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SUSTAINABILITY IN A NUTSHELL

Kamarkat Srini and his team give out-of-work coconut shells a fresh new start in kitchens, cafes and restaurants. **P5**



A display of furniture made from Perungudi dumpyard's legacy waste at the South Asia Summit 2024. PHOTO : B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Sitting in style on 'landfill waste'

The agency hired by Greater Chennai Corporation is expected to extend this initiative to the Kodungaiyur dumpyard

LIFFY THOMAS

Sleek furniture out of garbage. That is a positive story from Perungudi dumpyard that was showcased when the South Asia Summit 2024 was conducted on the dumpyard near the Pallikaranai marshland. On display at the event were samples of chairs and tables that were made using landfill waste.

Nagesh Prabhu, co-founder, Zigma Global Environ Solutions, the private agencies that undertook the bio-mining project at Perungudi, says the samples showcased at the event served as a perfect example of how upcycling can be done with products that

cannot be recyclable.

The furniture was made using non-recyclable plastics lying in the dumpyard.

"We shred it, wash it and then it goes through an extrusion process to make such furniture," says Nagesh adding that the R&D plant for this project was in Coimbatore.

Elaborating on the products, Nagesh says, the furniture does not look like it is made from recyclable material and can again be recycled.

"It ticks all boxes of sustainability and circular economy," he says.

Close to 96 acres of the dumpyard had been reclaimed following the processing of 1.73 million cubic metres of waste.

The contract with GCC at Perungudi dumpyard has ended but the company plans to continue making products from the Kodungaiyur dumpyard where it began its operation in September 2024.

"We will be spreading this initiative. We have not started a full-fledged plant but as our R&D was a success wherever we get a biomining project we can implement this," says Nagesh.

We will start rolling out new products as our contract with the Kodungaiyur dumpyard is on for the next three years.

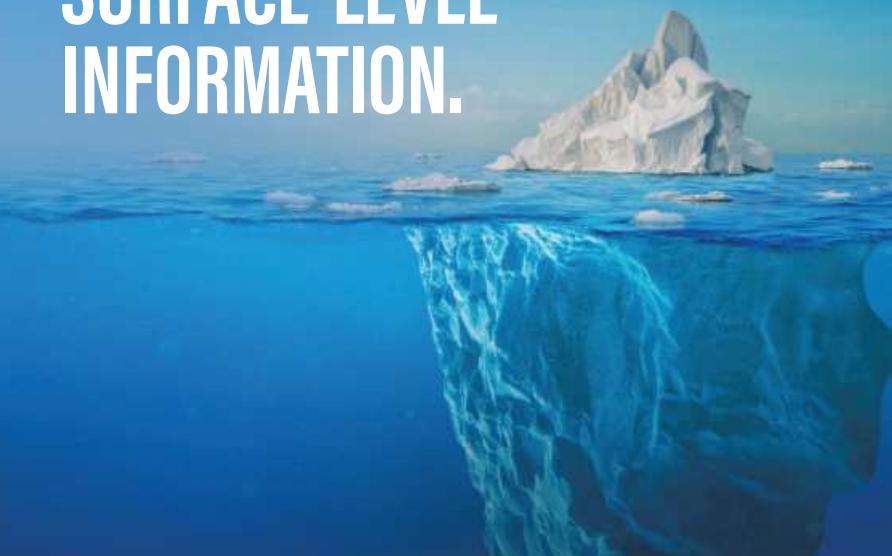
Be our chronicler



It is the fag end of the year, a time to look back on the year that is ebbing away, and greet the one that is looking at us fresh-faced, a smile of optimism glittering in its eyes. At *The Hindu Downtown*, this sense of reflection and expectation is further amplified by the fact that the hyperlocal supplement crosses another milestone: it celebrates its twenty-sixth anniversary. On this occasion, it urges residents welfare associations across Chennai, many of which stand for the values *The Hindu Downtown* espouses and promotes, to chronicle their achievements in the year that went by and their expectations for the approaching year. The write-ups will be carried in the December 29 year-end issue. They can send the write-ups to downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in



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EVENTS

War of DJs 2024 held at lounge in Thoraipakkam



War of DJs 2024 - Epic Night was conducted at Zebra Crossing Lounge in Thoraipakkam recently by Chiroptera Events.

In a competition that showcased an array of talented DJs, DJ Loki emerged as the ultimate winner, captivating the crowd with a power-packed set that had everyone on their feet. His seamless transitions and energy-infused beats created an exhilarating ambience, showcasing his prowess in blending different genres.

