



metro PLUS

THE HINDU

Meet Sai Akash, the Chennai-based vice captain of the Indian Deaf Men's cricket team **P3**

WHY TEAM RAAYAN IS EXCITED **P4**



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A little after dawn breaks over Elliot's beach, there are cones being placed on the sand to demarcate areas to play on. A group of children takes on an equally motley crew of teens, passing a frisbee and blocking their opponents, running and jumping across the sand. All around, similar pockets have matches going on, with a mix of cheering players and a gaggle of onlookers keenly observing from the sidelines.

Over the weekends in particular, it is not rare to see discs flying up in the air as Chennai's many Ultimate teams take to the city's beaches. The teams we chance upon on a Saturday, warming up, being coached, and playing matches are all a part of Agni Nakshatra, a beginners tournament.

"Every year, teams from Chennai try and get new people to play the sport. The Agni tournament is timed with the school and college holidays so that the children and teens who come in are coached, and get to play matches. This is the first opportunity these players get, and an experience they never forget," Praveen Balaji (aka Bajji), a player with Chakra, the first Ultimate club in Chennai.

A no-contact sport backed by significant community support and spirit, Ultimate which is played on the beaches in Chennai has five players on each side with an alternating ratio of three men to two women. Watch an Ultimate game in action and you realise how much it looks like rugby, full of running minus the contact.

Chennai's seaside has seen Ultimate grow by leaps and bounds. It was only recently that the India Mixed team, with 16 of its 17-member squad from Chennai, clinched the silver medal at the Asia Oceanic Beach Ultimate Championship (AUBOC) in Shirahama, Japan.

Tournaments like these are now aplenty, for Chennai's many clubs and its stellar players.

"When we began back in 2007, there were probably seven of us who came together to play Ultimate here. Hardly anyone knew of the sport, and we relied on YouTube to learn, and even wrote to international

The flying disc chase

With several international victories, Chennai's Ultimate community is getting more competitive than ever before



players to coach us via email," recalls Abhinav Vinayak Shankarnarayanan, indicating how far the sport has come. Chennai currently has around 500 to 600 active players, including children from schools and NGOs. At present, there are between eight and 10 clubs here.

On equal footing As one of the few thriving mixed-gender sports, a number of young girls and women are at the Agni tournament, picking up the nuances of the sport. "We don't see a lot of sports where men and women play together, and in my own club, I've seen the number of women joining

and committing to the sport increase. It helps that the community here in Chennai has been safe, warm and welcoming," says Namritha Anbarasan, a Chennai-based psychologist who plays for Stall 7.

Namritha was a part of the India Mixed Masters team, which also participated in the recent tournament at Shirahama, placing sixth. The Masters team was coached by Mrinalini Siddhartha from Chennai, the first woman head coach of an Indian team.

As a sport that is independent and is without the backing of a Government, the community is what makes

Ultimate the sport it is. The captain of the India Mixed team which won the silver in Shirahama, Siva Raman, a player from Flywild recalls several instances of the Chennai Ultimate community stepping in. "Finding sponsors has always been hard in this sport. A decade ago, I was a student and my father was a tailor. I could participate in tournaments only thanks to how generously my friends like Abhinav pitched in," he says. A decade later, Siva now helps younger, promising players from lower economic backgrounds which include many from the fishing communities in the area who take to the sport.

The beaches have long been acknowledged as what sets Chennai apart as a training ground and producing fine players. "The Ultimate community in Chennai is extremely competitive since so many people find a place in the national teams. It is really hard to run on the sand, and practising on the beaches as well as experiencing these strong winds helps us with stamina and conditioning," Siva explains.

The next exciting challenge coming up is the World Championships in Australia. Five players from Chennai, are a part of the team from India off to compete in the tournament.

How does one begin their journey with Ultimate in Chennai? Just show up at the beach. "On the field, everyone is equal and we will teach you to play frisbee no matter what. In 50 minutes you can be a passable thrower, and the sport will then take you decades to master," Abhinav says. On what sets the sport apart, he is quick to quote late psychiatrist Dr Stancil Johnson. "When a ball dreams, it dreams it's a frisbee."

Scan the QR code to watch a video on the Ultimate community in Chennai



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Vasanthakumari Vijaykumar has been operating at optimum strength, making sesame balls known as ellu paagu in bulk. All the frenzy in her kitchen is in preparation for the Oorum Unavun food festival at Semmozhi Poonga between July 5 and 7.

