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THE HINDU

Discover the Ripon buildings through their iconic columns **P3**

ALL EYES ON ARUL, BY SANDEEP AND YANCHAN **P4**

Ocean's 20



Plastic Odyssey, a 'floating laboratory' is now docked at Chennai Port. It is on a three-year expedition to find sustainable solutions from all over the world to fight plastic pollution. We take a look inside

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Chennai's skies and waters are in a never-ending tussle on who wears the colour blue best. But at the Chennai Port today a first-of-its-kind vessel is docked, its imposing blue-and-white hull inviting curious glances. The vessel, sized somewhere between a ship and a boat looks decidedly out of place among the bulk carriers and container ships that dot the ever-busy port. Not far away is a gaggle of students from St

Antony's Matriculation High School, Pallikaranai, wearing crisp smiles and making their way to the vessel. This is their first time aboard a ship, let alone one with a purpose.

Grandly christened the Plastic Odyssey, this 40-metre long "floating laboratory" is a three-and-half year expedition that set sail from Marseilles, in the South of France, on October 1, 2022, and has since been collecting low-cost, sustainable plastic waste solutions from around the world. These include ideas, innovations and technology that contributes to plastic recycling and reduction. After recent stops at Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia, Plastic Odyssey is on its 31st

stopover in Chennai – its only stop in India.

Simon Bernard, a former merchant navy officer whose love for the ocean led him on this expedition, says, "India is an amazing stopover for us both in terms of recycling and reduction. India consumes 10 times less plastic than France, that is approximately seven kilograms per person, per

year. There is a lot to learn here, the use of stainless steel instead of single-use plastic for instance." The now-CEO and co-founder reiterates that the expedition is not limited to recycling on board; it is about research and incubating programmes while working with local entrepreneurs and communities like the Indian Vision Institute, a Palavakkam-based non-governmental organisation.

"We have been to 30 countries so far. There are many initiatives, solutions, entrepreneurs, and changemakers around the world but they are not connected to each other. Our job is to make them connect, document all this knowledge and share it worldwide," he adds.

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Cruise control Plastic Odyssey makes a stopover in Chennai, its first and only stop in India.
JOHAN SATHYADAS

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The 40-metre vessel is a work of art in itself: divided into 10 spaces complete with analysis laboratories, recycling workshops, display areas, pyrolysis zones and training rooms, it is nothing short of a research facility on water. With a 20-member crew, of which nine are professional sailors, the vessel has been home to researchers, engineers, activists and entrepreneurs for the last two-and-a-half years.

A tour, led by stopover manager Morgane Kerdoncuff, begins at its very heart: the recycling workshop. “This area is dedicated to transforming plastic waste directly into useful products. The first step is to segregate plastic by type. We have several machines that we built on the ship, to transform the vessel itself into a recycling factory,” says Morgane. The next step, after sorting, is to shred hard plastic and soft plastic into flakes using shredders. Then, the extruder melts the flakes into a chewing gum-like paste, which in turn can be moulded into usable products like lumber, tiles and other building material.

“With this kind of lumber – a good alternative to wood, you can build furniture, barriers, decking, bins and tiles for pavements,” says Morgane. The workshop is also home to the many prototypes that were made onboard and discovered on their journey: think colourful soap dishes, hammers, building tiles, coconut shell bowls and chairs and tables that the crew use.

The workshop leads to a smaller, darker room where there is a neatly stacked row of moulds in the shape of spectacle frames. Morgane explains, “Here in Chennai, we are trying to make spectacles out of recycled plastic. We are working with the Indian Vision



Docking change
(Clockwise from left) Children aboard the vessel; and plastic waste strewn across the Besant Nagar beach. JOHAN SATHYADAS AND AKHILA EASWARAN

Ocean’s 20

Institute, to see if it is possible to build a model where people from underprivileged communities can bring plastic waste and make spectacles out of it. It is still in the prototyping stage.” ROKA Chennai, a residents welfare association working with solid waste management, and Kabbadiwala Connect are some of the other collaborators from the city.

