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KNOCKING ON THEIR DOORS, PULLING ON THEIR HEARTSTRINGS

The Hindu Downtown Kolu Kondattam is more than a contest; it signifies a deep connection with Chennai and its people. Here are highlights from this year's edition of the event **P3**



AN ELABORATE MENDING EXERCISE

In an event at Mandavelipakkam on October 25, Saahas will feature a range of skilled workers giving a variety of broken things a new run **P5**

READERS WRITE

'The only access road in a shambles once again'



ANANTA CHARAN SWAIN

The condition of the only access road to Casagrand First City, near Gleneagles HealthCity in Perumbakkam, has gone far beyond inconvenience – it is now a serious safety threat. This damaged stretch is used every day by over 1600 families, emergency vehicles and hundreds of school

buses from two major institutions: Casagrand International School and NPS International School. Despite its critical importance, commuters are still forced to navigate stagnant water, poth-

oles and broken road surfaces every single day.

(Anata Charan Swain is a resident of Casagrand First City, Perumbakkam)

Heart lessons for children



Dr.TG Sivaranjani, Director, Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals (extreme right) and Dr. Senthil Raj T, Consultant Cardiologist (second from left) with the winners of Heart Wise quiz. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Heart Wise Quiz 2025, organised in commemoration of World Heart Day, concluded with enthusiasm on October 12, 2025 at Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals auditorium in Pallikaranai.

According to a press release, the quiz brought together students from classes V to IX across the city, aiming to create awareness about

heart health, nutrition and healthy living from a young age.

Dr. T.G. Sivaranjani, director, Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals, interacted with the semi-finalists in a light-hearted and interactive manner, emphasising the triad mantra for healthy living – food, exercise and sleep. She shared practical tips on balanced eating, simple strength-training routines, and

maintaining proper sleep in sync with the circadian rhythm, the release says.

Dr. Senthil Raj, consultant cardiologist, engaged the children in a gentle and friendly interaction that put them at ease, offering insights on heart health and lifestyle choices.

The grand finale saw six finalists compete in a spirited battle of knowledge and quick thinking, impressing everyone with their awareness and enthusiasm.

Winners: 1st Prize: Nirighna Peetha, Sivananda Rajaram Senior School (Class 8); 2nd Prize: Navellen M. Sivakumaran, PSBB KK Nagar (Class 7); 3rd Prize: Srinand Suresh Kumar Warriar, Velammal Bodhi Campus, Kolapakkam (Class 8)

Runner-ups: Dhaksh A, Velammal Bodhi Campus, Kolapakkam (Class 8); Rakshita Krishnakumar, TIPS, Perungudi (Class 8); and Aarav Ramesh, Mount Litera Zee School, OMR (Class 5)

All finalists and semi-finalists received certificates for their spirited participation.

The event was presented by Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals, powered by X Quiz IT, Media Partner: News 7 Tamil, and curated by Zigma.

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P. Periannaswami



From a ‘motorhome’ on Anna Street

P. Periannaswami's first intervention on October 15 had impressive results; the patch on Anna Street known for water logging even after a moderate downpour was clear

PRINCE FREDERICK

The air at Anna Street in Thiruvannamiyur, not far from the coast, is clammy. P. Periannaswami has retired for the night, the oppressive air forcing him to take two contradictory actions, but relevant in equal measure under the circumstances. To fend off the cold of a monsoon night, he wraps himself in a thick woollen blanket. To deal with the heavy humidity, he has dispensed with his shirt.

His bed is a modest plank, each end placed on the fender of a tractor. If one peered into the vehicle, they would find essentials of survival.

A bottle filled with water and the woollen blanket among them. And a marker of time: a calendar. Periannaswami, a resident of Villupuram district is living in this “motorhome”.

There is nothing fancy about it: his life in the rough is not being documented and televised. Periannaswami is among a faceless set of people, drawn from the districts and placed on inundation watch in Chennai, assisted in their work by tractors fitted out with suction pipes. Along with the tractors entrusted to them, they are on standby mode at spots known to retain water more on the surface of the earth than under it.

