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Police booth at Pallavaram in a *neglected state*

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

A police booth in Old Pallavaram constructed with funds pooled in by residents lies in a state of utter neglect. As the images show, the police assistance booth attached to Pallavaram Police Station has lacked upkeep for a considerably long time.

The booth was opened on March 23, 2008 to benefit residents of Thiruttani Nagar, Pallava Garden, Garden Woodroff Nagar, A.R.G. Nagar, Perumal Nagar and Tiruchendur Nagar. It was manned by a sub-inspector along with a police constable who worked in shifts.

The booth stopped functioning in 2014 for unknown reasons, say Thiruttani Nagar residents.

During this period, Friends of Police identity cards were issued to residents. Residents would patrol the streets from midnight to 4 a.m. with a *lathi* and a whistle. The police personnel would also patrol the areas two to three times and meet the residents.

Unidentified persons had broken the booth's lock and helped themselves to it. The booth is littered with trash, the ceiling fan and the metal roof sheets are broken and the lights are defunct.

Residents and office-bearers of the Thiruttani Nagar Welfare Association in Old Pallavaram have requested the Tambaram Police Commissionerate to restore the booth and make it functional.



Association president K. Srinivasan notes that expenses towards the construction of the booth were met by residents of Thiruttani Na-

gar, A.R.G. Nagar and Pallava Garden.

"We also provided a table, chairs, a fan, a wooden shelf and



Snapshots of the police booth.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



lights. The table and chairs are missing. The long shelf is dumped outside the booth. Personnel do not man the booth as it is uninviting. However, patrolling occurs twice every day," says V. A. Vellaiswamy, secretary of the Association.

Ashoka Park and Playground in Pallava Garden, Old Pallavaram, Ward 21, is undergoing renovation at a cost of ₹1.46 crores. The booth is located outside the park. We request the Tambaram City Municipal Corporation to renovate the booth as well, say residents.

They have submitted petitions in this regard to the Corporation and the Commissionerate.

Three schools are functioning in the vicinity. The school traffic is heavy during the morning and evening. The personnel could help regulate the traffic. The functional booth will also reduce anti-social activities in the park and the nearby residential areas, say residents.

Finding purpose *underwater*

Archana Thiagarajan had a memorable time representing India at the World Championship in Japan; she set new Indian national records

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Archana Thiagarajan is now lolling around at her parents' home in Perungalathur, diving headlong into a world of delectable inactivity. She deserves the spot of relaxation she has found in a familiar environment.

Squadron Leader Archana (ret'd) is back from the 34th AIDA Freediving World Championship

in Wakayama, Japan. She is the first woman to represent India at this championship, which will remain memorable not just for the afore-mentioned reason. The 33-year-old athlete set four new national records across all pool disciplines, making her a 10-time national record holder in freediving.

Her journey into freediving happened by chance during a sabbatical in Indonesia, after she completed a decade of service with the Indian Air Force as technical officer.

Taking notice of the accolades she had won at the national level representing Tamil Nadu, an instructor introduced her to freediving, the practice of diving underwater on a single breath without the use of a breathing apparatus.

In less than one-and-a-half years, Archana has proved discipline and determination can break barriers in any sport.



"Forty-nine countries and 234 participants were in the fray in this international event, and I was able to break the Indian national record in all the four events that I took part in," says Archana.

Freediving is open to those aged above 18. Over the last six



Archana Thiagarajan at the World Championship in Wakayama, Japan

months, she has been preparing for the competition, training at Puducherry and Philippines as well as at pools in Chennai and Bangalore.

"Freediving is considered an extreme sport and you cannot train alone, so my husband has been a pillar of strength. He takes care of my safety," says Archana. She notes that her background in NCC and her stint with the Indian Air Force have helped her in the

sport.

An avid yoga enthusiast, Archana says the sport emphasises relaxation, breath control and mental discipline over physical strength.

She adds, "To hold your breath for four minutes underwater, one would need considerable mind power. I have to stay calm; and overcoming these challenges related to the mind was possible with yoga."



