

IT CORRIDOR

Adyar » Kanathur » Kelambakkam » Navalur » Semmencherry » Thoraipakkam » Velachery » IIT Madras » Kandanchavadi » Kottivakkam

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Women rally around to protect waterbody

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Exnora International has found an ally in its effort to protect a waterbody. A 19-member team of women from Sholinganallur is keeping an eye on Puducherry Keni, a two-acre waterbody located along Tamil Nadu Housing Board Link Road.

They are members of Vibrant Women Welfare Association at Marutham Nagar in Sholinganallur. One of the initiatives by this group formed in 2023 is to ensure the waterbody is not misused by the public.

"We have also erected fences on a section of the lake to prevent anti-social elements from entering the lake," says M. Sujatha Mani, an EC member of the association.



A view of Puducherry Keni.

The women have seen the lake and its surrounding areas transform over the years. Haphazard development and lack of proper sewage connection in the area was an area of concern.

They have sent letters to the Chief Secretary and Secretaries of the Public Works Department, Water Resources Department, Revenue and Disaster Management Department, and Chennai District Collector to remove the encroachments in the lake area and prevent the waterbody from

getting polluted.

Another member S. Tamilarasi says they want the government to remove encroachments on the lake. Years ago, Rotary Club of Madras erected fences.

However, the fences were broken by anti-social elements. Taxi drivers misuse the lake for washing clothes and bathing.

S. Karpagam, co-ordinator of Exnora Waterbodies, says the group started taking up lake cleanup in 2024. "Currently, close to 2,000 residents of the Tamil Nadu Housing Board in Balaji Nagar rely on the lake for their groundwater getting replenished."

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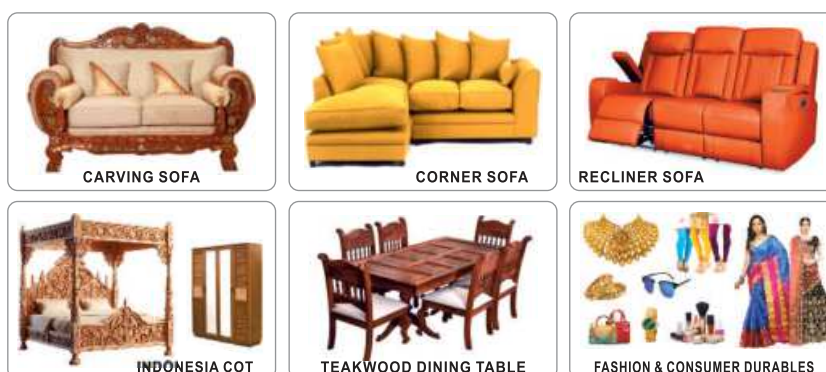
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At home in a dry patch



▼ A brown shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) that was spotted near the Buckingham Canal in Sholinganallur on March 28, 2025. The brown shrike is a winter visitor to Chennai and surrounding areas. It prefers a dry landscape and is known to impale its prey on thorns and keep it there to ensure an extended food source. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK



Specials trains for IPL matches

In view of Tata Indian Premier League 2025 matches at M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chepauk on April 11, 25 and 30, and May 12, the Southern Railway will be operating three passenger special trains for commuters after the matches get over.

From Chennai Beach to Velachery, 'passengers special one' will be operat-

ed at 22 p.m.

From Velachery to Chennai Beach, passengers special two will be operated at 22.55 p.m.

From Chepauk to Velachery, passengers special three will be operated at 23.30 p.m.

For details, log on to <https://x.com/DrmChennai>

IPL ticket enables free travel 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 haltover, and near Omandurar Hospital on Anna Salai.

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

Stoles and souvenirs for autism awareness

A learning centre in Thiruvanniyur will showcase the works of its students on April 5

Aadhi Learning Centre located at Journalist Colony in Thiruvanniyur is celebrating its seventh academic year with an exhibition showcasing the works of its students on April 5. The event is also aimed at creating awareness about autism. April is observed as Autism Awareness Month.

