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LISTENING TO ROCKS

The Department of Geology at the University of Madras invites school and college students to take a look at the rocks and minerals parked in its museum **P3**



HOTTEST TOPIC OF THE SEASON

Three groups of researchers are studying heat stress in and around Chennai and how it impacts human health and the economy **P4**



'Mend Canal Bank Road'

With a part of RK Mutt Road being closed for Metro rail work, Canal Bank Road serves as an alternative route

C.R. BALAJI

Canal Bank Road leading to Pallakku Manyam (also known as Madhav Rao Garden) has sharp edges damaging two wheelers. The road has concrete and bitumen-topped parts and they are mismatched, not being on the same level.

The concrete parts of the road have been subjected to road cuts considerably, and in the concrete relaying of these parts, care had not been taken to cordon them off. Wheel marks of vehicles passing through the wet concrete can be seen.

This adds to the unevenness of the road surface.

The inside streets are no better, being visibly damaged around



Canal Bank Road

sewage manholes. This road which falls in Ward 123 needs immediate attention, particularly because of its significance.

Canal Bank Road serves as an alternative to RK Mutt which has

been partly closed on account of CMRL work and is unlikely to be opened in its entirety for traffic for the next 3 to 4 years.

(C.R. Balaji is a resident of Norton First Street in Mandaveli)

A thousand saplings to mark environment day

The Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) planted over 1,000 saplings across various plantation sites (drinking water board lands in Kodungaiyur and Koyambedu, which will not be used for future construction by the board) as part of World Environment Day.

An in-house seminar on the impact of plastics on various ecosystems was also conducted to raise awareness.

CMRL continues to integrate sustainability into its operations through several green initiatives such as all metro stations achieving Indian Green Building Council Platinum certification, solar panels across stations and encouraging digital practices including e-ticketing to reduce paper consumption, said a release.



A lurking danger



There is a trouble spot on Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, by the side of the compound wall enclosing the Stella Maris campus. A tree stump resting more on the carriageway than the pavement can be missed at night, its brown colour getting "absorbed" in the dark. A motorist can run into the stump. The tree stump has to be either painted in fluorescent colours or extracted from the landscape. It belongs to a rain tree that was considerably weakened due to digging of earth for Greater Chennai Corporation's Integrated Stormwater Drain project years ago. The tree was set in place with some packing that accompanied closing of the trenches following completion of the SWD work. The tree did not have much leg space and was also leaning on the compound wall. The removal of the tree is justified, but leaving behind a part of it is not. The images were taken on June 6, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



Battery cart being operated around Mada streets



SRINATH M

Karur Vysya Bank has donated a battery-driven cart for use on the Mada streets around Kapaleeswarar temple in Mylapore. HR&CE Minister Sekar Babu formally launched the free ferry ser-

vice in the presence of senior officers of the bank on May 31, 2025. The cart can be used by senior citizens and the differently abled to access the temple entrance from the Mada streets. When not in service around the Kapaleeswarar temple, the cart

stays at Sai Baba Temple hall. It is kept there at night. Space constraint at the Mada veedhi had led to this arrangement. The service starts by 9.30 a.m. and is on till the temple closes at night.



PHOTOS: SRINATH M

Plummeting to a new low



With the passage of time, the junction of Thiruvengadam Street and Venkatakrishna Road in Mandavelli is plummeting to new lows, every so-called patchwork throwing a new curveball at motorists. The broken parts now larded with concrete, navigating this section is even more difficult. Here are Images of the junction taken on June 3 and June 7. PHOTOS : RAGHUNATHAN S.R AND SRINATH M





Listening to rocks

The Department of Geology at the University of Madras invites school and college students to take a look at the rocks and minerals parked in its museum

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Did you know the Department of Geology at the University of Madras welcomes school students to take a tour of the rocks at its museum? Various types of rock – metamorphic, igneous and sedimentary rocks among them – gathered from various parts of India are on display. One can also get up close with a dinosaur fossil and ammonites. The museum also houses samples of semi-precious stones found naturally



Students go through the exhibits; and during a field visit.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

or mined.

