

MYLAPORE

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A TURNAROUND

Meet Devika G., a bio enzyme evangelist, imparting the skill to people around her neighbourhood
P5



TOASTMASTERS CELEBRATES A MILESTONE

A stamp was released to commemorate the centennial year
P7

Minor traffic changes on Royapettah High Road



A section of Royapettah High Road, near Sanskrit College, had been shrunk to facilitate CMRL work. The divided road had been barricaded for easy movement of vehicles – that is, only for two- and three-wheelers. Though this is a two-way road, Metro Rail work had eaten into the road space.

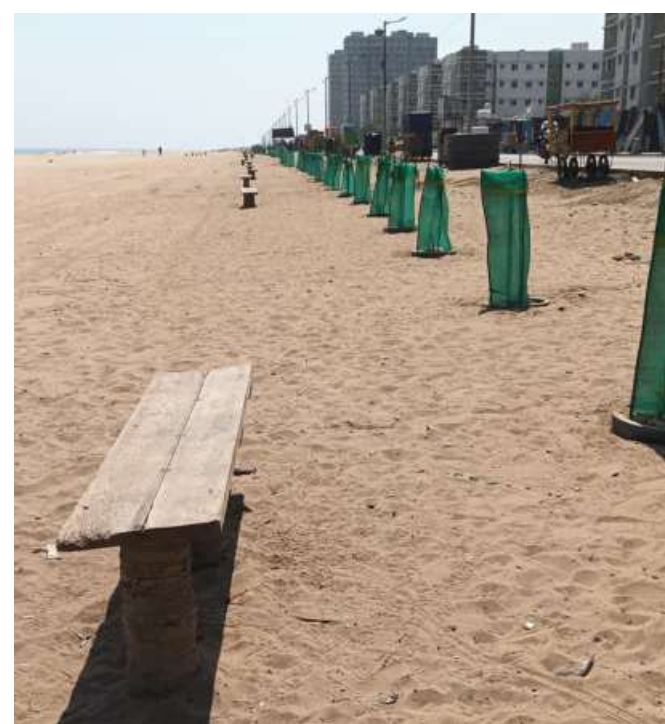
But the arrangements are impressive. In connection with this, the old bus stand had been shifted to a nearby location where all the buses going towards the north and east, now halt.

The old bus shelter has become defunct. A new bus stand was erected (near the old petrol pump that was closed a year ago) to the left side of the road near the tip of the closed flyover and Bheemsen Garden Road (Vidya Bharathi Kalyana Mandapam Road).

Since the old bus shelter will be of no use, CMRL plans to relocate the same to some other location where it is needed.

Baskar Seshadri
Mandaveli

Palm saplings at Marina Beach



Greater Chennai Corporation has planted palm trees on the beach from Light House to Foreshore Estate. Last year, wooden benches were set up on the sands. PHOTO: RAGU R

Keeping a tradition afloat

Kapaleeswarar is being taken in the illuminated float on the first day of float festival at Kapaleeswarar temple tank.

The utsavar deity is taken around the temple tank on nine rounds. On the second day and third day Lord Murugan utsavar deity is taken for seven and five rounds, respectively, around the tank. The temple Gopuram and the tank are decorated and illuminated with lights and they exude a grand look. Devotees are parked on the tank steps.



Snapshots of the festival.
PHOTOS & TEXT: M. SRINATH

Goshen Library receiving a deft restorative treatment



▼ The heritage division of Public Works Department is renovating Goshen library in Chintadripet, renewing its vitality through wall-strengthening procedures and refreshing its unique features without altering them.

