

T. NAGAR

Saidapet » West Mambalam » Vadapalani » Porur » Kattupakkam » Irungattukottai » Nungambakkam » Manapakkam » Ashok Nagar » Valasaravakkam
Gerugambakkam » Mangadu » Choolaimedu » Egmore » K K Nagar » Kodambakkam » Virugambakkam » Somangalam » Poonamallee » Chetpet

‘Area under overhead metro track should be developed as park’



P. SUDHAKAR

The area under the overhead metro railway track at West Jhafferkhapet on Jawaharlal Nehru Main Road should be developed as a park along the lines of the one under the MRTS railway track in Velachery.

We suggest this because West Jhafferkhapet has no parks. Residents of this locality visit the parks at K.K. Nagar. Besides, the area under the metro railway track is unkempt and misused for alcohol consumption.

P. Sudhakar, secretary, Federation of Residential Welfare Associations, West Jhafferkhanpet



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Dear readers, you can be our volunteer-writer by writing to us about issues and events in your neighbourhood. You should send the write-ups to downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in. Letters must carry the postal address and contact number.



PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B

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M - UK 10 (EU 44.5)

M - UK 9 (EU 43)

M - UK 8 (EU 42)

M - UK 7 (EU 40)

M - UK 6 (EU 39)

M - UK 5 (EU 38)

MEN SIZES

WOMEN SIZES

W - UK 9 (EU 43)

W - UK 8 (EU 42)

W - UK 7 (EU 40.5)

W - UK 6 (EU 39)

W - UK 5 (EU 38)

W - UK 4 (EU 37)

W - UK 3 (EU 35.5)

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'Milk booth hinders traffic flow'



The Aavin milk booth at the entrance of Saraswathi Street in Mahalingapuram needs to be shifted. Because, it is located at the intersection of the street and Mahalingapuram Main Road by taking up more than half of street's width. This makes it difficult for motorists to enter the street from the main road. There is a marriage hall inside the street and on days when events are held it is difficult to navigate the junction and enter the street. It is two decades since I started pursuing this issue with the State Government.

D. Gopalakrishnan,
Mahalingapuram



Aavin milk booth at Saraswathi Street in Mahalingapuram.
PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B

Safety rules thrown to the wind



▼ Motorists do not follow the dictates of the traffic signal at the junction of Mahalingapuram Main Road and Saraswathi Street. PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

'Decrease the height of the bench at this bus stop'



The hardly used seating facility at ITC Grand Chola bus stop in Guindy.
PHOTO: T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Recently, the State Highway Department relaid the pavements along the ITC Grand Chola stop in Guindy.

Earlier, the pavement slabs were shaky and uneven, which looks fine

now and is a relief for pedestrians.

But Greater Chennai Corporation has to reduce the height of the bench at the bus stop.

S. Narayanan,
Guindy

Special trains for IPL matches

In view of Tata Indian Premier League 2025 matches at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chepauk on April 11, 25 and 30, and May 12, the Southern Railway will be operating three passenger special trains for commuters after the matches get over.

From Chennai Beach to Velachery, 'passengers special one' will be operated at 22 p.m.

From Velachery to Chennai Beach, passengers special two will be operated at 22.55 p.m.

From Chepauk to Velachery, passengers special three will be operated at 23.30 p.m.

For details, log on to <https://x.com/DrmChennai>



IPL ticket enables free travel on MTC buses

As in the previous year, Metropolitan Transport Corporation wants more people to use public transport during IPL matches. People with tickets for IPL matches at M.A. Chidambaram Cricket Stadium at Chepauk need not buy bus tickets. The offer is valid for three hours before and after a match starts and ends, on Deluxe, Express and Whiteboard services.

To enable commuters to reach their homes, MTC will operate buses from three points around the stadium.

The three points include Anna Square Bus Terminus, University of Madras haltover, and near Omandurar Hospital on Anna Salai.

From Anna Statue on Mount Road, MTC will operate shuttle services to the cricket stadium.

A glimpse of a Smile Store.