“Discovering marine fossils is a special experience, many of them have been sourced from our field works at various sites in Tamil Nadu include the Ariyalur region,” says Suresh Gandhi, Professor and Head of the Department of Geology, University of Madras.

During special occasions such as Micropaleontology Day and Environment Day, the Department sends out invitations to neighbouring schools to visit the museum and have a first-hand experience of the geological treasures.

“Besides this museum by the Department of Geology, we also have the Department of Applied Geology where one can learn about geological evolution. Students are welcome through the year, they just need to notify us in

advance,” says the professor.

Careers in geology

In Chennai, the University of Madras and Anna University are the only two institutions that offer a postgraduate programme in Geology.

This year, the entrance examination for M. Sc Geology by the University of Madras will be held on July 14. Professor Suresh says the number of opportunities in the field of geology has grown over the years. “One can appear for the UPSC examination with geology as an elective, which is preferred by many as it is easy to grasp. Most of the oil fields recruit geologists and they are also needed for ground water studies,” he says. For more details, call professor Suresh at 9443806534.

A free photocopy machine at Presidency College

Students of Presidency College do not have to leave the campus in search of a photocopy machine. They are provided one free-of-cost, thanks to the Madras Presidency College Alumni Association (MPCAA) that sponsored the machine.

For the benefit of aspirants applying for college admission, a photocopy machine was provided to take out prints of documents required for admission, free-of-cost. Besides, students are being per-

mitted to take photocopies relating to their study.

“The machine was presented last year and an average of 2,000 copies are taken every day. During admission time, this number increases,” says C.A. Somasundaram, an alumnus of the college.

For differently abled students, an air-conditioned computer lab was set up. A solar system has come up on the campus with the help of Temenos at a cost of ₹70 lakhs, said a release.



PLAN YOUR WEEK

Free computer classes at Bhavan's

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Gandhi Institute of Computer Education and Information Technology Centre at Mylapore offers free computer education to the educated unemployed youth belonging to the economically backward section of society. Courses such as MS Office, Tally and DTP have helped many students secure employment at various levels. Senior citizens can also enrol for Microsoft Word, Excel and Internet courses. The last date for collection and submission of filled-in application forms is June 25. The Institute is at East Mada Street, Mylapore. Contact: 24611312, 24643420

Handloom fair in Mylapore

All India Handlooms and Handicrafts is conducting sari and kurti mela at North Mada Street, Mylapore.

Rural artisans from the eastern part of India are featuring a collection of cotton and silk handlooms, tie and dye, dress material, West Bengal cotton saris and many more. A 10% discount on handicrafts and 20% discount on handlooms is being offered to customers. The exhibition-cum-sale ends on June 20.

Job fair today in Thailavaram

Chengalpattu District Collectorate, District Employment & Career Guidance Centre, Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board are organising a job fair in on June 8 in which companies from private sector will take part.

It will be held at the premises of Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board, Thailavaram Project Area, Thailavaram near Guduvanchery. Time: From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Candidates aged between 18 and 40 can attend, says a press release. They should bring relevant documents, identification proof, and passport-size photographs. Candidates should register on the website: <https://www.tnprivatejobs.tn.gov.in>.

Celebrating Father's Day



To celebrate Father's Day, The Raymond Shop in Adyar, in collaboration with Iris Events, presents “Dashing Dad” on June 15 at the store. The event is open to fathers of all ages. For registration and other details, call 98847 83510 / 98412 06506

Hottest topic of the season

While everyone stresses about the soaring mercury, these three groups of researchers are studying heat stress in and around Chennai and how it impacts human health and the economy. They share the details of their work with *The Hindu Downtown*

LIFFY THOMAS



A man quenches his thirst with water from a sprinkler at Marina Beach.
FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

Collecting data

Professor Vignesh K.S. and his team of researchers from the Occupational Safety and Disaster Risk Management Department of SRM University are waiting for the sun to burn bright. The June 3, 2025 show-ers in the city forced them to postpone their plans to set up a camp at an industrial location in Thiruvottiyur where they will be collecting data about heat stress.