Ripple effect
Driven by a staggering statistic that every minute, at least 20 tonnes of plastic waste is dumped into the ocean, of which 78% comes from land sources, what makes this expedition actionable is its very intent.

“Of all the plastic waste in

the ocean, only 1% comes to the surface,” says Simon. And so, the idea is to stop the waste at the land source before it reaches the ocean. “We had about 400 entrepreneurs coming on board so far and sharing their practices, and launching factories in their respective countries. The aim is to have these long-running factories all over the world. We also had around 5,000 children on board who have discovered a lifestyle with less dependence on plastic. I consider that a big impact.”

Senegal was their big win. There are 10 recycling factories being currently set up in this West African country. While in the Philippines, the team has facilitated factories that can

recycle 300 tonnes per year with each of them creating at least 20 jobs. “We want to replicate this in every country,” says Simon.

The students now receive brief training on basic steps to reduce plastic dependence. Saranya P of ROKA says, “Deliberate on the life cycle of a product; what does it become at the end of its life cycle? Think about what we can do in our homes to assist this movement; carry your own bottle, bag and cutlery. Segregate your garbage at source. Join a volunteering committee. Wash your dabba... the list goes on.” The students pile out with ready answers; a field trip well done.

Next stop is Reunion Island,

in April. Though the expedition is slated to come to a halt within the next year, the efforts won’t stop, assures Simon. “After this expedition, we want to build a boat to focus on restoring ecosystems through clean-ups. We want to focus only on places that are impossible to reach, and are hotbeds of biodiversity. The Henderson Island cleanup was our first step in this direction, done in collaboration with UNESCO. We are calling it The Impossible Cleanup.”

Get in touch at plasticodyssey.org for information, or to introduce projects to the team.



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THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13634

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Across

- 1 I don’t know! (3,2,7)
 - 9 Demand and obtain (5)
 - 10 Dozens (7)
 - 11 Indicates agreement (4)
 - 12 I am to blame! (Latin) (3,5)
 - 14 Kind of terrier (informal) (6)
 - 15 Caught sight of (6)
 - 18 Holiday (8)
 - 20 Small Scottish island (4)
 - 22 Lamb and vegetable casserole — nirvana (anag) (7)
 - 23 Bird — boy’s name (5)
 - 24 Gunners (12)
- ### Down
- 2 Defame (7)
 - 3 Silent (4)
 - 4 Prime Minister 1945-51 (6)
 - 5 Sunless (8)
 - 6 Squalid dwelling (5)
 - 7 Get up! (4,3,5)
 - 8 The Keystone State (12)
 - 13 Relating to a shore (8)

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- 16 Dishonourable (7)
- 17 Swoop (as in an attack) (6)
- 19 Long to have (5)
- 21 Licentious revel (4)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated March 27, 2025.

Solution No. 13633

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Persian palate

Experience the flavours of *nowruz* (meaning ‘new day’ in Persian) which marks the arrival of spring at Hyatt Regency in collaboration with Soul On A Plate. The restaurant presents an authentic Persian meal crafted by home chef Nisrin Karimi. The curated menu includes joje kebab, torsh kebab, plumber chicken, and shiraz mushroom, alongside traditional desserts like tarhalva and bamieh. @Spice Haat, Hyatt Regency, Teynampet. Till March 21. From 7pm to 11pm. Priced at ₹2,199. For reservations, call 9884369333

A neighbourhood’s tale

Archival showcases and guided walkthroughs will spotlight Mylapore’s Pelathope from March 21 to 23

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Deep Dive
Pelathope, an iconic locality in Mylapore, means jackfruit grove. YASH JAIN

As a child, Shreya Krishnan recalls riding her tricycle and playing cricket at Pelathope in Mylapore. Her ties to the neighbourhood continue till this day as her office currently functions out of her grandfather’s house, which has been there since 1935.

