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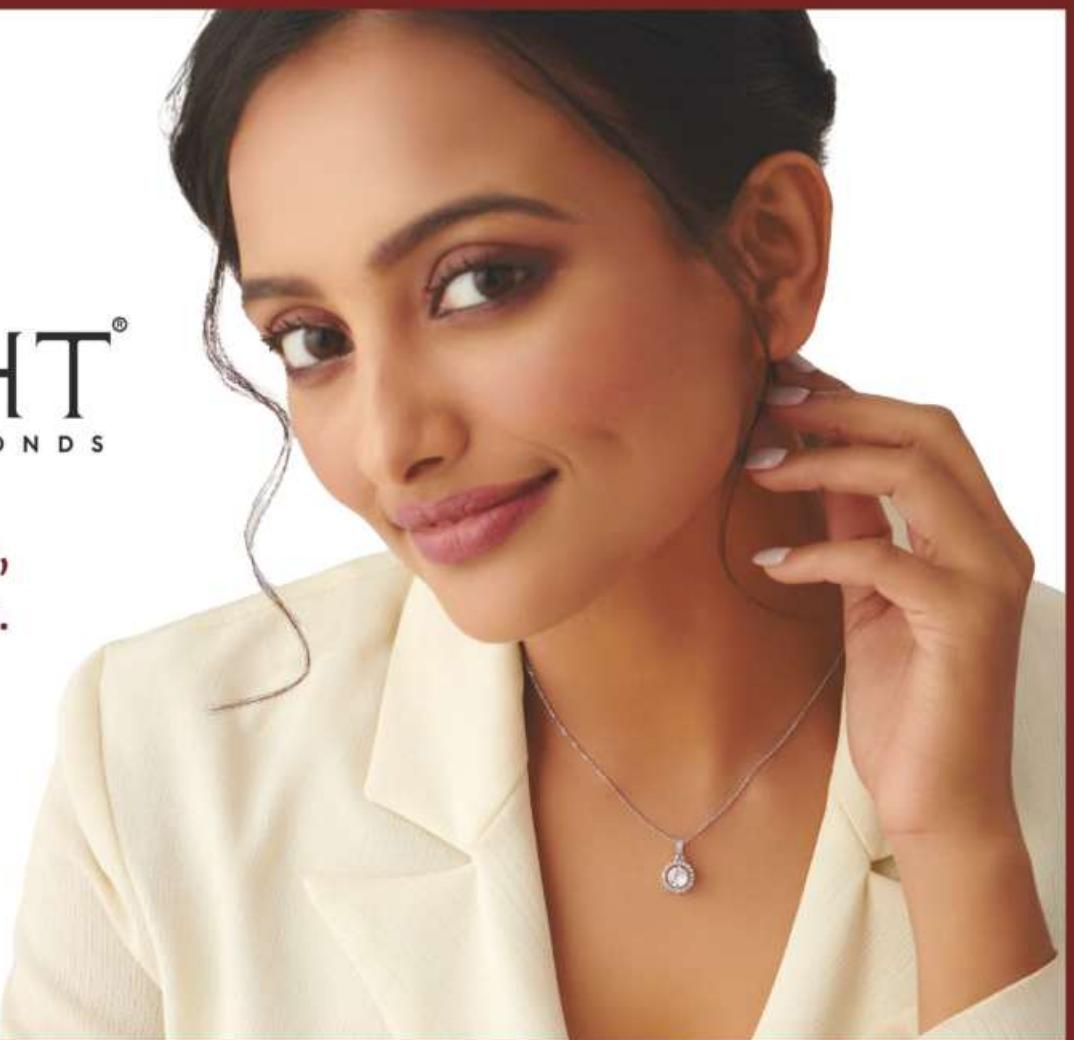
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Sunday
March 30, 2025

THE HINDU

ANNA NAGAR

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Perambur citizens forum decries footpath work

Decrying the footpath restoration work on Perambur High Road – North as a “misplaced priority”, Perambur Neighbourhood Development Forum notes the effort should have been directed first towards reconstruction of the stormwater drain under the footpath.

The SWD network – particularly the section running along the compound wall of Perambur railway station – is ineffective during heavy rains, a fact highlighted by the Forum for 15 years, and with greater emphasis during the last four. “Manholes of the stormwater drain, including the broken ones, were given a fresh coat of yellow paint just four months ago. With the relaying of footpath all those painted manholes have been done away with – a case of wasted funds. Without removing silt from the SWD, the footpath was relaid,” says Raghukumar Choodamani, the forum’s convenor. Raghukumar points out the footpath relaying work has strangely left out a section (opposite the main entrance of the Perambur railway station) of the road that badly needs a footpath. Raghukumar says this section is lined with a variety of commercial establishments. Despite being a no-parking zone, it is marked by haphazard parking. No footpath has been laid here yet: it is learnt fresh tenders would be floated for footpath relaying work on this section, which is odd, adds Raghukumar. He also calls into question the decision to widen the footpath near BB Road junction as doing so would only encourage unauthorised parking.

PHOTOS: M. VEDHAN & TEXT: L. KANTHIMATHI

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41st ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATION -“AGAMI- 2025”

PGS School Ambattur celebrated its Annual Day 2025, “Agami 2025”, with a grand cultural program. Eminent guests, including Thiru. Poochi S. Murugan, Chairman, Tamil Nadu Housing Board & Headquarters Secretary, DMK; Thiru. Joseph Samuel, MLA, Ambattur; Dr. G. Shanthakumari, Chairman, Public Health Committee, Chennai Corporation; Mr. Nandakumar, Former principal DAIS (Dhirubhai Ambani International School Mumbai). Mr Arun & Mr. Aravind, Vijay TV reality show Heads, graced the occasion. Students showcased their talents through mesmerizing performances, leaving the audience spellbound. The event was a resounding success, celebrating the school's achievements and promoting holistic education.