In April-May, the team completed the field study from Chengalpattu to Pallavaram. Industrial zones, in particular areas classified as “red” (in terms of contribution to global warming) by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board have been the focus of the team this year. They have set up camp near an industrial area with all their devices including an exclusive heat stress monitor.

“Heat stress is calculated based on relative humidity, wet-bulb temperature and globe temperature. Through geospatial technology, we cover areas within a one to three kilometre radius of an industry to understand how the community is getting affected. From that buffer we will access and locate a few sample

places where heat exposure is high,” says the assistant professor.

Once the field reports are completed, they work on presenting their studies and publishing them in leading science journals.

Vignesh says their reports played a crucial role in Tamil Nadu government formulating a Heat Action Plan (HAP).

“We are also in a capacity to give recommendations at a regional level on actions that need to be taken during heatwaves and other calamities,” says the professor.

Their role does not end with bringing out a report rather they engage with communities. “We do training programmes with local communities that are vulnerable to heat. Many people do not know what is dehydration, heat stroke, especially those working on the highways. We sensitise them as per public health standards,” he adds.

During the pandemic, the department studied air pollution levels in various neighbourhoods.

“As researchers, we generally focus on pre-disaster which is prevention, mitigation, preparedness and early warning.”

Studying the vulnerable population

It is a hot and humid Friday in Chennai and beyond. A team of researchers from Chennai have headed to the Marakkanam salt pans in Villupuram district. Team members have fanned out to different sections of the salt pans.

One researcher is collecting urine sample of workers, another is collecting blood, a group is interviewing workers and another set of them is measuring heat with sophisticated instruments.

When the sun goes down they would return to their lab at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research to document their findings. Once the field evidence is consolidated, analysed, peer-reviewed, the team would work on advocacy. This research is needed to better understand the impact of heat and heatwaves on human health, especially the vulnerable population, to develop effective mitigation strategies and improve public health interventions.

Vidhya Venugopal, professor of Climate Change, Occupational and Environmental Health at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, who is leading this team of researchers, says many lesser-known heat-related illnesses often go unrecognised.

As a global expert in heat and health, Vidhya has studied how high temperatures affect kidney, pregnant women and communities among others. While the direct affect of heat stroke is widely acknowledged, kidney ailments and cardiovascular diseases are not commonly associated with heat.

Having worked in the area for the last 16 years, she says they have rich data to show that heat stress poses significant health risks for vulnerable groups.

This summer, their outreach work extended to street vendors in the city. They like to focus more on women, especially as their working conditions are such that they avoid drinking water and this leads to dehydration and other issues, she says.

“We try to reach out to make sure vulnerable communities are not impacted so much by heat. If exposure is less the impact is less,” says the Velachery resident.

Towards the end of this month, the team will be visiting a research practice centre of the institute located on the outskirts of the city to study and sensitise those coming to the outpatient department. After all, heat preparedness should be a 365-day effort.

Resettlement sites in sharp focus

Chennai resident Suchismita Goswami, who is currently pursuing her PhD in the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, is carrying out research on the new risks in resettlement sites in Chennai. This work brings her to the city.

Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board’s resettlement site in Perumbakkam and the AIR resettlement colony in Thiruvottiyur are where her field works are concentrated. These resettlement facilities had been planned to provide safe and secure housing for communities; however today, floods and heat have impacted them socially and economically.

With heatwaves being a big concern for the State Government, Suchismita thinks there should be a special focus on resettlement sites.

