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AN ENHANCED 'SERVICE' ON PALM SUNDAY

Risen Christ Church church has a culture of organising organ donation awareness sessions and similar exercises during this time of year **P4**



SPORTS MEET FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN SPARKS A 'SMILE'

Children from 22 special schools take part in the meet **P7**

Children to take the spotlight at area sabha meeting

On April 14, at Ward 6 in Thiruvotiyur, they will be presenting a shopping list of demands for their neighbourhood's betterment to government officials and an elected representative



Young participants at two different Area Sabha meetings conducted last year. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

LIFY THOMAS

On April 14, when members of Ward 6 of Zone I (Thiruvotiyur) assemble for the Area Sabha meeting, a squad of children will be in the spotlight. These are members of the Children Nagara Sabai; and as in previous meetings, these children will be raising their concerns and demands. Facilitated by Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children, this is the third or fourth Area Sabha meeting that they are being encouraged to take part in and have a ringside view of democratic governance processes.

This time, children are raising two main demands: CCTV cameras in their street as a bicycle got stolen; and a park for the area.

"The closest existing park is in the main road near Ajax bus stop, which is not easily accessible for all. So, we have identified another small area that could be put to good use," says 16-year-old K. Sharmila, the eldest in the group and a resident of Dr Ambedkar Nagar.

She took part in the meetings last year and says it boosted her confidence about facing a crowd and placing their concern before elders. The high point was that the issues they took up were resolved. "A small canal had become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and invasive plants were also growing; we asked the councillor to engage workers to clean it. The garbage van that comes to collect waste from every household was irregular, which was also represented," says Sharmila, a Class XI student who wants to take the NEET exam. She says the concerns are always represented



as a team and they narrow down issues after a series of discussions.

Arunodhaya staff say the children are treated with respect by the councillor of Ward 6, M. Samuel Diraviam.

The canal was cleaned based on the representation by children but it needs to be done on a regular basis. S. Selvi, thematic facilitator at Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children, says children have many ideas to improve their locality. Says Selvi, "Unlike the Children Nagara Sabha meetings where children invite elected representatives to address their grievances, this is one step bigger. It is a motley group here and they do not shy away from speaking their mind."

A green intervention outside Sri Parthasarthy Swamy temple



A yellow bag dispenser was installed by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forest near Sri Parthasarthy Swamy temple recently. This allows devotees to draw the bags at ₹10 each. The initiative is aimed at reducing the number of plastics. PHOTO: RAGHUNATHAN SR

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A tour of the cemetery.
PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B



St. Patrick's Cemetery smartened up

VELANKANNI RAJ B

Two hundred and seventeen years old, St. Patrick's Cemetery on Pallavan Salai wears its age well, partly because it has received a facelift.

Renovation efforts were launched under Father Prakash, who took charge as parish priest of Our Lady of Dolours Chapel on June 04, 2024.

Under the Archdiocese of Madras Mylapore, St. Patrick's Cemetery is attached to this chapel located on Pallavan Salai in Park Town.

Fr. Prakash lists out the improvements that contribute to the cemetery's neat and enhanced

look: "An 800-foot-long compound wall and fencing have been constructed to ensure the cemetery's security and dignity. Over 100 trees and flower plants have been planted, and 15 solar-powered lights have been installed throughout to prevent untoward incidents; another 10 solar-powered lights will be fixed. Concrete pathways have been laid, and a new church bell has been installed to pay homage to the departed souls. Toilets and a washing area are currently under construction."

On the future plans for the cemetery, Fr. Prakash notes: "More solar lights and additional trees are on the cards."

'Dink N Drive' pickleball tournament held

The two-day 'Dink N Drive' pickleball tournament held recently witnessed an extraordinary display of skill, sportsmanship and camaraderie.

Over 200 matches were played by 140 players. Picklism, an online platform dedicated to promoting the sport globally, hosted the tournament on March 29 and 30 at Ice Water Sports Arena in Express Avenue.

Vishwajit Tirumurti emerged as the winner and Arun Adithya was the runner-up in the open singles category.

Pro men's doubles: Vignesh S.



and Sabby (winners); and Suryakumar S and Abhishek Prasad (runners-up)

Intermediate doubles: Vishal and Shravan (winners) and Avra-

kan Antony and Sri Ubathiya (runners-up)

Women's doubles: Sai Samhita and Joshika (winners), and Pavithra and Nidhi (runners-up)

In the mixed doubles category, Ganesh and Joshika Premkumar were declared winner, and Ashwin and Kamini emerged as runners-up.