It is October 16, 2025, and only the previous day, the presence of Periannaswami and the tractor had made a difference. Usually, moderate downpour of the kind witnessed in the morning of October 15 would be sufficient to turn a section of Anna Street (near the gates of Kalakshetra Foundation's craft centre) into a bath tub filled to the brim.

And he is having the sleep of the industrious. And when woken up from it, he is affable, giving a smile that is half-toothy and half-toothless, just as he had when *The Hindu Downtown* had first met him at the same spot with the same machine nearly a fortnight ago.

Ahead of the NE Monsoon, when significant showers had been forecast, the Periannaswamis had been stationed at inundation-prone spots. With heavy showers not being expected for some time, some of them returned to their districts. Not Periannaswami. “It is 18 days since I came to Chennai. Some took a break and went home, I did not. What would I do back home?” For now, this motorhome on Anna Street in Thiruvannamiyur is home indeed.

INUNDATION WATCH

A dress rehearsal



On Anna Street, October 15, 2025.

PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

In Chennai, the morning of October 15, 2025 turned out to be a wet rag for most neighbourhoods, with rains oscillating between the light and moderate spectra.

The persistence of the downpour ensured that tractors with suction pipes stationed at inundation-prone points kept humming, including the one on Anna Street near the gates of Kalakshetra Foundation's Craft Centre.

In the blurred zone between afternoon and evening, the “desk” displayed signs of the early morning task, the “pap-

pers” left uncleared. The suction pipe was coiled, one end of it disappearing into an open recharge well.

For a stretch before and another behind the tractor the road was caked with soggy mud that had the consistency and colour of choco-lava, suggesting movement of water.

There was no sign of water only sign of water having been cleared. One needs to wait and watch how effective this intervention proves against heavy rain, and after the earth gets saturated with frequent downpours.

Monsoon and tree care

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

An illness seldom bursts on the scene like a burglar, suddenly and unannounced. It would be present in some insidious form before developing into something that demands urgent intervention. Frequent check-ups will stop it in its tracks. That applies not only to illnesses afflicting humans, but also those of an arboreal nature.

Member of Chennai District Green Committee T.D. Babu advises continual attention to the health of trees for prevention of tree falls during cyclonic conditions. That diligence usually lacking, the next best thing is to identify trees on

“uncertain footings” around monsoon time and take remedial measures to ensure they cause any harm during cyclones.

He begins: “Avenue trees with overgrown branches need to be pruned. Priority needs to be given to copperpod, gulmohar and rain trees. Their stability has to be assessed and based on the assessment, the load of the trees can be reduced, particularly those trees that are overloaded with branches on one side.

“Generally, tall trees especially kaatu vadumai (*Sterculia foetida*) can be trunk-pruned as it can withstand trunk pruning at 20 feet.”

There are then trees that might be suffering from diseases of the



FILE PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B

“gums”, their support being eroded by construction of stormwater drains networks. A data of trees likely to have been weakened on account of SWD construction needs

to be obtained and acted upon.

“Many trees might be destabilised due to the recent SWD work close to their trunk damaging their roots. Such trees’ branches can be

pruned to stabilise them, leaving minimal branches and thereby preventing the fall.”

Babu adds: “In general, dead trees have to be removed as they might absorb water during rains, becoming heavier and fall.”

In private gardens

Babu on what owners of private gardens should pay attention to: “In private premises or gardens having coconut trees, dry leaves and mature coconuts are to be removed before monsoon; tall mature *Millingtonia hortensis* (Indian corkwood), *stetculia foetida* (kaatu vadumai) and *Monoon longifolium* (netulingam) trees can have trunk pruning if the trees are tall and weak. Other indigenous trees with huge branches hanging can have lateral pruning (moderate or slight pruning).”



