

DOWNTOWN

Sunday
March 31, 2024

THE HINDU

TAMBARAM

Chromepet » Pallavaram » Tambaram West » Rajakilpakkam » Mannivakkam » Guindy » Keelkattalai » Nanganallur » Guduvanchery » Hasthinapuram » Pammal » Tambaram East

Medavakkam » Srinivasa Nagar » Kathipara Junction » Kovilambakkam » Sadasivam Nagar » Potheri » Selaiyur » Sembakkam » St.Thomas Mount » Madipakkam » Urappakkam » Paranur



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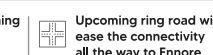
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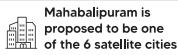
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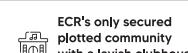
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Mini-dump emerges at Mappedu-Vengambakkam Road

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Aunofficial mini-dump has come up on a section of Mappedu-Vengambakkam Road in Vengambakkam. This section marks the outlet and inlet points of Puthur Thangal and Agaramthen lake respectively.

A.R. Lakshmanan, a social activist and a resident of Vengambakkam, says: "Dumping of trash has been happening for some years now as the Agaramthen Village Panchayat lacks a proper disposal mechanism."

The conservancy staff collect the trash from the homes in the localities and dispose of it along the waterway through tractors.

Along the inlet point, a walkway has "submerged", going below the road level. Pedestrians must either walk on the trash or along the carriageway.

During windy days, trash lands on the road. Smoke from burning garbage hinders the view of motorists.

Residents buy water cans or depend on Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants, fearing groundwater contamination, adds Lakshmanan.

The trash sometimes extend to the cemetery nearby, say residents.



The trash yard along Mappedu - Vengambakkam Road. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

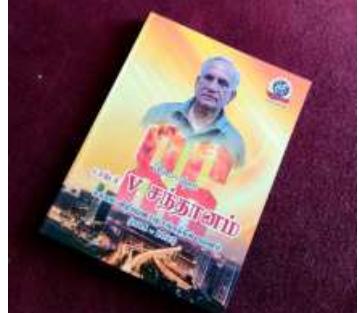
Chronicles of civic activism

Veteran civic activist is not willing to give up an old habit – the habit of chronicling the issues he has grappled with, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with members of People's Awareness Association (PAA). PAA is a residents forum he founded and continues to be a key member of.

He chronicles them in souvenirs. He has done six souvenirs, and the latest one marks the civic activism he has been part of in the period between 2018 and 2023.

The souvenir presents copies of press reports about issues the Association has engaged with; missives sent to government officials; images of civic campaigns. From time to time, the souvenir also provides glimpses of 86-year-old Santhanam's life off the field of activism, with images of Santhanam with his family.

The souvenir also records the novel forms of protests the Association has been engaging in, in recent times.



Chromepet bus stop misused as thoroughfare

As this picture illustrates, Chromepet bus stop (towards Pallavaram) is used as a thoroughfare by motorcyclists.

Motocyclists from Lakshmi Nagar and Chromepet New Colony use the terminus to go to CLC Works Road and MIT Flyover service lane.

Many commuters say this must be stopped as many buses from Gudvanchery and Tambaram enter

the bus stop and many commuters wait on the carriageway. R. Rajan, a commuter, says: "Earlier, bus bays were earmarked, which regulated the crowd, but now drivers halt near the entry area. When commuters cross over to board the buses, they risk being hit by motorists."

Autorickshaws waiting at the entrance of the stop must also be regulated.

Text: T.S. Atul Swaminathan



A motorcyclist using the Chromepet bus stop as "link road".
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PLAN YOUR WEEK

Tambaram humour club meets today

The monthly meeting of the Tambaram Humour Club will be held on March 31 at Valluvar Gurukulam Higher Secondary School, GST Road, Kadaperi, Tambaram West at 4 p.m.

A special debate on the topic 'Who brings happiness in a family, husband or wife?' will be discussed.

For details, call 94445 85858, 98413 58857, 98409 18096.

Education fair ends today

A two-day education fair called "Mega Education Fair-2024" organised by ARK Eventz ends on March 31 (today).

It is being held at Sri Vasudeva hall at Camp Road in Tambaram. Time: From 9.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m.

According to a press release, various colleges and universities from Tamil Nadu are taking part in the education fair. ARK Eventz is an event management company. For details, call 9444456087

Play on 'Operation Vijay 1971' today

United and Disciplines Alumni Association Network is organising a play on March 31 at Guru Nanak College auditorium, Velachery. The play titled 'Operation Vijay 1971' is produced by NCC UDAAN Tamil Nadu and staged by SBS Creation. The play depicts the valour, sacrifice and indomitable spirit of our armed forces during Operation Vijay of 1971.