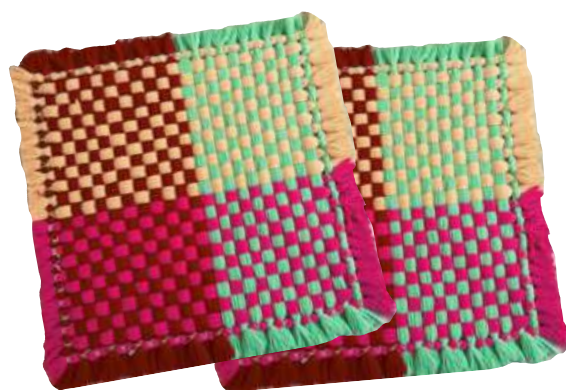
Founded by Meera Natarajan, a mother of a young adult on the spectrum, the centre runs tailored programmes for those in the age group 10 to 30 years with autism and learning disabilities. Besides a set of full-time students, Aadhi Learning Centre has students joining it to pick up vocational and behavioural skills.

Home décor, block-printed bags, stoles, eco-friendly festival

gifts, wedding souvenirs, and return gifts, all crafted by the students will be up for sale. They are priced from ₹100 onwards. Cotton stoles and art and craft gifts are among their most shopped items.

"This is a platform to show that children with special needs are capable of independent living if they receive early intervention and are trained properly," says Meera, who specialises in behavioural communication.

The students' works will be on view on April 5 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For details, call 9444904718/9790963622.



Skill development courses at Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya

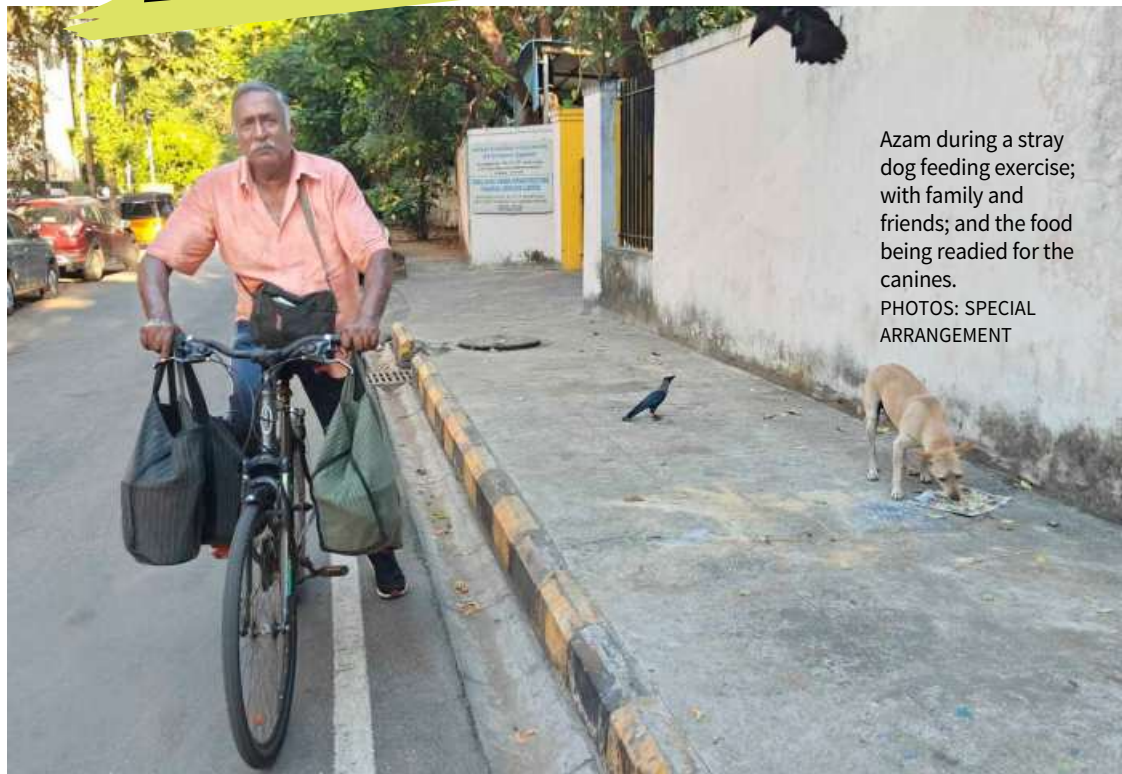
Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya Samithi along with Tamil Nadu Apex Skill Development Centre for Automobile is conducting a training programme from April 2. Also, Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya Samithi is offering courses on embroidery, hair styling, and servicing of refrigerators and air-conditioners from April 2 to 21. Classes will be held from Monday to Saturday. The centre is at No: 58, Venkatanarayana Road, T. Nagar. For details, call 9176624283.

