

T. NAGAR

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



A VOICE FOR DIFFERENTLY ABLED SINGERS

Musicians with disabilities do not find themselves on a level-playing field. Vinod Venugopal and Reshmi have launched Samagratha, a platform that provides these musicians with opportunities **P5**



MAKING PROFESSIONAL COURSES MORE INCLUSIVE

Through a new initiative, Karna Vidya Foundation is adding to the already existing e-book content for the visually impaired **P6**

In Ekkatuthangal stands a 'wardrobe' for the poor



During the pandemic, hordes of people were suddenly reduced to a bare subsistence level, and the fortunes of the extremely unfortunate would have plummeted further. Things they would have earlier thoughtlessly lumped together as essentials now needed to be segregated with care and some kicked upstairs to the luxury category and some others further up to the "prohibitive luxury" sphere. A fresh collection of dresses for the family could have been added to any of these two categories.

If one fast-forwarded to now, and paused at a pavement on Jawaharlal Nehru 100 Feet Road in Ekkatuthangal, they would come across the symbol of an exercise that sought to bring "fresh sartorial experiences" down to the essentials list during the pandemic. The initiative is still relevant. It is a shelf packed with dresses that the poor can take away for free. The community shelf had been put up by Ray Mart (a supermarket and textile showroom located nearby) in 2021 for people to place any dress they want to give away, and for the needy to take any cloth they might want to have. At the time of clicking this picture, Satya was rummaging through the clothes to find the ones that would suit her child. And the child, Rajan had found a soft toy among the pile. An employee of Ray Mart notes, "L. Rathnaraj, founder of Rays Group of Companies, initiated this intervention as part of his social service. Initially, we had to regulate this exercise; and now it is self-regulatory. People who want to donate clothes know the spot; so do those who have need for a fresh set of clothes. From time to time, we also place clothes from our textile showroom that are damaged or are not moving."

The image was taken on March 16, 2025. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

A donation to Thalassaemia Association



The Rotary Club of Chennai Port City donated ₹ 2 lakh to the Thalassaemia Welfare Association at an event held at Kamarajar Arangam on March 16. The cheque was handed over to Dr. Mythili by the chief guest N.S. Saravanan, District Governor, RI District 3234, along with past governor J. Sridhar; Vinod Saraogi and Suresh Jain.

The evening featured a 'Mega Isai Kondattam' by Ganesh Kirupa orchestra, with music directors Sabesh, Murali, and Srikanth Deva, as well as singers Krishnaraj and Vivek Sarathy, as guests of honour.

Organised as a fundraiser, the Mega Isai Kondattam aimed to support crucial humanitarian initiatives, including providing treatment for children affected by Thalassaemia, improving education and sanitation facilities in government schools, and equipping rural hospitals with essential medical equipment, said a release.

'Road in school zone poorly maintained'

Sixth Avenue in Ashok Nagar is so battered that motorcyclists could skid and sustain injuries. It should be noted that there is a school in the vicinity and hence witnesses heavy traffic during peak hours.

The irony is that the road is poorly maintained in spite of the presence of the Division office of the Greater Chennai Corporation located nearby.

A S Thirumalai
West Mambalam

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.

Median with precast blocks at busy road in Egmore



Installation of a median with precast blocks is a five-finger exercise. Annai E.V.R. Maniammai Salai Road (formerly Whannels Road) in Egmore was subjected to little laceration as it received a median of this kind. The rectangular precast blocks serve as troughs as they come with a cavity. The cavity can be filled with soil and saplings grown therein. The image was taken on March 20, 2025. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

‘Redevelopment work at Guindy railway station to be complete by May’



Guindy railway station on March 20.

PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B

Work under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme is progressing at a good pace at Guindy railway station. According to a press release from the Southern Railway dated March 19, 2025, the work that is being carried out at a cost of ₹13.50 crore will be completed by May.

Work at the parking facility (950 square metres), installation of three lifts, new roofs for shelters (2400 square metres) are completed. Booking counter at GST Road entrance, pedestrian path and toilet construction are nearing completion, adds the press release.

This station classified as Suburban Grade - Two handles 68,000

passengers every day. Over 200 EMU/MEMU services stop at the station and 98 express trains pass through the station.