The play begins at 5.30 p.m.

CMWSSB cash counters to function today

The cash counters of Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) will be open on March 31 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to enable consumers to pay the 'Water and Sewerage Tax'.

The counters will function in the area, as well as depot offices and at the CMWSSB headquarters on Pumping Station Road in Chintadripet. The consumers can pay the tax amount through cheques or demand drafts. Or, visit <https://bnc.chennai-metrowater.in/#/public/cus-login>.

Consumers can also pay the tax at E-Seva centres, said the release.

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SIPCOT Fire Station. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

Siruseri fire station serves a section of Vandalur-Kelambakkam High Road

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Being fixated on the precise meaning of a name is a surefire way to ignore what it is silent on. Siruseri SIPCOT Fire Station is a neighbour to companies with addresses in that special economic zone and is also their designated protector, hence the name.

But its call of duty extends noticeably beyond the SEZ.

Recently, personnel from the Siruseri SIPCOT Fire Station were

in action at Navalur when a tea shop and a supermarket caught fire.

According to a Tamil Nadu Fire And Rescue Services official, the outer bounds of the fire station's jurisdiction are defined by these areas: up to Sholinganallur junction on one side of OMR; upto Kalavakkam on the other side of OMR, Covelong on East Cost Road; and Pudupakkam on Vandalur-Kelambakkam High Road.

The fire station has three machines: a water tender vehicle; a vehicle with a 54-metre ladder and another vehicle with a 104-

metre ladder.

The last one is evidently in the team keeping in view the OMR skyline.

The TNFRS official remarks that the rescue personnel carry out rescue exercises involving people and animals, and as the IT Corridor intersects with reserve forests in many places, calls for snake rescues are common.

The current building housing the fire station became functional around two years ago, the station having been moved from its old address (also within SIPCOT Siruseri) just a stone's throw away.

Reunion held at MIT



The 1976 batch of the Electronics Department of the Madras Institute of Technology, Anna University, had its reunion at the college campus in Chromepet recently. According to a press release, the alumni contributed a sum of ₹6.27 lakh to their *alma mater* for setting up a 5G laboratory. The alumni association can be reached at 98402 93262.

OTA alumni organise silver jubilee reunion

Alumni of Officers Training Academy from army courses SSC-61, SSC (Tech) - 04, and WSES-07 recently celebrated their silver jubilee reunion at their alma mater, the OTA in St. Thomas Mount..

The programme started with a wreath-laying ceremony at Temple of Remembrance in OTA. Following that, there was the OTA movie & POP teaser, says a press release.

The alumni presented a silver trophy comprising 25 pillars to their alma mater, the OTA Chennai signifying the mark of silver Jubilee.

The trophy was unveiled by Veena Jasrotia mother of braveheart Maj. Ajay Jasrotia SM

and presented to officiating Comdt Maj. Gen. Ajay Sud.

Speaking at the occasion on behalf of the alumni, Lt. Col. Musheer said, "Visiting OTA with coursemates was an exhilarating experience."

Addressing the gathering, ex-woman officer Maj. Benor Desai said: "OTA was never about infrastructure, it was all about Josh and Jazbaa of Cadets and devotion as well as the dedication of the DS."

Maj Gen Ajay Sud extended compliments and exchanged memento with Core Working Committee for the reunion which included Lt. Col. Musheer Hyderi, Lt. Col. Sameer Ghanekar, Col. Arun Yadav, Col. Prasoon Nath and Lt. Col. Sanjeev Verma.