“The findings are very particular to the resettlement sites and as a researcher you cannot universalise that,” says Suchismita, who had a stint with the Madras School of Social Work as a faculty.

During fieldwork, she found it particularly challenging to initiate conversations with residents about heat-

related stress. “Given Chennai’s high temperatures, heat is often normalised and rarely discussed as a distinct concern

to resettlement sites,” she says.

The resettlement sites severely lack green cover and also experience long hours of power outage in comparison to the rest of the city during summer months.

The resettlement sites are spread across vast tracts of land, and residents have to walk long distances due to the absence of last mile connectivity. They are typically inhabited by the most marginalised groups who cannot afford alternative housing options within the city.

The only formal heat-relief measure mentioned by the administration was distribution of electrolyte water at health centres. Residents however have found their own coping mechanisms such as extending the building, closing shops during the afternoon, installing sheds and curtains, and investing in multiple cooling devices.

The closing of shops or covering store fronts to block heat can reduce business visibility and income. These are new forms of risks which affect their health and finances directly, she adds.

A home production

What awaits gated communities that assume the responsibilities of facility management? There is the possibility of workers becoming trusted lieutenants

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

A facilities management agency is a cake ordered off the shelf. An in-house facilities management team is a cake baked at home. The latter obviously calls for a greater outlay of energy and time. But the icing on this cake is thicker, double-layered. Layer one: owners at a gated community that opts for this bold arrangement, actually begin to “own” the space, every jot of it. Layer two: the facilities management team they put together, hand-picking workers and assigning them to roles, can be won over in ways that a team sent in by an outside agency with a human resources roster, cannot be. The workers are likely to be in for the long haul. And as time rolls on, the possibility of workers rising to the status of trusted lieutenants increases.

One finds this possibility illustrated with arresting images from the flood experience of The Central Park South (TCPS) in Sholinganallur in 2015. The workers pitched tent at the gated community. If it were dry harbour they were looking for, these workers could have found it elsewhere. They stayed at the community – occupying vacant flats – in the days after the floods to ease the challenges it faced. Remember, there were places on earth drier than TCPS: at this community, vehicles were marooned, some gulping rainwater all the way into their engines.

The fact that even now workers are offered places downstairs where they can stay and cook, and an AC room for a dash of comfort, proves offering shelter to them during floods was not a calculated, self-serving move.

“They are not servants. They are helpers,” says Rakesh Ohri, president of the TCPS Owners’ Association, his conviction crystallised by the memory of many difficulties surmounted, and achievements scaled, all because these workers went the extra yard. Rakesh notes that when the managing committee is running the show, dignity of the workers can be safeguarded more easily. Residents are instructed not to scold workers; complaints are handled by the managing committee to maintain respect. He is of the view that a



From Bollineni Hillside.



facilities management agency would not give this instruction to residents with the same emphasis.

A yard for a yard – that is how it works. Loyalty is earned and goodwill returned. Rakesh notes that one sign of a happy workplace and even loyalty is that on an average, a worker stays on the team for 10 to 11 years. If a worker hits a rough patch, the Association extends a financial lifeline – advances with a flexible repayment plan stretching up to a year. “Some repay earlier, some take the full period. And if they genuinely can’t pay for one month, we grant an extension,” explains Rakesh. Health insurance is another non-negotiable thread in this safety net. A group policy covers all workers. What is done for these workers in their darkest hour, returns as burnished loyalty.

“One of our plumbers lost his 25-year-old son recently to leukaemia” – when the youngster was battling the condition, the association had banded together to help the family with medical and other expenses.

Workers join residents in festivities, breaking bread and thereby, barriers. “We do Dandiya, and on May Day we arrange free food,” says Rakesh. “During Diwali, we arrange short eats and programmes. They are en-

couraged to participate in that.” In these shared moments, the line between “worker” and “resident” blurs into a sense of a joint family. Some communities grasp what a team formed and installed by them can do for them, but balk at taking the exercise all the way to the finish line.