As part of the project, the aesthetics of the station's facade will be enhanced. The station's entrance will be redesigned with dedicated pathways for pedestrians and motorists. A pedestrian plaza, resurfacing the platform flooring, additional shelters and lights, installation of digital display boards, improved public announcement system, installation of high-resolution CCTV cameras are provided under the scheme, adds the release.



A sea of sewage

Sewage overflowing at the Nesapakkam stretch of Anna Main Road on March 18. To be specific, it was overflowing opposite the sewage treatment plant of Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board.

PHOTOS: B. VELANKANNI RAJ



READERS WRITE



‘Scant regard for Panchayat’s signboard at Senneer Kuppam’

Waste pileups at Senneer Kuppam stretch of Kumananchavadi-Poonamallee High Road have become more conspicuous in recent months. It is extremely difficult to pass through this stretch. The signboard installed by Senneer Kuppam Village Panchayat warns the public of a penalty of ₹5,000 if they dump waste on the stretch: the warning is stubbornly ignored.

S. Pratheesha
Ilangoan, Iyypanthangal



The images were taken on March 17. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

‘Adyar river bund in West Jhaffer Khanpet is unkempt’



Adyar River View Road at Chairman Vasudevan Nagar on March 20.

PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B

The section of Adyar River View Road along Rathinam Street and Ramachandran Street at Chairman Vasudevan Nagar in West Jhaffer Khanpet (Ward 138 - Zone 10 Kodambakkam) is misused to dump waste.

But, we notice this problem has become more conspicuous ever since the Public Works Department fenced this section of the road four months ago which is part of a flood protection wall construction as Adyar river flows along the other side of the road.

However, the work has not started to this day and the fencing has made the place secluded and hence people have started to misuse it to dump waste which

includes garbage, discarded furniture, carton boxes, and construction debris.

Due to this residents of both the streets are badly affected. They are unable to keep their windows and doors open.

It should be noted that West Jhaffer Khanpet is a low-lying area and known for flooding. In that case, Adyar River View Road and the river bed should be free of any obstruction. Several complaints have been made to the Greater Chennai Corporation, Public Works Department, and to the elected representatives but they were to no avail.

P. Sudhakar, secretary, Federation of Residential Welfare Associations, West Jhaffer Khanpet

Many primary schools are putting in extra effort to meet the objectives of the 100-day reading challenge

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Chennai Urdu Girls Primary School at Thousand Lights has tweaked its school timings to facilitate a reading programme for children from Classes III to V. The last bell that would usually ring at 1 p.m. would now ring later – two hours later. In these two additional hours, children would be taught to identify words, read sentences and pick their favourite stories from newspapers.

At Chennai Primary School in Vannia Teynampet, the headmistress has allotted each day of the week for a visit to a particular class where children get to showcase their reading abilities. “Monday is assigned for Class III, Wednesday for Class IV and Thursday for one section of Class V,” says HM Kasthuri U.

In an effort to inculcate the reading habit in them, children are encouraged to read story books and newspapers (of course, in addition to class textbooks).

“We have set aside a timetable for each of these activities,” says Kasthuri.

With the School Education Department having asked its primary schools to engage its students for a 100-day reading challenge, many institutions are taking diligent steps towards fostering the reading



Sparkling an interest in reading

At Chennai Urdu Girls Primary School in Thousand Lights. PHOTO: RAGU R

break in this activity.

“Unless children get some support from home, they will forget most of what they learnt in school, especially if the language is new to them,” she says. During the pandemic, lessons were sent via the mobile; but Kasthuri says the same strategy cannot be followed as parents think children are already spending considerable time on the phone. Another teacher from a school in Thiruvalluvar Salai says a one-size approach does not work in a class, so they have to have tailor-made activities.

Those running reading programmes say such initiatives must be running through the year for maximum impact, and schools

must be equipped with a good collection of books that are suited for children depending on their age group.

“Not all children will be inclined to read a book which is fine. Some would just like to look at the pictures. The interest would come in slowly,” says Neena Gayatri, co-founder, ACEnovation Hub, which runs Blu Hornbill Storytelling Clubs. She says schools must have a trained librarian and a reading hour in the timetable. “The library area should be inviting and a happy place that children like to visit,” says Neena, which is running a pilot in a government school by setting up Blu Hornbill Storytelling Clubs.

habit.