“Mylapore is a vibrant neighbourhood, and there are attempts being made to engage with the community through initiatives like the Mylapore Festival. It is possible here, to find different ways to engage with the neighbourhood through its heritage and culture,” says the architect who heads Shreya Krishnan Design Office (SKDO).

The Pelathope Urban Living Lab - Open House, an initiative by SKDO in collaboration with PLUS (Public Landscape Urbanism Studio, Curating for Culture, U-CAN(Urban Collective Action Network) and Cultural Heritage Narratives which will take place from March 21 to 23, aims to put Pelathope in the spotlight.

Sustainable urban development and the role that neighbourhoods play in social cohesion, are areas Shreya has worked in, and is extremely passionate about. “Through the Open House, we want to initiate a discussion on how culture and heritage should be drivers of development in Mylapore. The area has become very mobility-rich given its connectivity, but we also feel there should be a more inclusive approach that takes the heritage and culture here into consideration,” she explains.

The Urban Living Lab movement, an initiative rooted in the Netherlands, is all about creating a space for experimentation in engaging with neighbourhoods and bringing in catalytic projects that can be scaled up to bring about a larger impact, she says.

Pelathope, which means jackfruit grove, is now known as Vedanta Desikar Swamy Street. The street holds within it many stories like that of Shreya’s, and also from longtime residents who have made the neighbourhood their own. “All of this will be a part of the Pelathope Archives, a diverse collection of photographs, books, maps and oral histories, we have put together. As part of this exercise, we explored the area and met with some long-time residents which gave us valuable insight into this neighbourhood and Mylapore,” she says.

Another significant launch will be the Mylapore Culture Map, a crowdsourced map which aims to capture the spatial and temporal cultural life of Mylapore. “While there are many organisations doing a host of interesting things here, we want to bring it all together and create a crowdsourced map where we hear from people as to what they can do when they come here,” Shreya says.

Over the three days, Shreya has envisioned the Open House to be a space where people from the neighbourhood and different parts of the city can walk in, and interact with architects, urban planners, historians and the community about the past, present and future of Mylapore. While they can browse the archival showcase, there will also be a guided walkthrough to experience a restored heritage row house and its transformation, which will be central to the Open House.

The Pelathope Urban Living Lab - Open House will take place on March 21 from 5pm to 8pm, and March 22 and 23 from 9am to 6pm at 11/6, Pelathope, Vedanta Desikar Swami Street. Follow @shreyakrishnan.designoffice on Instagram for the schedule.

Rooted in flavour
(Clockwise from right) A spread of the menu at Go Native; interiors of the restaurant; jackfruit biryani. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Sip, savour, sustain

Go Native’s new Chennai outpost blends tradition, sustainability, and inventive flavours in a vibrant setting

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There is a brand new addition to the tree-lined streets of Alwarpet – the two-storey boutique and restaurant Go Native. Open for less than two weeks now, the outlet is already buzzing with activity, and securing a table for dinner at the restaurant can feel like a game of chance.

The ground floor of the outlet is dedicated to the boutique, where a display of handwoven textiles, organically-made skincare products, accessories, home decor, and more is lined up, but it is the aroma from the kitchen upstairs that draws you in. The space is filled with plants and drenched in sunlight as it filters through large windows, casting soft patterns on tables set with copper and steel plates.

“The idea is to have a one-stop shop for everything

that allows you to connect better with the people who are making the product and consequently build a more sustainable lifestyle,” says Anvitha Prashanth, owner of Go Native, adding that sustainability is complicated, and it can be difficult to make sure that everything is 100% sustainable. “But one thing we are keen on, is making this a better alternative.”

The boutique currently carries products from brands like Vilvah, Juicy Chemistry, WhySoBlue, and more. “These are the brands we have in our Bengaluru outlets, so naturally, we brought them here. But we are actively looking for local brands and will start reaching out to them, especially for ceramics, jewellery, and apparel,” says Anvitha.

The brand, which currently has



five outlets in Bengaluru, has brought its ethos to Chennai along with a well-crafted menu rooted in tradition and local produce.