Knocking on their doors, pulling on their heartstrings

The Hindu Downtown Kolu Kondattam is more than a contest; it signifies a deep connection with Chennai and its people. Here are highlights from this year's edition of the event



Last Sunday, at P.T. Thyagaraya Auditorium in T. Nagar, the epilogue to *The Hindu Downtown* “Made of Chennai Kolu Kondattam 2025” was scripted and staged, and it turned out to be an event absolutely fitting for a contest that had attracted enthusiastic participation

from residents of Chennai, as in the previous years. At this event that felicitated those who made it to the podium as well as those who almost made it there, the joy was multifarious in its manifestation.

There was the gentle glow of satisfaction for members of The Hindu Group (THG) who worked indefatigably behind the scenes to make this happen. There was a sense of pride for those who partnered with THG to celebrate once again an event that has found a permanent space on the city's cultural calendar. *The Hindu Downtown* “Made of Chennai Kolu Kondattam 2025” ushered in a new category, “Corporate Kolu Contest” inviting corporate houses and institutions to enter the fray. The corporate kolu winners are: United India Insurance Co.; Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education & Research; and Sindhi Model Matriculation Higher Secondary School.

In another novelty, actor Neelima Rani, who had been signed up for this event, set foot in the homes that housed five kulus that won prizes. It was a surprise the THG team had planned for top winners across the five zones of *The Hindu*

Downtown. It was unwrapped for the contestants only in the moment when Neelima and the THG team were at this doorsteps. Until that moment, they did not know they were on their way to the podium. The look of bewilderment being replaced by beaming smiles was a treat for the eyes. That moment signified what *The Hindu Downtown* as well as its Kolu Kondattam is all about: being connected with the people of Chennai and participating in the details of their lives in a manner that makes them feel enriched and supported.

In an edition of the contest years ago, a group of influencers had been signed up to visit the kulus that were well put together by contestants. Reinstalling this feature in this year's contest proved to be a great decision.

Moment of glory

The felicitation ceremony on October 13 took an unhurried course, beginning with a captivating Bharatanatyam performance by students of Sri Kalakshi School of Dance.

Three winners and eleven consolation prize winners were selected from each of the five zones of

Glimpses of the felicitation ceremony; actor Neelima Rani at a contestant's home; and the first three winners from this zone.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



The Hindu Downtown.

The winners were felicitated by Sekar from Gopuram Products, Sri Ram Ramesh from ITC Mangaldeep, Bharath Vikram from Kaleesuwari Refineries, Manmohan Ram from Sundari Silks, Praveen Lalwani from Hi-Laptop.com, Aarthi from Naga Foods, and Vinod Balaji from Narpavi.

The Title Sponsor was Gopuram Products, Powered by ITC Mangaldeep and Dheepam Lamp Oil. Associate Sponsors were Sundari Silks, Aroma Ghee, and Hatsun Curd. Tech Partner, HiLaptop.com, Water Partner, Repute.

Gift sponsors were Medimix, Na-

ga, P.S. Tamarind, Vivekananda Sarees, Narpavi, DIFA, RAS Chekku Oil, Maestro Electric Cooker and Cotton House.

Adyar Zone results

Winner: Dr. Nirmala Madhavan
First Runner-up: Ramya Santhosh

Second Runner-up: Kavya Gurumurthi

Consolation Prizes: Anupama & Bharati; B. Uma Maheswari; Veenaa Krishnan; Swathi Rajasekaran; Vijayalakshmi; Deepa Jayachandran; Thilagam; Pavitra M; Uma Maheswari & Srividya; Shoba Sridaran Sanjay; Jayasri Ravi

READERS WRITE

Helping RWAs on OMR choose their *facility managers*

SENTHILRAJ R

The FMS Survey Analysis Report of October 2025 presents key trends and recommendations from a survey conducted among 250 Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) associated with FOMRRA – the Federation of OMR Resident Associations in Chennai's OMR area, representing 40,000 flats.

"Every other day we have an office bearer from a FOMRRA community asking for feedback about the performance matrix of some FMS agency or the other. We decided to undertake this study and prepare a consolidated report so that we do not need to reinvent the wheel every few weeks," said Harsha Koda, co-founder, FOMRRA.