This exercise however is not easy. “We have 150 students who are being specially groomed for this purpose but the environment around them is such that they do not get to read books. Most of the

parents are daily wage labourers and do not place much emphasis on reading,” says Kasthuri. Her school has completed 30 days of the reading classes so far and hope to finish the challenge by July 27, the summer vacations causing a

Nimble fingers

Learning centre in R.A. Puram celebrates its 15th anniversary with an exhibition featuring artworks by special needs children on March 30

To celebrate 15 years of Ekadaksha, the learning centre at Jeth Nagar in R.A. Puram is having an art exhibition of its students on March 30. ‘Strokes & Swirls’ will feature more than 40 artworks and products made by students – these are coasters, keyholders, stationery, trays and table mats, to name a few.

Art is a powerful and transformative tool for our children with special needs which offers a path to self-discovery, emotional well-being and enhanced communication skills, says a press note.

Some of the artworks were done independently, while some were done with the help of an

adult. Some artworks were

done with instructions while some others were the result of children’s creativity. These artworks have been converted into wonderful and useful products. Products which will remind us that every one of us is unique and has a creativity of our own, adds the note. The exhibition will be on view at Geetham Banquet Hall, T. Nagar, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Keyholders, coasters and trays





Deepesh Bhaskar and his team of volunteers at different events.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Party hard, but mindfully

Meet Deepesh Bhaskar, founder of Chennai-based startup Nilayaan, who is focussed on making celebratory events easy on the planet and our collective conscience

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

If you are a Jay Gatsby with a propensity for throwing extravagant parties (recall the central character in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*), then you would not want to let Deepesh Bhaskar anywhere near your event planning team. Deepesh would gauge the success of any celebratory event by what it leaves behind or rather, what it does not. The *numero uno* at an environmental services startup named Nilayaan (@nilayaan.earth), Deepesh dons many sustainability hats, one of which is that of a minimal-

waste celebration consultant.

The path to Nilayaan was paved with a dramatic event (as distressing as it was transformative), days of brow-knitting reflection, course alteration, fresh learning and finally as with any entrepreneurial effort, a leap of faith.

Having pursued a bachelor's as well as a master's degree in social work, Deepesh initially transitioned into marketing for financial stability. But everything changed the day he encountered a cow choking on a plastic bag in the middle of a road. Along with his friends, he tried desperately to save the animal, but the effort proved futile. The cow died



cradled in Deepesh's arms. The experience left him shaken.

"I knew I had to do something," he recalls. The COVID-19 lockdown gave him the opportunity to turn reflection into action. As he continued working in marketing, he delved deep into plastic research and waste management. A course on Climate

From Deepesh's green notes

Replace plastic-based decor with flower-based arrangements that can be composted post-event

Use banana fibre strings instead of cotton or plastic strings for tying garlands, ensuring full compostability

Use paper lanterns instead of balloons for decorative purposes

Use cardboard instead of thermocol

Traditional paper cups often contain a thin plastic coating, making them non-biodegradable. Instead, use bagasse (sugarcane pulp) cups and plates, which are fully compostable

Hire steel plates and cups instead of purchasing them

Many apartments have RO filtration systems that waste 70% of water. Instead of letting this water go to waste, we collect and reuse it for event-related purposes

Change and Sustainable Development from the Centre for Science and Environment opened his eyes to the direct link between soil health and climate change. He soon realised that true impact required systemic change, not just individual action. And so, he started Nilayaan – an environmental services startup dedicated to making sustainability a fundamental part of events and everyday living – in the middle of the pandemic.

Nilayaan's philosophy is anything but abstruse: introduce Nature-based solutions in people's everyday living and they will carry that ingrained practice into their moments of celebrations. After it sows the seeds of awareness among individuals and communities, Nilayaan nurtures what grows out of the effort by lining up the right tools for segregation and composting. It offers choice in terms of home and community composting kits, and the buyer can match one with their composting situation at home or organisation.

As one can see from the testimonials on its Instagram page, many of those who have brought Nilayaan on board as their minimal waste celebration partner have been impacted by its work prior to it. Baby showers, birthdays and weddings form the chief part of the minimal-waste celebrations organised by Nilayaan.

Deepesh is embedded in the sustainability ecosystem, a situation that enables him to bring various entities – examples include Namma Ooru Foundation and Upcycle – on board to drive different aspects of what makes an event zero-waste.