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‘Fix railings on the median here’

Near Velachery MRTS flyover, pedestrians jump over the median and dart across the road

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

The median around the point where the Velachery MRTS flyover meets the road does not do a great

job of preventing pedestrians from crossing over to the other side of Velachery Main Road. They scale it with ease; and the suddenness with which these pedestrians

show up on the road unsettles motorists.

Pedestrians jump over the median and dart across the road.

In recent times, there have been



The point where the violations happen. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

accidents on account of this road behaviour at the end of the flyover.

J. Moses, a motorcyclist who drives down the flyover to reach his workplace in Thiruvanniyur, says pedestrians rushed to cross the road recently and he had to slam on the brakes to avoid a collision.

He notes that the risk is higher on the lane towards the Vijaya Nagar junction as it is on a down-

ward curve.

“When a motorcyclist apply the brakes suddenly, they can fall,” says Moses.

One of the suggestions from motorists to the Highways Department is that railings be mounted on the median to deter pedestrians from trying to scale it. One comes across an arrangement of this kind at West Tambaram on GST Road.

Dry waste collection drive in Padur

A dry waste collection drive will be held on July 27 at Padur Panchayat Office on Old Mahabalipuram Road.

Time: From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

According to a press release, the event is organised by

the local body with the support of Spreco Recycling, a waste aggregator.

Residents can drop items like clothes, footwear, bags, glass bottles, newspapers, books, electronic waste, X-rays, empty tablet strips.

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‘Speed up work on vehicular subway’



At the protest.

Work on the Light Vehicular Movement (LMV) subway connecting Radha Nagar Main Road and GST Road along Level Crossing 26 is not yet over.

On July 13, Federation of Civic and Welfare Associations of Zone 2 and Zone 3 (Tambaram City Municipal Corporation) held a protest seeking early completion of the

project and opening it for users.

C. Murugaiyan, secretary of the Federation, says the delay is due to the unavailability of land, 100-foot length and a 10-foot width, for the State Highway department to take up the work.

The Highway should construct a road connecting the subway (Radha Nagar Main Road) and the

footbridge on Station Border Road.

The gates at LC 26 are frequently closed during the day time to allow goods, express and suburban trains to pass. Motorists have to wait for a good period of time, leading to traffic congestion even after the gates are opened.

Text by T.S. Atul Swaminathan



‘Relay the intersections in Mappedu’

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

As part of the work to widen the New Tambaram Bypass Road, two vital thoroughfares intersecting Bypass Road, Vengambakkam Main Road and Ebenezer Street in Mappedu were dug up.

Although work on the Bypass Road, which connects New Perungalthur - Nerkundram Road and Mappedu Junction is over, road relaid and opened to traffic, the thoroughfares have been ignored.

The same goes for Vengambakkam Main Road, along Agaramthen Main Road in Mappedu.

The intersections are pitted with stones, making it difficult for cyclists and motorcyclists to negotiate them.

D. Karpagam Devarajan, a motorist, says, “Motorcyclists can skid and fall, especially on Vengambakkam Main Road and Bypass Road.”

The stretch has no street lights



for a distance of more than 50 metres.

Recently, a senior citizen, riding a two-wheeler, was about to skid.

N. Samundeshwari, a motorist, says vehicular movement is affected because of the bad roads.

The intersections provide connectivity to Vengambakkam, Vandalur-Kelambakkam Road, and the Agaramthen Road, and witness a steady stream of vehicular traffic.

The intersections should be relaid as soon as possible to ensure the safety of road users.



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Inclusive classrooms on the rise

Many city colleges are effecting changes in their systems to make persons with disabilities feel welcome



Saravanan with his mother S. Kamala.

LIFFY THOMAS

Saravanan Umapathy will open a new chapter in his career on July 21 when classes begin at Dhanraj Baid Jain College in Thoraiappakkam. The 23-year-old special needs student is on the spectrum and non-verbal but exhibits strengths in visual thinking and processing that led his mother to enrol him for a course in B.Sc (Visual Communication).