RWAs reported engagement

with 15 different facility management vendors, paying an average cost of ₹2.8 per sq.ft for services. Of the participating communities, 63% utilise multiple vendors for specialised services, while 37% rely on a single integrated vendor. The majority (nearly 70%) have vendor engagement periods ranging from two to five years, indicating moderate stability but also ongoing evaluation and switching.

Surveyed services include Security, Housekeeping, Gardening and Common Area Maintenance. Housekeeping and Gardening emerged as highest-rated service categories, while Security scored lowest, suggesting a need for stricter service level agreements and improved training. A handful of vendors received top ratings, especially for integrated management



Photo used for representational purpose only.

and responsiveness. However, only 36% respondents strongly recommended their current vendor, 40% were unsure, and 24% would not recommend, highlighting the need for vendor accountability and improvement. "We all understand that past performance does not guarantee future results, but at least armed with this data we can make informed choices," added Harsha Koda.

The report recommends that

large communities adopt single integrated vendors for better coordination and accountability, while smaller communities may benefit from multiple vendor setups for flexibility.

Core recommendations include: creating a preferred vendor list; developing benchmark scorecards for performance evaluation; implementing security audits and training; using digital dashboards for real-time service monitoring; en-

couraging preventive maintenance methods for better asset management.

The report advocates innovative solutions and regular benchmarking to ensure high service standards and greater resident satisfaction in facility management services. A detailed confidential report has been shared with all participating RWA Office Bearers.

(Senthilraj R is a resident of OMR and a volunteer in FOMRRA)

The joy of *passing on a book*

A resident of DLF Garden City sets up a meaningful book corner during a collection drive for Goonj



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Community collection drives for non-profit organisations mean bags of clothes, toys and other usable items kept at a common point before they are taken in a van/ truck. Neela Gangadharan, a resident of

DLF Garden City, a gated community in Semmancherry, added a creative touch to such a drive conducted recently for Goonj as part of Daan Utsav and Deepavali.

Surrounded with a large collection of books at home, she set up a small book corner during the collection drive for residents to

Books arranged during the drive by Goonj at DLF Garden City.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

pick take books home. The rest would be taken by Goonj at the end of the day.

The bags for Goonj were dropped at the association office. So Neela arranged them in a manner that those coming to the room could not miss the display of books, each announcing its title.

"The drive was an opportunity to display the collection of books we had gathered over the decades and see if someone else was interested in reading them," says Neela adding that 100-odd books across genres were arranged.

She turned down the idea of giving the books to libraries as many did not have the space to

stock them.

Ahead of the drive, she sent out a message in the women's group. Neela says she did not really monitor to see who took the book and how many were taken.

The Goonj team is happy with the idea of a resident turning the campaign into a space not just for giving, but also for growing together through stories and learning.

Those who came to contribute clothes and toys were seen pausing to pick up a book – a gentle reminder that knowledge, too, is a form of sharing, says a note by Goonj.

Last year, Goonj witnessed the volunteering spirit through Ram, who in his 60s dedicated his time and energy to organise collection campaigns in nearby apartments.

"From Mr. Ram's enthusiastic efforts to Ms. Neela's thoughtful idea, the joy of sharing continues to evolve in new and inspiring ways. It remind us that Daan Utsav is not just about giving materials, but about creating moments of togetherness – where generosity, creativity, and community spirit come alive," adds the note.

INTERNATIONAL REPAIR DAY: OCTOBER 18

A 'repair station' for toilets

From deep cleaning to timely refurbishments, this initiative ensures toilets in Triplicane remain functional and hygienic

LIFY THOMAS

Repairing and maintaining existing toilets is more sustainable than adding new ones. Design firm Recycle Bin (known for conducting the

International Toilet Fest) believes in it and Toilet Repair Cafe (TRC) has entered its second year since inception.

Launched as a pilot programme in Triplicane with 23 public toilets, the initiative is gearing up to cover a new set of toilets in the Che-



A vehicle that serves as an ally.

pauk constituency.