The regular is interspersed with the out-of-the-way, now and then – such as the Harris Jayaraj's concert "Rock On Harris" in October 2023 that Nilayaan associated with as a minimal-waste celebration partner.

Recalling the Harris Jayaraj concert, Deepesh says, "There was so much food waste. But with the right planning, we turned it into a resource instead of garbage." An Insta post provides specific details: "We converted 87 kilograms of food waste into nutrient-rich compost and recycled 250+ kilograms of plastic waste." Deepesh notes food that was left untouched reached needy palates as we had partnered with a food redistribution NGO.

In Nilayaan, volunteers form the flywheel that drives the engine. Volunteer management is therefore of critical importance to Deepesh.

Large-scale events require at least 18 volunteers to effectively manage waste, he begins and continues: "Sourcing and training volunteers within a short time frame is difficult. Some attendees are resistant to sustainable practices and may discard waste irresponsibly. Events with over 1,000 attendees pose logistical challenges. Due to limited volunteers, only 60% of waste was managed at certain events, which was disheartening."

The work Deepesh and his associates (largely volunteers) undertake has to be underpinned by a deep personal commitment for it to be effective. That commitment is made and reinforced from time to time. Nilayaan conducts waste audits across industries and corporate spaces. One audit was carried out at an address extremely familiar to Deepesh. "At my own home, we conducted a waste audit and found that we had diverted 200 kg of organic waste in just 7-8 months. That realisation encouraged me to scale up the initiative," says Deepesh.

And Deepesh made his niece's first birthday as minimal-waste as possible, enunciating the right script for all her subsequent birthdays.

A voice for differently abled singers

Musicians with disabilities do not find themselves on a level-playing field. Singers Vinod Venugopal and Reshmi have launched Samagratha, a platform that provides these musicians with opportunities that might not otherwise come their way



LIFFY THOMAS

Over the last seven years, Sapna Soundarajan (now 25 years old) has shared the stage with acclaimed playback singers such as Late S.P. Balasubramaniam, K.S. Chithra, S.P. B. Charan and Unni Menon. That would make any singer's portfolio look hugely impressive. It is even more admirable when one considers the fact that Sapna is on the spectrum.

Sapna is a multi-lingual singer and knows 3500 songs. However, she struggles to find opportunities that would fetch her monetary benefit. Samagratha offers a ray of hope to Sapna and others like her.

Chennai-based accomplished singers Vinod Venugopal and Reshmi have been running Samagratha, an inclusive music platform, since 2023 to showcase the talent of differently abled singers along with the best of musicians from the industry.

The seeds of Samagratha were sown during the pandemic when the two "VIRES" (the name of their band) were involved in raising funds for light mus-



ic performers whose income was affected on account of the pandemic.

"We used to judge various events and one particular event had the differently-abled also participating in it. We saw amazing talent there and wondered what can be done to ensure these budding musicians have sustained income," says Vinod, who along with Reshmi are jury members for Zee Tamil

SaReGaMaPa show.

Vinod says inclusion efforts aimed at helping differently abled musicians should cover more ground than just offering a visually challenged singer an opportunity to perform on stage or including an autistic musician in an orchestra. The efforts should be deeper, he adds.

Samagratha has been working to create livelihood opportunities for the differently-abled through music, give them a launch pad to sing along with playback and celebrity singers and also perform with top instrumentalists.

Under the Samagratha banner, Vinod and Reshmi have organised three shows in Chennai, and identified 14 aspiring musicians which include those who are visually-challenged, autistic and with multiple disabilities. While a majority of the talent are from Chennai, the duo has also

spotted aspiring musicians from Coimbatore, Calcutta and Pune. Bringing aspiring musicians down to Chennai before a show poses logistic challenges and that includes cost management. "Parents have to invest in music training, upgrading their wardrobe and other tools each one requires depending on the type of disability. We insist that these singers be paid," says Vinod.

The two spend time in identifying, training the talent and offering them a level-playing field at musical shows.

"Rehearsals are a must before a show so that they are on par with any other stage singer. We decide the upon the song based on their strength, fix the pitch of the song then make them practise over a couple of sessions before the show. The rehearsals are done with karaoke track," says Vinod, a resident of Anna Nagar.

Besides ticketed shows, Samagratha has been trying to create awareness at local events such as weddings and private functions on why the differently-abled should be offered stage for performance.