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A glimpse of a Smile Store.



1.
Nungambakkam
September 20, 2020



2
Avadi
January 26, 2021



SMILE STORE
Launches

4
Walltax
Road
February 19,
2023

5
MC Road,
Washermanpet
April 8,
2023

SALES FIGURES
(April 2024 –
February 2025)

Nungambakkam:
₹6,19,160

Avadi:
₹3,79,220

Purasawalkam:
₹5,67,140

Walltax Road:
₹3,67,440

MC Road, Washermanpet:
₹4,78,280

BENEFICIARIES
(April 2024 – February 2025)

Nungambakkam: 5,666 people

Purasawalkam: 4,976 people

Avadi: 3,383 people

MC Road: 4,018 people

Walltax Road: 3,283 people

Where beneficiary is king

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

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

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

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

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

Taking

Rajasthan Cosmo Club Foundation runs five Smile Stores in Chennai; and it is focussed on expanding this social enterprise's presence not just in the city, but the whole of Tamil Nadu

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

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

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

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

The airport kiosk

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

native to discarding clothes.

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

Beyond Chennai

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

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

DESIGN:
M ARIVARASU

Special stories and a message

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



Scenes from a rehearsal.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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

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

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

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



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

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

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

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

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

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

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

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



Back in Chennai after a job transfer had taken him away from the city, A.K. Kannan has resumed a "green exercise" that had earned him the admiration of sustainability enthusiasts.

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

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

Bringing sustainability into large-scale events is a challenge, one often only partially met. "Clients love the idea when I suggest it – but when they see the cost, they hesitate," she admits.

She has found that intimate gatherings offer more room for conscious choices.

"In our friends' group, we try to bring our own plates, cutlery and glasses. It sounds simple, right? But out of 50 people, maybe two will actually do it," she observes, adding: "It is not about going zero-waste overnight. Even if just 20-30% of an event is done consciously, it is still something. Small steps add up."



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

Riddhi Khandhar

All in a day's work

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

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

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

A lingering aroma

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

AI GENERATED IMAGE:
M ARIVARASU



READERS WRITE

Playground at Thiru Vi Ka Nagar: a big draw

In Thiru Vi Ka Nagar, located west of Perambur, a football playground and a children's play area are proving to be a big draw.

A walking area around the football playground receives immense patronage from people of all age groups.

Aged people visit the facility for a spot of relaxation in the evening

hours. Children use this football ground as cricket ground and for other games.

The authorities concerned are maintaining the football turf well. A high mast lamp has been installed to avoid poor lighting facilities. This playground is a boon to the locality.

K P Narendrakumar
Perambur



The football turf. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Tristar Park Road: still waiting for meaningful attention'

After the report of Tristar Park Road being in neglect appearing in the February 16 edition of *The Hindu Downtown*, the authorities concerned took notice; action was finally taken to clear the police-seized bikes from this road in Mogappair Eri Scheme.

But, as is often the case, progress was short-lived. Just a short while after the clearance, this writer witnessed a tow truck dumping a car into the very space that had been cleared. Meanwhile, the long-forgotten four-wheelers – their tires punctured and their wheels rusting – remain parked on a by-lane. Greater Chennai Corporation seems to have not added Tristar Park Road to its list of streets that need regular sweeping. The debris from Tristar Park, along with leaves from the overhanging trees, accumulate and sit untouched for weeks on end.

Will GCC finally take note of this overlooked road and add it to "their official list for maintenance"? A little attention is overdue.

Badrinath K.
Mogappair



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A fire mishap in Mogappair West



A major fire broke out in a mechanic shed at Vellalar Street in VGP Nagar, Mogappair West (near Santhana Srinivasa Perumal temple) at 7.30 p.m. on March 28. Members of the J.J. Nagar East unit of the Tamil Nadu Fire & Rescue Services rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire. According to officials, short circuit was the cause of the fire.

TEXT AND PHOTOS: SHIVARAJ S



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At Velammal Academy in Avadi.

Little stars sparkle on annual day

The Avadi campus of Velammal Academy celebrated its first annual day and kindergarten graduation ceremony recently.

The event showcased the talent and

achievements of its young learners.

D. Gokul, scientist and project manager, SDSC SHAR - ISRO, was the chief guest.

Hrithik Jayakish, winner of Super Sin-

ger, and Sharvaanica A.S., a world chess master, were the guests of honour.

Around 500 students took the stage in over 35 cultural performances, featuring songs, energetic dance numbers, captivating stage plays and cultural fusions, said a press release.

With IPL ticket, free travel is possible on MTC buses

As in the previous year, Metropolitan Transport Corporation wants more people to use public transport during IPL matches. People with tickets for IPL matches at M.A. Chidambaram Cricket Stadium at Chepauk need not buy bus tickets.

The offer is valid for three hours before and after a match starts and ends, on Deluxe, Express and Whiteboard services.

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

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

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

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Workshop on Tanjore painting

A workshop on Tanjore paintings and various traditional Indian art forms, including Madhubani, Warli, Gond, Patachitra, Zulu, Kerala Mural will be conducted at SAF Games Village, Koyambedu from April 1 to April 15.

For details, call Kanimozhi at 9381157831

Yoga classes

Mogappair Panneer Nager Manavalakalai Trust is conducting its monthly yoga foundation course from March 31 to April 12 at Seethakathi Salai 4th Cross St, near Velammal Matriculation School, Mogappair, For details, call 9840861519 / 9444418241.

A celebration of talent



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

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

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