SMILE STORE Launches



1. Nungambakkam
September 20, 2020



2. Avadi
January 26, 2021



3. Purasawalkam
August 14, 2022



4. Walltax Road
February 19, 2023



5. MC Road, Washermanpet
April 8, 2023

SALES FIGURES (April 2024 — February 2025)

Nungambakkam:
₹6,19,160
Avadi:
₹3,79,220
Purasawalkam:
₹5,67,140
Walltax Road:
₹3,67,440
MC Road, Washermanpet:
₹4,78,280



BENEFICIARIES (April 2024 — February 2025)

Nungambakkam: 5,666 people
Purasawalkam: 4,976 people
Avadi: 3,383 people
MC Road: 4,018 people
Walltax Road: 3,283 people



Where beneficiary is king

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

In five years, Rajasthan Cosmo Club Foundation (RCCF) has established as many Smile Stores in Chennai. An introductory note: a Smile Store is a thrift cloth store with a heart-warming twist in the coat-tail. RCCF wants this social enterprise to find newer addresses in Chennai and extend its presence to the rest of Tamil Nadu, essentially hoping the smile widens into an ear-to-ear grin. And here is why the grin might not be a far-fetched idea. Smile Stores have one thing going for them straightaway: they might be underpinned by charity, but they denounce an idea that usually tags along with charity — beneficiaries passively receiving handouts. It is charity offered on a platter of dignity. Though the clothes come in a ridiculously nominal price range, the beneficiaries are still offered a shopping experience.

A Smile Store feels nothing like a typical charity outlet. With barcoded tags, organised racks, fitting rooms, and even clothes from premium brands such as Louis Phi-

lippe and Arrow making it to those racks, the experience mirrors that of an upscale boutique. The gently used clothes are worked upon to look brand-new. Prices range from a mere ₹20 to ₹50: but clothing purchases made at highly subsidised rates do not cost the beneficiaries their self-respect.

“When items are given for free, many individuals — be it a driver or a cook — hesitate to accept them. But when they walk in to a store that resembles a premium retail outlet and make a purchase themselves, they experience a sense of ownership and dignity,” explains Manish Chowdhari, chairman of Smile Stores.

Taking

inspiration from the renowned Goodwill Stores in the United States, the first Smile Store opened its doors on September 20, 2020 in Nungambakkam. Since then, it has expanded impressively, with four more outlets across Chennai, and a clothes collection kiosk at the airport to boot.

To maintain fairness and prevent misuse, purchases are closely monitored. A five clothes per month limit per family ensures that garments reach those who genuinely need them, while mobile number tracking helps pre-

vent stockpiling or commercial exploitation. “Quality is non-negotiable,” says Suresh Gundecha, former managing trustee of Smile Stores. Every donated item undergoes rigorous laundering, sanitisation, and ironing before it reaches the shelves. Clothes that are stained, excessively worn, or damaged never make it to the racks. Among its outlets, Nungambakkam has registered the highest sales — ₹6,19,160 (from April, 2024 to February, 2025). The impressive numbers across the five stores are an attestation to the demand for dignified giving.

The airport kiosk

In 2022, RCCF took an unconventional leap — launching a kiosk at Chennai airport. This initiative allowed travellers to donate excess baggage instead of paying hefty fees, providing a meaningful alter-

native to discarding clothes.

“The airport kiosk was a game-changer,” notes Suresh. “Frequent travellers often dispose of clothing to manage luggage weight.” Even in cases where items bought at a Smile Store are resold, Manish sees a silver lining: “If someone resells a piece of clothing, it still provides them with a means of livelihood. The essence of giving remains intact.”

Beyond Chennai

Smile Stores thrive on community collaboration — a factor that should naturally facilitate its growth. Schools organise donation drives, religious institutions facilitate collections during festivals, and retailers contribute surplus inventory, all playing a crucial role in sustaining the mission.

With existing outlets in Avadi, Purasawalkam, Washermanpet, Walltax Road, and Nungambakkam, and a new store set to launch soon, the dream is to expand across Tamil Nadu.

DESIGN:
M ARIVARASU

Special stories and a message

V-Excel Educational Trust invites schools to a cultural event on April 5 and 6 at Kalakshetra Foundation



Scenes from a rehearsal.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

V-Excel Educational Trust, an organisation working with persons with special needs, is gearing up for its much-awaited cultural event — ‘The Golden Fruit’, which will be staged at Kalakshetra Foundation in Thiruvannamiyur on April 5 and 6. Occurring every two years, the event showcases the progressive rehabilitation work carried out with the differently abled students at V-Excel.

According to a press release, this event witnesses a collaborative exercise between students who wish to express themselves through the medium of story telling and their teachers. It also addresses deep questions in society, whether it is existential, cultural, something to wake up to, or simply seeing the big picture in a societal context, reflecting on the journey of the individual, the release adds. The annual day is a cultural extravaganza after a three-month long exploration of a single theme. It forms the curriculum, serves as therapy and is generally a transformational experience for most students and teachers, the release says.