Sapna's father V. Soundarajan says more corporates should come forward to give differently abled musicians a chance. 'That would be a big push for such talent.

Music came naturally to Ashwath R, a 27-year-old on the spectrum with a post-graduate degree in Visual Communication. Thanks to Samagratha, he received a launch pad. "Music brings a lot of happiness to special needs children and they are really fast and good at grasping the nuances in every song. All that we want from the society is that these musicians be given equal opportunities," says Sheeba Sojanar, Ashwath's mother.



Vinod Venugopal and Reshmi and (above) two of the inclusive music programmes organised by Samagratha.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Making professional courses more inclusive

LIFFY THOMAS

Braillie is among the most common knowledge accessing tools for the visually challenged. Increasingly, accessible EPub (short for electronic publication) has made learning easier and instant. A visually impaired person only needs to slide his fingers on the mobile device to read the content or listen to it.

In Chennai, Karna Vidya Foundation, a non-profit that has been empowering the visually-challenged through technology, launched into this space in 2017 by providing school textbooks in an accessible format. The pandemic slowed down the Foundation's work in this space, but since 2023 they have been focussing on making textbooks more accessible where professional courses such as law, commerce and computer science are concerned. This initiative is also aimed at encouraging the visually impaired to opt for courses beyond English, Tamil and history (which are usually taken by the visually impaired) for higher education.

"We would have converted provided nearly 300 books in the EPub format since we launched into this space," says K. Raghuraman, who is honorary advisor of Karna Vidya Foundation and assistant professor in English at Government Arts College in Nandanam.

Adaptability makes EPub user-friendly.

If a visually impaired person wants to switch from EPub to Braille it can be done easily. If they want to hear it as an audio that is also possible. Likewise, they can opt for a magnified version of the book.

The Foundation has been able to convert books with the help of a team of volunteers, who are mainly parents of children with different disabilities trained for this purpose.

Raghuraman, who is visually challenged, says EPub is yet to catch up in a big way, and conversion of books requires time and effort. There are multiple processes to go through.

"The images, tables and rows, font, elements of the text and other dimensions of the page have to be considered while undertaking conversion into book format. In vernacular languages, it becomes even more challenging as they come with stylised fonts," says the professor. He says digitally accessible information system (DAISY) has brought accessibility to EPub.

To take this effort by Karna Vidya Foundation to a larger audience, the books are taken to Bookshare, an international online library for print disabled including those with dyslexia and learning disability.

"There is a quality check before the uploading of any book on this platform to check if it meets all accessibility norms. Anyone can get themselves registered by showing a medical certificate to get access to the books, and this is free for people in Asian countries," says the professor, adding that the book remains a permanent treasure.

The Foundation has been reaching out to institutions to popularise such learning content. It also takes requests from students on certain books that they want to read in an accessible format.

"When you make learning resources public and accessible then the community will grow. This is a gradual process where we need to train people for conversion but we are sure to see results in the long run," he says.

The Foundation wants more volunteers to help with converting which can be done from the comfort of one's home. Visit them at karnavidyafoundation.org.

Through a new initiative, Karna Vidya Foundation is adding to the already existing e-book content for the visually impaired

Survey seeks to make legal education more accessible

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

To make legal education accessible to all, a group of law school students have initiated a survey to identify gaps in the current system.

The Samavesh Project, as it is called, is an initiative under the Awaaz Leadership Labs, a non-profit based in New Delhi, with seven law school students representing different institutions collecting information from persons with disabilities (PwD) who have either appeared for the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT), All India Law Entrance Test (AILET) or aspire to appear for any of these examinations.

The exercise is aimed at collecting information, identifying gaps in the current system of law entrance examinations, make suggestions and propose model guidelines to relevant authorities, says a note.

"Those involved in making legislations that govern the nation must be representing diverse abilities. Once we are able to send stakeholders to the positions of law making, then the scenario will change," says Sushanth Gajula, a visually chal-

lenged law graduate who is part of the team.

The exercise is largely aimed at entry barriers for national level examinations. "CLAT, for instance, is not yet inclusive," says Sushanth. The team will be reaching out to various schools for sensitisation workshops.

They are also trying to build capacity among law schools. "Once we find some success in CLAT then we will push the agenda for other examinations," he says.

One challenge the project is faced with is getting across to students with disabilities.

Once they collect data, the team will be presenting it to the CLAT consortium.