Sujatha Y, secretary of the owners’ association at The Central Park East – a hop away from TCPS – says her community was the first in the area to have a home-grown team running the facility.

“We have seen the TCPS model – it is very structured and policy-driven,” says Sujatha Y, secretary of the owners’ association. Sujatha notes that “here at Central Park East, we are a bit more flexible” – some workers are hired directly; the community also goes to contractors to find

teams for certain functions.

Different strokes for different folks, indeed! East does have a group insurance option for workers it has appointed, but cares for the absolutely helpless through non-institutionalised aid.

“We have elderly gardeners with no bank accounts or family support,” Sujatha says. “We make sure they are looked after.” Financial help here is often personal and spontaneous, with residents stepping up to support the workers in paying their children’s education fees or medical bills. Some community members contribute to programs supporting children’s education, for example, treasurer’s family trust aiding economically weak children with a minimum of 60% marks.

At Navin’s Maris Dale in Semmancherry, Arokya Inian shares a unique way their community cultivates bonds. “We have garden spaces with fruit-bearing trees, and the harvest is shared with our workers,” he explains. This gesture isn’t just about food – it is about sharing the fruits of collective effort, fostering dignity and connection. They have also embraced sustainability: recyclable waste is collected and sold, and the proceeds distributed among workers to

cover minor expenses such as tea and refreshments. It is a small but meaningful way to say, “We are in this together.” At Bollineni Hillside in Arasankalani, the owners association has made arrangements for staff to live onsite in dorms. It is a win-win situation. The need for daily commuting has been struck off the list for the staff who avail this option. And for the residents, there is 24/7 availability of workers for urgent repairs. Staff receive group medical, life, and accident insurance. And the owners association has introduced a system of incentives to motivate the staff to do quality work.

Secretary K. Thirugnanam highlights another key aspect of this arrangement: easy knowledge transfer through mentorship. For example, experienced electricians train apprentices, creating a pipeline of talent that is clued into the unique power system within the community.

The challenges

In this scenario, committee members do not just step into the shoes of a facility management services provider, but wear an additional pair of shoes over the ones they are already wearing. A majority of them do this work in the midst of another work, one that puts bread on their table. In some seasons, the added responsibility can get overwhelming.

At Bollineni Hillside, Thirugnanam explains: “For example, in May, despite my responsibilities as a government advocate, I dedicated all my time outside of court to association work – covering recurring maintenance, new developments, public relations and government liaison.”

He emphasised the workload intensifies during certain periods, such as the rainy season, which requires additional planning and precautionary measures. He adds the in-house management committee is sizeable and “collective effort by (treasurer Senthilkumar, president Sajeekumar, 23 EC members and Thirugnanam himself as secretary) makes things easy” At TCPS, Rakesh notes that while many members have day jobs, two or three of them from the core committee are involved in daily operations. “I do not have a day job. Two or three of us do not. One is a housewife who also has other commitments such as singing. So, these responsibilities are managed as and when required.”



Reclaiming waste



Glimpses of the workshop.



GANGA SRIDHAR

EcoKonnectors Trust, in collaboration with Munnnetram Trust and FICCI FLO Chennai, recently conducted a sustainability workshop “Make Best Out of Waste” at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Mylapore.

Designed to empower women self-help groups and specially-abled individuals by equipping them with practical upcycling skills that can create viable business opportunities and to help environment enthusiasts integrate sustain-

able living into their daily routines, the workshop featured a hands-on experience in sustainable crafting, led by trainer Malathi and her team from Munnnetram Trust.

Participants learnt to transform temple flower waste into sambranis and handmade soaps; to create activated charcoal from coconut shells and its various applications, including charcoal pouches, soaps, and face masks.

Over 50 participants, including members from self-help groups and non-profit organisations such as SNEH, V-Excel, Nalamdan Trust, Kalliamman Trust, Vidya Sagar School, Vriksha along with school

students and sustainability supporters engaged in experiential learning.