Under this initiative started in association with Cheer NGO, WASHlab and Greater Chennai Corporation, a centralised hub has been established for all toilet maintenance needs. A vehicle is pressed into service to carry out cleaning work at design-

nated toilets, and also attend to complaints raised by residents through a common helpline number.

"Instead of building new infrastructure every now and then, we should work on improving and empowering the human resources around the toilet. That think-

ing got us started on TRC," says Shebin George, an architect with Recycle Bin. The team is working on building a skill bank from the community. "These are people who are trained in various aspects of toilet maintenance so that it generates employment for them. For example, someone who has graduated from an ITI can be a toilet coordinator," says Shebin.

The SOPs each toilet has to follow include deep cleaning of toilets, wearing of safety gears, specifying the role of janitors, maintaining a checklist of items a toilet must be equipped with and classifying the nature of repairs.

Besides attending to complaints in a timely manner, deep cleaning of toilets is undertaken by a separate team once in 15 days. The janitor takes care of the day-to-day

cleanliness. In case addressing a complaint entails undertaking a major work then the local engineer and deputy commissioner works are informed.

The project has trained and employed local sanitation workers, offering them the tools and skills needed to maintain and repair public toilets.

Shebin says TRC is a model that empowers the community and is cost efficient with impact being visible on the ground.

"To build a TRC one needs a space that also fulfils the purpose of advocacy (TRC Nodal Hub- Advocacy platform)," he says adding that WASHlab works on eight verticals in the sanitation and toilet space, operation and maintenance being one (the others include design as a social tool, inclusivity and governance).

An elaborate mending exercise

In an event at Mandavelipakkam on October 25, Saahas will feature a range of skilled workers giving a variety of broken things a new run

Saahas, the Bengaluru-based non-profit working in the space of solid waste management and circular economy, is hosting its first repair event in Chennai as part of International Repair Day, observed on October 18.

The day-long event called "Repair Pannalama? - Chennai Edition" will be held on October 25 at the auditorium of St. Antony's Girls Higher Secondary School in Mandavelipakkam.

Through the event, Saahas aims to revive and popularise the repair culture, integrating it as a life skill amongst communities. In Bengaluru, Saahas has been hosting city-wide events to celebrate Repair since 2024, and Chennai is among cities to which it has extended this event, says a press release.

The event will have a 'Repair Arena' where vendors for shoe repair, bag repair, umbrella repair, clothes alterations, zip fixing, small appliances' repair and knife sharpening will be available. Residents can bring broken things from their homes and give them a new life.

Free workshops on sustaina-



ble living including home composting and cloth upcycling, a kids arena where games on sustainable living for children (examples: waste segregation and disposable v/s reusables car game will be conducted).

A corner featuring sustainable gifting will showcase earth-friendly products such as pre-loved clothes, chemical-free personal care products and up-cycled decorations.

For further details, contact Smita Kulkarni (9845832311)/ Shamini (9176561066)/ Senthil (90030 33460)



Putting abandoned electrical items back to work

Repair Cafe Chennai Initiative along with Wasted 360 Solutions will host a camp on October 25 in T. Nagar

Though abandoned, some electrical items can be given new spark of life. All it takes is a bit of tinkering; or the addition of a new component.

On October 25, a small group of troubleshooting experts from Re-

pair Cafe Chennai Initiative will be seen working on such electrical and electronic items received by Wasted 360 Solutions, an NGO working on creative waste management solutions, during its recent collection drives.

The team will figure out how many of these discarded items can be repaired and brought back to life. "Unlike our usual workshops, this one will not have any participants. We are planning to bring in just our mentors, experts who can together troubleshoot and fix these items. We have been inviting tinkerers whom we have worked with in the past and are known to our circles," says Meenalochani S. who leads the Chennai chapter.

Started in June 2024 as a home-based repair workshop, organised by homeschooling parents in collaboration with Repair Café Collective India, the chapter has held five events so far and plans to increase the count.

The software professional turned homemaker initiated the chapter seeing the curiosity shown by her children in fixing things. Today, they have five members and many volunteers helping them.

