

ANNA NAGAR

Purasawalkam » Villivakkam » Kolathur » Nazarathpettai » Pattabiram » Maduravoyal » Koyambedu » Tiruverkadu » Puzhal » Kilpauk » Perambur » Mogappair

Avadi » Ayyappakkam » Tiruninravur » Nerkundram » Moolakadai » Ayanavaram » Retteri » Padi » Ambattur » Tirumullaivoyal » Aminjikarai » Vysarpadi » Red Hills

READERS WRITE

Commercial vehicles eat up road space at Thiru-Vi-Ka Park

I am a resident of Pulla Avenue in Shenoy Nagar since 1957 and am saddened to witness the degradation of this beautiful and tranquil residential locality.

In recent times, we find many vehicles, especially private buses and commercial lorries parked along the periphery of Thiru Vi Ka Park in Shenoy Nagar. Measures need to be taken to check the parking of such vehicles and mechanics using this area as sheds. The blaring of horns and heavy throttling are a nuisance to senior citizens and students residing in this area.

The Corporation has not provided garbage bins on the western side of Thiru Vi Ka Park, forcing residents to dump their waste on the roads thereby attracting stray dogs, and conservancy workers demand money to clear the waste.

There is no proper platform along the periphery of the park making it difficult for pedestrians to walk. Besides, it is essential to make the circular road one-way to facilitate smooth flow of traffic.

K.S. Anantharaman
Pulla Avenue, Shenoy Nagar

Letters to this section must be emailed to downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in

Tristar Park Road in Mogappair marked by neglect



There are roads that are not taken, to borrow a thought from Robert Frost. On the other end of the spectrum, there are roads that are taken, only to their detriment; and left bruised and bleeding. Tristar Park Road in Mogappair Eri Scheme falls in the latter category.

Tristar Park Road is an offshoot of Sixth Main Road. It is a cul-de-sac, literally and in a figurative sense. It stands stubbornly neglected.

For years, it remained nameless until finally in 2021, the name Tristar Park Road was bestowed on it by the Greater Chennai Corporation, matching it with the adjacent Tristar Corporation Park.

On the map, Tristar Park Road was among the few roads in Mo-

gappair with a lush cover of copper pod and neem trees, with gulmohar shooting into view. However, nature ceased to be, thanks to human activity.

Currently, the road is used to park vehicles seized by the police, which have long rusted and gone to seed. Corporation workers find it convenient to dump trash, debris and waste on its sidelines, adding to its woes.

Tristar Park Road has not been cleaned for long and is in a deplorable state today.

It would be beneficial for the authorities concerned to address these issues and to restore the road to what it once was.

Badrinath
Mogappair

Sixteen-year-old packs a punch

KEERTHIVASAN K.

E. Kebiraj is one of the most popular martial arts coaches in India. As the general secretary of Mixed Martial Arts Federation of India, the 45-year-old, an exponent of taekwondo, karate, jujitsu, boxing, kickboxing and MMA, is trying his best to make the sport accessible to all across age groups.

Currently, he has around 550 trainees in various clubs spread across Anna Nagar West, Mylapore, Mogappair and Vanagaram.

Among his many talented

wards is 16-year-old daughter K. Amaliya.

An eleventh standard student of Church Park, Amaliya is well-versed in sports such as boxing, taekwondo, wushu and karate and is itching to perform in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) Fight in the future.

"Amaliya is one of the best in India, excelling in boxing, taekwondo, karate and wushu. I also want her to perform in MMA at the International level," says Kebiraj, who is the chief instructor and chief examiner of Budokai Karate-Do Training School International and Hi-Impact Mixed Martial Arts in Anna Nagar West while also being a coach for the Indian

Among the best in India in boxing, taekwondo, karate and wushu, K. Amaliya has now set her sights on mixed martial arts



K. Amaliya

Army.

MMA, insists Kebi, is important for all girls and women as it teach-

es them to be independent and brave.

Amaliya has many feathers to

her cap; and her versatility and accomplishments in different martial sports make her a unique talent. The 16-year-old has performed creditably in the Wushu Junior Nationals in July in Coimbatore and Khelo India Youth Games in Mangalore in 2024. Her confidence received a major boost when she won a gold in the International National Taekwondo U-17 championships held in Bardoli (Surat) in December 2024. She has earlier won gold medals in International karate events in Sri Lanka and Malaysia. She won gold in the National boxing championships in u-17 category in Chennai in 2022.