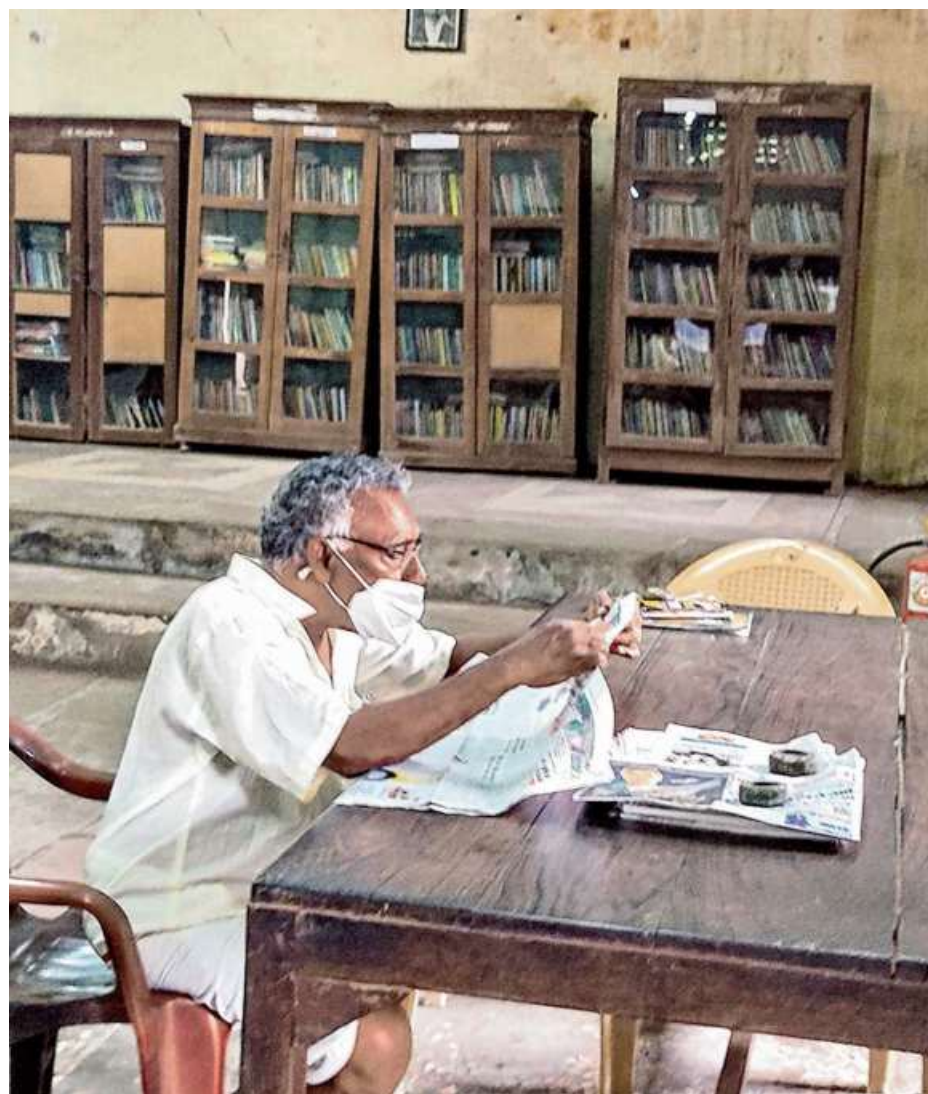
The work is being executed at a calculated pace, needless haste being avoided as the building is bound to be weather-beaten, and needs to be accorded the same care that one would give an antique vase while packing it for shipping.

According to sources familiar with the work, the walls have gone through a process of

limewater strengthening.

At last look, the main hall of the library was standing “open to sky”, steel beams sitting on the pillars. The groundwork for the laying Madras terrace roof — in the original flatbed format — had apparently been carried out. Joists would be placed and the roof installed over it. The pediment, one of the high points of the building, would be intact. The duration of the work is 12 months; and reportedly, three months have elapsed. And the work would be completed before the deadline, according to sources.

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



Goshen Library had a badminton court and a room for utensils

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A March 22, 1929 report in *The Hindu* sketching out the highlights of the ceremony marking the opening of Goshen Library notes the presence of a Badminton court as a supplementary feature of the facility.

There is physical space: the front yard likely sported this court. However, the mental space to fit this court into the library premises is restricted. Because in recent decades, the library has had only a solemn air about it: knowledge seekers silently deciphering the meanings pregnant in the printed word. That the premises was filled with roars of delight over delectably landed smashes is a surprise.

The library also had a room for utensils. After opening the library, the governor Viscount Goschen mentioned this in his address, and attributed this room's presence to the thoughtfulness of Rao Bahadur Vijiaraghavulu Chetti, honorary

presidency magistrate, who established the library.

The utensils were being parked there for the poor people in the locality to use them “for marriages and other ceremonial occasions”.

T.E. Moir had laid the foundation stone for the library three years earlier, in 1926.

Lodged in *The Hindu Archives* is another report, one dated 16 November 1946, that suggests a plan to cram a museum into the available space. This idea had manifested with the clarity of a bright morning in J.P.L. Shenoy's mind. As Commissioner of the Corporation of Madras, Shenoy was pushing for the establishment of a “museum of machines” for the benefit of school students. The museum would deconstruct the technology behind the making of various machines — cars, motorcycles, radios and so on — by having them displayed with notes about their parts.