Close to 120 students and their teachers will bring the production alive with their movements, expressions, group dances, attire, music and art. The event requires the audience to come with an open mind and heart so that they could use their imaginative lens to watch the performance. This is an offering

made by V Excel towards advocacy and awareness of neuro-diversity.

‘The Golden Fruit’ is a story woven around human pursuit and how each of us is looking for our golden fruit. This time, the writers and directors are experimenting with comedy. As with any V-Excel production, this one is home-grown, with rich music and visuals, groups of teachers and therapists and trainers painting humongous backdrops, the release says.

On April 5, the organisation invites schools to bring their students to witness the unique production. On April 6, it is open for parents, well-wishers and friends of V-Excel.



This section spotlights initiatives undertaken by residents of Chennai to minimise the waste that reaches landfills

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Heavy-laden bags hanging down like gyves, from a motorcycle. And a man seated astride that vehicle hitting a meandering early-morning road he need not take, but did anyway. Those images were singular because of the regularity with which they occurred. They were intriguing because of the unusual volunteering effort they signified.

When Chennai barely stirred, that man, A.K. Kannan, would leave his home in Choolaimedu and visit temples on that motorcycle, picking up floral waste, coconut shells and other discards of worship, cram them into bags, drop them at Corporation's compost yards and be at his office on time, which was Doordarshan's Chennai Kendra in Chepauk.

When Kannan, civil engineer with Doordarshan, was transferred to Guwahati, Assam in 2023, that scene dropped out of sight abruptly. And with Kannan's return to Chennai in February, 2025, that early-morning scene has now returned. An additional responsibility requires Kannan (56 years old now) to divide his days between Chennai and Guwahati offices: ten days in a month here, and the rest in Guwahati.

Whenever he is in Chennai, he diligently performs this self-imposed task. The worship-related leftovers he collects at temples he drops off at certain locations earmarked by Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) for effective garbage disposal, including composting.

A GCC facility in Chintadripet is his main drop-off point. With GCC closing down some compost yards and material recovery centres now, his options might have dwindled, but Kannan is not complaining. He continues to make the most of the options still open to him.

Beyond temple waste, Kannan also takes it upon himself to ensure recyclable materials such as plastic bottles reach the right hands. Instead of allowing ragpickers to sift



All in a day's work

Sustainability is not just for the professionals in the environment space or for the diehard green enthusiasts. It is for everyone to pursue in their daily walk. On "Zero Waste Day" (March 30), meet two residents of Chennai who have woven green thinking into their workaday lives

through garbage bins, he directly hands over the collected bottles to scrap dealers in Kodambakkam, Chintadripet, and Saidapet. "Good materials should not end up in the wrong place," he says firmly.

Despite his demanding job and frequent travel, Kannan remains steadfast in his mission. "I do what I can," he says. "But real change will come when more people take responsibility, not just watch from the sidelines."

A lingering aroma

As an event manager, Riddhi Khandhar brings celebrations to life, and the remains of celebrations to new life. She makes sure floral decorations are not shoved into trucks and discarded mindlessly; she has them put away carefully to be collected and composted. She asso-

ciates with Namma Ooru Foundation (NOF) to ensure composting of floral waste gathered from her events, and also for sourcing bio-cleaning products.

"In the case of smaller events, I take the flowers home dry them, and compost them with my kitchen waste. It is a small step, but at least I know they do not just end up in the trash," says Riddhi, who runs Beyond Bling Events, an event management company. By ensuring flowers take the right form after they are discarded, she ensures their aroma lingers on.

Bringing sustainability into large-scale events is a challenge, one often only partially met. "Clients love the idea when I suggest it – but when they see the cost, they hesitate," she admits. She has found that intimate gatherings offer more room for conscious choices. "In our friends' group, we try to bring our own plates, cutlery and glasses. It sounds simple, right? But out of 50 people, maybe two will actually do it," she observes, adding: "It is not about going zero-waste overnight. Even if just 20-30% of an event is done consciously, it is still something. Small steps add up."



In the case of smaller events, I take the flowers home, dry them and compost them with my kitchen waste. It is a small step, but at least I know they do not just end up in the trash.