"Many have special learning disabilities and are not comfortable in talking," says Sushanth. The team has also reached out to Lawctopus, a go-to platform for law students, to promote this initiative.

Awaaz Leadership Labs was founded by Rohit Sharma, a law graduate from National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata.

AI GENERATED IMAGE:
M. ARIVARASU



Avichi college celebrates third graduation day

Avichi College of Arts and Science proudly hosted its third Graduation Day at the college premises recently. The momentous occasion began with a grand academic procession, setting the stage for a day of honour and accomplishment, says a press release.

The ceremony was formally declared open by AVM. K. Shanmugam, Secretary of the College, following which N. Bhuma, Principal of Avichi College, delivered the welcome address. The Principal also presented the annual college report, highlighting the achievements of the graduating batch of 2020 and the institution's progress in various academic and extracurricular domains.

The event was graced by Prof. S. Elumalai, Registrar, University of Madras, as the Chief Guest.

In his inspiring address, he emphasised the importance of agriculture in today's world and encouraged young graduates to equip themselves with the skills needed to compete on the global stage. He also urged students to drive innovation across all fields, reinforcing the significance of research and technological advancements, the release says.

A defining moment of the evening was the awarding of degree certificates to the proud graduates, marking the culmination of their academic journey at Avichi College. Among them, S. Sadhana from the Department of Computer Science was honoured for securing the 7th rank in the University Examinations and achieving First Class with Exemplary distinction.

Imizhi's music for the planet at Ampa Skyone Mall

Ahead of the Earth Hour, the band performed songs inspired by Nature including A.R. Rahman's Vellai Pookal



During the concert.

As a lead-up to Earth Hour (22nd March, 2025 8.30 -9.30 PM) and World Water Day, WWF-India organised a live performance on March 21, 2025 at Ampa Skyone Mall in collaboration with the band Imizhi.

The band performed songs inspired by nature, including A.R. Rahman's Vellai Pookal and other popular tracks from the film *Rhythm*, known for its coverage of the five elements of nature, urging people to take action on water conservation. The song Nathiye Nathiye particularly moved the audience, reinforcing the emotional connection to water and its significance in our lives, says a press release from WWF-India.

Throughout the event, announcements highlighted the Switch Off initiative and the importance of conserving electricity. The band's

lead singer, Arul Arasu, captivated the audience with his powerful performance, engaging nearly 1,000 attendees, the release says.

The event effectively connected with the general public, inspiring them to take simple yet impactful steps toward sustainability. An interactive session further reinforced the message of Earth Hour, reminding participants that their collective actions contributed to a greener planet.

Ampa Skyone a key collaborator in this event, participated in the switch-off, making it one step for the planet. Given the audience size (1000+) and three-hour duration of this event (6.30 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.) this initiative effectively contributed an estimated 2000 hours (1000people x 2 hours) for the planet, showcasing the power of collective action, adds the press release.



Women achievers honoured

The AVC Wonder Women Awards 2025 ceremony was recently held at Radisson Blu, Egmore, celebrating 22 women from diverse fields.

The ceremony was inaugurated by distinguished dignitaries, including Sowmiya Anbumani, Srinivasa Naik IRS, Principal Commissioner of Customs, Chandrasekaran, Assistant Director, Enforcement, and Dr. Josephine, a gynecologist.

The honorees were Sapna Handa, an image and styling coach; veteran actress Sathya Priya, who was felicitated with the 'Lifetime Achievement Award'; and Parvathy Venkitaramanan, a small-screen actress.

A significant highlight of the ceremony was the fashion show titled "The Golden Rasa" by designer Uma Balachandran, choreographed by Karun Raman.



Oratorical competition held

Around 2,000 women students from 18 colleges took part in an oratorical contest and debate conducted by the Greater Chennai Corporation Mayor, R. Priya. According to a press release, the theme was "Tamil Magal."

The HR&CE Minister and CMDA Chairman, P.K. Sekar Babu and the Minister for Human Resources Management, N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj and Professor and Tamil orator, Parveen Sultana attended the event, adds the press release.

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Two champions at the dining table

K. KEERTHIVASAN

In school and elsewhere, not many know that P. B. Abhinandh and M. Ananya, who are among the top table tennis players in the country in their age categories, are siblings.