Rama Navami celebration

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is celebrating Sri Rama Navami on April 6 at 6.30 pm at its main auditorium in Mylapore. Bharathanjali (Guru Smt. Anitha Guha) presents "Parishanga Pattabhishegam" (Bharathanatyam-Group). The programme is open to all.

A provider

Noting how stray dogs are the joint responsibility of residents and the Corporation, a resident of Mandaveli writes about how one man honours his side of the obligation every day, cycling down the streets of Mandaveli, Mylapore and R.A. Puram



Azam during a stray dog feeding exercise; with family and friends; and the food being readied for the canines.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



GANGA SRIDHAR

One evening I saw this gentleman cycling down the neighbourhood with huge bags loaded on both sides of his bicycle. Noticing a stray dog that was eagerly waiting for him, he slowly dismounted from his cycle and pulled out a bucket from one of the bags. He led the dog to a corner and gently kept a small piece of newspaper and served the food that he had brought with him in the bucket. I observed this practice being followed every day around the same time and also being extended to many places in the neighbourhood. "I have always been an animal lover and I started feeding the strays four years ago, following the pandemic," started off Azam as we sat down for a chat. "My day starts

at 6:30 a.m. when I start cooking 20 kilos of rice and freshly procured chicken. I make sure that only the good nutritious part of the chicken is used and cooked well, no stale or unwanted parts are served to them," says Azam.

He loads the meal cooked specially for the strays in buckets and starts his bicycle ride down the neighbourhood in the evening. He cycles looking for strays to feed include Greenways Road, Mandaveli, Mylapore and RK Salai feeding. He feeds a good 35-40 strays on the way. "A few vegetarian pet owners come down request me to feed their dogs also as they cannot cook non-vegetarian food at home, but I warn them that once the pets get used to this food, they will not eat vegetarian food at their house," Azam says.

While feeding the animals he al-

so inspects them for any health ailments or injuries and tries to help them with his experience of many years handling his own pets at home. While the strays look forward to Azam bringing them their daily meal, he faces discouragement and rebuke from people who think that he is creating nuisance by feeding the strays.

"Street dogs do not harm anyone unless they have been provoked or are hungry. They are happy when they are fed well and are just a part of the neighbourhood. They are like protectors who raise an alert when strangers enter the area. They mark their territories and do not allow outside dogs to enter their area. Stray dogs have to face different kinds of abuse from people. They get hit, run over by vehicles, children throw stones at them for no reason, drunkards

pour liquor on their diseased wounds and the poor dogs do not survive the torture. It is such inhuman acts that infuriates them and they react. Dogs with diseases have to be reported to the Corporation and they have to get them treated," says Azam. Communities could contribute with kindly gestures in the form of feeding, monitoring the strays while Greater Chennai Corporation can proactively take care of periodic vaccination, neutering to keep their population under control and addressing the diseased ones.

When it comes to pets, the en-

tire responsibility lies in the hands of the respective owners to get them registered, vaccinated and ensure they do not cause any harm or nuisance to the general public.

