



# metro PLUS

THE HINDU

**At Melgaarsh, a Toda hamlet, we trace the sacred ritual of thatching an ancient temple P2**

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM MOTO JAM 2025 P4**

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## Finance and emotional wellness

School of Life's summer workshop has something for children that most millennials wish they had studied about in school – finance. Over 11 days, the summer workshop for children will have sessions on personal finance; understanding how stock markets work as well as confidence building; dealing with jomo (joy of missing out) and fomo (fear of missing out); and vision board-making.

"We were keen on including topics related to finance so that children have a head-start with regard to this in life, and have experts from the field addressing them. Emotional wellness is important at a time when screens dominate our lives. The other topics we focus on, will help them with peer pressure and regulating their emotions," says Anjana Krishnaswamy, founder, School of Life.

Lady Andal School, Harrington Road, Chennai, from April 30 to May 10. For 7 to 11 years at 10am, and 12 to 16 years at 3pm. Register at 9342182735 or follow @school\_of\_life.in on Instagram.



**Summer camps are no longer** about learning a song or two, or picking up a new craft. This year, Chennai's summer camps dabble in everything from finance to board games and weaving. Here are some of our picks that promise a distraction from the punishing heat

## Rowing in the Adyar river

Being able to set out on an early morning row down the Adyar river, much before the heat takes over, is what participants at Madras Boat Club's annual rowing camp can gear up for. Having initiated several youngsters from the city into rowing over the last many years, the camp will take place over two batches this time.

"The camp will serve as an introduction to a sport that is fairly niche. Open to all children aged 13 and above, they can pick up the basics and choose to stick on with the sport much after the camp has ended," says Sumana Narayanan, vice captain of boats. Several participants who have picked up rowing at this summer camp, have gone on to compete in national events. "Rowing also inculcates discipline, hard work and leadership skills. Every person on the boat will have a part to play and they will learn to work together. The camp will train them physically and mentally," Sumana adds. Children are expected to have basic swimming knowledge.

@Madras Boat Club from May 12 onwards for 13 to 21 years. Contact 9445395089 for registrations.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 2