After a successful first edition that attracted over 5,000 guests in a day, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is hosting the festival for the second time to commemorate World Refugee Day (celebrated on June 20). "I came to Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka when I was eight years old. Today, I live in the Ranipet camp. Back there, we had our own sesame plantation. My mother would make this often," shares the 44-year-old.

The fest will feature food stalls by 75 refugees from Sri Lanka and Myanmar currently residing in Tamil Nadu, offering over 30 traditional dishes and snacks. Among the participants are Sri Lankan Tamil entrepreneurs involved in a Tamil Nadu Government initiative to promote self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

Vasanthakumari participated last year, serving olai puttu. Inspired by the response, she is returning with a dish close to her heart. "The black sesame seeds are soaked overnight. They are then dried. The skin is removed to avoid bitterness before pounding them in an ural (mortar). Once it begins to secrete oil, country

A whiff of home

Refugees from Sri Lanka and Myanmar bring flavours from their land to a unique food festival



Kitchens of the world Sri Lankan food prepared by women from refugee camps at Olai Puttu restaurant, Thoothukudi.
N RAJESH

sugar is added and made into balls," she explains.

"Many participants got orders after last year's festival. This empowers them. We curated this menu based on what the participants excel at making," says Surya Kumari from OFERR, part of the organising committee.

Lalitha Padmanathan visited the festival last year and decided to participate this time. "It's a wonderful way to connect and watch people enjoy dishes we grew up eating. I will serve vegetarian dishes and fish patties along with kara bonda," Lalitha shares.

While most stalls are by Sri Lankan refugees, Shaju Begum from Myanmar is excited to showcase her favourites. "I am just starting preparations. I will make lappas, a

dish with peanuts, seeds, onion, and garlic, and channa soup, a chickpea and noodle-based dish," she says.

This year's festival theme is 'Ellarum Inbutirukka', translating to 'for everyone's happiness' in Tamil. "It feels like home when surrounded by flavours we grew up eating," says Vasanthakumari.

Limited slots for pre-booked lunch are also available for all three days. A vegetarian meal costs ₹160, chicken meal costs ₹280 and fish meal ₹320.

For reservations, contact 9176483735 or email oorumunavum2024@gmail.com. The festival will be on from June 5 to 7 between 10am and 8 pm at Semmozhi Poonga.

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Scan the QR code to watch a video on the Ultimate community in Chennai

DIY dresses, metallic bomber jackets and more, took Chennai's Pride March fashion up a notch

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Although everyone from the city tends to defend Chennai's eternal summer, we have no choice but to admit some truths. It is harder for make up to stay on as sweat is a vexing consequence. Black is a bold choice on a humid day, and anything other than cotton might seem foolhardy. But when fashion is the name of the game, these rules are meant to be bent.

Egmore's streets transformed into a runway at the 16th edition of Chennai's annual Self-Respect Rainbow Pride March on June 30. Black bodycon dresses, metallic bomber jackets, ornate turbans, sequins and intricate make up in all shades of the rainbow, stood out against the backdrop of the Cooum River, near the site of the march.

Wings, capes, flags and hand fans were other prominent accessories. Participants who travelled from different parts of the country to be part of the march, said that most were executing specific Do-It-Yourself (DIY) visions for their looks. This meant that most looks were put together with bits and bobs of various elements including belts, earrings, chains, and paint and tailoring on clothes. Being in a crowd that rejoiced in self-expression helped ease the nerves, they said.

Aishu Ajith from Thiruvananthapuram said that they were channelling their inner Aishwarya Rai. Dressed in a velvet red headscarf and a long black gown that trailed through the streets, they struck a pose for every moving camera. Another black dress that caught our attention was that of Rakesh's. "Pride is a once-a-year event."

Rainbow-tinted glasses

Coming out in a jeans and T-shirt does not define me. This is why I am wearing a black bodycon jacket, metal purse, silver glasses, thunder-like ear cuffs centred around a rainbow heart. "I am a futuristic queer person who has gone through the trials of life and gotten to a point where

when Scarlet* explained their outfit – a metallic bomber jacket, metal purse, silver glasses, thunder-like ear cuffs centred around a rainbow heart. "I am a futuristic queer person who has gone through the trials of life and gotten to a point where

Scan the QR code to watch a video about the different looks at Chennai's Pride march.