The audience responded enthusiastically, highlighting his ability to read the crowd and maintain a high level of engagement throughout his performance, says a press release.

Runner-up DJ Desmo impressed attendees with his professional track selection and meticulous mixing skills. His commitment to delivering an immersive auditory experience was evident, as he expertly crafted a set that resonated with both seasoned fans and newcomers. The precision in his mixing and the overall flow of his performance solidified his reputation as a serious contender in the competitive DJ scene, the release adds.

Also deserving recognition was DJ Vasanth (Runner up), who entertained the crowd with a lineup of popular commercial tracks. His impressive technical skills and smooth mixing not only kept the audience engaged but also created an infectious energy that had everyone dancing. The

positive reception to his set demonstrated his understanding of the audience's tastes and preferences, making him a crowd favourite.

DJ Sam rounded out the evening, showcasing a diverse range of tracks that appealed to all. His ability to mix various styles seamlessly allowed the crowd to experience a little bit of everything, maintaining a laid-back yet festive atmosphere.

The camaraderie among the DJs and the exhilarating performances turned the event into a night to remember. Other finalists DJ Raan, DJ Kash, DJ KL did an amazing job and deserves applauds, special thanks is due to DJ Elvin, DJ Ashish Nagpal and DJ Raw Z for being amazing judges for the event, the release says.

Collection drive for people affected by Cyclone Fungal

It is the season of giving and sharing and in keeping with this spirit, The Little Caterpillar in partnership with Goonj is organising a collection drive.

One can drop clothes, vessels and toys that will be sent to people affected by Cyclone Fungal. Dry ration, gently used clothes, new undergarments, blankets, household essentials and hygiene products are some of the items urgently required, said a press release. The collection centre is open till December 22, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Little Caterpillar is at # 66, Karpagam Avenue, 2nd Main Road, R A Puram. For details, call 72003 24361/ 92661 30020

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Founders Day celebrated



Be Well Founders Day, led by Dr. C.J. Vetrivel, celebrated unity and social welfare with impactful events: tree plantation at Dr. Natesan Park with dignitaries, a free health camp and lunch at Charu Old Age Home, a blood donation camp with VHS Blood Centre, and essential item distribution to underprivileged families, says a press release.

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ENVIRONMENT

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Kamarkat Srinivasan. That name would likely spark a glint of recognition in the eyes, if the reader is from Chennai, salivates over traditional healthy sweets, is a card-carrying follower of veganism and pops in at organic food markets.

With a surfeit of traditional sweets on his food enterprise Kottivakkam-based Marabhu Suvai's *carte du jour*, R. Srinivasan – to whom that sweet-sounding moniker (pun intended) belongs – offers something beyond the norm for the sweet tooth.

And he also offers a novelty to the hand that wields cutlery – spoons and ladles finely crafted from coconut shells. This pursuit has in fact, put his sweets-making business in the shade – in the shade of coconut trees. His enterprise, SN Crafts makes spoons, ladles and customised teapots with coconut shells allied with handles made of teak and pine wood. Surveying these products, one is left in no doubt about which element has star billing: it is the humble coconut shell, with all the other elements smugly content playing a supportive role to it.

If the reader has not made the connection yet, Kamarkat candy, typically made from the rich, fragrant flesh of the coconut, led Srinivasan to appreciate everything associated with *cocos nucifera*, even what would qualify as chaff. The coconut shells left behind after the meat is grated for making Kamarkat and other coconut-based sweets, caught his fancy.

For nearly five years now, he has devoted himself to upcycling these shells, giving them a fresh start, a second career in kitchens and cafes; and also a place in homes. The coconuts are cherry-picked, with only mature, organic country-breed coconuts chosen for the candy, leaving the shells to be repurposed for his ladles and spoons. On the supply chain are farmers from Papanickenpalayam in Coimbatore and Udu malpet in Tirupur, and at home, an organisation in Adyar with a sprawling campus dotted with 200 coconut trees.

Srinivasan's approach to sustainability, as exemplified by his enterprise, might hark back to the traditional homegrown wisdom of reusing and repurposing,



Kamarkat Sriniv and his team give out-of-work coconut shells a fresh new start in kitchens, cafes and restaurants



Sustainability in a nutshell



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

but is driven by a fiercely modern sense of innovation.