However when it comes to stray animals, they are an inherent part of a locality's ecosystem. Rule 20 of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023, titled 'Feeding of Community Animals', states: "It shall be the responsibility of the Resident Welfare Association or Apartment Owner Association or local body's representative of that area to make necessary arrangements for feeding of community animals residing on the premises or in that area." Corporation's duty is to vaccinate and neuter them and leave them back where they belong. Finally, the onus is on the residents of the area to take care of the strays, about which most of us are unaware. More force to compassionate souls such as Azam who selflessly do their little part of the community by taking care of the strays selflessly.

(Ganga Sridhar is a member of Mandaveli Raja Street Residents Welfare Association)

Chekku: a travel back in time

I saw this chekku at an oil shop in Bazaar Road, Mylapore. This is used to extract oil by grinding the till (ellu) on a smaller scale. In those days, a bigger one was used to extract oil; bullocks would go around in circles as part of the oil-extracting process. I was happy to see this kept in the shop, which stirred up memories of ancestral traditions and practices.
K R Jambunathan is a resident of Kalvi Varu Street, Mylapore



Have you paid your property tax?



If you are yet to pay your property tax, here is one more chance. A Greater Chennai Corporation staff has temporarily camped himself inside the RA Puram park on 7th Main Road. The staff would also be available on March 30 for collecting payments from residents. CMWSSB has also announced in a circular that all its collection counters in Metrowater offices will function on March 30 and 31 for the public to pay water and sewer tax. The last date for payment is March 31.

A glimpse of a Smile Store.

SMILE STORE
Launches



1.
Nungambakkam
September 20,
2020



2
Avadi
January 26,
2021



3
Purasawalkam
August 14,
2022



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 underpriced 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 in to a store that resembles a premium retail outlet and make a purchase themselves, they experience a sense of ownership and dignity,” explains Manish Chowdhari, 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. “Quality is non-negotiable,” says Suresh Gundecha, former managing trus-

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.

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

V-Excel Educational Trust, an organisation working with persons with special needs, is gearing up for its much-awaited cultural event — “The Golden Fruit”, which will be staged at Kalakshetra Foundation in Thiruvanniyur on April 5 and 6. Occurring every two years, the event showcases the progressive rehabilitation work carried out with the differently abled students at V-Excel.

According to a press release, this event witnesses a collaborative exercise between students who wish to express themselves through the medium of story telling and their teachers. It also addresses deep questions in society, whether it is existential, cultural, something to wake up to, or simply seeing the big picture in a societal context, reflecting on the journey of the individual, the release adds. The annual day is a cultural extravaganza after a three-month long exploration of a single theme. It forms the curriculum, serves as therapy and is generally a transformational experience for most students and teachers, 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 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.

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



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-

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

AI GENERATED IMAGE:
M ARIVARASU





Graduation Day

Sree Balaji Medical College and Hospital recently held its 16th Graduation Day.

Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, President (acting) of Mauritius, was the chief guest.

More than 800 undergraduate and postgraduate students received their degree certificates.

Gold medals and endowment prizes were awarded for the best outgoing students, university

exam toppers and prize exam winners.

Pillay Vyapoory said, "As we celebrate the achievement of these students, it is an honour to see the bright future of healthcare. The students have the knowledge, skill and determination to make an impact in their field. The students must continue learning, innovating and serving with compassion and integrity".

Entrepreneurship development programme launched



A six-week Technology-based Entrepreneurship Development Programme (TEDP) on 'A Roadmap for

Bioentrepreneurship' was launched.

The programme was organised by the School of

Life Sciences, B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, and sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology and the Tamil Nadu State Council of Science.

The programme seeks to train graduates and diploma holders to establish their own businesses.

TEDP 2025 is a knowledge-sharing platform that equips participants with valuable insights into technology-driven entrepreneurship and biotech-driven business models, said a press release.