The couture game peaked



*Name changed to protect identity.



Strike a pose The participants at the Chennai Rainbow Self-Respect March celebrate self expression. THAMODHARAN B

I am accepted and happy. I want to represent the future where these feelings are possible," they said.

Besides clothing and accessories, another key area of attempting new trends was make up. Shobika, for instance, spent two hours glueing sequins in the colour of the rainbow. She added that she coloured her hair especially for pride. Cheeks saw rainbow paint, the eyes saw colourful liners and eyeshadows, and lips saw vibrant tints.

Harnesses, crowns and painted clothes were other popular trends at the march.

Scarlett, Shahid, Aishu and Rakesh said that although they quickly got ready for pride, it took them at least one month to put their looks together. "We do not have the time, space or freedom to engage with tailors or experiment with our make up unlike cis-gender people. A lot of it is still done under wraps. Although there are futuristic elements, my favourite part of my outfit is the rainbow heart. Homophobia and queerphobia exists and our struggle never ends, but today, we get to be ourselves".

*Name changed to protect identity.

Spoonful of magic

The Little Festival hosts a Korean puppet production, and a musical based on clowning



Many worlds The cast of *The Kooks*. ABISHEK THANGAMANI

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Akitchen full of silly superheroes, with pots, pans and whisks in tow – sure sounds like a recipe for chaos and madness. Here, there are no rules. If you are underwater one minute, you will be part of the underworld the next.

At the newly renovated Museum Theatre, the busy kitchen is slowly coming to life. One can spot funny-looking fish, the occasional dragon, and a group of chefs with bright red clown noses floating in the distance as the stage gets ready to host the 13th edition of The Little Festival, an international theatre festival for children. This year, apart from the chefs and their antics in a home production titled *The Kooks*, the city will also see a Korean puppet production, *A Tree and A Boy*.

Both plays are non verbal, and cater to young audiences. Krishnakumar Balasubramanian (KK), artistic director, and creator of *The Kooks* says one of the easiest ways to tackle the perceived barrier of language in theatre is by using human physicality.

"I have always been hugely inspired by anything that is physical when it comes to comedy. So we wanted to set this in an unusual setting. We also wanted it reflect the idea of 'coming together' and what other than food brings people

together? That's how the marriage of a kitchen and physical humour happened," says KK. This year, the show is directed by Santhosh Kumar. The play derives from the techniques of clowning and slapstick humour and leaves room for improvisation, in every iteration. "The script is two pages long, but the show is 1 hour and 15 minutes long" says Santhosh.

South Korea's theBEFU theatre's *A Tree and A Boy* conceptualised in 1992 is a journey in imagery and sounds, and a masterclass on traditional Korean puppetry. Here, the lives of a boy and a tree are juxtaposed through the seasons; from spring to winter, and spring again.

Director Lee says, "The show is a story about life that everyone can relate to. The cycle of birth, growing up, loving, failing, dying, is a very natural and beautiful one. The magic of existence."

Children are at the centre of both these experiences. And they sure are a tough audience to satisfy. Concludes KK, "Sometimes, they ask for some characters to remain on stage for longer to connect with them. We will make sure this happens."

The Kooks will be performed on July 5, 6 and 8 at 11am, and July 7 at 4pm. *A Tree and A Boy* will be held on July 9 and 10 at 11am. Passes are priced at ₹400 at explara.com.

Blind date

Plunge into darkness for a five-course adventure at Park Hyatt's unique Dine in the Dark experience



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You eat with your eyes first.

All five of our senses are interconnected when it comes to food, but first impressions are made when we look at what is put in front of us. This is one of the main reasons why restaurants meticulously plate the food, add garnishes, and other embellishments. It is a visual feast and in today's Instagram age, your camera eats first.

But imagine a dining experience where this very important sense is taken away.

At Park Hyatt's Flying Elephant, in a dining room plunged into pitch darkness you are served a five-course meal.

After a brief introduction and interaction with fellow diners, you are led into a dining space and all smart devices are confiscated. The lights are turned off, curtains drawn to a close and blindfolds go on. The carpeted floor muffles the host's steps as he walks around the 10 seater table explaining what we will experience for the next 90 minutes or so.