Workshop on organic farming

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on organic farming of vegetable crops on April 17.

According to a press release, concepts such as soil nourishment, chemical-free methods of pest and disease management, and organic certification will be covered during the session.

The session will be held at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048



Cemetery needs *better maintenance*



St. Mary's cemetery is overrun with unruly and unhelpful vegetation

R. RAVINDRAN

“Snake in the grass” acquires a literal meaning at St. Mary's cemetery on St. Mary's Road. The land is overrun with vegetation and those visiting the tombs of their dear departed have complained of snakes wriggling away in the unchecked overgrowth.

The CCTV camera at the four-way junction right after one enters the cemetery is broken and non-functional. Without a camera in working order, there can be no tabs on movement of people within the premises. The meter box is burnt and of no use, for months together. Power is being taken from a street light. Though the gates are closed in the evening hours, a hole in the compound wall, raises the bogey of unauthorised entry into the cemetery. The hole is blocked by a cardboard which can be easily moved.



Clockwise from top) Unruly vegetation, Photos: R. Ravindran. THE HINDU

READERS WRITE

‘Thiruvengadam Street in a **sorry state**’



The carriageway at Thiruvengadam Street has gone from bad to worse, especially from the extension of St Luke's Church road to the stretch that leads to Venkata Krishna Road. Corporation officials would usually fix the road with some patchwork. Nothing

like that has been done here yet as this is now a Bus Route Road. For BRR, permission has to be obtained from CCTP for the commencement of work.

I wish some remedial measure is carried out soon.

Baskar Seshadri
Mylapore

‘Poor upkeep of area outside GPO’



Madras GPO building on Rajaji Salai, an Indo-Saracenic structure built in 1884, houses the General Post Office.

This grand structure has been neglected in spite of its importance.

The rear side of the building and the southern side facing the Metropolitan Court show lack of regular upkeep.

Ilyas Haidari
Angappa Street



An enhanced 'service' on Palm Sunday

Today at Risen Christ Church, Palm Sunday, which marks the beginning of the Holy Week, will accommodate a blood donation camp. This church has a culture of organising organ donation awareness sessions and similar exercises during this time of year. And the Perambur branch of the All India Anglo Indian Association is working round the clock to honour a home-grown Eastertide tradition marked by the spirit of giving

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

For the past 15 years, at Risen Christ Church on Paper Mills Road in Perambur (near Perambur), the Holy Week services (beginning with Palm Sunday and culminating in Easter Sunday) have been long-drawn-out processes, the extended hours providing congregants with an opportunity to put into action what they heard preached from the pulpit. It is about making a donation to the needy – someone up against a nervously ticking clock, chewing their nails off waiting for a donor. It is not donation straight out of a cheque book. The donor and their donation are organically linked.

This year, on Palm Sunday (April 13), Risen Christ Church (Which comes under the Arch Diocese of Madras Mylapore) is partnering with ESI Hospital to host its annual blood donation camp, and church expects a turnout of 250 to 300 donors. The blood donation camp is scheduled between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. The main eligibility criterion: healthy individuals aged between 18 and 60. Meeting this criterion, anyone can participate



in the camp.

The church has created a benchmark in terms of social outreach by promoting organ donation among congregants. In 2017, when an organ donation awareness talk by Mohan Foundation was squeezed into an extended Good Friday service. Reportedly, the initiative sparked interest among parishioners, causing many of them to step forward and sign up for it. It ushered in a culture of openness to organ dona-

tion, and successive parish priests have kept this interest alive.

Father M. Arulraj, who took over as parish priest of the church in June, 2024, has taken a personal interest in eye donation, often reminding his congregation: "The eyes are the lamp of the body. What better way to let your light shine than by giving someone the gift of sight?" Outside the church, a board proudly displays the names of those who have pledged their eyes – a quiet yet powerful

reminder of selflessness.

Why host these events during Holy Week?

Ronald Victor, vice president of Risen Christ Youth, explains why. "Easter is about hope, sacrifice, and renewal. It is a reminder that we are here not just to receive but to give. This is our way of honouring that message." Ronald has been associated with Risen Christ Youth since he finished school, and every year, he has been watching the community reach newer heights of generosity.