Riddhi Khandhar

AI GENERATED IMAGE:
M ARIVARASU



READERS WRITE

Footpath work at Langs Garden Road in a limbo, says resident



A section of the pavement as it appeared a few days ago



NASSAR KHAN

Greater Chennai Corporation is dragging its feet on footpath-relaying work at Langs Garden Road. After removing the old cemented pavement, the work was stopped midway and it is close to four weeks now since the work came to a standstill. In some sections of the road, there is some sign of the work being carried out, but not others.

This issue / complaint was raised with GCC through Namma Chennai app (Zone 5, Division 61) and over phone, but in vain.

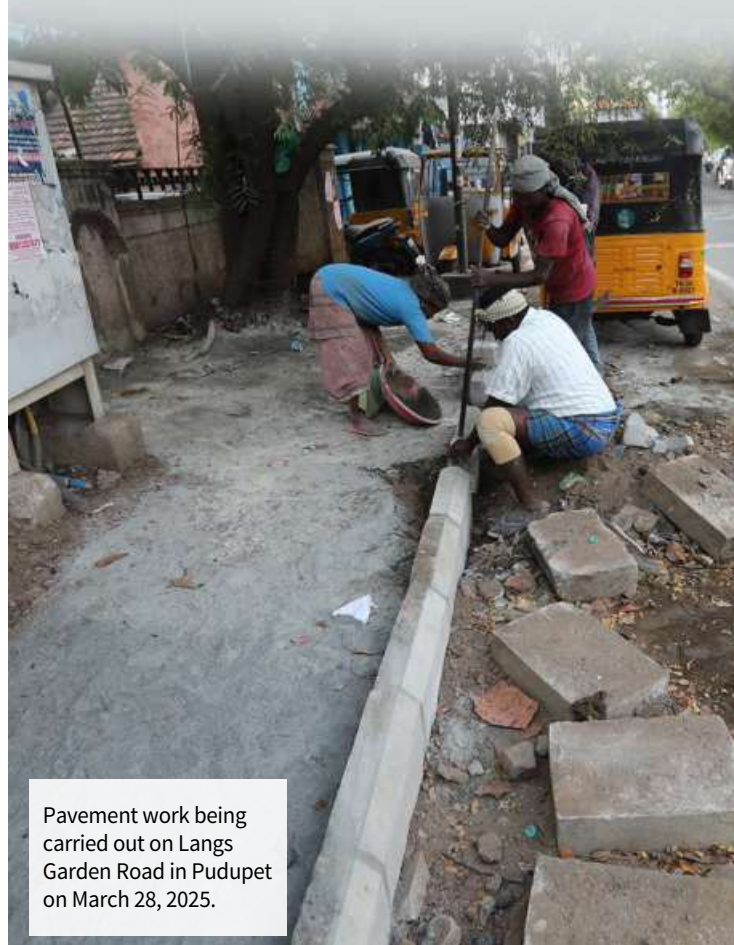
Due to this negligence, the public and residents are finding it difficult to walk and to move their cars and two-wheelers.

The department concerned should look into this issue and complete the work at the earliest.

(Nassar Khan is a resident of Langs Garden Road, Pudupet)

A field visit

When *The Hindu Downtown* visited Langs Garden Road on March 28, 2025, workers were seen constructing the kerb on a pavement on a section of the road. The workers remarked the work would be completed soon. When contacted, Nassar Khan, a resident of Langs Garden Road, said the work has left out certain sections of Langs Garden Road, including the one where he is domiciled, and was skeptical about the work being completed along the whole length of the pavement area anytime soon.



Pavement work being carried out on Langs Garden Road in Pudupet on March 28, 2025.



Team Blue wins title in veterans hockey tourney

The 10th anniversary tournament of Madras Veterans Hockey Club (MVHC) was held on March 22, 2025 at Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Ground on Gandhi-Irwin Road in Egmore.

Three teams – Team Blue, Team Orange and Team Green – were in the fray; each team fielded seven players, according to a press release from MVHC.

The chief Guest was C. Balasubramanian, chairman GKM Engineering Colleges, and former RBI hockey player..

Besides, L. Nancy, stadium officer, Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium and former hockey player was also present.

Team Blue won the trophy beating Team Orange in the finals. Team Green ended up in third place.

Each team was given a trophy.

All the players were given a commemorative placard in recognition of their contribution to the Club over the last 10 years.

The event ended with a dinner hosted by the Club.