"Slowly reach out and feel what has just been placed in

front of you," says Jaspreet Singh, our host for the evening. The cold ceramic bowl holds the salad course. "I cannot smell anything," says one guest, while trying to find their cutlery. As the diners begin to taste the salad, they start sounding out their guesses. Apples! Olive oil! Cucumber!

Each course is punctuated with fun activities to keep the diners engaged.

The soup course is served at a lukewarm sipping temperature. "I planned each course keeping in mind that it shouldn't be easily recognisable. If I put familiar flavours in front of you, it will not be a fun sensory experience," says Chef Dhanraj Manogaran, Chef de Cuisine at Park Hyatt, Chennai. While cutlery is provided, it is suggested that you reach out into the bowl (or plate) and feel the various elements. Do not be afraid to get messy because nobody can see or judge how you eat.

A palate cleanser is served before the dessert course. The chef's manage to keep each course relevant to the region by using at least one local ingredient.

At the end of the meal, while you are squinting and adjusting to the light, a screen displays the details of the meal.

While there are plenty of opportunities to sneak a peek at your plate, one must take it upon themselves to stay true to the experience, even if the server's light shines through the blindfold. Close your eyes, and eat with your other senses for a change.

Dining in the Dark at The Flying Elephant is at Park Hyatt, Velachery Main Road, near Raj Bhavan. For reservations call +91 893 9871128. The experience per person costs ₹4,200.

The plate is lava

Paper Roast by Cafe Pramadham, Chennai's newest entrant into the quick meal ecosystem, has surprises like steaming lava idlis

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It is half past 5 on a weekday and a group of friends, all clad in black waistcoats, saunters in. They are ravenous. Nothing compares to post-work snack cravings. At Paper Roast by Cafe Pramadham, Chennai's latest vegetarian tiffin centre located at St Mary's Road junction, junior lawyers from private law firms nearby are regular fixtures. Today, they want to try the butter bun.

Paper Roast by Cafe Pramadham, is the Greams Road restaurant's smaller cousin, hoping to be the go-to spot for a quick, fuss-free meal in Alwarpet. While Cafe Pramadham was initially intended as a tiffin centre, it has grown to be a restaurant with a possibility of eventually growing into a fine dining experience. Paper Roast on the other hand was conceptualised as a quick service restaurant from the start.

Vignesh KR who runs both



Familiar tastes (Above) Inside Paper Roast; (below) the vegetarian spread. M SRINATH

says, "We are seeing this trend [of QRs] in all metro cities, but I have always felt that Chennai had a gap in this market. We are focussing on a limited menu, but within that there will be special crowd pullers."

And the winner is
The simple dish of butter, bun and a generous sprinkling of sugar, is a winner from the get go. The butter does not overpower, and invites

second, and third bites within minutes.

Paper Roast's showstopper is the "viral" lava idli. This decadent version of a podi idli is a donut-shaped, glass-skinned idli that holds a pool of oil and podi in its centre. Cut into it, and you will be welcomed by a rush of 'lava'.

At first glance, it looks like a recipe for heartburn, but surprisingly, it is light as familiar notes of podi pair well with the very soft idli, leaving no room for the oil to



overpower. "We make everything at site, and have an open kitchen plan to ensure the quality of hygiene," says Vignesh, adding, "There is a group that really wants the basics to be done right, and we are targeting them, along with those who want to experiment within this realm."

But let's be honest. The dosas are why we are here. The restaurant's namesake is crisp, comforting and all too familiar as any loyalist would agree. The coconut chutney is the right amount of chunky yet smearable, but the tomato chutney wins as the ideal pairing. The sambar is a little runny making the thick sambar fiend in me a little disappointed. The special cheese dosa (with a poondi kozhambu paste) is flavourful while the double cheese dosa simply overwhelms one, thanks to the thick cheese layer within the folds. The crispy Guntur masala dosa with a spicy onion-chilli chutney filling hits all the right spots.

For the main course, the nool parotta and kurma is a clear winner. Flaky strands of dough tangle into a light parotta that pairs perfectly with a balanced vegetable kurma, (alternatively one can opt for paneer butter masala as well).

Served in a glass, their frothy filter coffee is on the milkier side, not as fragrant as one expects. Some would argue that it could be stronger. An elaneer payasam, which boasts the consistency of a beverage, or the newly-introduced tender coconut jelly with shavings of coconut on it, are other options to end the meal.