While the menu is full of surprises and might take multiple visits to explore, start with the sweet potato mochi, which is chewy, served with a flavour-packed peanut basil sauce, crunchy garlic peanut bits, and potato wafers. The spinach neer dosa, served with coconut chutney, a pineapple gassi (thick Mangalore coconut-based curry), fresh grated coconut, and jaggery, hits all the right spots; as does the classic millet Mangalore buns.

“We source all the vegetables and fresh produce from two local vendors, and the other staples like rice, millets, and pulses are currently being sourced from Bengaluru,” says Anvitha.

On the seasonal menu, which changes every few months, the baby jackfruit and plant meat kofta biryani is a clear winner. What catches the eye and surprises the palate is the innovative chaat section of the menu. The duet of golgappas – raw mango-filled puris served with Kerala-style buttermilk and potato and sprout-filled puris served with sweet jeera water – is

served chilled, making them the perfect snack for summer. The chip and dip platter, with green peas hummus and pineapple relish, is served with four kinds of chips – Kerala

banana, sweet potato, okra, and lotus stem. The chips, however, could be crunchier and fresher.

“The menu is currently heavily Karnataka-influenced because that is what we have been doing so far, but we plan on launching new dishes that are Chennai-specific. Even in all our Bengaluru outlets, we keep changing the menu depending on the season,” she says, adding that the brand is collaborating with a Chennai-based consultant chef M Lakshmanachary to create dishes that are authentic and traditional, made with local produce.

Corporate chef Kanakadri Narasimhalu, who has been with Go Native since the beginning in 2018, says that they do have some Chennai-specific dishes like the Chettinad baby jackfruit kofta bowl, millet ven pongal, kothamalli paneer, and more. “We’ve curated the menu keeping in mind the kind of ingredients we could source here, and it took us about a month to build those dishes,” says

End the meal on a sweet note with the classic elaneer payasam, which is served chilled, indicating that Go Native is ready to tackle Chennai summers. “We are planning to expand to one more outlet in Chennai soon,” says the chef, without revealing any more details.

Go Native is at 17, Ananda Road, Alwarpet. A meal for two costs ₹2,000. For reservations, call 7872582708.



#FramesofIndia

A window to the past

The Greater Chennai Corporation's guided heritage walks of the Ripon Buildings bridges the iconic landmark's history since 1913, and various facets of its present-day functioning



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned cardigan over a dark top and dark trousers, stands on a stage. She is holding a microphone and singing. To her left is a music stand with sheet music. The stage is lit with blue and white lights, and there are stage lights visible in the background. The audience's heads are visible in the foreground.

Culture in high-octane

A person wearing a helmet and protective gear is performing a wheelie on a motorcycle. The motorcycle is tilted upwards, with the front wheel lifted off the ground. The person is holding the handlebars, and the background shows a paved area and some trees.

Counting steps at the club

CM
VK

Arul, by Canadian songwriter Yanchan Produced, and Chennai vocalist Sandeep Narayan, has been recently nominated for the JUNO Awards

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Sandeep Narayanan has sung Thyagaraja *kritis* on several stages, but this one was going to be different. Recording the popular ‘Manavayalakincharadate’ for a track called ‘Tradition’, the Carnatic singer had to sing traditional lyrics over hip-house Afrobeats. “I had to get over my mental block of whether it was appropriate,” he mulls, “To be genuinely convinced and tell myself that it’s okay to go ahead was one of the most challenging things about this project.” “Tradition” is the first track of *Arul*, an EP that resulted due to a musical collaboration between Sandeep and popular Canadian songwriter-music producer Yanchan Produced. The beats are modern and trendy, while the song and the lyrics are classical.