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A primer on geriatric social work offered to college students

The initiative benefits students of the Department of Social Work at Stella Maris College

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Recently, 18 students from the Department of Social Work in Stella Maris College received a primer on geriatric social work. The 30-hour free certificate course spread across two months was initiated by Heritage Foundation, a Regional Resource and Training Centre (Ageing) for Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, to sensitise students about the interventions an ageing population would require. These interventions address the diverse needs of the elderly through assessment, counselling and advocacy. With its practical approach, the course was also



aimed at equipping social work students with the skills required to offer appropriate care in the community.

K.R. Gangadharan, founder, Heritage Foundation India, says that in addition to doctors and nurses, psychologists, social workers and psychotherapist need to work with the elderly.

Tamil Nadu has 70 old age homes funded by the State Government and every old age home should have a social worker, so this certificate course was good enough to help students understand the facts about ageing, says Gangadharan.

"The programme has been designed to expose students to the implications of case

work, group work, community and counselling in an ageing population," says Gangadharan, who serves as the board member at Madras School of Social Work and is honorary professor at Center for Ageing.

The syllabus, he says, was based on his experience in the field for the last three decades and with experts from Bharathidasan University, NIMHANS Bangalore and Madras School of Social Work weighing in with their inputs.

"Assessment is one of the biggest teachings we give them where they learn how ageing happens," says Gangadharan, adding that clinical assessment tools are available.

"Three city colleges have shown interest in introducing the programme for their students that we are working on," he says.

Stella Maris College rewarded the students who completed the programme with an additional credit. For the certificate distribution function, nonagenarian Kamakshi Subramanyam and octogenarian R.T. Namasivayam were invited as special guests.

A celebration of talent



Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology (RIT) recently conducted its annual two-day cultural festival, 'Yatra 2025'. The festival witnessed spectacular performances, including classical and contemporary dance, music and theatre presentations, says a

press release.

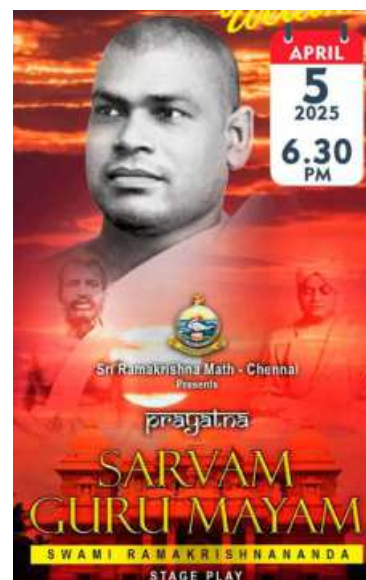
Actor Vijay Sethupathi was the special guest. He urged the students to pursue their passion. The festival gave everyone lasting memories of a vibrant and unforgettable celebration of culture and talent, the press release adds.

Alumni join hands to stage a play

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Schools Alumni Association is hosting a play on the life and message of Swami Ramakrishnananda who established the Madras Math in 1897.

Written and directed by K. Vivekshankar, an alumnus of the institution, the play will be staged at Infosys Hall on Bazullah Road in T. Nagar on April 5 (from 6 p.m. onwards).

Titled 'Sarvam Gurumayam', the drama will be staged by members of Prayatna Theatres. "Swami Ramakrishnananda was specially chosen by Swami Vivekananda to start Ramakrish-



na Math in Chennai in 1897 soon after the establishment of its headquarters in Belur Math, near Kolkata. His dedication and unswerving hard work ensured the growth of the Math and Mission not only in Chennai but in other parts of Tamil Nadu," says K.V.S. Gopalakrishnan, representing the alumni association.

The twin national ideals of Swami Vivekananda – service and sacrifice moulded the institutions with the objectives of 'elevating oneself' and 'for the benefit of the society'.

All are welcome to attend the play.

Rama Navami celebration

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is celebrating Sri Rama Navami on April 6 at 6.30 pm at its main auditorium in Mylapore. Bharathanjali (Guru Smt. Anitha Guha) presents "Parishanga Pattabhishegam" (Bharathanatyam-Group). The programme is open to all.

Skill development courses at Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya

Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya Samithi along with Tamil Nadu Apex Skill Development Centre for Automobile is conducting a training programme from April 2. Also, Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya Samithi is offering courses on embroidery, hair styling, and servicing of refrigerators and air -conditioners from April 2 to 21. Classes will be held from Monday to Saturday. The centre is at No: 58, Venkatanarayana Road, T. Nagar. For details, call 9176624283.

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Workshop on chocolate making

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a culinary workshop on making chocolates on April 3. Another workshop on mushroom cultivation will be held on April 4. According to a press release, both the sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048

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