Over the years, the church has accommodated newer forms of generosity as well: besides the annual blood donation camp, it has been organising general health camps, eye screenings, dental check-ups and awareness sessions – all rooted in the belief that faith is best expressed through service.

Ronald observes that this year, the word about the Palm Sunday blood donation has spread far and wide – through schools, churches and social media. The hope is that this Holy Week, more people will step forward – not just to give blood but to embrace the spirit of giving in whatever way they can.

Ensuring no one feels forgotten

Easter (or any festival, for that matter) has its time-honoured traditions. The Perambur branch of the All India Anglo Indian Association has appended a home-grown tradition to that Eastertide lineup and steadfastly persisted with it, even in those years when its coffers looked emaciated and, understandably, begrudged support.

During a previous edition of the blood donation drive at Risen Christ Church; and (below) beneficiaries of the 2024 edition of the initiative by Perambur branch of All India Anglo Indian Association. The gift hampers were handed out to the beneficiaries a day before Easter. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

This branch plays the Easter Bunny to families within the Anglo-Indian fold that would do with some kindness.

"Easter is a time of giving, but the scale depends on what we receive," says Penelope Mckertich, president of the Perambur branch.

It does not want to have anyone forgotten. Whether it is 150 families or 350, whether the donations are plentiful or paltry, they ensure that those who need help stay helped.

A bag of groceries, a small sum of money, a hamper filled with essentials – nothing is too small when given with intention. And here is the most beautiful part of it: the younger generation is stepping forward, hearts sparkling red and large with kindness and hands calloused with charity work. The youngsters pack food, sort donations and make sure the proffered succour reaches the right people.

(In Chennai, the All India Anglo Indian Association has seven branches, and Penelope notes that all "the seven branches do whatever is possible within their limits for the less fortunate on the eve of Easter.")

This focus is kept sharp, and it does not matter that Insta-worthy frames are on the lower side. This group in Perambur might not throw grand feasts or organise vibrant celebrations during Easter, but its quiet act of kindness, though not quite making it to the radar of wider public attention, has left an indelible imprint on the minds of those who benefitted from it, deepening community bonds.

The ebb and flow of membership is inevitable. Some families move on to other parts of the city or country, some others cross oceans in search of new beginnings. But the Perambur branch remains steadfast in its purpose.

"We do what we can, with whatever we have," Penelope avers.

And often, that is more than enough to make a difference.





An Area Sabha meeting at Anna Nagar West J Block in January 2024.
FILE PHOTO: VEDHAN M

The ground that remains to be covered

As Area Sabha meetings are set to unfold tomorrow across Chennai, a look at what needs to be done to make them more participatory

LIFFY THOMAS

Preparations are under way at various wards for the Area Sabha meeting of April 14. Some councillors *The Hindu Downtown* spoke to say they received the message from Greater Chennai Corporation on April 9, which gave them some time to reach out to citizen groups and residents and inform them about the timings and venues. While many plan to use social media to publicise the meeting, some engage autorickshaws fitted out with loudspeakers.

Giving prior notice about the meetings was among demands made by civil society organisations such as Voice of People which has been pushing the State Government to initiate various steps to strengthen Area Sabhas and Ward

Sabhas.

Tamil Nadu introduced Area Sabhas for urban local bodies in 2022 and has earmarked four days – January 25, April 14, September 15 and December 10 every year – to conduct the meetings. As per the government order, each ward is divided into 10 areas and each of the city's councillors must organise meetings to address grievances of residents.

Now, how popular are these platforms? Were residents able to raise their concerns about issues

pertaining to their areas? Are these forums facilitating participatory planning? Are grievances being addressed?

Area Sabha meetings have a long way to go in the city, say organisations working in this area of grassroots democracy.

For the December Area Sabha meeting Nallor Vattam founder Balasubramanian, a resident of Choolaimedu, had to return home disappointed. "I visited the GCC Division Office in Aminjikarai to enquire about the meeting a day be-

fore the scheduled event, but left with little clarity. The next day I waited for over an hour for the organisers to arrive only to hear from them that they are not organising any meeting," says Balasubramanian, adding that awareness about Area Sabha meetings is low.

He says just like Grama Sabha meetings, Area Sabha meetings hold huge potential provided they are conducted as per norms.

Last year, Voice of People through an RTI found that most urban local governments including some zones of the Chennai Corporation had failed to conduct adequate Area Sabha meetings. None of them was maintaining information in the public domain.