Arul is a project that has prompted conversation among purists on the way Carnatic tracks are used. *Arul* is also a project that has appealed to global listeners for its unique approach to blending Western and classical ideas, resulting in a prestigious nomination: to the upcoming 54th Annual JUNO Awards in Canada. At the awards ceremony set to be held in Toronto later this month, *Arul* will

compete, in the South Asian Music Recording of the Year Award category, against the likes of AP Dhillon, Chani Nattan, Inderpal Moga & Jazzy B, Jonita Gandhi and Karan Aujla. “I think we have a great chance because our album explores Indian classical-based music. *Arul* is also a bridge that connects the tradition of India to the modern day,” he says. Sandeep Narayan first met Yanchan when he was a

teenager who wanted to learn to play the *mridangam* in Chennai. “His teacher (Neyveli Venkatesh) introduced us more than 15 years ago. Subsequently, we kept in touch through social media. But during the COVID-19 lockdown, I saw a lot of his work and had given him some positive feedback. One thing led to another, and we decided that we



Tune in Sandeep Narayan; (below) with Yanchan Produced. AMAR RAMESH AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

should work on something.” That something was a few hip-hop stems and beats that Yanchan had worked on, back in his studio in Canada. “He wanted me to sing whatever came to my mind, but over these beats,” he recalls. Hoping to fruitfully battle lockdown-induced boredom, Sandeep launched into the project with gusto at his

Many youngsters growing up in the West lose touch with their culture back home and regret it when they grow up. Listening to Arul made them feel connected to their roots

Chennai home studio. “I would record a few things over the beats and send it to him. He would cut it, move it around. We were just jamming. We did not go into this thinking it would be an EP or album.” But it did. *Arul*, consisting of five short tracks that mixes classical and Western musical sensibilities, was not picked by two major music labels because “it could not be categorised into any genre”. Undeterred, Sandeep and Yanchan decided to take *Arul* in their own hands, a decision that has yielded rich dividends. “A lot of youngsters growing up in the West, especially in Canada or the US, lose touch with their own culture and regret it when they grow up. They felt that listening to *Arul* made them feel a little connected with their roots.” Even as his regular Carnatic *kutchis* go on, Sandeep will, this year, work on an extension of the *Arul* universe, along with Yanchan. Apart from that, he is also working on a 12-track album with German musicians. “I’ve been working with a few musicians in the Lo-Fi category, but trained in jazz, piano and drums. My friends from Chennai have played violin and mridangam. Apart from original compositions and covers, we have also redone something from Andral’s *Thirupaavai*. Each track has a different approach; some are upbeat and some meditative. I really want to show the range of Indian classical music.”

The big screen
In the mood to watch some international films? Then, head to the Dr KCG Verghese International Film Festival, happening today. Held in association with Indo Cine Appreciation Foundation, Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in Chennai and Iran Culture House of Mumbai, this fest will feature four films. Watch Taiwanese film, *A Time to Live* and *A Time to Die* (10am), followed by a screening of *Dust in the Wind* (12.45pm). You can also watch Iranian movies like *In the Arms of the Tree* (3 pm) and *Sima’s Unfinished Narration* (5pm). All screenings will take place today at PVR Inox – Screen 4, The Marina Mall, Old Mahabalipuram Road. For details, contact 9840151956/8939022618.



Fusion special
Ready for some music? Chennai will host a fusion concert, bringing together a line-up of artistes like Andrea Jeremiah, Paal Dabba, Asal Kolaar and Pradeep Kumar. In a recent meet-and-greet event, Andrea said, “The fusion concert is a fresh concept, and it gets even more special because it’s the first time the four of us – each from different performing styles – have collaborated.” Put together by KYN (Know Your Neighbourhood), a neighbourhood discovery app, the concert promises to be a grand display of music and celebration. The concert will take place on March 29 at YMCA Grounds, Nandanam. Tickets available on the KYN app.