There is no available evidence to be certain that this picture of a museum translated into reality.

A view of the library in 2022.

SYMA organises another edition of **Child Fest**



Participants at the art event

Children from 150 schools participated in the two-day “Gold Winner - SYMA Child Fest 2025” at NKT National Training College for Women in Triplicane.

Close to 230 winners across age groups were felicitated across the events such as drawing, fancy dress, group singing, dance, quiz, artwork, oratory, carrom, chess and essay writing competitions, said a release.

The event was inaugurated by S. Chamundeswari, principal, National College of Education for Women and Periamurai Sri Parthasarathy Bhattar, Sri Parthasarathy Swamy Temple.

All students were given a participation certificate and a gift. Along with volunteers of SYMA, 60 students from Bharathi Women's Arts and Science College and MOP Vaishnav College for Women and Soundarya Rathnamala Isai Kuzhu helped conduct the event smoothly. Jayasudha and Saranya co-ordinated the events, said a release.

Lt.Col.U. Sachin, second-in-command, Corps of Military Police and Shankar V. Subramaniam, CEO, Hindu Tamil Thisai distributed prizes to the children.

Don Bosco Matriculation High School, MKB Nagar won the overall trophy, added the release.

Academicians from city colleges author book on **tourism and cuisines**

The Department of History at Stella Maris College organised an international seminar on “Tourism and Cuisines: Journey through Taste, Flavours across the Globe” on February 8 at Stella Maris College.

Chef Damu was the chief guest. Keynote addresses were delivered by adjunct professor Huang Soon Fook, Binary University Malaysia, Amy Allocco, Elon University, North California, USA; Chef Ramkumar Varadarajan; J.Eugene, IHM, Chennai and Dr. Anbumalar, Stella Maris College.

All of them spoke on different aspects of Indian and international cross cultural impact and the tourism perspectives. An international food festival where students prepared and displayed international foods took place in Stella Maris College campus.

Padmashree Chef Damu released a book authored by academicians from across the city colleges. The book is titled *Tourism and Cuisines: Culinary Treasures from every corner of India*.

Laser vision for **presbyopia**

Uma Eye Clinic, an ophthalmology center in Anna Nagar, has launched ‘Presbyond,’ a laser vision treatment for presbyopia.

Presbyopia, an age-related condition affecting individuals typically over 40, makes it difficult to focus on near objects, often requiring reading glasses.

For details, call 044 - 4902 3232.

Electronics expo on Feb 21, 22

Neostud, Tamil Nadu Electronic and Technician Association, and 3A Business Consulting is conducting an electronics evolution exhibition, ‘Time 2 Travel’ (obsolete to exotechnology), on February 21 and 22, where one can experience the journey of electronics.

At the expo, one can discover

how everyday electronic products such as cameras, television sets, radios, mobile phones, and projectors have evolved from earlier designs to cutting-edge advancements and technologies.

The expo will be held at the Perumbakkam Community Hall from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m..

S. Jose Densingh Cruz, the expo organiser, said that visitors can touch the products and see how technology has evolved. People can register for quizzes. The expo will offer an interactive experience for technology enthusiasts, students and industry professionals.

For details, contact S. Jose Densingh Cruz at 73585 54114.

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SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa wakes up to an unsettling truth: he has transformed overnight into an insect, with no say in his own becoming. Neeraja Arjun's transformation was not entirely unbidden, certainly not grotesque, but indubitably as life-shifting as Gregor Samsa's. At CIT Colony in Mylapore, Neeraja lays up unlikely treasures – citrus peels and similar organic discards – and hobnobs with microbes, in a spirited effort to impart worth to waste; and she has hired herself as an unapologetic spokesperson for alternative organic cleaning solutions, clambering on to platforms where the message can be amplified. This picture is indeed vastly removed from the one that defined her everyday reality only a few years ago: a homemaker dabbling in sustainable practices and applying them within the closed walls of familial wellbeing.