Gurusaravanan M., chairperson, Institute of Grassroots Governance, says Grama Sabha meetings are a major force to strengthen democracy at village panchayat level; and a lot can be done through such meetings at Urban Local Bodies. "In a Grama Sabha, resolutions are passed and cannot be challenged by any court of law. Likewise, Area Sabha meetings must be given more power so that it gets more meaningful and there is active participation," says Gurusaravanan.

Organisations working to promote this participatory form of democracy point out that before all of that, more political will is required to strengthen Area and Ward Sabhas in Tamil Nadu.

A bilingual handbook

For those keen on knowing more about the functioning of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees, "People Participatory Platforms in TN Urban Local Governments" would be a valuable resource. The 30-page bilingual book published by Thannatchi and Voice of People with the support of Tambaram Makkal Kuzhu gives an introduction to Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. The guidebook also discusses the roles of citizens and the functioning of these sabhas.

"There are other platforms where grievances can be aired and so many people do not see a need for these sabhas. Just as government schemes are advertised, rights-based initiatives such as Area Sabhas should be promoted through multiple channels," says Gurusaravanan.

In a Facebook post of Voice of People, founder-member Charu Govindan urges people participating in the upcoming meeting to ensure accountability. "As this is the first quarter of this financial year, when participating in your Area Sabha be sure to ask your councillor to present their accounts for previous years," says the post.

When and where

If you have got no intimation about the meeting in your area then reach out to the local councillor. Their names and contact details are available on the GCC website <https://chennaicorporation.gov.in/gcc/council/council-address/>. The GCC division office in each ward should also provide details of the scheduled meeting.

The colour of festivity



There was noticeable fervour during the 10-day Panguni fest at Kapaleeswarar Temple in Mylapore. Snapshots of the three major events. PHOTOS : S.R. RAGHUNATHAN AND B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

A refreshing
break for
devotees

Members of Mylapore Station Vigilance Committee along with Nithya Pushpa Kainkaryam forum serve food and butter milk to devotees during Panguni festival



Members of Mylapore Station Vigilance Committee along with Nithya Pushpa Kainkaryam forum, who offer flowers to God and Goddess at Arulmigu Kapaleeswarar Temple, served devotees who took part in the Panguni Brahmotsavam with food, butter milk and drinking water. The volunteers used 30 litres

of curd for preparing butter milk that was peppered with curry leaves, coriander leaves, ginger paste and *perungayam*, said a release. On days when huge crowds was expected, 100 litres of curd was used to make butter milk.

Kesari, kitchadi, pongal, kot-su, vegetable rice with kurma,

halwa and Kancheepuram idly were some of the other items that were also served.

The placement of the distribution point ensured devotees got recharged after the two-hour long procession.

Close to 12,000 devotees were served during the festival, added the release.

An installation on a celestial theme



Rajasthan Cosmo Club gets a new team

A celebration of vision, unity, and new beginnings unfolded at the Don Bosco Auditorium, where the Rajasthan Cosmo Club (RCC) hosted a celestial-themed installation ceremony. The evening marked the induction of the new president, Manish Kumar Chowdhari along with his board of directors.

Executed by Sunil Kumar Munoth, installation director, the evening transported members into a cosmic journey filled with inspiration and possibilities. From the thematic décor to the seamless flow of the programme, every element resonated with the power of

shared dreams and boundless ambition, said a release.

Manish Kumar Chowdhari unveiled the club's theme for the year, "Disha Wahi, Udaan Nayi", setting a visionary course for growth and excellence.

A moment of cultural reverence was witnessed during the traditional *chandan tilak* ceremony performed by Hastimulsa Chowdhari.

The event was further graced by esteemed honorary trustees Praveensa Tatia and Gunvathsa Baid, along with senator members and past presidents.



Sports meet for special children sparks a 'Smile'

The second season of "Smile 2025", a sports meet for children with special needs, was organised by Rotary Club of United Chennai along with Rotary Club of Chennai Sneham at the District Sports Complex, SDAT, Nehru Park in Egmore.

Over 275 children from 22 special schools in and around Chennai

took part. In a release, chairman Imthiyas Basha M. said the sports meet was conducted for the second consecutive year by the club involving experienced physical education teachers and special school coordinators.