They are looking for mentors and volunteers skilled in mending a wide range of things – electrical, carpentry, utensils, semi-precious jewellery, bicycles, laptops and mobiles.

"Whether you are a professional or a home-based repairer, we have plenty of gig opportunities. One must be passionate about sharing the knowledge they have," says Meena.

They are also looking for workshop managers to help coordinate events. Hosting DIY repair workshops across the city once in every three months is the plan.

Write to them at repaircafe.tiruandchennai@gmail.com

Follow them on Instagram: @repaircafe.tiruandchennai



Juwairiya during a painting session at home; some of the paintings created with paint made with natural pigments. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Colours of nature: straight to the palette

Royapuram resident Juwairiya H teaches children how to explore the outdoors and collect materials to create art that is natural and sustainable

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Imagine there is no curriculum; only curiosity driving the learning. Imagine there is no preset route; only exploration charting the course. Put those almost-Lennonesque ideas together and you get a programme that encourages children to explore nature and coax materials out of it to make natural paints and gum and create foraged art. As should be evident to anyone, this programme militates against the assembly line. There is no telling what natural colour would be turned out; the consistency with which the gum would trickle; or the shape the artwork from foraged items would take. All of these would take you to the doorsteps of a rather unusual (but not unlikely) world Juwairiya H has created for children. Moored in Royapuram, Juwairiya (a Montessori-trained teacher, Zentangle artist and biotechnology graduate) conducts this programme in person as well as remotely.

But first things first. The programme is structured in a manner

that breaks structured, predictable learning.

Each session begins with the children taking a silent nature walk with unplanned pauses to accommodate a scavenger hunt. "We do not buy anything," explains Juwairiya. "Everything we use comes from nature. It is playful and unpredictable. Often, we do not know what colour will bloom and that uncertainty is part of the magic." The children are encouraged to bring leaves, petals roots and seeds. Back in the workstation, they get to work with what they have collected. The paint-making

is supported by a simple base: maida flour whisked into a slurry and boiled into perfect paint-like consistency. Multiple roads to creativity, some predictable and others unpredictable, extend out of there.

"Turmeric gives yellow, limestone with turmeric makes red, and flowers or leaves produce unpredictable shades," Juwairiya explains. Seasonal changes and availability of ingredients in a local environment influence paint colours, and experimentation is encouraged. Blue pea flowers and bougainvillea are frequently used in natural paint making.

An artist's take

For G. Sooriyamoorthy, a sculptor and artist with over 25 years of experience, acrylics might remain the primary medium of artistic expression in painting, but that does not stop him from appreciating the raw character that natural pigments bring to a piece of art. "They give a beautiful, organic texture that is hard to replicate with synthetic paints," he observes.

And one need not marvel that colour can be obtained directly from nature. He explains: "Take beetroot, for example; once the colour gets on your hand, it is hard to wash off. That kind of natural strength is remarkable."

ing. She collects both used and unused paper, turning it into pulp for new paper or functional items like bowls to be used to keep natural paints. Children often paint with fingers or brushes made from twigs and fibres.

Gum making might seem like a simple process, but it teaches much more than just sticking things together. "It's very basic, really—just maida and water but the technique matters," explains Juwairiya, who guides students through the process. The flour is mixed with water until smooth, then gently boiled until it reaches the perfect gum-like consistency. "Continuous stirring is essential," she adds, "otherwise lumps form, and the texture isn't right."

For her young students, understanding the correct consistency can be a challenge, especially in an online setting. "I give clear instructions and check their work step by step.

Sometimes, I ask them questions to help them adjust – adding a little more flour or water until it's just right," says Juwairiya. Safety is also a priority, as the process involves handling fire. "Adult supervision is crucial, but we also encourage independence without stepping in too much," she notes.

Juwairiya manages to replicate the same processes in the online homeschooling support programme offered by the Dharmapuri-based alternative school Puvidham, which reaches children in various geographies including Dubai, Singapore and Delhi. Juwairiya is a facilitator for Puvidham's online programme.