# Love so natural, only a natural diamond will do.

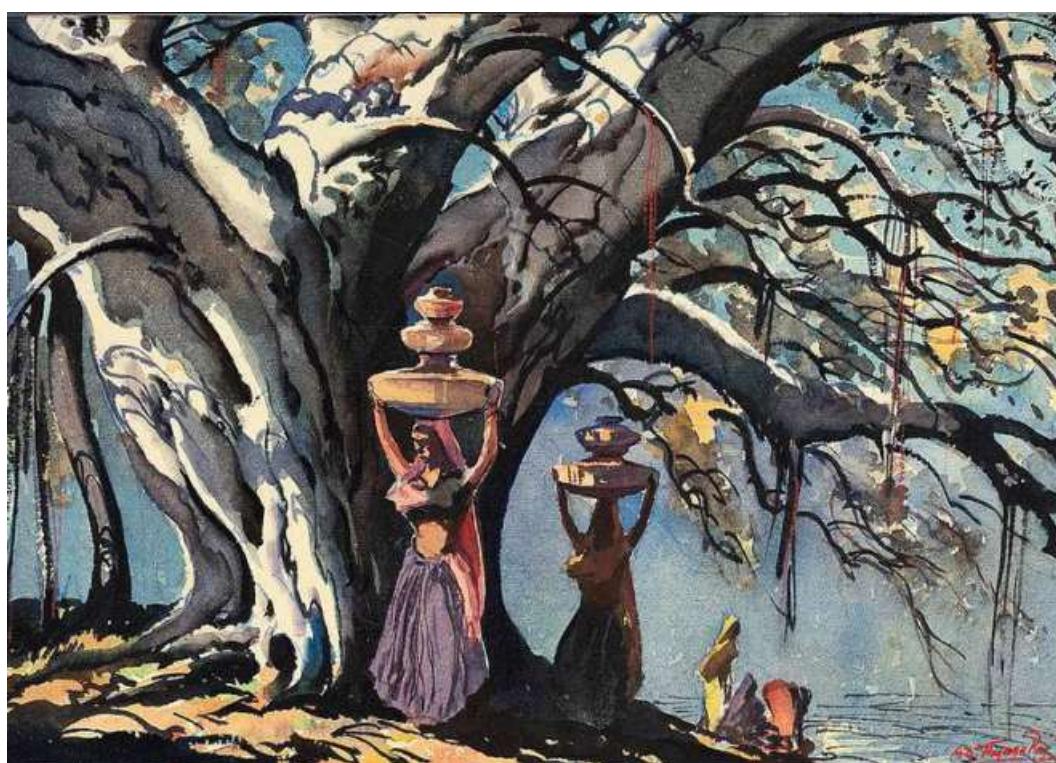


**love, from dad**  
COLLECTION  
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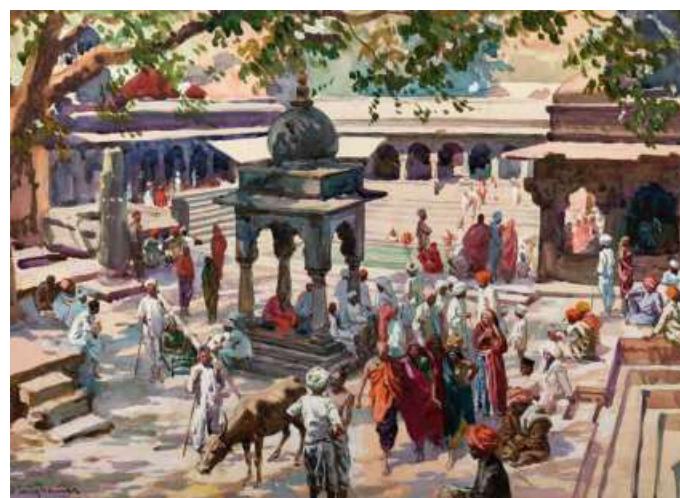


**DE BEERS**  
A DIAMOND IS FOREVER





Call of the wind Works by (left) GD Thyagaraj; and (below) Walter Langhammer. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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In an exceptional use of contrasts, an idyllic scene painted in shades of translucent blue, effortlessly lets the warm sun trickle in, as a man atop a bull gazes into the distance. He stands beside a towering, veiny tree. The deft use of shadows, and contrasting colour palettes makes this watercolour work by R Govindaraj a picture of skill; a fine example of how artists in the Madras School interpreted the 19th Century European technique of Plein Air painting (derived from the French expression, *en plein air*, that translates to 'in the open air').

Today, this beautiful painting has taken over a whole wall on the first floor of Lalit Kala Akademi gallery in Chennai, and is one among the many rarely-seen-before works that date back as early as the 1930s – which is believed to be the first time Madras forayed into the world of pre-modern Plein Air painting.

GD Paulraj, KCS Paniker, S

## Memory and movement

**Did Plein Air painting have a presence in Madras? These rarely seen artworks from the late 1930s, investigates the possibility**

Dhanapal, R Krishna Rao, HV Ram Gopal, K Sreenivasulu, GD Thyagaraj, GD Arulraj, R Govindaraj and PB Surendranath are the artists who captured the outdoors, in all its immediacy and transient glory. Works by early Bengal School artists such as Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose are also on display, alongside figures of Bombay's Modernist movement like SH Raza, Walter Langhammer, MS Joshi: a rare sight in Chennai.

Ashvin E Rajaopalan, curator

of the show, says that the idea of such a curation struck him while researching the Bombay School, specifically SH Raza.

"For the purpose of the curatorial narrative, works have been put together from museums, private collections and our own art collection. That said, it is not entirely commercial," says Ashvin.

"The Piramal Museum of Art [in Mumbai] has about 200 watercolours that build this story from the Bombay perspective. That's when I stumbled upon GD Paulraj. When I started researching

Paulraj, I realised that he appeared in *Illustrated Weekly* issues as early as the 1940s. Then I found his two brothers [GD Thyagaraj and GD Arulraj]. From there, I started looking at people like Krishna Rao, while I already knew of Paniker's watercolours."

Ashvin believes that this story, interestingly, hinges on the early techniques of printmaking. "Watercolour was the preferred medium for colour printmaking. Along with the emergence of colour itself, there was this rise of watercolours, which were done quickly. These also gave a photorealistic finish, possibly an influence from photography," he speculates.