Srinivasan's father-in-law, a skilled carpenter, was instrumental in helping him create customised machinery to carve the shapes of the ladles and spoons, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation. Kamarkat Sriniv and his business partner Nagarajan Mani took it a couple of notches higher: spending one year in further customisation of the machinery.

The challenges
For Srinivasan, the production



A glimpse of the factory.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Surveying these products, one is left in no doubt about which element has star billing: it is the humble coconut shell, with all the other elements smugly content playing a supportive role to it

process is efficient when all materials, which include wooden teak handles for the ladles, copper or aluminium rivet and wire brush are readily available.

For example, making 50 ladles in just half a day becomes possible when all the materials are sourced from wholesale traders in Parrys, particularly Kandaswamy Koil Street. He also sources some of the materials from



Moore Market, which is a part of Chennai's circular economy. When they receive large orders – such as the maximum of 300 ladles – they can make them in just eight hours if all the materials are at hand.

Srinivasan used to source coconut shells from Nagarajan Rao until the latter was operating a business named Farmcoop in Mandaveli. Nagarajan who turned his back on selling coconut-based discards for recycling and upcycling, sheds light on the challenges faced by such businesses:

"We started collecting coconut shells during COVID-19, but practical issues, pests and lack of storage space made it difficult. With 100 to 300 houses involved, we could not find land for collection. Plus, not everyone had coconut shells to offer."

The lack of processing facilities in Chennai also hindered progress. "Without proper infrastructure, making the initiative sustainable became tough," he adds.

Nagarajan Rao hopes to make a comeback to the coconut-based sustainability business: "The dream is still alive, but it requires the right resources to thrive."



A dollarbird photographed from different angles by Saravanan Manian and S. Sivakumar at Chembarambakkam lake on December 15, 2024; and (below) the three birders (from left to right) S. Sivakumar, Saravanan Manian and S. Sathyakumar.



Chembarambakkam lake has a rare visitor

The previous documented sighting of a dollarbird in Chennai was at Guindy National Park in 2016; as far as the city goes, this species is among the rarest of rare passage migrants

PRINCE FREDERICK

The birding community's relationship with any rare passage migrant is best outlined by the connection with an estranged, implacably bitter friend. If a meeting happens, it would be unplanned and fleeting. Often, the chasm would have grown wider than a hippo's fully extended maw, the last interaction would be as removed from memory as the star Earendel from earth, that when a chance encounter does materialise, the person might go unrecognised at first sight.

On the morning of December 15, 2024, at the Chembarambakkam lake, an Oriental dollarbird (*Eurystomus orientalis*), at first clasp of a pair of eyes, did not cause a sharp intake of breath. Instead, it caused the viewer's brow to be knitted in mystified concentration.

Two brothers, S. Sathyakumar

and S. Sivakumar and their common friend Saravanan Manian had been poking around (as only birders can) in a moderately wooded section caressing the outer perimeter of the Chembarambakkam lake.

That is when this dollarbird fell on Sathyakumar's eyes, magnified by his binoculars. He saw the bird perched on a tree, but did not "see" it for what it was. He dismissed it as a parakeet explaining the bluish-green tint as a filter effect engineered by the early morning light. A doubt creeping closely on the heels of this judgement, he asked himself if he was missing something.

He sidestepped the idea of raising this question with the other two birders, fearing they would mock him with friendly laughter for failing to call a parakeet a parakeet. Derisive laughter gift-wrapped in friendliness can sometimes have the effect of friendly fire, unintended but still deadly.



"I came around to asking Saravanan to look at the bird through his camera viewfinder. He clicked it. It turned out to be a dollarbird," says Sathyakumar with a half-suppressed laugh.

Birds generally get identified much before they are fully seen. A cursory look at a part of the bird – a diagnostic feature in ornithology speak – is all it takes to realise what the rest of it looks like. And out pops the bird's name. They call it GISS. With rare passage migrants, GIFF hardly works, especially when the bird has not showed up for extended periods of time. These birders travel far to bird, and they have seen the dollarbird in its wintering ground in Kerala. Else, the identification would have been

The dollarbird was seen hanging around this place for around three hours

much delayed.

The last sighting of a dollarbird in Chennai was in 2016 at Guindy National Park: that is a long period of "estrangement" from the city.

As is the case with any active migrant, the dollarbird is a "polyglot", flexing diametrically polar linguistic muscles between its breeding and wintering grounds.