Parents accompany the youngest participants on their pre-session nature walks. "We begin with stories, questions and provocations," she explains. "If a child asks a question, we respond with another question. It is not about answers; it is about sparking thought, letting imagination run the lesson plan."

Beyond paint, the "curriculum" gets into composting, bio-enzyme making, cloth upcycling and paper recycling.

"Adults often worry it is messy, or a waste of time," she admits. "But when a child sees colour emerge from something they picked themselves, their eyes light up. That is learning that cannot be measured."

Unschooling philosophy

At home, Juwairiya, a mother of two, follows an unschooling philosophy, where the child's curiosity leads. "Unschooling does not mean isolation," she clarifies. "It is about letting interests flourish. Sometimes, the greatest lessons happen outdoors beyond four walls and schedules."

Her quest for meaningful education had led her far from the hum of conventional classrooms and into Nagarkoodal village in Dharmapuri, home to Puvidham – an alternative school. Here, the philosophy is as earthy as the soil itself: children create what they consume.

"It was Puvidham that changed everything for me," she recalls. "I learned how to upcycle paper, make natural gum, and create paints from nature. Their focus on sustainability wasn't just a lesson; it was a lifestyle."

Unable to place her children there due to distance, she enrolled in Puvidham's Learning Facilitator Programme (LFP), a programme that would quietly overturn her understanding of teaching. "Children, especially in their early years, think and learn with their hands long before they engage with text. That insight reshaped my approach entirely," she says.

The course immersed her in hands-on modules – from paper upcycling and foraged art to ink and gum making. On completion, she began co-learning with children, letting curiosity, rather than curriculum, chart the course. And she is continuing to learn along with the children she teaches.

Helpline for Deepavali

Here are numbers and pointers that could ensure a safe, hassle-free and responsible celebration of the festival

Treatment for burn-related injuries

Hindu Mission Hospital, Grand Southern Trunk Road, Tambaram (West): 8754595044
Dr. Agarwals Eye Hospital: 95949 24048
Ambulance: 108
Burns Ward, Kilpauk Medical College: 044 - 28364951

Commissionerate of Transport and Road Safety in Chennai invites complaints about excess bus fare to be registered on its toll-free number 1800-425-6151.

Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services : 112

Make sure to segregate firecracker waste and hand it separately to the conservancy worker



The Tamil Nadu Government urges residents to celebrate a noiseless, smoke-free and safe Deepavali. It requests people to burst green crackers and restrict the bursting to 6-7 a.m. and then 7-8 p.m.

Eye care: Dos and Don'ts

- Do not rub your eyes or scratch your eyes.
- Wash your eyes and face properly.
- In case of any irritation or foreign body in the eye, hold the eyelids open and flush the eyes continuously with water.
- If a particle is large or stuck in the eye, do not attempt to remove it.
- If any chemical has entered the eyes, immediately irrigate the eyes and the space under the eyelids with water for 30 minutes. Seek an eye doctor immediately.

Source: S. Soundari, regional head, clinical services, Dr. Agarwals Eye Hospital

Korean Coffee House comes to Chennai

Dot Korean Coffee House has opened two outlets in Chennai, one in Poonamallee and the other in Mylapore.

The outlet has a variety of coffees to choose from - Korean, Austrian, French, and Canadian filter coffee, says a release.

The cream coffee varieties include maple cream, caramel, vanilla, and peanut cream.

The specific cream gives each cup its unique flavour. Iced ball coffee is one of Dot Coffee's special varieties.

The special coffees are priced between ₹40 and ₹90, while the variety called real coffee costs between ₹20 and ₹40. Dot also has cold coffee cans, said the release.

The outlets are open every day from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m..



Listen to Hindi songs picturised on vehicles

Satragi's next presentation 'Zindagi Ek Safar' will be held on October 26 from 5:45 p.m. at TEACH Auditorium, Taramani.

This programme will feature transit songs from Hindi movies of 50s, 60s and 70s. Songs picturised on car, bus, cycle, boat, horse cart and other vehicles will be presented from movies like *Naya Daur*, *Mere Sanam*, *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar*, *Andaz*, *Amar Prem*, *Aradhana* and *Kashmir Ki Kali*.