Paulraj was one of DP Roy Chowdhury's first students. It is through this channel that the Plein Air style trickled into Madras, says Ashvin. Though a

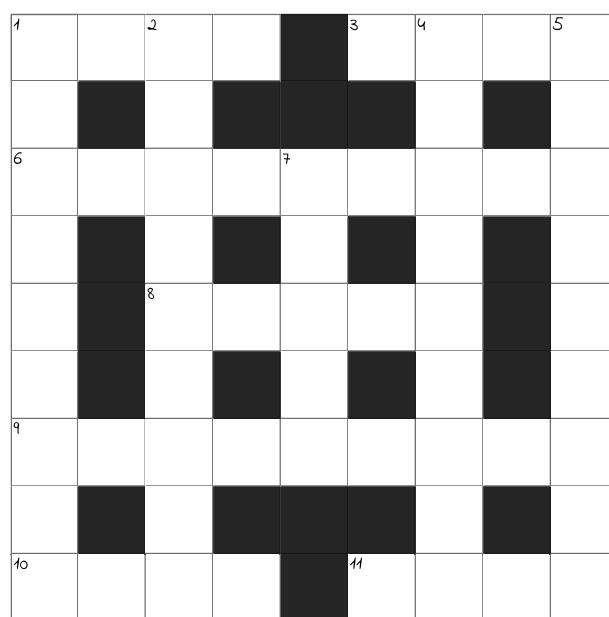
**Works by early Bengal School artists such as Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose are also on display**

formal conclusion is hard to make, it is from the likes of Abanindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose that this style reached Madras when Roy Chowdhury took charge as principal of the Government College of Fine Arts.

"It could be that the watercolour is a Bengal medium, and drawing like this came from Bengal because of the wash technique, but Paulraj definitely had a genius moment between the 1930s and 1950s," reminds Ashvin. Its spotlight on a specific strand, lost somewhere in the noise, is what makes this display different. While the works in itself are exemplary manifestations of pre-modern expressionism, what they investigate is largely unknown. Be it Paniker's swaying trees or bustling markets, or Govindaraj's deeply moving, earthy rural landscapes, the fleeting urgency of these frames demand a long, close gaze.

**Light and Legacy** is on display till April 20, on the first floor, Lalit Kala Akademi, Egmore.

### ONE DOWN #1437 BY LITTA JACOB



#### Across

- 1 Several (4)  
3 Soft sound to attract attention (4)

6 Person sitting in the stands (9)

8 Leafy garden arbour (5)

9 Sharp-eyed trait (9)

10 Soap bubbles (4)

11 \_\_\_ cars or pre-owned ones (4)

#### Down

1 Enoki, button, and Shiitake (9)

2 As-required grant for a student (4-5)

4 Ends of the week for Arab countries (9)

5 Troubled and taunted; victimised (9)

7 The Eiffel or Qutb-Minar (5)

To play One Down Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.



Solution No. 1437

### Catch the comedy

The Theatrewalas, Chennai, presents *Doctor Sukku Mareez Dukkhi*, inspired from *Le Medecin Malgre Lui* by the master of comedy, Moliere. The play is adapted in Hindi and directed by Sushma Roshan Ahuja. @Alliance Francaise, Nungambakkam. April 20, 4pm and 6.30pm. For tickets, priced at ₹350 and ₹500, call 9840821030.



## + Veena with a side of varuval

Visesham is the newest kid on the elaborate South Indian fare-block of Chennai's culinary landscape. Here are our recommendations



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A t Visesham, a new restaurant in Nandanam, one eats a meal while watching artistes play the veena.

As we get to the review, I would like to get one thing out of the way. Nearly every food item elicits a "that was good". Here are my recommendations from the Visesham menu.

Begin your meal with an annasi pazham (pineapple) rasam which is sweet from the diced pineapples and spiced with red chillies for a kick. The peethala mamsam chaaru is another option. Cooked with whole crabs, the stock simmers with flavour. The former however, is the pick of the table.

The podi idlis are a great appetiser order for a large table. Served with three chutneys that change depending on what's available at the market, these ghee-soaked mini idlis are an easy crowd pleaser. The deep-fried kappa cutlets made of a tapioca stuffing and the pacha masala yeral or green marinated tiger prawn, should not be missed. The tiger prawn, steeped in the spicy green



By the bowl (Top) A variety of food at Visesham; (above) the interiors. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

chilli-coriander paste is easy to wipe off the plate. The koon milakkattu, a deep-fried mushroom dish with pepper, however, is a miss. Instead, try the koonthal porichathu, another deep-fried dish with squid. A hit of lemon on top ensures that the dish hits the spot.

Visesham's strength lies in its mains. Served with idiyappam,

parotta or dosas of choice, an assortment of gravies is the way to go. If I were you, I would begin with the mutton istew and the monagadda royyalu koora. Both these coconut milk-based dishes with mutton and prawn respectively, have vastly different flavour profiles. However, the meat in both dishes is succulent and soft. Pair it with an idiyappam to ensure that a neutral vessel carries the flavour through.