"It was because of my father I took up the sport. And my family is interested in martial arts. My mom likes martial arts, my uncle is a black belt in jujitsu, a Japanese martial art, and my aunt is a karate coach," she says.

A committed and disciplined athlete, Amaliya many plans up her sleeve. "I want to take part in Olympics in boxing and taekwondo and fight in MMA," she signs off.

CMDA develops GCC's playground at Kannigapuram



Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority is upgrading the Greater Chennai Corporation-run playground at Brightons Road at Kannigapuram in Vyasarpadi.

According to a CMDA official, the playground is spread across an area of 3.5 acre and work is under way. The project is carried out at a cost of ₹12.69 crore.

It has been six months since the work began.

As part of the project, the playground will get exclusive courts for Kabbadi and Silambam, children's play area; and an outdoor gym and a three-metre wide walking track.

Besides, a ground-plus two-floor building is being constructed. It is

meant for indoor games including boxing and badminton, and two gyms of which one is for women.

Two galleries with a seating capacity of 280 each is another feature. With respect to vehicular parking lot, eight four-wheelers and 60 two-wheelers can be accommodated. Regular users of the playground hail this work.

"This playground must be five-decades-old. I have been playing here since I was eight. Today, I am a cricket coach in a private school. For years, this playground has been known for football. Football matches have been conducted by local clubs. Cricket was also popular here. In recent years, Kabbadi and Silambam are also practised,"

says 43-year-old K. Stalin.

Regulars pointed out that problem of waterlogging should be addressed. Now many buildings including multi-storey ones have come up in the vicinity causing days of waterlogging at the playground, they say.

They also underscored the need for maintenance.

"Crores of money was spent towards revamping the playground around eight years ago, but for want of regular maintenance, the facilities provided as part of that project were in a shambles in a few months. Hence, Greater Chennai Corporation should ensure maintenance is in place," adds Stalin.

Regulars also suggested opera-



Illustrations shared by the CMDA; and work under way at the playground at Kannigapuram in Vyasarpadi on February 15.
PHOTO: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM



tion of small buses on Brightons Road which would help in easy access of the playground.

"This road is wide enough to accommodate small buses. Once the construction of the flyover which is under way in the vicinity at Gane-

sapuram gets completed buses should be operated via the playground," says Stalin.

This playground falls under Ward 72 of Zone 6 - Thiru Vi Ka Nagar.

Text by L. Kanthimathi

Footpath in school zone usurped by garbage bins



A section of the footpath on Madhavaram High Road along the compound wall of a Greater Chennai Corporation-run school is out of bounds for pedestrians as they are occupied by a line of garbage bins.

Considering the safety of children, Perambur Neighbourhood Development Forum, a citizens group, has raised this issue with

the Corporation from time to time but its efforts were to no avail.

"All kinds of waste including leftovers and offal could be spotted here. Further, Madhavaram High Road witnesses heavy traffic. Hence, this is not an appropriate place to have waste bins," says Raghukumar Choodamani, convenor.

Chaos at Bricklin Road

Overflowing waste bins, discarded furniture, haphazard parking of vehicles, and encroachments by shops have made Bricklin Road in Otteri narrow. Pedestrians are at the risk of being hit by vehicles.

A Greater Chennai Corporation-run crematorium is located on the road. Therefore, in case of a funeral procession, the road becomes further congested. Mortuary vans and hearse vehicles are also parked along the road permanently.

The road witnesses heavy traffic flow but it moves at a snail's pace, especially during peak hours. A good number of Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses also frequent this road.

"Vehicles are being diverted through this road as metro rail construction is under way at the vicinity. The Greater Chennai Corporation and the Greater Chennai Traffic Police should do needful to ensure pedestrian safety and a hassle-free drive," says a passer-by.