The sambrani-making session was particularly interactive, where participants mixed their own blends and used a sambrani-making gun to craft fragrant sambrani bullets.

Similarly, the soap-making workshop provided participants with an opportunity to cut the soap base, observe the melting and mixing process, and mould the soaps themselves.

Not only did they gain practical insights, but they also took home a sample of their creations, reinforcing

their newfound skills.

Throughout the event, the core team—Ashok, Bala, Ganga, and Sumithra from EcoKonnectors Trust—imparted knowledge on sustainability, reinforcing the importance of upcycling as a practical and impactful solution.

To ensure continuity of learning, e-certificates and a PDF instruction manual were provided to all participants, allowing them to replicate and further spread the upcycling techniques learnt.

Here are some feedback who attended the workshop

Tejasvini Rao (CA student from Adyar), a participant, pointed out:

“As someone who has recently gotten into sustainability, I left with a lot of insights on how I can implement it in my life. I loved the sambrani making tutorial the most.”

Another participant Iswari Muthu noted: “The trainers were very clear in their explanation. The organisers had planned the workshop meticulously and we were kept engaged throughout.”

Kathirvel of Kalliamman Charitable and Educational Trust, Thondiarpet, had a word of praise for organising live demos.

(Ganga Sridhar is a resident of Raja Street Mandaveli and co-founder EcoKonnectors Trust)

RSIC summer programme concludes at IIT Madras

Thirty-seven students from schools in and around Chennai wrapped up a summer programme at Research Science Initiative Chennai (RSIC), jointly hosted by Padma Seshadri Group of Schools and IIT Madras. The summer programme is an annual feature.

Selected from a competitive pool of nearly 250 applicants through a screening and interview process, these students took home life stories, a renewed sense of curiosity apart from immersive academic experiences and project reports. Over the course of the programme, they attended around 90 lectures and took part in 15 hands on research



▼ Lakshmi Narayanan presents a certificate to a student at the valedictory function of RSIC's summer programme. Also seen are Sheela Rajendra; and M.S.Ananth. PHOTO : R.RAVINDRAN

projects, and each received a stipend of ₹ 3000.

“Living on the IIT campus while still in school and attending lectures by IIT professors were really the best part of the programme,” said Aisvarya Lakshme Kannan, studying grade 12 at PSBB Nungambakkam, one of the attendees of the summer programme. “Beyond lectures on science, we also had extra mural sessions where we took part in nature walks, theatre classes as well as yoga sessions every day,” she said. At the valedictory function, Dean & Director and Correspondent of PSBB Group of Schools, Sheela Rajendra addressed the students to not follow the crowd but chart their own

paths, understand their aptitude and passion, and what truly brings them joy.

“Mental curiosity to learn and question is something everyone needs to develop,” said former Vice Chairman of Cognizant Technologies, Lakshmi Narayanan. He also spoke about how a student needs to be technologically and data literate irrespective of their career streams, as well as human literate including critical and design thinking. Guest of honour, former Director of IIT Madras, M.S. Ananth spoke about the principles of teaching, character building, and nuances of research for students as cornerstones of meaningful education.

She has retired after 41 years of service at the company. At the farewell function, she spoke about how this office in Nungambakkam defined both her routine and life. Shiny is a resident of Choolaimedu

Shiny Wilson bids farewell to FCI

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Shiny Wilson, who was the first woman flag bearer at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona and the first Indian woman athlete to reach the women's 800 m semifinals at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, retired from service after four decades. The four-time Olympian was serving as general manager Food Corporation of India (FCI) located in Nungambakkam.

The farewell function was an emotional event for Shiny. It was attended by Ashutosh Agnihotri, chairman and managing director FCI; and Jacintha Lazarus, executive director (south), FCI. Her husband, Wilson Cherian, an international swimmer, who retired from ICF after 43 years of service, was also present.