Paper Roast by Cafe Pramadham is open for trials from 11am to 10pm, till July 14. After July 15, it will be open from 7am to 10pm. Price for two is ₹400-₹500.



Beyond the sixer

Chennai-based cricketer Sai Akash on the Indian Deaf cricket team's recent victory in England

Sai Akash proudly holds up a medal, the blues of his cricket jersey matching the bright blue skies in Birmingham, United Kingdom. While the entire country erupted in joy a few days ago when the Indian Men's Cricket team lifted the T20 World Cup in Barbados, Sai Akash was part of a team that was also scripting its own success story.

In the Bilateral International Deaf Series, the Indian Deaf Men's team which he is the vice captain of, emerged victorious, winning five out of the seven matches they played. For this Chennai-based cricketer, the joy was double – having also been named the player of the series.

"While I struggled in the first match because I didn't know how the English cricket pitch would be, I scored four half

centuries in the remaining matches. I was extremely happy with the encouragement from the ECB (England Cricket Board) and the British commentators regarding my batting," Sai says, in a text interview.

For the 28-year-old cricketer, cricketing aspirations slowly began to take shape from the time he was a child playing street cricket. "The thrill of the game and the sheer joy of playing cricket kept me going. Over time, my passion for cricket only grew stronger, leading me

to pursue it at the highest level," he says.

A lack of specialised coaches for players who are hearing-impaired meant that Sai



Our Deaf Team India that won this series has dedicated and passionate players from various parts of the country

SAI AKASH
Cricketer

Aim for the sky Sai Akash after the team won the Bilateral International Deaf Series. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

initially did not have a formal coaching set up to hone his skills. "I learned a lot from YouTube and from my seniors. I also had part-time coaching through friends, playing matches, and net practice," he says. Citing Suresh Raina as a particularly important inspiration, Sai says he shares the same birthday and jersey number with the former cricketer. "I admired his attitude, humble dedication, first-ever T20 century, and sportsmanship. His example motivated me to take the game seriously."

In the run up to the series in the UK, the team, comprising players from across the country met for practice camps. Sai, and his teammate, all-rounder E Sudarsun were the only two players from Tamil Nadu. With his experience of playing in sunny India, Sai says he found the weather in Birmingham "cold and awesome."

"Our Deaf Team India that won this series has dedicated and passionate players from various parts of the country. Despite the challenges, we come together to train and prepare at different local academies and grounds. Many of us use online resources and rely on support from local coaches, friends, and senior players," Sai says.

Sai says that aspiring deaf cricketers should not let any challenges deter them. "Embrace your unique journey and use it as motivation to excel. Seek out opportunities to learn and improve, whether through online resources, local coaching, or support from fellow players," he says.



**Garlic and herbs...
the perfect mix in your butter**

If there's one thing most foodies agree on, it's their love for butter; whether slathered on toast, melted into mashed potatoes, or used as a topping on their favourite dishes. In simple words, butter makes everything better.

But while most love the classic salted butter, we must tell you it's the garlic and herb butter that tops it all when it comes to flavour. Infused with garlic and aromatic herbs, this savoury, flavour-packed butter takes every dish to the next level. This is the perfect accompaniment to multiple dishes.

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dishes into something decadent, try the Amul Garlic and Herb Butter. It's 100% natural and has no artificial flavour or colour. Blended to perfection with garlic and oregano, this butter lets you turn an ordinary dish into something extraordinary, with a swipe of your butter knife. Whether it is kulchas, toast, or pastas, this works like magic. Complex, tantalizing, and intense, nothing awakens your taste buds like the Amul Garlic and Herb Butter.

If you're looking to whip up something simple and give it a tasty upgrade, or you just want a way to use up leftovers innovatively, Amul Garlic and Herb Butter is the perfect choice to make it extra special.



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Skill building Children bring in bicycles and electronics to the repair cafe in Chennai. B THAMODHARAN

watches that needed repair, niggles in their bicycles, stuffed animals, remote-operated cars and more – all in need of tinkering.

Melvie Pearlita was one such participant, keenly focussed on her clock, at the electronics repair station. As a volunteer patiently explained the different moving parts of the device, the 10-year-old followed instructions, and began her repairs.