Brick Kiln Road. PHOTO: AKHILA EASWARAN

Toastmasters celebrate a milestone

A stamp was released to
commemorate the centennial year

District 120 Toastmasters celebrated a grand Centennial milestone of Toastmasters International on February 9, 2025, at Grand Chennai by GRT Hotels. The event witnessed a gathering of hundreds of enthusiastic Toastmasters, including present and past district leaders, who came together to commemorate 100 years of empowering communication and leadership, says a press release.

The event was led by Mohanakrishnan G, DTM (District Director), Parthasarathy PD, DTM (Program Quality Director), and Aswathy Rajan, DTM (Club Growth Director). Key district leaders, including Arun Kumar SN (Public Relations Manager), Vijayalakshmi S, DTM (Finance Manager), and Vaisali Sridharbabu, DTM (Administration Manager), played pivotal roles in making the celebration a memorable one. A special highlight was the presence of Nina John, DTM, a founding member of Toastmasters in Tamil Nadu since 2004 and a dedicated member for over 20 years. A distinguished Past District Governor, Nina John's inspiring journey and invaluable contributions to the fraternity were recognised and celebrated during the event, the release adds.

The Centennial Stamp Release was a defining moment, presided over by Srinivasan Ramani, Deputy National Editor of *The Hindu*. The commemorative stamp was presented to District Director Mohanakrishnan G, DTM, alongside Parthasarathy PD, DTM, and Dr. Aswathy Rajan, DTM.

Another proud moment was the launch of the district newsletter One Two Zero, unveiled by Meenakshi Perikaruppan, District Director of District Youth Services, Rotary District 3233, and received by Arun Kumar SN, Public Relations Manager.

The celebrations combined learning with fun through a captivating Kahoot Quiz session conducted by Vaisali Sridharbabu, DTM, featuring questions on Toastmasters' rich history and present achievements.

The morning began with a delightful breakfast and concluded on a high note with a grand cake-cutting ceremony, symbolising the district's journey and future endeavors. The Centennial Celebration stood as a testament to the unwavering spirit and camaraderie of District 120 Toastmasters, embracing 100 years of communication, leadership, and transformation.



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25
Photography
Exhibitions

15
Venues
Across Chennai

130
Exhibiting
Artists



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Rotary's Chariot Awards event held



Rotary Club of Madras Southwest organised its Chariot Awards 2025 event recently. According to a press release, five awards were presented to eminent personalities from various fields in recognition of their accomplishment and contribution to society. They were presented in the presence of the chief guest, Padma Shri awardee Nalli Kuppaswami Chetti, adds the release.

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SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

In Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa wakes up to an unsettling truth: he has transformed overnight into an insect, with no say in his own becoming. Neeraja Arjun's transformation was not entirely unbidden, certainly not grotesque, but indubitably as life-shifting as Gregor Samsa's. At CIT Colony in Mylapore, Neeraja lays up unlikely treasures – citrus peels and similar organic discards – and hobnobs with microbes, in a spirited effort to impart worth to waste; and she has hired herself as an unapologetic spokesperson for alternative organic cleaning solutions, clambering on to platforms where the message can be amplified. This picture is indeed vastly removed from the one that defined her everyday reality only a few years ago: a homemaker dabbling in sustainable practices and applying them within the closed walls of familial wellbeing.

Neeraja dons the mantle of a bio enzyme maker and she dons it in a manner campaigners wear their ideologies. Unlike most other bio enzyme makers, she ensured early on that the activity broke out of the prison walls of her kitchen. A few years into bio enzyme making, she kicked the activity upstairs, collaborating with a commercial bio enzyme manufacturer. She would go on to fashion her own brand, called PUVI which she promotes through her sustainability store called The Canopy Tales. However, the most significant aspect of her work, one that steers her a whole galaxy away from DIY bio enzyme makers and even a horde of those practising it professionally is her desire to share her knowledge with women self-help groups. Neeraja speaks on sustainability at various fora, particularly on college campuses and in corporate houses.

The road to Mylapore began in Tiruchirappalli. In the prelude to this journey, her hands were full, one cradling a newborn, the other clutching a questionnaire resulting from introspection: how does one cleanse without consequence? How does one strip away dirt without leaving behind something far worse?

