The Sangam has 43 members and it would be all hands on deck when the Sale is in the works. The efforts are steered by a core group

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# READERS WRITE

## 'An obstacle course at the entrance of Villivakkam railway station'



The Market Road entrance of Villivakkam railway station. PHOTO:S VEDHAN M



Railway sleepers placed at the entrance of Villivakkam railway station (the entrance at Market Road) is inconvenient for commuters. If one does not watch out they will trip and fall. Therefore, I request the Southern Railway to remove the sleepers as it is difficult to walk over them. This will be of immense relief to senior citizens.

It must be nine months since the sleepers were placed with an aim of preventing two-wheelers from being parked there. Earlier, motorcyclists were parking their vehicles very close to the station's building (near the ticket counter) blocking the way for others. Now, due to the sleepers, motorcyclists are parking on the road. This is also an offence.

These motorcyclists should not be mistaken for commuters who use the parking lot day-long on an everyday basis. Instead, these are motorcyclists who visit the station to buy tickets and leave soon. And some wait to pick up someone from the station. As they are at the station for a short duration, they do not want to spend by using the station's parking

lot. Hence, they prefer to park on the road unmindful of the inconvenience they cause to the public. The "no-parking" signboard at the entrance is treated with scant respect.

Southern Railway should take stringent measures against this practice.

M. Senthil,  
Villivakkam

## Yoga programme at Surapet

Satyananda Yoga Centre is conducting a four-week Yoga programme from January 6 at Aruljothi Arulayam, Ambattur Puzal Road, Surapet. The classes will be held from 5.30 a.m. to 7 a.m. According to a press release, no fee will be charged. Sessions on food habits, moral values and reitation of mantras are also part of the programme.

The centre follows the curriculum of Bihar School of Yoga. For details, call 9841150877 / 9445051015



'MTC's 142 service is erratic'

Metropolitan Transport Corporation's bus service 142 (Perambur - Vinayagapuram via Papermills Road) is operated with good frequency. There is a bus every 10 minutes. As a regular commuter of this service, I notice a reduction in its frequency in recent days, especially between half-past six and eight in the evening. Commuters have to wait for half-an-hour and then

around five buses come one after the other at the same time which is of no use. Due to erratic service, commuters resort to using share-autorickshaws. The minimum and maximum fare is ₹15 and ₹30 respectively.

V. Vairamuthu  
Kathirvedu

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## A feat achieved with the feet



A little over two-and-a-half years old, T. Lavith Aadheeran has established a notable record in the India Book of Records by kicking 50 meters using a kickboard in a 25-meter swimming pool. The little boy trains at SDAT Dolphins Swimming Academy in Mogappair.

## AGUA Gifting Smiles spreads joy and hope to thousands of children

This year, Gifting Smiles, an annual flagship initiative of AGUA Women Foundation, witnessed over 800 volunteers working tirelessly to bring smiles to thousands of children aged 1 to 12. The journey began in October – hours spent collecting funds, choosing toys with care and wrapping them with love. By December, these gifts of joy made their way to the hands of children who could not believe the treasures they were receiving,



says a press release.

This year, Gifting Smiles crossed borders, after covering Tamil Nadu, it crossed borders, state and international.

Volunteers in Bangalore and Mumbai reached children in tribal communities such as Adivasipada, Bhatipada, Ambivili, and Titwala. The initiative crossed

over to the United States, with Rohit Bharadwaj, AGUA's youngest volunteer, spearheading the effort in New Jersey. In Chennai, the team brought smiles to children in fishing communities across Panaiyur, Nainarkuppam, Kannathur, Karikattukuppam, Kovalam, Semmancheri, Nemmeli, Sulur and Pattipulam. They also visited neighborhoods such as Besant Nagar and Vanagaram, with support from Hope Foundation.

## Accessibility for elders enhanced at temple

**A**thulya Senior Care, which provides holistic living solutions for seniors, has launched a pilot project – under its #CaringForASenior campaign – at the Arulmigu Sri Parthasarathy Swamy Temple in Triplicane, seeking to address mobility and comfort challenges faced by elderly devotees.

In an event, it introduced wheelchairs for seamless mobility within the temple premises and chairs strategically placed as resting spots for elderly visitors. These thoughtful additions aim to improve the comfort and accessibility of the sacred space



for senior citizens. To further enrich the experience, Athulya deployed trained caretakers who volunteered to guide and assist the elders, ensuring their safety and active engagement in temple activities, says a press release.

The #CaringForASenior campaign is Athulya's promise to enriching the lives of senior citizens by taking a comprehensive approach to their well-being, the release adds.

The project's success can be attributed to the

strong collaboration between Athulya, the temple administration, and local senior citizen groups. This partnership ensured effective outreach and smooth execution, maximising the initiative's impact. Through this model, Athulya envisions creating a replicable framework that can inspire similar accessibility projects at other temples and community spaces, the release adds.

The event witnessed heartfelt participation from senior citizens who expressed their gratitude for the thoughtful provisions made for their comfort and mobility, says the release.

## Alumni meet ends today

The two-day alumni reunion of St. Mary's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School, Armenian Street, will end on January 5 (today). According

to a press release, the meet is held at Tru Liv Villa Ivory, Kovalam. For details, call Bhoothpal Sreenivasan at 63835 99778.

## Employees union's gift to the visually challenged

Canara Bank Employees' Union, in association with the All India Confederation of the Blind, recently handed over a desktop computer and 100 seven-piece folding canes to visually-impaired persons.

R. Karthik, joint general secretary and state secretary of Tamil Nadu Nadu, said that such assistances were being provided with funds mobilised by way of additional contribution of one month's subscription from the members of the Union

from across the country.

This year programmes were conducted in Tamil Nadu alone for a sum of ₹2 lakh.

K. Srikrishna, treasurer, AIBEA said that various programmes have been conducted by AIBEA which is the parent organisation for Canara Bank Employees' Union.

Muthuselvi, vice-president, All India Confederation of the Blind, thanked the Union for its timely help. She said that the canes get worn out quickly and needed replacing often.

## Workshop on mushroom cultivation

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is organising a workshop on mushroom cultivation on January 9. Also, a culinary workshop on making brownies will be held on January 10.

According to a press re-

lease, various flavours of brownies such as walnut, butterscotch, peanut butter, mint, coconut, salted caramel, raspberry, and a few more. The session will focus on both egg and egg-less brownies. For details, call 044 - 29530048.

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