"I know my son will face challenges with social interaction and communication, but he will not disappoint in academics, and I want him to surmount those barriers," says S. Kamala, adding that Saravanan communicates by writing or typing on the Awaaz app.

Brought up in Abu Dubai, where he completed his studies in a main-

stream school, Saravanan did not take the help of a shadow teacher and is good in sports as well. Over the last one year he was pursuing a data entry course at NIEPMD from where he also picked up Tamil and the confidence to apply for higher studies.

"He is currently getting trained to cycle on Chennai's busy road, so that he can get to college from his home in Pallikaranai," says a determined Kamala.

Many city colleges in Chennai are taking baby steps towards making their classrooms inclusive, a mandate under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

In the last academic year, Welfare of the Differently-Abled Persons Department issued a circular to 19 universities in Tamil Nadu reminding them that they have to reserve five per cent of the seats in



S. Muralidhar (centre) with friends during the Onam celebration in the college

higher education for persons with benchmark disabilities.

As per data from NIEPMD, 18 of their students with intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, special learning disability and multiple disabilities enrolled in various city colleges in the academic year 2024-25 for higher education. These include courses in hotel management, arts and science and polytechnic.

"Our programmes offered here act as a bridge to integrate those with special needs into higher education," says K. Balabaskar, lecturer-AIL, NIEPMD. He says the Institute has an exclusive coordinator, R. Dhakshnamoorthy, to support parents to select the right institute.

Higher education plays a transformative role in the lives of persons with disabilities, which contributes to their personal growth, employability and social inclusion. "Although some city colleges have exclusive batches for PwD or inclusive classrooms, it is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 that mandates a 4% reservation for persons with benchmark disabilities in direct recruitment to government jobs, that has come as a big encouragement for parents to find appropriate career courses in higher education institutions," says Balabaskar.

Parents have to do their homework about institutions and career paths that best suit their child.

B. Sumathy, whose son S. Muralidhar is pursuing his second year of B.Sc (visual communication) from A.M. Jain College in Meenambakkam, says many parents of children with special needs do not make an effort to place their ward in a mainstream college fearing the environment. Or, they think of distance education.

She herself was planning to enrol Muralidhar in a course through distance education as it is difficult for him to sit in one place for long.

"When I enquired with Madras University they recommended courses in literature and economics, which I was not keen on as my son would not be able to study theory-related subjects," says Sumathy.

They were discouraged from taking courses that involved lab activity. "I was told programming would be difficult for him, so I enrolled him in a data entry course in NIEPMD that went on for close to a year," she says.

That brought about a huge change in Muralidhar. "He started getting more disciplined and his time management skills improved, and this gave me the confidence that he can move to an inclusive setup," says the resident of East Tambaram.

The parents are happy as the college has a supportive environment with a dedicated room where parents can wait, notes are sent on WhatsApp and Muralidhar has made many friends.

Orienting staff and students

To create and maintain inclusive classrooms, colleges are getting their faculty trained to understand the unique needs of students, getting permission from the University to exempt special students from writing language papers and finding scribes if needed.

At Agurchand Manmull Jain Col-

lege, every special need student is attached to a mentor who understands his/her unique needs based on the training they are given to handle such students.

"This academic year, we have five new special needs students on the campus, a slight increase from last year where we had four," says M. M. Ramya, dean, A.M. Jain College. While most of the infrastructure needs for an inclusive campus are largely met, the college management has been taking up steps to meet other requirements.

"We have a lounge where parents of special needs students can wait while their children attend classes. It is like a crèche; sometimes children want to meet their parents, and on an average five-six parents avail it," says Ramya. Getting peer support is one challenge and to address this concern this year students were oriented about their specially abled classmates. "This has to be a continuous process," says Ramya adding that they recommend students joining courses in visual communication and interior design as they are more hands-on.

A programme based on credits

The third batch of the programme in Diploma in Office Automation and Assistive Technology (DOAAT) for persons with multiple and neuro-developmental disabilities will start soon.

Initiated by the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with Bharathidasan University's Centre for Differently Abled Persons, this is a first-of-its-kind credit-based inclusive higher education programme, says a note.