"I just wanted a safer way to wash my child's clothes," Neeraja recalls. That is when she found bio enzymes and by 2017 mastered the science-art of making it through gratuitously but helpfully offered YouTube tutorials. While the world stockpiled disinfectants during the pandemic, her home was stationed

A solution at multiple levels



in a microbial utopia, sterilised by raw life, not chemicals. It was not until 2021 that the real shift happened: when she moved to Chennai. Her research deepened, leading to her mentor, Shrekant, who is based out of Coimbatore and owns a brand (@houseofgrownest) that makes and promotes sustainability-related products. Their insights reinforced her faith in bio enzymes. From having seeped into her routine, bio enzyme making was now redefining it. It was defining her on the personal and professional fronts.

Educational training

A snatch of a back story would place this pursuit in perspective.

Neeraja's educational training geared towards environment-related professional practice proved a cul-de-sac, failing to take her to the promised destination. She is qualified in GIS for environmental modelling and management, which she studied in Europe on a scholarship in 2009-10. After returning to India, she found that GIS was still a nascent industry

and struggled to find opportunities in the field. With marriage, she settled down in Tiruchirappalli, where she lived for nearly a decade until 2021. With localities marked by stretches of paddy fields and banana plantations, Tiruchirappalli supported her passion for organic farming. She visited many an organic farm to understand

Bio enzyme making usually occupies the DIY stratosphere, the pursuit entrapped within the prison walls of private kitchens. Here is a resident of Chennai who set it free, building up a repertoire of bio enzyme varieties and putting them out in the market; and most importantly, sharing the lessons from this journey with women self-help groups to empower them



organic practices. In those years, she was unconsciously searching for her place in the sustainability ecosystem, settling on a pursuit that would help her shore it up in a small way. The unspoken desire materialised when she discovered her metier in bio enzyme making, following the move to Chennai. Everything seemed to happen on cue. She found herself racing towards the summit of Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs – self-actualisation.

First, in only a little expendi-

ture of time, her repertoire for bio enzyme making broadened. "I love experimenting and bio enzyme making gave me that space. I have crafted over 30 varieties of bio enzymes, some defined by known and regular raw materials such as lemon and orange peels and others by less-known, the latter list including flowers, notably marigold, Asian pigeonwings (*sangu push-pam*) and night jasmine (*parijath-am*)." Between them, the 30 varieties of bio enzymes serve three applications: as floor cleaner, laundry liquid and dishwashing liquid.

Bio enzyme making might be ruled by formulas, neatly laid down ratios of ingredients. While swearing by the science of it, Neeraja is enamoured by the craftsmanship glazing it. "I love the unpredictability of it," she admits. "Each batch is different. Each one has its own scent, its own personality."

In the early years when she was making bio enzymes on a reasonably sizeable scale, partly due to a collaboration with a manufacturer, she was yoked to a demanding routine.

Challenges at various levels – from the production process to the pricing – had to be dealt with. Though daunting, Neeraja kept at it. The process was labour-intensive, the yield limited, and yet, she priced her products as accessible as she could, says Neeraja. Beyond fermentation, one major cost factor was laboratory testing. "Because bio enzymes involve probiotics, they have to undergo extensive lab testing to ensure quality and safety," she says. These tests added to the overall cost but also ensured that customers received a product that was not just environmentally friendly but also safe for their homes and families. "The margins are slim because I want more people to try bio enzymes.

But I also have to be realistic. If someone expects a handcrafted product to match mass-market pricing, they're not seeing the full picture."

In any sustainability journey, one would come upon a mole-hill (if not mountain) of contradictions sooner or later. In large-scale fermentation, the very vessels that cradle these bio enzymes – the jars where transformation happens – are made of HDPE plastic. "Glass and aluminium would be ideal," she acknowledges, "but they are impractical for large-scale fermentation. The solution is not about demonising plastic but using it wisely." This, she believes, is the essence of sustainable living – not a rigid doctrine, but a practice of making conscious, balanced choices.

Knowledge sharing

Environmentalism would be sustainable in the deepest sense of the term only if it heals social wounds, in small but significant ways, Neeraja makes sure it does. She offers the how-to of bio enzyme making to women self-help groups. In this context, she is associated with Women's Indian Association (which she got introduced to by way Wipro Urban Ecology Small Grant and Care Earth Trust) conducting regular sessions on bio enzyme making for the women whose lives the organisation is trying to improve. "The real magic is not just in the jars, but in the people who learn to make them," she says. In a village near Mahabalipuram, she trained a self-help group of 20-30 women, passing on to them what she had learned. she left the session wiser by a new bio enzyme-making trick she picked up on account of it.