The OG roadie

Raghu Ram, popular for *Splitsvilla* and *Roadies*, has teamed up with Ajith in upcoming Tamil film *Good, Bad, Ugly*

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Raghu Ram is waiting for the release of his upcoming film – Adhik Ravichandran’s *Good, Bad, Ugly* – starring Ajith Kumar. His previous Tamil film, *Doctor* (2021), starring Sivakarthikeyan, was acclaimed as well as successful. But it was released during the pandemic-induced lockdowns. So, Raghu could not be a part of the promotions or watch it in Chennai. This time, it is a bigger project. So, Raghu is waiting to experience the fanfare in Chennai with his wife Natalie Di Luccio, who has sung in *Kadal* and *I*. Raghu made his name as a television producer and host with popular reality shows like *Roadies*, *Splitsvilla*, and *Indian Idol*. His first film was Abbas Tyrewala’s *Jhootha Hi Sahi*. Of late, he has begun embracing acting as more than just a side gig. “I think about three years ago, I was going through a transition in my mindset,” he says, over a call, “I was becoming more fascinated with fiction and other aspects of creativity.” It was around this time that *Keedaa Cola*, a Telugu film directed by Tharun Bhascker, came his way, giving him the sense of direction he had been seeking. Since then, he has taken on a variety of roles across multiple industries, culminating in his upcoming Tamil venture. The **Ajith factor** Raghu’s filmography spans multiple languages – Hindi, Punjabi, Telugu, and now Tamil – but it is the southern industries that have intrigued him the most. “I really enjoyed working in the South a lot more,” he admits. His background gives him a unique

connection to Tamil cinema. Though he primarily lived in Mumbai and Delhi, he grew up in a Telugu household while attending a school run by a Tamil management. “I don’t see myself as a random North Indian being cast in a Tamil film,” he says. One of the biggest draws of *Good, Bad, Ugly* for Raghu was the chance to work with Ajith Kumar. “All I can tell you about my character is that it’s nothing like the one in *Doctor*. That’s one of the reasons it appealed to me – it’s very different from anything I’ve done,” he says. “But personally, what drew me to this is that it’s an Ajith Kumar film, a Mythri production, and it’s directed by Adhik.” What truly struck him about Ajith was his larger-than-life persona. “I started getting a little in awe of him when I realised that he was driving his own racing car. It’s like Bruce Wayne is so rich that he could hire someone to be Batman, but he chooses to be Batman himself.” Beyond his stardom, Ajith’s outlook towards life resonated deeply with Raghu. “The biggest thing I picked up from him is to not let societal expectations limit or define you. He doesn’t need to prove anything – he just is.” If working with Ajith was an experience in industry culture, collaborating with director Adhik Ravichandran was a crash course in adapting to a unique creative process. “There’s an energy to his filmmaking. It jumps out of the screen.” Raghu is also venturing into screenwriting, drawing inspiration from the filmmakers he has worked with. “Every director is also an actor in a way. When they direct me, I pick up on their movements, their vision.”



Back in time
Aditya 369, the 1991 film directed by Singeetam Srinivasa Rao, starring Nandamuri Balakrishna and Mohini, is all set for a re-release on April 11. The time travel science fiction Telugu film was produced by Sivalenka Krishna Prasad of Sridevi Movies and presented by the late, legendary singer SP Balasubrahmanyam. The film won both critical acclaim and the appreciation of the audience during its release and ever since, has been considered one of the best Indian science fiction films. On the film’s re-release, producer Sivalenka Krishna Prasad says, “The iconic film has been digitally remastered in 4K resolution, with its sound upgraded to 5.1 quality. The digital team worked for six months to deliver the output. The original film continues to enjoy immense popularity among audiences. I will always remain indebted to SP Balasubrahmanyam *garu*, who supported me in producing this film. Nandamuri Balakrishna *garu* and Singeetam Srinivasa Rao *garu* were thrilled when they heard about the re-release.” *Aditya 369* boasts of music by maestro Ilaiyaraaja, dialogues by Jandhyala and cinematography by PC Sreeram, VSR Swamy, and Kabir Lal. The film also starred Amrish Puri and Tinnu Anand. Meanwhile, Sivalenka Krishna Prasad’s new Telugu film, *Sarangapani Jathakam*, directed by Mohanakrishna Indraganti and starring Priyadarshi Pulikonda and Roopa Koduvayur, is scheduled to release on April 18.

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