Santhosh Kumar, president, Ro-

tary Club of United Chennai, said the Club is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and sports meet for the special children will continue every year as a flagship project of the club.

Certificates and medals were presented to all the participants.

Past District Governor, Rotary District 3233 N.Nandakumar; Ram.N.Ramamurthy; Devendran Damodaran, District Governor Elect and Preetha Mahesh, president, Rotary Club of Chennai Sneham were among those who took part.

Vintage and classic cars on display

The Historical Cars Association of India, in association with Cars & Coffee Chennai, presents 'Back to the Future 2' on April 13 at Hotel Turyaa - Rayala Techno Park campus, OMR.

Vintage and classic cars such as Buick Super 8 (1949), 1957 Studebaker President, 1960 Chevy Impala, 1985 BMW 525 and 1953 MG TD will be displayed along with modern wheels which includes cars from Aston Martin, Rolls-Royce, Lamborghini and Porsche, said a release.

The exhibition is open from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.



Special buns prepared for cancer patients in paediatric ward

Madras Cosmopolitan Ladies Circle 38 donated ₹45,000 to NGO River towards distribution of buns for 18 days.

These buns are specially made by the transgender community on a cost-to-cost basis for cancer patients in the paediatric ward. The project was started by late Dr Shantha and Madhu, founder of NGO 'River- empowerment of women', said a

release.

Sathvika Ranganathan, chairperson of Madras Cosmopolitan Ladies Circle 38, which is part of Ladies Circle India and Madras Cosmopolitan Round Table 94, handed over the cheque along with her team. Ladies Circle India is a non-political and non-sectarian organisation by the wives of members of Round Table India. Its offers opportunities for serving the community, for fostering and strengthening friendships between like-minded young women and helps create a better understanding of the obligations one owes to the society.



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Art festival on April 18

Rukminidevi Natyakshetra Foundation, an institution for arts and culture in Mogappair East, is having its 21st annual art festival at Rukmini Arangam, Kalakshetra in Thiruvannamipur for two days.

On April 18, a musical presentation on the theme "Tamil Moovar" will be presented and a dance drama on April 20. All are welcome.

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Black tailed godwits: drabness gives way to colour



Many a wintering bird would acquire their breeding preparedness “badges” even when the breeding grounds are an indefinitely large number of wing flaps away. The newly acquired dress might not serve its intended purpose yet, but then, one dresses up for the jamboree not when it is on them, but ahead of them. That is actually anthropomorphic blah-blah: there is considerable variation and that would make any sweeping statement absurd.

Some birds might begin to “dress up” for the “party” in earnest only when they find themselves in the hazy beginnings of it. They might put on the breeding plumage in full only when they have arrived back in their breeding grounds. Whether they fly back in breeding plumage or a partial version of it or none of it depends on the time they choose to make the return journey.

In contrast, some birds are markedly transformed during the fag end of the wintering season, the adult black-tailed godwit being one of them. The drab shades are well and truly well. Their heads, necks and chests seem to have been exposed to a powerful blast of brick dust. The wings acquire the quality of an artfully woven cloth, with black and white threads coming together in a delectable design. At Perumbakkam, this black-tailed godwit was found ready for the flight back to its breeding grounds on April 10, 2025. Photos: Prince Frederick

Footpath work on Pantheon Road



The footpath on Pantheon Road on the side where Ashoka Hotel is located is being relaid, according to a GCC source connected with the work. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

On uncertain ground at Egmore museum



In the recesses of the Egmore museum, on the northern and eastern sides, a facility integral to the road infrastructure and serving multiple purposes wears a gap-toothed grin. From its outward presentation, one can see this facility serves as a pavement above and at least a couple of things below -- a conduit for utility cables; and when it rains, a stormwater drain. Slabs, either missing or chewed off with rusty steel rods exposed much like a prey picked clean to the bone by a Peregrine falcon, appear with disturbing regularity. As the facility winds its way, it finds itself in the space right outside the Museum theatre, a well-hoofed section on account of events. Though the carriageway is usually free of vehicular traffic and anyone on shank's mare can walk down that path, during crowded times, which can result from cars being parked on the carriageway, pedestrians would have a need for this pavement. Events are known to stretch on well into the evening, and during the late hours, these gaps can be missed until one's feet has sunk into one. The PWD, which bears the responsibility of maintaining the infrastructure at the Museum, has an office parked on the premises. The images were taken on April 8, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