At the end of the session, one woman hesitated before asking, "Can we make bio enzymes from cashew fruit?" Neeraja had never heard of anyone trying their hand at this. The woman explained that cashew-processing industries in the area discarded vast quantities of the fruit, treating it as waste. Intrigued, Neeraja took some home and let it ferment. Three months later, the results were astonishing – better than citrus peels. "That is when I learned innovation is sometimes just about paying attention."

(Clockwise from bottom): Neeraja Arjun speaking at a college; two interns at The Canopy Tales; Neeraja at WIA; and during an organic products sale.



A turnaround

After a succession of tragedies, Devika G., found employment as a helper at WIA crèche on Greenways Road, and rose to the role of teacher in time. Seizing an opportunity at WIA to learn bio enzyme making from an expert, she augmented her income. She is now a bio enzyme evangelist, imparting the skill to people around her neighbourhood

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Often times, right within the constricted and overpoweringly suffocating circumstances of one's life, there would be doors of escape. When discovered and opened, these hidden doors provide fresh air, new vistas and purpose. Devika G., has found those doors consistently and made good the possibilities they led into.

A resident of Greenways Road, Devika has seen the Women's Indian Association's (WIA) facility located on the same road, at close quarters, right from the cradle. It has always been her second home.

Her mother was on WIA's payroll, serving as a helper at the WIA Creche. After an unexpected turn of events, really unexpected, Devika found herself joining that payroll.

Here is what happened. At a young age, Devika was orphaned, losing both her parents. After Devika's mother passed on, her grandmother took up a helper's role at WIA. Devika was just 16 years old

when tragedy struck again. Her grandmother passed away: it was a rude jolt to a ship that just then seemed to have steadied and was sailing on an even keel.

Now at 16, Devika was on her own, and added to that, had a younger brother to take care for.

"There was no one else to earn for our family, so I took up my grandmother's job at WIA," she recalls.

She worked as a helper for three years before the Administrative Officer at WIA, Pandian, recognised her dedication and encouraged her to become a teacher. In 2004, she stepped into her new role as teacher of basic elements of education – the alphabet, rhymes and so on – at the crèche, where she now looks after around 50 children aged between two and five. In addition, she took up tailoring and also began making *sattu maavu kanji* – a nutritious porridge mix – that she supplies to hospitals and people around her neighbourhood.

"I have always wanted to learn new things. Even if something is difficult, I tell myself to give it a try, at least once. That is how I grew in-

Devika G

to this role and found my confidence," she says.

Her enthusiasm for learning was shining bright like the morning star and eluded nobody's notice. And it caught the eyes of WIA president Padma who had just then launched an initiative to impart vocational skills to women from an underprivileged background. Recognising Devika's eagerness in utilising this opportunity, Padma introduced her to Neeraja Arjun, a sustainability campaigner, who was seeking to train people in bio enzyme making.

In the moments that she could snatch for herself, which was during the children's lunch time at the crèche, Devika would make bio enzymes. With Neeraja's guidance, Devika released her first batch of bio enzymes on October 19, 2024. The response was overwhelmingly positive. One of her neighbours even sent her a photograph of a hibiscus plant that had flourished on account of the bio enzymes being applied to the soil.

"When I saw the picture, I felt proud. Something I had made was helping plants grow. That was when I knew I wanted to continue doing this," she says with a smile.

Encouraged by the feedback, Devika began teaching women in her neighbourhood about waste segregation and how certain types of food waste can be transformed into useful cleaning products.

"When I realised waste could be turned into something valuable, I started seeing it differently. Now I tell others – do not throw it away, turn it into something useful!" she gushes.

The avid student of bio enzyme making had become an adept teacher of it. Devika has trained 10 to 15 women in her community and 10 of her colleagues at WIA in bio enzyme making. Their bio enzymes, which can be used as floor cleaners, dishwashing liquid, laundry detergent and stove cleaner, have gained popularity among residents of Mylapore and even found buyers from Poland.