The course is structured over two semesters and focuses on digital literacy, office auto-

mation, and assistive technologies. It offers a practice-based curriculum aligned with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 and the National Education Policy. It also strengthens employment opportunities through the 4% PwD reservation policy, including 1% for persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

Ten students are inducted per batch.

For details, call R. Dhakshnamoorthy, vocational instructor / coordinator - Higher Education for PwDs (8124862799), K.Balabaskar, lecturer-AIL, NIEPMD, Chennai (9382934157), Email Id: niepmd.dail@gmail.com

Chromepet Rail Users' Forum present a raft of issues to Railway's

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

The Chromepet Rail Users' Forum has submitted a petition to the Divisional Railway Manager, Southern Railway, seeking improved commuter amenities at Chromepet.

Among the raft of issues that have been presented are: lack of adequate shelters and fans, need for a proper approach path to the station premises and additional ticket counters and deployment of RPF personnel.

The double-discharge platform

lacks sufficient shelters to accommodate benches.

Out of 50 benches, less than 10 have a roof. Although steps are taken to facilitate overhead roof pole structures, the work should be completed as soon as possible. Fans should also be provided.

Commuters stand or sit on the steps of the footbridge, says V. Santhanam, founder of Chromepet Rail Users' Forum.

Along GST Road, a proper approach path should be laid. The path is uneven and strewn with trash.

The terminal has two ticket

counters, and it sometimes takes a longer duration when long-distance passengers buy train tickets, at times holding up the electric train commuters.

Other demands include repair of escalators at the footbridge on GST Road, renovation of FOB, and re-laying the battered Station Border Road.

A majority of the benches at the double-discharge platform in Chromepet railway station lack shelters. PHOTO: SPECIAL

ARRANGEMENT



Registrations open for Madras Day quiz

Ispahani Centre in collaboration with X Quiz It presents the second edition of Quiz@123 – it is quiz that celebrates the spirit and legacy of Madras.

Part of the Madras Day celebrations held every August to commemo-

rate the founding of the city, this quiz promises a delightful journey through the streets, stories and heritage of Madras, says a press release.

The highlights of the quiz contest are as follows: it is a team-based quiz

with two participants per team. It is open to all age groups.

It includes rounds that cover history, culture and landmarks. The quiz will take place on August 23, 2025 at Ispahani Centre in Nungambakkam.

The link to register for the quiz is: <https://bit.ly/123quiz2025>



Two social events in memory of college founder

Vidhya Sagar Women's College in Chengalpattu organised a blood donation camp and RYA book distribution ceremony in memory of the college's founder Hashtimal Surana on July 16.

The event was held to commemorate his educational and social services. The ceremony was attended by chief guest Prakash Natarajan, founder of Asia Pacific International, and presiding guest Gyanesh Jain, president of Rajasthan Youth Association.

Correspondent of Vidhya Sagar Educational Institutions Vikas Surana welcomed and honored the special guests.

In his address, he said the founder had established 11 educational institutions and bettered the lives of thousands of students through his educational services. He emphasised the importance of reading books to enhance knowledge and encouraged the students to strive for excellence. As part of the event, Rajasthan Youth

Association distributed books worth ₹3 lakhs to 500 students, promoting education and literacy, said a release.

As part of the memorial activities, a generous donation was made to a leprosy home, benefitting 100 residents.

On July 19, a camp was conducted where free artificial limbs, calipers, tricycles, wheelchairs, spectacles, hearing aids, and other necessary equipment were given to the needy, added the release.

Workshop on electric vehicle technology

Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME, is conducting a workshop on electric vehicle technology and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector on July 23 and 24 at its premises at

SIDCO Industrial Estate, EDII Office Road, Guindy. Time: From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. According to a press release, participants will learn about functioning of a motor, battery, charging systems, safety procedures, and servic-

ing methods. Also, the session will focus on franchise business models, dealerships, and government schemes and incentives in the sector.

Prior registration is required. For details, call 9543773337 / 9360221280

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