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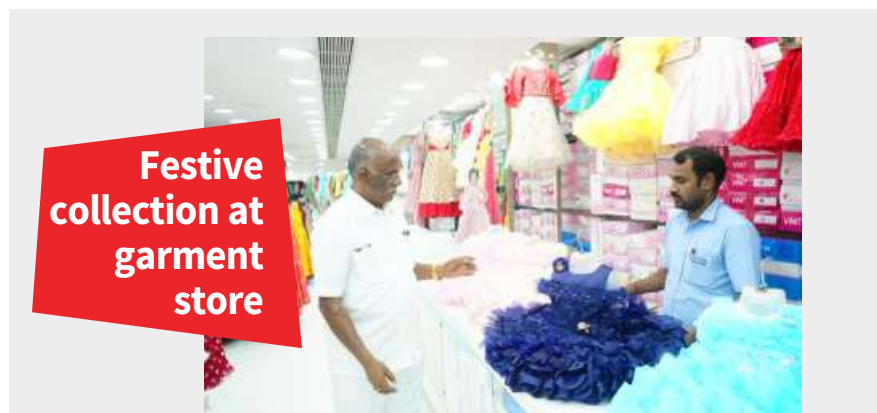
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Festive collection at garment store

Cotton House in Thiruvannmiyur has stocked new collections for the Eid festival.

For women, it has various designs of salwar kameez, sharara suits, kurtis, anarkali dresses,

and lehengas.

Men's kurta shalwar designs, sherwani churi pajama designs, and kurta wasket. From traditional wear to modern and trendy styles, there are pyjamas, sherwanis,

and suits. The store is located on Lattice Bridge Road, opposite the Thiruvannmiyur signal.

Phone: 044 - 24454442 / 9176444440.
Website : www.cotton-house.co.in

Waste collection drive in Perumbakkam

Nesamani Nagar Residents' Welfare Association, in coordination with Perumbakkam Village Panchayat, is organising a waste collection drive on April 5 and 6.

The drive will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Panchayat Community Hall, near the pan-

chayat office.

The public can drop off books, papers, clothes, e-waste, pillows, mattresses, footwear, toys, ball point pens, tablets, strips, handbags, and accessories, X-rays and footwear.

For details, contact N. K. Raja at 91764 53025.

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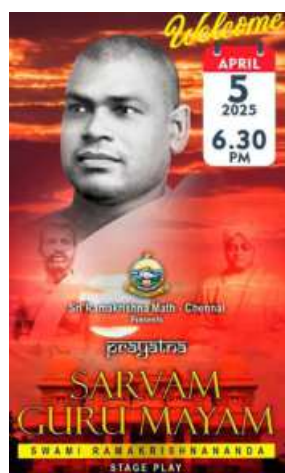
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Rejuvenation of a lake under way on the IT Corridor



▼
Snapshots of the ongoing restoration of the Sholinganallur lake (opposite Infosys office) on Rajiv Gandhi Salai, on March 29, 2025.
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

**MATHS
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X, XII,
CBSE, ICSE,
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Alumni join hands to stag a play

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Schools Alumni Association is hosting a play on the life and message of Swami Ramakrishnananda who established the Madras Math in 1897.

Written and directed by K. Vivekshankar, an alumnus of the institution, the play will be staged at Infosys Hall on Bazullah Road in T. Nagar on April 5 (from 6 p.m. onwards).

Titled 'Sarvam Gurumayam', the drama will be staged by members of Prayatna Theatres. "Swami Ramakrishnananda was specially chosen by Swami Vivekananda to start Ramak-

rishna Math in Chennai in 1897 soon after the establishment of its headquarters in Belur Math, near Kolkata. His dedication and unswerving hard work ensured the growth of the Math and Mission not only in Chennai but in other parts of Tamil Nadu," says K.V.S. Gopalakrishnan, representing the alumni association.

The twin national ideals of Swami Vivekananda – service and sacrifice moulded the institutions with the objectives of 'elevating oneself' and 'for the benefit of the society'.

All are welcome to attend the play.

Workshop on chocolate making

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a culinary workshop on making chocolates on April 3. Another workshop on mushroom cultivation will be held on April 4. According to a press release, both the sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048

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