Its introduction to language is either in Australia or Japan – its prominent breeding grounds – and when it comes of age and can fly to escape inclement winter, it picks up Sinhalese and Malayalam in its wintering grounds.

Given the trajectory of its route from its breeding grounds to its wintering grounds, it has to veer really off course to end up at Chennai – which explains the scant records.

And local birders subconsciously train their brain not to look for this bird – which is not the case with the chestnut winged cuckoo

(CWC), also a passage migrant but one that clearly works Chennai into its winter tour diary. CWC has become a box waiting to be ticked every winter in Chennai.

A wooded patch

The dollarbird is a creature at home in wooded habitats and is associated with Western ghats, particularly Thattekad. This patch at Chembarambakkam lake is generously endowed with wood and, to state something as obvious as sunlight on a sunny day, has plenty of water to offer. The dollarbird was seen hanging around this place for around three hours, as Sathyakumar reports.

"During winter, this patch offers many feathers, including the Indian pitta, orange-headed thrush, blue-throated flycatcher, forest wagtail and Asian paradise flycatcher. On that Sunday, we found none of these. But one sighting of the dollarbird made up for it."

EVENTS

Street music festival: grand finale at Thiruvanmiyur beach today



Greater Chennai Corporation's (GCC) collaborative event with On the Streets of Chennai, a thriving music community, is in its second and final day. Awesome Weekend: Live Green, Love Blue (December 21-22), as the music festival is called, is aimed at addressing pressing environmental issues of the times.

The festival is set to culminate with a breathtaking grand finale at Thiruvanmiyur Beach on December 22, 2024, at 7.30 p.m.. Students from The Chennai School, under the administration of Greater Chennai Corporation, are set to perform a parade at the final showdown of the event.

Over the two days, the event seeks to celebrate urban greening and water conservation.

The festival has been designed to showcase 150 street music performances across the city, spanning over 150 hours, and transform Chennai's parks, beaches, streets, metro stations, and residential communities into vibrant music hubs.

To complement the music, GCC has organised innovative, hands-on activities to inspire collective action for sustainability:

Hug a Tree: Participants hug a tree, post a photo on social media with @chennaicorp, and receive a certificate.

Sow a Seed, Sing a Song: Get seed balls from music bands, sow them in parks or lakes, sing a song, and tag @chennaicorp on social media.



The street music festival highlights environmental issues.

Music for Chennai's Green Future: A call for music bands to compose original Tamil songs on the theme "Live Green, Love Blue." Winning compositions will be produced as an album.

Photo and Sketch Walk: Capture Chennai's natural beauty at Kotturpuram Park and MRC Pond through photography and sketches.

Eco-Themed Performances: Flash mobs and dance performances will be held to spread the festival's eco-conscious message.

Apartment Performances: Special musical acts in residential communities to promote rainwater harvesting and sustainable practices.

For more details, visit <https://www.chennaicorporation.gov.in/gcc/livegreen/loveblue.htm> or follow @chennaicorp on social media.

Christmas collections for the family

Cotton House has lined up an array of collections for Christmas catering to the entire family. These offerings come as a Chrsitmas discount sale, says a press release. Among the highlights of the sale is a collection that goes under the title "Christmas Saris". It includes Pattu silks and lightweight art silks. Additionally, linen saris, tissue cotton, digital tissue and softy silks are on offer and these are priced Rs.500 onwards, says the release. Among collections involving the entire family is what Cot-

Quiz at Velachery library

The State Government-run Full-Time Branch Library at Dhandeeshwaram in Velachery is conducting a general knowledge quiz and puzzle-solving on December 31. Also, fancy dress contest on the theme "Indian national leader" will be held. The event will begin at 3 p.m.

EFI hosts kutcheri at Besant Nagar

The Environment Foundation of India invites music enthusiasts and audiences to celebrate Margazhi at their office in Sri Shankara, 31st Cross Street, Besant Nagar. The initiative began on December 16 and will run till January 16, every Friday and Saturday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and is open to all artistes and music lovers. The initiative aims to promote environment-themed music. For details, call 8925858068.



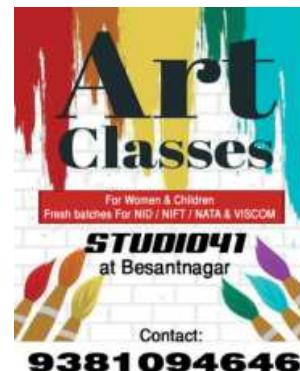
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