Neeraja dons the mantle of a bio enzyme maker and she dons it in a manner campaigners wear their ideologies. Unlike most other bio enzyme makers, she ensured early on that the activity broke out of the prison walls of her kitchen. A few years into bio enzyme making, she kicked the activity upstairs, collaborating with a commercial bio enzyme manufacturer. She would go on to fashion her own brand, called PUVI which she promotes through her sustainability store called The Canopy Tales. However, the most significant aspect of her work, one that steers her a whole galaxy away from DIY bio enzyme makers and even a horde of those practising it professionally is her desire to share her knowledge with women self-help groups. Neeraja speaks on sustainability at various fora, particularly on college campuses and in corporate houses.

The road to Mylapore began in Tiruchirappalli. In the prelude to this journey, her hands were full, one cradling a newborn, the other clutching a questionnaire resulting from introspection: how does one cleanse without consequence? How does one strip away dirt without leaving behind something far worse?

"I just wanted a safer way to wash my child's clothes," Neeraja recalls. That is when she found bio enzymes and by 2017 mastered the science-art of making it through gratuitously but helpfully offered YouTube tutorials. While the world stockpiled disinfectants during the pandemic, her home was stationed

A solution at multiple levels



in a microbial utopia, sterilised by raw life, not chemicals. It was not until 2021 that the real shift happened: when she moved to Chennai. Her research deepened, leading to her mentor, Shrekant, who is based out of Coimbatore and owns a brand (@houseofgrownest) that makes and promotes sustainability-related products. Their insights reinforced her faith in bio enzymes. From having seeped into her routine, bio enzyme making was now redefining it. It was defining her on the personal and professional fronts.

Educational training

A snatch of a back story would place this pursuit in perspective.

Neeraja's educational training geared towards environment-related professional practice proved a cul-de-sac, failing to take her to the promised destination. She is qualified in GIS for environmental modelling and management, which she studied in Europe on a scholarship in 2009-10. After returning to India, she found that GIS was still a nascent industry



Bio enzyme making usually occupies the DIY stratosphere, the pursuit entrapped within the prison walls of private kitchens. Here is a resident of Chennai who set it free, building up a repertoire of bio enzyme varieties and putting them out in the market; and most importantly, sharing the lessons from this journey with women self-help groups to empower them



AI GENERATED
IMAGE:
MARIVARASU



organic practices. In those years, she was unconsciously searching for her place in the sustainability ecosystem, settling on a pursuit that would help her shore it up in a small way. The unspoken desire materialised when she discovered her metier in bio enzyme making, following the move to Chennai. Everything seemed to happen on cue. She found herself racing towards the summit of Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs – self-actualisation.

First, in only a little expendi-

ture of time, her repertoire for bio enzyme making broadened. "I love experimenting and bio enzyme making gave me that space. I have crafted over 30 varieties of bio enzymes, some defined by known and regular raw materials such as lemon and orange peels and others by less-known, the latter list including flowers, notably marigold, Asian pigeonwings (*sangu push-pam*) and night jasmine (*parijath-am*)." Between them, the 30 varieties of bio enzymes serve three applications: as floor cleaner, laundry liquid and dishwashing liquid.

Bio enzyme making might be ruled by formulas, neatly laid down ratios of ingredients. While swearing by the science of it, Neeraja is enamoured by the craftsmanship glazing it. "I love the unpredictability of it," she admits. "Each batch is different. Each one has its own scent, its own personality."

In the early years when she was making bio enzymes on a reasonably sizeable scale, partly due to a collaboration with a manufacturer, she was yoked to a demanding routine.

Challenges at various levels – from the production process to the pricing – had to be dealt with. Though daunting, Neeraja kept at it. The process was labour-intensive, the yield limited, and yet, she priced her products as accessible as she could, says Neeraja. Beyond fermentation, one major cost factor was laboratory testing. "Because bio enzymes involve probiotics, they have to undergo extensive lab testing to ensure quality and safety," she says. These tests added to the overall cost but also ensured that customers received a product that was not just environmentally friendly but also safe for their homes and families. "The margins are slim because I want more people to try bio enzymes.



(Clockwise from bottom): Neeraja Arjun speaking at a college; two interns at The Canopy Tales; Neeraja at WIA; and during an organic products sale.

But I also have to be realistic. If someone expects a handcrafted product to match mass-market pricing, they're not seeing the full picture."

In any sustainability journey, one would come upon a molehill (if not mountain) of contradictions sooner or later. In large-scale fermentation, the very vessels that cradle these bio enzymes – the jars where transformation happens – are made of HDPE plastic. "Glass and aluminium would be ideal," she acknowledges, "but they are impractical for large-scale fermentation. The solution is not about demonising plastic but using it wisely." This, she believes, is the essence of sustainable living – not a rigid doctrine, but a practice of making conscious, balanced choices.