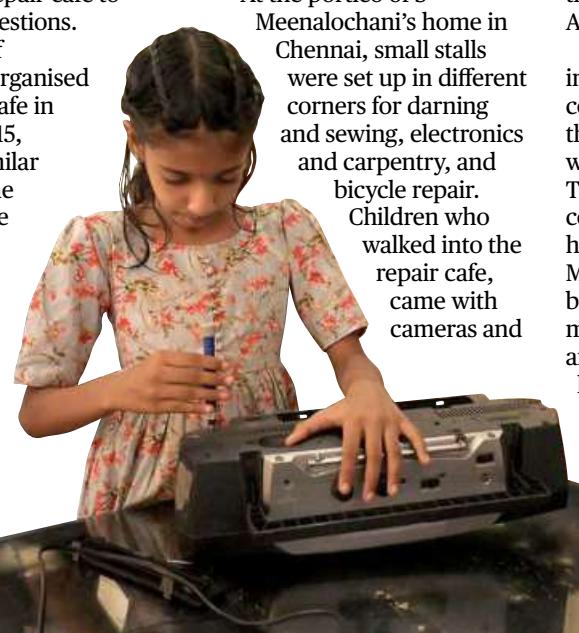
"We have had around 10 participants come in, and the electronics repair station is a big hit," said Meenalochani. A homeschooled parent, she said that learning how to do at least a first level of repair for things at home was an extremely useful skill for children to pick up, and was something often ignored by the current education system.

As children crowd around the electronics repair table, 10-year-old Yash Mritunjay stands nearby, watching and learning as Ashok Urs, a volunteer fixes a children's bicycle. "We have an array of tools and resources here to fix brakes, punctures, and even clean and care for their bicycles properly," Ashok said.

The repair cafe has been a great way to initiate children into the environmental benefits of learning to repair, according to the parents. "There are so many toys and other small things we end up throwing out. Learning how to repair, as well as being aware of the effort this takes, is a good way for children to learn to care for their possessions better," says Auxilia Rajaratnam, a parent.

The Repair Cafe Foundation in Bengaluru has been conducting workshops during the summer break, through weekends for children there. This is something that the community in Chennai also hopes to replicate, and Meenalochani says this will not be a one-off session. "With more awareness among parents and when interest grows, we hope to build on this and reach out to more children about the importance of repair as a skill," she adds.

At the portico of S Meenalochani's home in Chennai, small stalls were set up in different corners for darning and sewing, electronics and carpentry, and bicycle repair. Children who walked into the repair cafe, came with cameras and



Tinker and fix

Chennai's first repair cafe had children learning how to repair and care for things

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What do you do when your bicycle needs a repair? Or when your favourite stuffed toy has a tear and needs to be sewn up? Do you know how to tinker around with, and fix a watch or a camera that has stopped working? A collective of homeschooled parents from Chennai, and The Repair Cafe Bengaluru Foundation have come together to begin Chennai's first repair cafe to answer these questions.

"As a group of volunteers, we organised our first repair cafe in Bengaluru in 2015, inspired by a similar initiative from the Netherlands. The concept was modified to suit our cities, and we have trained the focus on children. We have tied up with residents associations, parenting

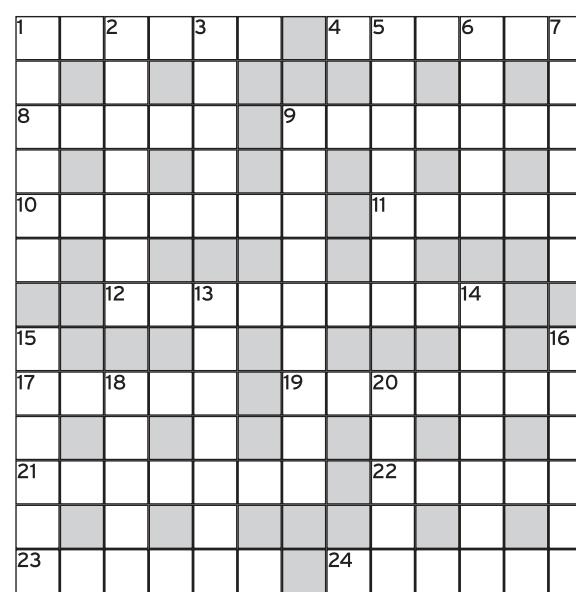
groups, and even individuals who wish to introduce this concept to their community," says Poorna Sarkar, coordinator.