Abhinandh, who is ranked number one in Under-17 and number two in Under-19 in India. Abhinandh's sister Ananya is number one in the State in U-15 and U-17 and number 2 in India in the U-15 category.

It is not often that you see a brother-sister duo being accomplished in the same sport.

"During my table tennis match, she gives me plenty of advice and whenever she plays, I see her

matches and share my views about them," says Abhinandh.

Ananya, a class IX student of Sankara Senior Secondary School in Adyar, is studious while Abhinandh is in class XII pursuing education through the open schooling.

"Our initials are also different. While my sister takes her initial from my father's name (Muralidharan) I take my initials from my grandfather's name, Pradhivadhi Bhayankaram (Narasimhan)," says

During my table tennis matches, she gives me plenty of advice and whenever she plays, I watch her matches and share my views about them

M. Ananya and P. B. Abhinandh

Abhinandh.

This month, the 14-year-old travelled abroad after nearly two years. She took part in WTT Youth Contender in Berlin and Czech Republic and in the Czech event, she won a bronze medal. "I was training for a while to strengthen my technique. I felt happy reaching the last four, beating few players from the Asian countries on the way," she says.

Early this month, Abhinandh achieved International glory when he bagged the gold medal in the boys U-17 category of the WTT Youth Contender in Berlin and finished runner-up in the boys U-19 category of the WTT Youth Contender in Havirov.

They were both coached by Subin Kumar at Chennai Achievers TT Academy. Both swear by their coach. "Subin sir has been coaching me since I was five. He has played a huge role in my life as well as in my sister's. Without his mentoring, we could not have achieved so much," says Abhinandh.

Both are ambitious and hard working and want to scale the utmost height in table tennis. Abhinandh wants to become India's No.1 in the men's section and is keen to win a medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Ananya wants to perform better this year, which will be her first year in the women's section at the National level. "For a start, I want to make an impression by beating a few top-ranked paddlers," she says. There is no doubt Abhinandh and Ananya, supported by their parents Muralidharan and Shanthi Muralidharan, will continue to make waves at the National and International circuit while supporting each other's career.

'Travel as you please' in AC buses

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) has launched a new 'Travel As You Please' monthly pass. Priced at ₹ 2,000, the pass allows commuters to travel in air-conditioned, deluxe, express and whiteboard buses for a month. There is no travel limit for the pass. The pass is available at renewal centres at terminuses, according to a release issued by the MTC.



Metro services for IPL matches

Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) will be running additional services for cricket fans attending the IPL matches at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chepauk. CMRL will extend metro train services on all Chennai Super Kings match days, ensuring safe and convenient transportation for fans, says a press release.

Additionally, valid IPL match ticket holders will be eligible for a sponsored round trip metro journey between any CMRL metro station and Government Estate Metro Station, the metro station closest to the stadium. This initiative aims to reduce traffic congestion and promote the use of public transport. On match days, metro operations will be extended by up to 90 minutes post the match or until 1 a.m., whichever is earlier, based on commuters' demand. CMRL will announce the last train times before each match day, added the release issued by CMRL.

Annual Ikebana exhibition is back

The annual Ikebana exhibition and workshops organised by Chennai Sogetsu Branch will be held from March 27 at Lalit Kala Akademi on Grems Road.

Titled "Ikebana and Us", the exhibition will showcase the exquisite and innovative floral arrangements created by 23 talented artists from the Chennai Sogetsu Branch, and feature free workshops.

The beauty and philosophy of Sogetsu Ikebana, a contemporary and expressive form of Japanese floral art, will also be on display.

A maximum of 10 people can register for the workshops. On March 27, the workshop will deal with 'Origami and

leaves'; March 28 on 'Sketching with Dots, Lines, Curved and Straight' and introduction to Sogetsu Ikebana; and March 29 and March 30 on a free introduction to Sogetsu Ikebana.

The exhibition will be open to the public on March 27; 1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and March 28 to 31; 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

To register for the workshop, contact Luna Bose at 9176161331.



Club gives educational assistance

In commemoration of International Women's Day, Jothi Madhar Sangam, a women's club, an awareness programme on cyber crime. Also, there were sessions on health. According to a press release, around 70 women took part. Also, games and competitions were conducted. The club also gave educational assistance of ₹10,000 to two school students, adds the press release.

The club is at Sukalayam, 70/44, Burkit Road, T. Nagar. For details, call 98411 58018.



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