The gutti vankaya koora, sacred to the Andhra palate, is a vegetarian option that steals the show. The garlic softened by hours of cooking in a fiery tomato and chilli gravy alongside stuffed whole brinjals, is best eaten with a kal dosa. If you would like an option from Karnataka, try the bhende chilli made of a Byadgi chilli paste from Tulu Nadu.

For the rice-loving South Indian in you, the Dindigul mutton biryani and curd rice, is a perfect way to end the meal. Pro tip: add a generous serving of inji puli to the curd rice. Because there is always room for dessert, a warm carrot

**Visesham's strength lies in its mains. Served with idiyappam, parotta or dosa of choice, an assortment of gravies is the way to go**

halwa with cashews and raisins becomes the perfect way to say "shubam".

Arasu Dennis, managing partner, Visesham, says that while the aim is to ensure South Indian cuisine is spotlighted, they have many kebabs and the standard dal makhnis and paneer butter masalas on the menu. "We don't want to say 'no' to anyone, you know," he says. He adds that they have also introduced set meals where one can choose from vegetarian, seafood and meat options.

Arasu believes in signs. "Our first booking on the opening day is of a kitty party by a person named Arthi. They are dressing in sarees for their meeting. An auspicious start, don't you think?" he asks. A visesham indeed.

Visesham is at 135, Chamiers Road, Nandanam Extension, Nandanam, Chennai. A meal for two costs ₹3,000. For reservations, contact 9176757711.

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**Sibi on donning the khaki yet again in upcoming crime thriller *Ten Hours***



# Officer takes charge

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**H**e may not be the most consistent actor, but there's something desirable about Sibi Sathyaraj and his tenacious journey that makes you root for him. Perhaps that's why you would find many comments under the trailer of his upcoming film *Ten Hours* wishing for the actor to get his due. Sibi, too, is impressively self-aware of where he stands. "I will get my big break. I know it," says a confident Sibi.

*Ten Hours*, a crime thriller directed by debutant Ilayaraja Kaliyaperumal, tells a story that transpires over 10 hours in a night. Sibi plays a police officer named R Castro. "Overnight, he embarks into what turns out to be his career's most complicated

case, and the film travels with him as he encounters quite a few unexpected turns," says Sibi. This is the actor's fifth role as a cop, after *Naagal Jaakkirathai*, *Jackson Durai*, *Walter* and *Kabadadaari*. Too much khaki on the same shoulders can get quite monotonous, but Sibi has somehow managed to make the roles his own. "Maybe it is because of the success of *Naagal Jaakkirathai* that directors think I am tailor-made for the role. Moreover, thanks to the preparations I did for that

film – like the weapons training I underwent at a police academy in Adyar – I find it easier to get into the groove of a cop."

In today's Tamil cinema, with bigger stars more or less settling for templates, an experienced actor like Sibi could dabble in some experiments, perhaps like his antagonistic turn in 2010's *Naanayam*.

"I have always been open to experimenting. I believe I started doing that right from 2007's *Lee*. But yes, I am on the course to do more

experiments," he assures.

20 years ago, Sibi was busy working alongside his father, veteran actor Sathyaraj, in titles like *Kovai Brothers* and *Vetrivel Sakthivel*, but except for *Jackson Durai*, the two haven't acted together since. In 2009, Sibi had told *The Hindu*, "Henceforth, we'll

**Sibiraj has earlier played a cop in films like Naagal Jaakkirathai, Walter and Jackson Durai**

**Cop act**  
Sibi Sathyaraj in a still from *Ten Hours*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

team up only if the project is unique. I don't intend on riding piggyback on my dad." He even went on to say that those films didn't do him any good as much as they did his father. But then, given Sathyaraj's pan-Indian break post-*Baahubali*, you wonder if the on-screen father-son equation is up for a renewal, say, in a genre they hadn't attempted before. But Sibi reasserts his sentiment.

"I don't want to be in his shadow. That's why, after all those films, we took a break from working together. Even when we reunited for *Jackson Durai*, it was only because it had such a unique concept." The 2016 horror-comedy film featured Sathyaraj as a ghost. "We have now reunited for *Jackson Durai 2*, in which he is playing a villain opposite me."

When Indian cinema underwent a boom in OTT content, audiences and critics hoped it would lead to more niche, smaller attempts and a possible upsurge of the long-format – and more spaces that actors like Sibi, who started in the 2000s, could use to boost their game. Sibi accepts that this has not happened. "But there have been attempts like *Suzhal* and *Inspector Rishi*. So I am hopeful that more opportunities will open up."