The programme will be presented by Promod, Smriti and Abhishek on pre recorded tracks.

Tickets for this event are priced at ₹500 and ₹300 and will be delivered on calling 9884778073.

Over 15,000 receive degrees at convocation of SRMIST



Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways, gives away certificate to a student of SRM Institute of Science and technology. T. R. Paarivendhar, Founder and Chancellor, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Bharat Bhasker, Director, IIM, Ahmedabad are seen.

PHOTO: SRINATH M

As many as 15,105 students were given their degrees at the 21st Convocation of SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) held recently. Among them were 5,779 women and two transpersons, the university said.

The list included 299 rank holders, 224 of whom were women. As many as 388 students earned their PhD, while 7,938 students completed their

post-graduation.

T.R. Paarivendhar, founder-chancellor, SRMIST, said that the University has a total of nearly one lakh students spread across its various campuses in the country and employs about 30,000 persons. He said that a total of 25,000 students would be getting their degrees across India this year.

C. Muthamizhchelvan, Vice-Chan-

cellor, SRMIST, highlighted the fact that two transpersons got their undergraduate degrees, which was a pointer to the inclusive environment at the University. While 62 per cent of those graduating were men, 55 per cent of the PhD holders were women.

Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, delivered the convocation address.



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PRINCE FREDERICK

One may know birds by their sounds. One may know them by their bills. One may even know them by their toes: the length of the toes and the absence of a toe. Among birds migrating to these parts, there are two representative cases exemplifying long toes and a conspicuously missing toe.

Seasoned birders identify birds by GISS. One cursory look and they know in their bones what they have seen. When in doubt, they might peer at the photograph for certain distinctive features. The winter in Chennai brings three stints: little stint, Temminck's stint and long-toed stint. There are diagnostic features that help tell one from another. The most distinctive

Know them by their toes

feature in a long-toed stint is its being long-toed – that was pretty straightforward, wasn't it? When a long-toed stint is in flight, its toes jut out prominently beyond the tail. Of the three toes in the front, the middle one sticks out a mile, making identification immediate, and once there, one need not bother to look at anything else to name the bird.

During winter at Nanmangalam lake, birders are probably identify-

ing the long-toed stint by GISS, having become accustomed to it. "All these three stints are sighted at Nanmangalam lake; and the long-toed stint has been seen in the last three wintering seasons," says birder Jithesh Babu, who birds regularly around the lake.

At the Adyar Estuary this year, the migratory season got off to a start with sanderlings holding court, but graciously letting into the spotlight the Tibetan sand plov-

A sanderling at Adyar estuary on September 29; and a long-toed stint at Nanmangalam lake on October 7.

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK AND JITHESH BABU



ers and greater sand plovers and Kentish plovers.

One cannot confuse the sanderling with any of the other birds mentioned here. Its distinctive feature is the lack of a hind toe. But a hind toe can be seen where it does not exist. Or not seen when it does exist. A hind toe that is present can be hidden in the sand. A small

object in the sand can "attach" a non-existent hind toe to a sanderling.

So, the easier way to spot a sanderling from a light year's distance is to look for the black shoulder patch. But if you want to go for the toes, you need to give it a try, clicking away till you get a photo that makes it clear.

Workshop on gold appraisal

Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME - Tamil Nadu is conducting a training programme on gold appraisal from October 27 to 31 at its premises at SIDCO Industrial Estate, Guindy. Time: From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

According to a press release, the following will be covering dur-

ing the workshop: essential concepts in metallurgy with focus on gold and silver; difference between karat and carat; methods for calculating gold purity; jewel loan assessment procedures; and hallmarking procedures and standards.

This knowledge and skill help one to find opportunities in banks offering gold-backed loans, adds

the release.

A session on jewellery-making methods and the essentials of setting up a gem and jewellery business is also part of the programme.

Those above 18 years of age with a minimum qualification of class 10 can apply for the programme. Prior registration is compulsory. For details, call 9840114680 / 9360221280.

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