For Devika, learning a skill-based occupation is a form of life-long empowerment.

"When women have skills, they have confidence. Even if the men do not provide, we can still run our families. And the best part is that bio enzyme making requires no investment – it is simply making use of what we already have," she says. "I started this journey to support my family. But today, I do it because I love it."

Despite the challenges, Devika does not pass by opportunities for learning and new challenges.

Whether experimenting with new ideas or teaching others, she remains driven by one goal – to make a difference, both at home and in her community.

AI GENERATED
IMAGE:
MARIVARASU

A *balancing* act

With Class X Board examinations having begun, *The Hindu Downtown* takes a close look at the daily schedule of three young sportspersons in the city who are appearing for those exams

LIFFY THOMAS

‘I cannot afford to skip the practice’

Fifteen-year-old M. Hansini appeared for her English exam yesterday (February 15) – and it is a Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class X board examination. Her friends should not be surprised if they do not find her plugging away at her books for the next paper. Of course, she will study, but also take a break for something that is equally important to her, even during these times. That is table tennis. When this reporter spoke to her a few days before her exam, Hansini, a Mylapore resident, had returned home after a table tennis practice session at Andhra Club in T. Nagar, and had no plans to give up her regular sports routine during this examination season that stretches on for a month.

“In fact, I took up an additional routine three weeks ago: working out in the gym for over two hours every day which is getting quite intense every passing day,” says Hansini, a Class X student of P.S. Senior Secondary School.

Exams do not come in the way of this promising ping pong player who was recently ranked the youngest National Champion in the under-19 cate-

gory. Her day starts at 7 a.m where she attends online tuitions in science, followed by a gym workout and ping pong sessions for three hours in the evening.

Among the players selected for the Sai National Camp happening in Bengaluru, Hansini has requested that she be allowed to join in late. “Luckily, this is off-season and I do not have any major tournaments lined up, but I cannot afford to skip my regular practices if I have to compete in the season starting in June,” she says.

Hansini’s parents are grateful for the support from the school. “In Class IX, when my parents were contemplating moving me to the National Institute of Open Schooling, which is more flexible, so that I could devote more time to sports, the school principal assured them that I can cope well and should not leave the school,” recalls Hansini.

For the pre-board examination Hansini could write only two paper as she was travelling on tournaments.



M. Hansini

‘It helps to take it easy’

Arising speed skating player Aghil Anand likes to set priorities when it comes to academics and the skating rink. A Class X student of Maharishi Vidya Mandir in Ayanavaram, he will be appearing for his Board examinations from March 25. Aghil has slowed down a bit in hitting the rink but has not given up. “My first priority is giving my best in the examinations and I am cool about it. I cannot take a break due to examinations or my speed will reduce drastically,” says Aghil, who completed the second revision test conducted by his school on February 14. This weekend, his father will be taking him to the practice sessions.

During the examination season, the routine of practising on the roads is restricted to the weekends.

A regular at the Anna Nagar Roller Skating Club, Aghil makes sure he gets a dose of fitness at home practising skipping for 15 to 20 minutes, working on dumbbells and choosing a few weight-lifting exercises.

Aghil’s best outing in 2024 was winning a silver and a bronze at state level tournaments. His father M. Anand says his son is an easygoing boy and happy with the outcomes he has achieved in speed skating so far.

Navigating the 64 squares and a major exam with poise



Sharon Rachel Aby

It is around 10 p.m. on February 14 and Sharon Rachel Aby has just come out of an online class conducted by her English teacher ahead of her CBSE Board examination the next day. A jovial sounding Sharon is pumped up talking to this reporter on the phone. “Ma’am revised some important topics with us and also prayed for all of us, so it was a good meet-up with the class again,” says Sharon, a student of Spartan Exclusive School in Mogappair.

The 15-year-old with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a rare degenerative disease, is among the most promising chess players in the differently-abled category, competing and winning honours at various important tournaments including the Asian Chess Championship in Kyrgyzstan.

Despite the limiting factors (Sharon moves with the help of a motorised wheelchair), she is comfortable juggling academics and the demands of the 64 square board.