Knowledge sharing

Environmentalism would be sustainable in the deepest sense of the term only if it heals social wounds, in small but significant ways, Neeraja makes sure it does. She offers the how-to of bio enzyme making to women self-help groups. In this context, she is associated with Women's Indian Association (which she got introduced to by way Wipro Urban Ecology Small Grant and Care Earth Trust) conducting regular sessions on bio enzyme making for the women whose lives the organisation is trying to improve.

"The real magic is not just in the jars, but in the people who learn to make them," she says. In a village near Mahabalipuram, she trained a self-help group of 20-30 women, passing on to them what she had learned. She left the session wiser by a new bio enzyme-making trick she picked up on account of it.

At the end of the session, one woman hesitated before asking, "Can we make bio enzymes from cashew fruit?" Neeraja had never heard of anyone trying their hand at this. The woman explained that cashew-processing industries in the area discarded vast quantities of the fruit, treating it as waste. Intrigued, Neeraja took some home and let it ferment. Three months later, the results were astonishing – better than citrus peels. "That is when I learned innovation is sometimes just about paying attention."



A turnaround

After a succession of tragedies, Devika G., found employment as a helper at WIA crèche on Greenways Road, and rose to the role of teacher in time. Seizing an opportunity at WIA to learn bio enzyme making from an expert, she augmented her income. She is now a bio enzyme evangelist, imparting the skill to people around her neighbourhood

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Often times, right within the constricted and overpoweringly suffocating circumstances of one's life, there would be doors of escape. When discovered and opened, these hidden doors provide fresh air, new vistas and purpose. Devika G., has found those doors consistently and made good the possibilities they led into.

A resident of Greenways Road, Devika has seen the Women's Indian Association's (WIA) facility located on the same road, at close quarters, right from the cradle. It has always been her second home.

Her mother was on WIA's payroll, serving as a helper at the WIA Creche. After an unexpected turn of events, really unexpected, Devika found herself joining that payroll.

Here is what happened. At a young age, Devika was orphaned, losing both her parents. After Devika's mother passed on, her grandmother took up a helper's role at WIA. Devika was just 16 years old

when tragedy struck again. Her grandmother passed away: it was a rude jolt to a ship that just then seemed to have steadied and was sailing on an even keel.

Now at 16, Devika was on her own, and added to that, had a younger brother to take care for.

"There was no one else to earn for our family, so I took up my grandmother's job at WIA," she recalls.

She worked as a helper for three years before the Administrative Officer at WIA, Pandian, recognised her dedication and encouraged her to become a teacher. In 2004, she stepped into her new role as teacher of basic elements of education – the alphabet, rhymes and so on – at the crèche, where she now looks after around 50 children aged between two and five. In addition, she took up tailoring and also began making *sattu maavu kanji* – a nutritious porridge mix – that she supplies to hospitals and people around her neighbourhood.

"I have always wanted to learn new things. Even if something is difficult, I tell myself to give it a try, at least once. That is how I grew in-

Devika G

to this role and found my confidence," she says.

Her enthusiasm for learning was shining bright like the morning star and eluded nobody's notice. And it caught the eyes of WIA president Padma who had just then launched an initiative to impart vocational skills to women from an underprivileged background. Recognising Devika's eagerness in utilising this opportunity, Padma introduced her to Neeraja Arjun, a sustainability campaigner, who was seeking to train people in bio enzyme making.

In the moments that she could snatch for herself, which was during the children's lunch time at the crèche, Devika would make bio enzymes. With Neeraja's guidance, Devika released her first batch of bio enzymes on October 19, 2024. The response was overwhelmingly positive. One of her neighbours even sent her a photograph of a hibiscus plant that had flourished on account of the bio enzymes being applied to the soil.

"When I saw the picture, I felt proud. Something I had made was helping plants grow. That was when I knew I wanted to continue doing this," she says with a smile.

Encouraged by the feedback, Devika began teaching women in her neighbourhood about waste segregation and how certain types of food waste can be transformed into useful cleaning products.

"When I realised waste could be turned into something valuable, I started seeing it differently. Now I tell others – do not throw it away, turn it into something useful!" she gushes.