After *Ten Hours*, Sibi has *Ranger* and *Jackson Durai 2* in the pipeline. "I am also in talks with director Ilayaraja Kaliyaperumal and the producers of *Ten Hours* for another project. We are also planning on mounting a project under our own production banner," says Sibi.

**Ten Hours** releases in theatres on April 18

# Horror stories

**Soha Ali Khan, who plays the antagonist in horror film *Chhorii 2*, talks about her diverse and trivia-rich career**



**A new outing** Soha Ali Khan as Daasi Ma in *Chhorii 2*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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1979 film *Dooriya*, starring her mother and Bengali cinema icon Uttam Kumar. Given that she was barely a year old at the time, wasn't it the fastest star-kid launch in history?

"It's true!" laughs Soha. "I was a little infant in my mother's arms in a song. That was effectively my debut."

Her actual debut, it turns out, was meant to be Amol Palekar's *Paheli*. "Amol ji wanted to launch me with another young actor. As a student of History, I was taken by the film's Rajasthan setting and the beautiful costumes I was going to wear. I was so excited that I quit my job at Citigroup overnight and didn't tell my parents."

However, once superstar Shah Rukh Khan came on board, the film's profile increased, and both Soha and her co-star were dropped by Palekar (Rani Mukerji eventually played the female lead in *Paheli*).

"Amol ji called and told me Shah Rukh Khan is doing the role of the hero. I was like, 'Oh that's amazing!' I didn't realise that he was slowly breaking it to me that I wasn't playing the girl anymore."

Soha, who took a break from feature films after 2018's *Saheb, Biwi Aur Gangster 3*, is cautiously optimistic about the future.

"While good stories are being rewarded, people are still hesitant to embrace originality." A correction, she adds, is certainly underway in the industry.

"Scripts are being reworked. As a female actor in my 40s, I am positive about the quality of roles coming my way. I couldn't say this, say, 10 years ago."



# When bikes flew

A peek into the celebration of all things motorsports at the recently-held Red Bull Moto Jam



**Flying high**  
A stunt bike rider at the Red Bull Moto Jam.  
ALI BHARMAL AND S SHIVA RAJ

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To watch a video from the event, scan QR code

**I**t's a bird. It's a plane. No, it's a bike. And it's up in the air. At the recently-held Red Bull Moto Jam in Chennai's Island Grounds, bikes flew sideways. Even as the motorists had fun with their vehicles, audiences watched

in awe, in an evening that was all about speed and style.

They were not the only ones having fun. Director Lokesh Kanagaraj, a surprise guest, went on a spin with rally champion Abdo Feghali, who, sporting a yellow Chennai Super Kings jersey, did everything possible with a BMW M4 car including quick spins and fast turns.

Much later, Lokesh, currently working on Rajinikanth's *Coolie*, would say, "I've never experienced something like this."

That pretty much sums up the emotion that thousands of Chennaiites felt, even as they experienced a multi-discipline celebration of motorsports with motorists pushing their limits with their machines. If stunt racer

Abdulrahman Ahmed Alraeesi got his car to race on two wheels, Sebastian Westberg, Vivian Ganther and Thomas Wirnsberger revved their freestyle motocross bikes to perform stunts in the air, much to the delight of the spectators.



**I'm happy to introduce drifting to new countries. While the weather might not be too ideal, the passion for motorsports in this part of the country is amazing**

**ABDO FEGHALI**,  
Rally champion



Among the many firsts that this motorsport spectacle threw up were Lebanon-based Abdo Feghali's stunts using drifting, a driving technique where a car is made to slide sideways, and Lithuania-based Arunas Gibieza's (Aras) stunts on his Triumph Street triple stunt bike.

Aras is no stranger to Chennai, having performed earlier in shows and college events. He started off with a gentle wheelie but soon, came into his own when he stood on the bike, even as the vehicle kept moving forward. Aras recalls, "When I was four, I was at a friend's place, having dinner, when the TV showcased a race. The guy who finished the race was crossing the finish line in style. I said, 'Wow, I want to do that.'"

He did exactly that in Moto Jam, while Chennai looked on in awe. Aras, dreaming to soon get a Guinness Record for the longest no-hands motorcycle wheelie, a record he held not long ago, is thrilled at the public support he got in India. "This will go a long way in spreading the word about motorsports in the country, and I hope it inspires many people to take it up, with appropriate safety precautions."