Known for her simplicity and reticent nature, Shiny was held in high esteem at FCI, and her farewell function proved why she is a respected personality.

At her acceptance speech, Shiny recalled her childhood days and her Olympics experience. Shiny



Shiny Wilson during the farewell function; and from an athletic meet.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

has taken part in three Asian Games, six Asian championships and seven SAF Games. She reminisced about her 41 years and three months of service in FCI. "I am thankful to have put a long and satisfying service at FCI," she said while praising FCI's sports scholarship given to sportspersons and its consistency in recruiting sportspersons.

Shiny's love, passion and commitment to athletics is astonishing. After a few months after giving birth to her first daughter in Octob-

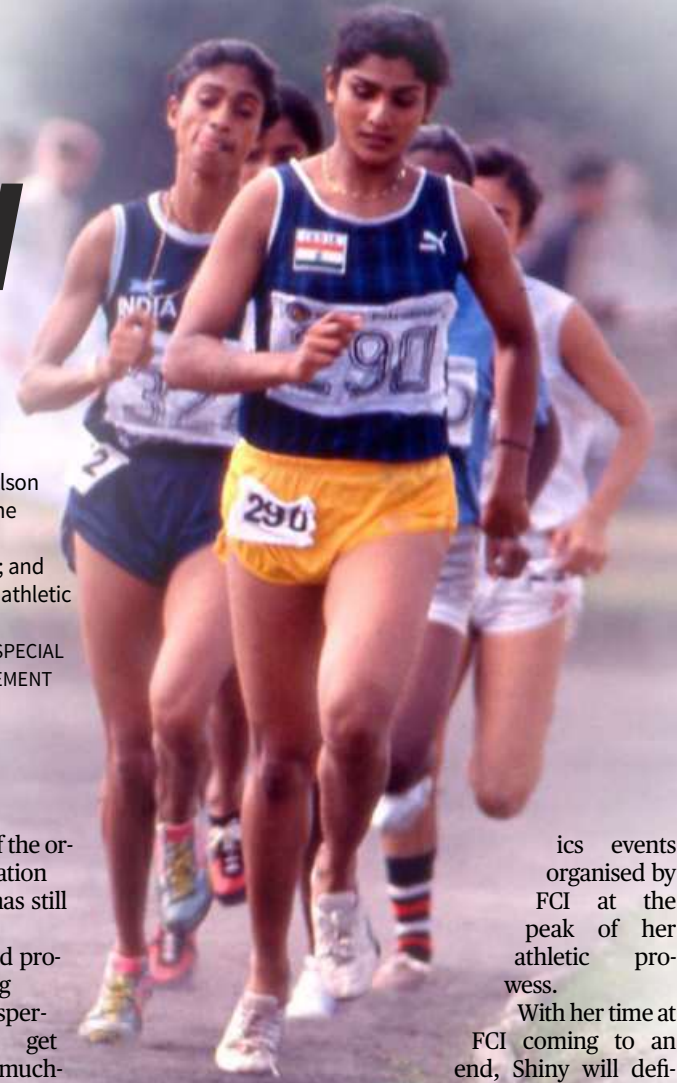
er 1990, she started to train in Bengaluru. "When my daughter was nine months old, I became a National champion in 800m and within a year, I won the Asian championships 400m gold and 800m silver," said Shiny, a resident of Gill Nagar in Choolaimedu.

Shiny came to Chennai from Kerala in 1992-93 and went to represent Tamil Nadu in numerous National competitions.

After she joined FCI in 1984, she was one of those instrumental in fast-tracking the scholarships initia-

tive of the organisation that has still today helped promising sportspersons get the much-needed stipend. Shiny continued to perform and shine in global and Asian events while being an employee of FCI. So much so that she even used to take part in all athlet-

ics events organised by FCI at the peak of her athletic prowess. With her time at FCI coming to an end, Shiny will definitely enjoy her free time while putting her heart and soul into her many roles which includes selector of the Indian team and a nominated member of the Asian Athletic Commission.