The avid student of bio enzyme making had become an adept teacher of it. Devika has trained 10 to 15 women in her community and 10 of her colleagues at WIA in bio enzyme making. Their bio enzymes, which can be used as floor cleaners, dishwashing liquid, laundry detergent and stove cleaner, have gained popularity among residents of Mylapore and even found buyers from Poland.

For Devika, learning a skill-based occupation is a form of life-long empowerment.

"When women have skills, they have confidence. Even if the men do not provide, we can still run our families. And the best part is that bio enzyme making requires no investment – it is simply making use of what we already have," she says. "I started this journey to support my family. But today, I do it because I love it."

Despite the challenges, Devika does not pass by opportunities for learning and new challenges.

Whether experimenting with new ideas or teaching others, she remains driven by one goal – to make a difference, both at home and in her community.

A *balancing* act

With Class X Board examinations having begun, *The Hindu Downtown* takes a close look at the daily schedule of three young sportspersons in the city who are appearing for those exams

LIFFY THOMAS

‘I cannot afford to skip the practice’

Fifteen-year-old M. Hansini appeared for her English exam yesterday (February 15) – and it is a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class X board examination. Her friends should not be surprised if they do not find her plugging away at her books for the next paper. Of course, she will study, but also take a break for something that is equally important to her, even during these times. That is table tennis. When this reporter spoke to her a few days before her exam, Hansini, a Mylapore resident, had returned home after a table tennis practice session at Andhra Club in T. Nagar, and had no plans to give up her regular sports routine during this examination season that stretches on for a month.

“In fact, I took up an additional routine three weeks ago: working out in the gym for over two hours every day which is getting quite intense every passing day,” says Hansini, a Class X student of P.S. Senior Secondary School.

Exams do not come in the way of this promising ping pong player who was recently ranked the youngest National Champion in the under-19 cate-

gory. Her day starts at 7 a.m where she attends online tuitions in science, followed by a gym workout and ping pong sessions for three hours in the evening.

Among the players selected for the Sai National Camp happening in Bengaluru, Hansini has requested that she be allowed to join in late. “Luckily, this is off-season and I do not have any major tournaments lined up, but I cannot afford to skip my regular practices if I have to compete in the season starting in June,” she says.

Hansini’s parents are grateful for the support from the school. “In Class IX, when my parents were contemplating moving me to the National Institute of Open Schooling, which is more flexible, so that I could devote more time to sports, the school principal assured them that I can cope well and should not leave the school,” recalls Hansini.

For the pre-board examination Hansini could write only two paper as she was travelling on tournaments.



M. Hansini

‘It helps to take it easy’

Arising speed skating player Aghil Anand likes to set priorities when it comes to academics and the skating rink. A Class X student of Maharishi Vidya Mandir in Ayanavaram, he will be appearing for his Board examinations from March 25. Aghil has slowed down a bit in hitting the rink but has not given up. “My first priority is giving my best in the examinations and I am cool about it. I cannot take a break due to examinations or my speed will reduce drastically,” says Aghil, who completed the second revision test conducted by his school on February 14. This weekend, his father will be taking him to the practice sessions.

During the examination season, the routine of practising on the roads is restricted to the weekends.

A regular at the Anna Nagar Roller Skating Club, Aghil makes sure he gets a dose of fitness at home practising skipping for 15 to 20 minutes, working on dumbbells and choosing a few weight-lifting exercises.

Aghil’s best outing in 2024 was winning a silver and a bronze at state level tournaments. His father M. Anand says his son is an easygoing boy and happy with the outcomes he has achieved in speed skating so far.

Navigating the 64 squares and a major exam with poise



Sharon Rachel Aby

It is around 10 p.m. on February 14 and Sharon Rachel Aby has just come out of an online class conducted by her English teacher ahead of her CBSE Board examination the next day. A jovial sounding Sharon is pumped up talking to this reporter on the phone. “Ma’am revised some important topics with us and also prayed for all of us, so it was a good meet-up with the class again,” says Sharon, a student of Spartan Exclusive School in Mogappair.

The 15-year-old with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a rare degenerative disease, is among the most promising chess players in the differently-abled category, competing and winning honours at various important tournaments including the Asian Chess Championship in Kyrgyzstan.

Despite the limiting factors (Sharon moves with the help of a motorised wheelchair), she is comfortable juggling academics and the demands of the 64 square board.

She ended 2024 on a high with tournaments in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Jharkhand. These tournaments are physically and mentally challenging, so coming back to be in the company of books is something Sharon enjoys. “Studying is some kind of a de-stresser,” says her father Aby Mathew.