Poorna, and a team of volunteers from Bengaluru were present at the repair cafe in Chennai on Sunday. While it was only a half-day pop-up of sorts in Chennai, the Repair Cafe community in Bengaluru has been conducting workshops during the summer break, through weekends for children there.

At the portico of S Meenalochani's home in Chennai, small stalls were set up in different corners for darning and sewing, electronics and carpentry, and bicycle repair.

Children who walked into the repair cafe, came with cameras and

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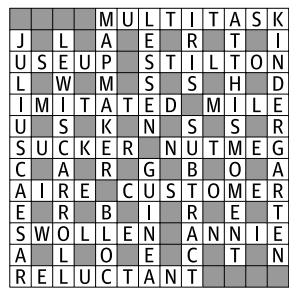
Across

- 1 Provide (6)
 - 4 Fraudulence (6)
 - 8 Watery discharge from the nose (5)
 - 9 Empires (anag) — assumption (7)
 - 10 React in an offended manner (7)
 - 11 Humiliate (5)
 - 12 Someone who comes just for Saturday and Sunday (9)
 - 17 Very long periods of time (5)
 - 19 Early childhood (7)
 - 21 Fielding position behind the batsman (4,3)
 - 22 Terminate before completion (5)
 - 23 Wolf-like (6)
 - 24 Letters added at the front of a word (6)
- Down**
- 1 Flashing light instrument (6)
 - 2 Screening before release for the general public (7)
 - 3 Boundary (5)
 - 5 Shade of green (7)

- 6 Heather — girl's name (5)
- 7 Ancient Greek or Egyptian city (6)
- 9 Going before (9)
- 13 Greek letter E (7)
- 14 Hang up (4,3)
- 15 Licit (6)
- 16 Grammatical structure in sentences (6)
- 18 Confess (3,2)
- 20 Stylishness (5)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated July 11, 2024.

Solution No. 13591



Unexpected twist

Social Bee collaborates with MasterChef Tamil winner Chef Akash Muralidharan and MasterChef Telugu winner Chef Mahaboob Basha, to present a five-course sit down meal of progressive South Indian cuisine.

Expect dolma with a South Indian twist, choux pastries with chicken, and Irani chai cheese cake to name a few.

@Cafe Fresco, Kotturpuram.

July 6 and 7 for lunch and dinner. Priced at ₹1,499 (vegetarian) and ₹1,799 (non-vegetarian) per person. For booking and details, call 9384839096

Rally for women

The annual event by The Duchess Club, the All Women Car Rally is back. It is professionally conducted by AA Motorsport Solutions, and is open only for women with the following categories: Experts, Regulars Novices and Family. The theme is 'Madras! Madras!'

The rally will be flagged off on July 7, 8am, from Hotel Savera. Fee per car is ₹1,500 (inclusive of lunch for four). Register on or before July 4 by calling 9710947355.

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Master of the game

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Srinivasa Ramanujam

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You are out at a big office team outing or a corporate networking event, and everyone is busy on their phones. Sounds familiar? To pep up corporate outings and spruce up special office occasions, Playtown, by Chennai-based Media Point, offers tech-based games that combine physical activity and technology. With a bouquet of games including an IoT-blended dance game, an AI caricature artist, and motion capture drumming, these games hope to create a participative spirit.

"We noticed a decrease in live interaction amongst guests across events, as they were glued to their phones. This kept them away from the core of social events, which is networking and celebrating the purpose of coming together," states Deepak Swaminathan of Media Point, explaining the genesis of the product.

Designed for all events including corporate outings and weddings, it promises a healthy combination of tech and games. "Many games these days revolve around videos, with little need for physical participation. This has given us an opportunity to blend tech with live participation that can be executed in small spaces," adds Deepak.

Deepak and his team have already tested the waters. During the IPL season, their popular game, Selfie Podu Six Podu, enabled guests to connect their mobile phones to a smart cricket bat and try their hand at hitting sixes. There are other cool games as well, such as a bonding tree that grows with the addition of every new guest, and an



Deepak Swaminathan of Media Point with the 'Selfie Podu Six Podu' game.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

energy-generating cycling gig, all keeping in mind the need to foster conversations over some fun and games.