She ended 2024 on a high with tournaments in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Jharkhand. These tournaments are physically and mentally challenging, so coming back to be in the company of books is something Sharon enjoys. “Studying is some kind of a de-stresser,” says her father Aby Mathew.

An academically bright student, Sharon topped the pre-boards. Sharon is using a scribe to write her exams. So her practice and preparation included coordination with scribe and preparing accordingly.

“She missed more than three months of school during the fag

end of 2024, so she was keen on covering lost ground and we have left it to her,” says Aby, advising parents not to make a fuss about examinations. With a supportive environment at school, Sharon only needed little external help.

“Maths is a little tough for her, so we have a tutor helping her out besides the additional classes she attends at school,” says Aby.

Does chess also need practice every day?

Aby says one will lose touch with the game so the daily practice is a must. When Sharon is tired of studying, she plays chess online. “That is the way to de-stress between studies,” she signs off.

Once the Boards get over, Sharon will be up and ready to compete in another round of tournaments.



Aghil Anand

Sage Agasthyar descends on a Chennai street

Chirpy children dressed in saffron robes carried *kamandalam* and *dhandam*

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Last Sunday, the usually quiet Agasthyar Temple on Raja Street behind Pondy Bazaar was bursting at the seams. The reason?

Scores of sage Agasthyar "look-alikes" descended on the temple.

Accompanied by their teachers and parents, children from various schools were honouring the sage by presenting themselves in his likeness.

While the adults stood aside the children, all dressed in saffron robes with long beards, a top knot on the head and rudraksham around their neck and wrists, kamandalam and dandam (sticks) in hand sat on the ground inside the temple - some playing with their dandam and others speaking animatedly to each other.

A few minutes later Sudha Seshayyan, former Vice-Chancellor of

the Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University, who is currently a director of the Chennai campus of Sastra deemed-to-be University, told the students the story of Agasthya.

"Do you know why you are here?" she asked the children. When they said to see Agasthyar, she proceeded to explain about the Kashi Tamil Sangam (KTS) and its theme, which is Sage Agasthya, who unified north and south India.

"This temple has a sanctum for Sage Agasthya. You are all dressed like him. He came to the south from Vidharbha kingdom," she

said and proceeded to narrate the story of Agasthya.

K.V.S. Gopalakrishnan, president of P.S. Educational Society, said the visit had been organised to commemorate the 3rd edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS3.0).

"Over 100 school students dressed as Sage Agasthyar participated in a walkathon organised by the Central Institute of Classical Tamil and Sastra," he said.

The students were from classes IV to VIII from Sanipani Vidyalaya, P.S. Senior Secondary, Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan and Bhavan's Rajaji Vidyashram. "The wal-

kathon started at the Hindi Prachar Sabha in Thanikachalam Road and concluded around 1 km away at the Sage Agasthyar Ashram Temple. All the participants were given a copy of Amar Chitra Katha publication on Agasthyar and served prasadam after darshan," he added.

The theme of KTS 3.0 is Sage Agasthya as a national unifier. S.Vaidhyasubramaniam, Vice-Chancellor of Sastra University, R. Bhuvaneshwari, Registrar of CICT, Venkat, Director of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, P.G. Subramaniam, Principal of Bhavan's Vidyashram and Bhuvana Shankar, Principal of Sandipani Vidyalaya also participated in the walkathon.

Remembering Bharathi

Shriram Bharathi Kalai Ilakkiya Kazhagam, a part of Shriram Group of Companies, observed the 143rd birth anniversary of poet C. Subramania Bharathi. The event was held at Krishna Gana Sabha, T. Nagar. Justice A. Nakeeran of the Madras High Court delivered the presidential address and released a book 'Avvaiyin Thamizhamuthu.' Kavita Jawahar, a renowned speaker, spoke on 'Paarthira Paadiya Bharathi.' On occasion, three scholars, professors Krungai Sethupathi, P. Mahendran and S. Kalaimani were honoured with a citation and cash prizes. The book was distributed free of cost to the entire audience.

Quiz to celebrate IEEE Computer Society's 80th anniversary

IEEE Computer Society (CS Madras) is organising a Mega ICT Quiz in the lead-up to the 80th anniversary celebration of IEEE Computer Society founded in 1946.

The quiz will cover the Information and Communication Technology history, concepts, developments, trends and current affairs.