An academically bright student, Sharon topped the pre-boards. Sharon is using a scribe to write her exams. So her practice and preparation included coordination with scribe and preparing accordingly.

“She missed more than three months of school during the fag

end of 2024, so she was keen on covering lost ground and we have left it to her,” says Aby, advising parents not to make a fuss about examinations. With a supportive environment at school, Sharon only needed little external help.

“Maths is a little tough for her, so we have a tutor helping her out besides the additional classes she attends at school,” says Aby.

Does chess also need practice every day?

Aby says one will lose touch with the game so the daily practice is a must. When Sharon is tired of studying, she plays chess online. “That is the way to de-stress between studies,” she signs off.

Once the Boards get over, Sharon will be up and ready to compete in another round of tournaments.



Aghil Anand



A stamp was released to commemorate the centennial year

Toastmasters celebrate a milestone

District 120 Toastmasters celebrated a grand Centennial milestone of Toastmasters International on February

9, 2025, at Grand Chennai by GRT Hotels. The event witnessed a gathering of hundreds of enthusiastic Toastmasters, including present

and past district leaders, who came together to commemorate 100 years of empowering communication and leadership, says a press

During the event

release.

The event was led by Mohanakrishnan G, DTM (District Director), Parthasarathy PD, DTM (Program Quality Director), and Aswathy Rajan, DTM (Club Growth Director). Key district leaders, including Arun Kumar SN (Public Relations Manager), Vijayalakshmi S, DTM (Finance Manager), and Vaisali Sridharbabu, DTM (Administration Manager), played pivotal roles in making the celebration a memorable one. A special highlight was the presence of Nina John, DTM, a founding member of Toastmasters in Tamil Nadu since 2004 and a dedicated member for over 20 years. A distinguished Past District Governor, Nina John's inspiring journey and invaluable contributions to the fraternity were recognised and celebrated during the event, the release adds.

The Centennial Stamp Release was a defining moment, presided over by Srinivasan Ramani, Deputy

National Editor of *The Hindu*. The commemorative stamp was presented to District Director Mohanakrishnan G, DTM, alongside Parthasarathy PD, DTM, and Dr. Aswathy Rajan, DTM.

Another proud moment was the launch of the district newsletter One Two Zero, unveiled by Meevakshi Perikaruppan, District Director of District Youth Services, Rotary District 3233, and received by Arun Kumar SN, Public Relations Manager.

The celebrations combined learning with fun through a captivating Kahoot Quiz session conducted by Vaisali Sridharbabu, DTM, featuring questions on Toastmasters' rich history and present achievements.

The morning began with a delightful breakfast and concluded on a high note with a grand cake-cutting ceremony, symbolizing the district's journey and future endeavors.

The Centennial Celebration stood as a testament to the unwavering spirit and camaraderie of District 120 Toastmasters, embracing 100 years of communication, leadership, and transformation.

Quiz to celebrate IEEE Computer Society's 80th anniversary

IEEE Computer Society (CS Madras) is organising a Mega ICT Quiz in the lead-up to the 80th anniversary celebration of IEEE Computer Society founded in 1946.

The quiz will cover the Information and Communication Technology history, concepts, developments, trends and current affairs.

The event is open for all including students (college and school level 10th grade and above), researchers, faculty and professionals.

The quiz will be conducted in four stages. Online Prelims, Zonal Orals (in

over 10 centres), Semifinal Orals (in two centres), and Final Orals (at Chennai).

All Orals will be in-person in physical mode, except Prelims which will held online to select contestants for Orals.

Win attractive cash prizes and gifts. Certificate of participation to all and certificate of appreciation to the orals contestants.

For detailed announcement, please see <https://lnkd.in/gQG4t2SF>

Registration fee is ₹50. Register at <https://lnkd.in/gjwjbXQD> on or before February 22, 2025

Remembering Bharathi

Shriram Bharathi Kalai Ilakkiya Kazhagam, a part of Shriram Group of Companies, observed the 143rd birth anniversary of poet C. Subramania Bharathi. The event was held at Krishna Gana Sabha, T. Nagar. Justice A Nakeeran of the Madras High Court delivered the presidential address and released a book 'Avvaiyin Thamizhamuthu.' Kavita Jawahar, a renowned speaker, spoke on 'Paarthira Paadiya Bharathi.' On occasion, three scholars, professors Krungai Sethupathi, P. Mahendran and S. Kalaimani were honoured with a citation and cash prizes. The book was distributed free of cost to the entire audience.