A new store in Mylapore for children's needs

Chennai Tiny's Treasures is a new store in Mylapore offering shoppers all the essential items for children.

Located on the second floor of Akshara Play School on Kesava Perumal South Street, Mylapore, the store stocks toys, school bags, lunch boxes, water bottles, flasks and stationery.

"Chennai Tiny's Treasures is an extended arm of Akshara Play School, run by my mother-in-law Jayashree Mugunthan. My

love for children and my wish to make all needs of children available to them in one place led to the launch of this store. The venture aligns with Akshara Play School's commitment to holistic child development and convenience for parents," says Lakshmi Krishna in a press release.

All 'back-to-school' essentials are currently available at discounts, the release adds.

For details, call 9361212731, 9841047058.



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The transformative power of Kalai Thiruvizha: a teacher's journey

A. AMUDHA

As educators, we often walk a tightrope – balancing academics with the complex realities of students' lives. I once believed that academic success alone could uplift students from challenging circumstances. But my perspective changed profoundly with Kalai Thiruvizha, a cultural festival introduced in Tamil Nadu's government schools.

Initially, I approached the festival with skepticism. Could artistic pursuits really contribute to a student's future in the same way as academic achievement? But as the festival unfolded, I began to see a transformation—not just in my students, but in myself.

Kalai Thiruvizha celebrates Tamil culture through dance, music and visual arts. At first, it appeared to be just another extracurricular activity, but it revealed something much deeper: the power of holistic development. I witnessed students – especially those considered problematic – redirecting their energy into meaningful expression. Girls once caught for mischief now practised “parai attam” during lunch breaks. Shy children found their voice in music; aggressive ones found purpose in dance.

One story that will always stay with me is that of a quiet girl from a single-parent household. Her mother worked as a daily wage labourer. Burdened by her circum-



During the 2024-25 edition of Kalai Thiruvizha. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

stances, she often sat silent and withdrawn in class. During Kalai Thiruvizha practice sessions, I noticed her tapping her feet softly to a rhythm. There was a natural grace in her movements that caught my eye. With gentle encouragement, she joined the freestyle dance team. Initially hesitant, she gradually blossomed. Her eyes began to reflect confidence, her body language transformed.

These experiences taught me that students are not mere vessels for academic instruction. They are individuals carrying unseen burdens. Art gave them a space to process their emotions, express their inner worlds, and find healing. More than just creative outlets, these performances became lifelines – building confidence, team-

work, and discipline.

As a teacher, this journey forced me to reassess my assumptions. I had been addressing only part of my students' needs by focusing exclusively on academics. Kalai Thiruvizha revealed that arts are not a distraction but an essential component of education. They foster emotional resilience, cultural connection and a sense of community.

The transformation was not limited to students. It changed me. I came to understand that teaching is not just about results and scores. It's about seeing the whole child—acknowledging their emotional, social, and creative dimensions. Arts and education are not opposing forces. Instead, they are partners in shaping well-rounded individuals.

To my fellow educators: embracing the arts in education is not about compromising academic standards. It is about enriching our students' lives and offering them the tools to heal, connect and thrive. The transformation I witnessed was real, powerful and lasting.

In this balance of creativity and knowledge lies the true essence of education. Through festivals such as Kalai Thiruvizha, we are not just teaching – we are building resilient, confident, culturally rooted individuals ready to face the world.

(Amudha is a teacher at Government Model Presidency Girls Higher Secondary School on Gengu Reddy Road in Egmore)

Stories from mythology



RA Puram resident Lakshmi Vibhu conducted a storytelling session titled “The Ramayana Rahasyams” on June 6 in Gopalapuram. Four children from Vidya Mandir School (Rachana, Saranga, Supriti and Vedanth) also participated in the narration of the story of Ramayana.

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