The event is open for all including students (college and school level 10th grade and above), researchers, faculty and professionals.

The quiz will be conducted in four stages. Online Prelims, Zonal Orals (in over 10 centres), Semifinal Orals (in two centres), and Final Orals (at Chennai).

All Orals will be in-person in physical mode, except Prelims which will held online to select contestants for Orals.

Win attractive cash prizes and gifts. Certificate of participation to all and certificate of appreciation to the orals contestants.

For detailed announcement, please see <https://lnkd.in/gQG4t2SF>

Registration fee is ₹50.

Register at <https://lnkd.in/gjwjbXQD> on or before February 22, 2025

Laser vision for presbyopia

Uma Eye Clinic, an ophthalmology center in Anna Nagar, has launched 'Presbyond,' a laser vision treatment for presbyopia.

Professor Dan Z. Reinstein from the U.K. recently inaugurated this cutting-edge technology at the clinic, said a release.

Presbyopia, an age-related condition affecting individuals typically over 40, makes

it difficult to focus on near objects, often requiring reading glasses.

According to the release from the eye clinic, the treatment is quick and painless, allowing patients to return to regular routines shortly.

For details, call 044 - 4902 3232. info@umaeyeclinic.in

Tiffin Master opens outlet in Anna Nagar

Tiffin Master, a household name in South Indian vegetarian cuisine, has opened its second outlet in Anna Nagar.

The outlet is at Mangalam Colony, Fourth Avenue, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar (West).

As part of the inaugural offer, the restaurant has introduced an exclusive mini tiffin for ₹49, available from 8 to 10.30 a.m.

The platter includes idly, vada, dosa, poori, pongal, chutneys, and sambar.

For details, call 98847 66523.

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Inter-collegiate meet remembers a sports enthusiast

Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women conducted the "Justice J. Kanakaraj Memorial Trophy Intercollegiate Tournament" on February 7 and 8.

The event paid homage to Justice J. Kanakaraj, a sports enthusiast who had represented the Madras University Basketball team in Inter-University tournaments.

He was a dedicated advocate for sports at the school and college levels. His efforts included introducing free sports coaching and establishment of indoor badminton court at Shanthi Colony.

The college principal S. Sridevi declared the Intercollegiate sports tournament open.

Nearly 200 students from va-



rious city colleges participated in the range of events, including cricket, badminton and chess

which were conducted under the guidance of the physical director G. Sandhiya. Referees, Arbiters,

Physical Directors, and Coaches from various colleges contributed to the spirit of sportsmanship.

Alumni association conducts medical camp

DRBCCC Hindu College Alumni Association, in collaboration with Pani Malar Medical College and Doctors For You, organised a two-day medical camp recently. The event was inaugurated by the N. Giri, ACP Pattabiram.

A range of medical services including free consultations, check-ups and diagnostic tests were conducted. A team of experienced doctors from Pani Malar Medical College provided expert care to the patients, addressing various health concerns and providing guidance on preventive measures, said a release.

Pilates Studio expands to Anna Nagar

The Pilates Studio Chennai has opened its third branch in Anna Nagar. It already has centres at Nungambakkam and Adyar. The Anna Nagar studio designed to offer a state-of-the-art experience for pilates enthusiasts of all levels. With a focus on precision, strength, and flexibility, this new location continues the studio's commitment to providing expert-led sessions that help individuals achieve their fitness goals, said a release.

The Pilates Studio was founded in Mumbai by the father-daughter duo, Samir and Namrata Purohit, and has since grown into a network of over 30 studios across India, said the release.

Address: Old no 14, New no 59, 2nd floor, 5th Avenue, Anna Nagar.

Annual day celebrated

Sudharsanam Vidyaashram celebrated its 11th annual day on February 7 in a resplendent display of talent, music and kaleidoscopic colours, says a press release.

Vijaya Banu, deputy director, SCERT, was the chief guest. The correspondent P. Venkatesh Raja; secretary D. Dhasarathan, and the director D. Saraswathi were among others who took part. Accolades and awards were showered upon deserving students, recognising their outstanding academic achievements and co-curricular activities.

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SARASWATHI VASUDEVAN
Founder, Yogavahini

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