Free ortho camp

Shree Geeta Bhavan Trust is conducting a free ortho medical camp on February 22 from 9 a.m. to 1p.m. on its premises at Avvai Shanmugam Salai, Gopalapuram. Arthritis screening and spine and joint related diseases will be screened at the venue. Those interested must register their names. Call 9445198100/ 9444542812

Workshop on vermicomposting

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre in Guindy is conducting a culinary workshop on February 20. According to a press release, the session will focus on preparation of squash and syrup from fruits. Another workshop on vermicomposting will be held on February 21

The sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate in Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048.

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Sage Agasthyar descends on a Chennai street

Chirpy children dressed in saffron robes carried *kamandalam* and *dhandam*

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Last Sunday, the usually quiet Agasthyar Temple on Raja Street behind Pondy Bazaar was bursting at the seams. The reason?

Scores of sage Agasthyar “lookalikes” descended on the temple. Accompanied by their teachers and parents, children from various schools were honouring the sage by presenting themselves in his likeness.



Participants at the rally

While the adults stood aside the children, all dressed in saffron robes with long beards, a top knot on the head and rudraksham around their neck and wrists, kamandalam and dandam (sticks) in hand sat on the ground inside the

temple - some playing with their dandam and others speaking animatedly to each other.

A few minutes later Sudha Seshayyan, former Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University, who is currently a direc-

tor of the Chennai campus of Sastra deemed-to-be University, told the students the story of Agasthya.

“Do you know why you are here?” she asked the children. When they said to see Agasthyar, she proceeded to explain about the Kashi Tamil Sangam (KTS) and its theme, which is Sage Agasthya, who unified north and south India.

“This temple has a sanctum for Sage Agasthya. You are all dressed like him. He came to the south from Vidharbha kingdom,” she said and proceeded to narrate the story of Agasthya.

K.V.S. Gopalakrishnan, president of P.S. Educational Society, said the visit had been organised to commemorate the 3rd edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS3.0).

“Over 100 school students dressed as Sage Agasthyar partici-

pated in a walkathon organised by the Central Institute of Classical Tamil and Sastra,” he said.

The students were from classes IV to VIII from Sanipani Vidyalaya, P.S. Senior Secondary, Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan and Bhavan's Rajaji Vidysram. “The walkathon started at the Hindi Prachar Sabha in Thanikachalam Road and concluded around 1 km away at the Sage Agasthyar Ashram Temple. All the participants were given a copy of Amar Chitra Katha publication on Agasthyar and served prasadam after darshan,” he added.

The theme of KTS 3.0 is Sage Agasthya as a national unifier. S.Vaidhyasubramaniam, Vice-Chancellor of Sastra University, R. Bhuvaneshwari, Registrar of CICT, Venkat, Director of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, P.G. Subramaniam, Principal of Bhavan's Vidyashram and Bhuvana Shankar, Principal of Sandipani Vidyalaya also participated in the walkathon.

Redwood Montessori hosts annual Organic Fair



At the event.

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER

The annual Organic Fair hosted by Redwood Montessori School in Thiruvannamiyur on February 9, 2025 was a celebration of all things eco-conscious. With over 50 stalls, the fair showcased everything from fresh produce to home-baked pastries, jute baskets, eco-friendly clothing, and more, as the marketplace was teeming with sustainable choices.

“The whole aim is to bring people to organic products,” says Shankari Subbiah, one of the co-founders of Redwood Montessori

School, at their 10th organic fair in Chennai.

“We believe in this organic farming as we provide fresh meals: breakfast, snacks, and lunch made from locally grown produce to our school children. We wanted to bring this culture to the public too, because not many know where to find such products,” adds Shankari.

Alongside the home bakers and vendors, there were games and activities for the students, and even a few grandmothers of the students ran stalls. What started with the goal of moving children away from processed food has since

evolved into a broader concept promoting the idea of eating local, buying local.

Walking the talk, Madhura Visweswaran, the co-founder of the school says they have been working towards creating a world free from single-use plastics, where wooden toys are the norm for children, and chemicals such as lead are removed from the crayons.

“This organic fair is also about providing vendors the chance to connect with parents, and as the demand for organic produce grows, we are hopeful that prices will drop, making organic food more accessible for all,” adds Madhura.

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And

BENEFITS OF YOGA FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S

By

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