Armed with these tech games, the makers of Playtown are targeting not just the corporate and IT community, which might see this as an alternative to expensive star hotels or resorts for team-building activities, but also anniversary celebrations and even kitty parties. Tech-fused games are here to stay.

Visit www.playtown.co.in for details.

Caught in a jam



Actor and television host Raju Jeyamohan, best known for winning *Bigg Boss Tamil* Season 5, is set to debut as a hero in an upcoming film titled *Bun Butter Jam*.

Bun Butter Jam is written and directed by Raghav Mirdath, who previously directed *Kaalangalil Aval Vasanthan*. Said to be a

drama that offers a hilarious perspective on the Gen Z romance, the film features Aadhy Prasad and Bhavya Trikha as the female leads.

"*Bun Butter Jam* is a story about Gen Z youth who learn to stay calm and face the present with a smile instead of swinging between the burdens of past pain and fears about the future," reads a press release. The cast of the film also features Saranya Ponvannan, Devadarshini, Charlie, Michael Thangadurai, and VJ Pappu among others. With music scored by Nivas K Prasanna, the upcoming film has cinematography by Babu Kumar IE and editing by John Abraham. It is produced by Suresh Subramanian of Rain of Arrows Entertainment.

The chutney arrives



Guess what Yogi Babu is upto? The actor is headlining an upcoming Disney+ Hotstar original series titled *Chutney Sambar*, co-starring Vani Bhojan and helmed by ace filmmaker Radhamohan. *Chutney Sambar* features R Sundarrajan, Nitin Sathyaa, Charlie and Kumaravel in pivotal roles.

Notably, this marks Yogi Babu's debut as a lead in a full-length series; the actor had earlier starred in a segment of Netflix's *Navarasa*.



Raayan on the block

Kalidas Jayaram and Dushara Vijayan on how actor-turned-filmmaker Dhanush extracted performances out of them

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Actors Kalidas Jayaram and Dushara Vijayan, who played a discordant duo in Pa Ranjith's *Natchathiram Nagargiradhu*, have taken quite an exploratory route in recent years. Even as they play crucial characters in large-scale entertainers, they seem to be operating from an identical standpoint: to do characters that can create an impact regardless of their screen time.

They will both star in upcoming Dhanush-directed *Raayan*, which also stars Aparna Balamurali, SJ Suryah and Selvaraghavan. Excerpts from a chat:

Question: How did you react when the makers of *Raayan* got in touch?

Kalidas: When Dhanush sir narrated the script and asked if I could do a role, I was quite shocked because he is someone I have enjoyed watching on-screen. I play Dhanush sir's brother; Sundeep, Dushara, Dhanush sir and I are all a family.

Dushara: Out of nowhere, I got

a call from Sreyas S (CEO of Wunderbar Films) that Dhanush sir was making this film with Sun Pictures and that they would like me to play a character. It felt like the universe was giving me a sign.

Q: *Raayan*, do you get any guidance from your father, veteran actor Jayaram, about your choices? He recently returned to the action genre with *Abraham Ozler*...

For any parent, their son's movie will be the best. So they will say it's good even if it's bad! I am happy



I had no cinema background. I had to break a lot of stereotypes, and here I am. If you have self-confidence and patience, you will somehow find a way to come out and make a mark

DUSHARA VIJAYAN

In the right direction Kalidas, Dhanush, Dushara and Sundeep Kishan in a still from *Raayan*.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

listen to something with a blank face.

Q: *Raayan*, you usually attend workshops and undergo specific processes ahead of shoots. When acting in such large-scale commercial entertainers, did your process change?

I still do my workshops and make time. While switching from one character to the other, it's important to understand the quality that each character possesses. I do my homework and talk to directors to understand what mannerisms we can bring into the character.

Q: *Raayan*, over the years, there has been a lot of discussion about what 'good acting' is. Does all that, consciously or subconsciously, influence your performance?

If you think a lot about it, it will start affecting your work. At the end of the day, if your director is happy and your character is moving along the graph that you wanted it to, then you are doing the right thing. I still remember being nervous while shooting my first shot for *Raayan*. It was a world I was very new to – I play a North Chennai guy who is very rough and tough. I kept feeling like something was missing and then Dhanush sir explained and gave me pointers on what to do. After the first shot, he came and patted me on my back and I felt relieved; that's how you know that you are on the right path.

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