Students of OMR college design e-cycle with bamboo frame



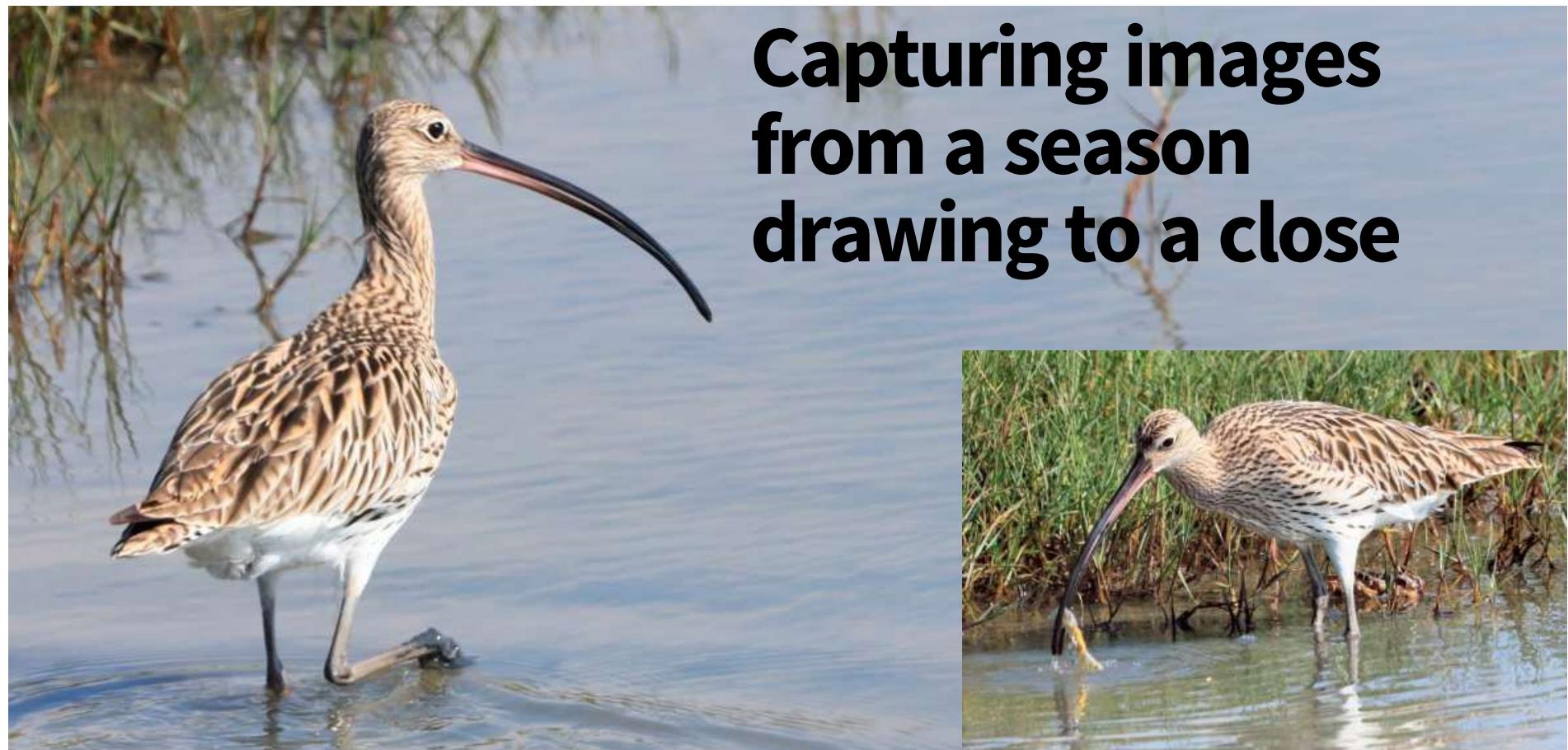
Students of final-year Electrical and Electronics Engineering of St. Joseph's College of Engineering have designed and fabricated a low-cost, lightweight e-cycle with a biodegradable frame – its a frame made of bamboo.

The entire weight of the cycle is about 22 kg. The first cycle uses a lithium ferro phosphate 36V 12Ah battery instead of lithium-ion batteries, due to high thermal resistance (less risk of fire), eco-friendly charges with less time and more life span of 6000 cycles when compared to other batteries, says a press release.

One time charge of the battery gives a mileage of 40 km with a speed of 30 kph. The magnesium alloy wheels on the e-cycle add to the cycle's durability and lightweight, which prevents corrosion and gives the bike an attractive appearance, the release adds.

A hub motor incorporated inside the wheel powers the e-cycle. The cycle's frame is composed of finest bamboo, which contributes to its low weight and has natural vibration-damping properties, contributing to a smoother and more comfortable ride, says the release.





Capturing images from a season drawing to a close



Mud play

PRINCE FREDERICK

Where the Eurasian curlew is concerned, “scraping the bottom of the barrel” connotes the opposite of what it does for us. It finds its very best at the very bottom, in fact deeper still. It probes the mud for crustaceans, the ones that burrow deep in the soil as well as the ones that pop in and out of it at will. At the time of this article going to print, the likelihood of an Eurasian

curlew being sighted at Kelambakkam, luxuriating in the mud, surfacing shrimps, unsuspecting crabs and squiggly invertebrates with its long, decurved bill is high.

The late leavers

With a beak like that, piercing through soft, water-filled mud is obviously no sweat off the Eurasian curlew's speckled back. When a wetland begins to sport as much mud as it does water, it signals a

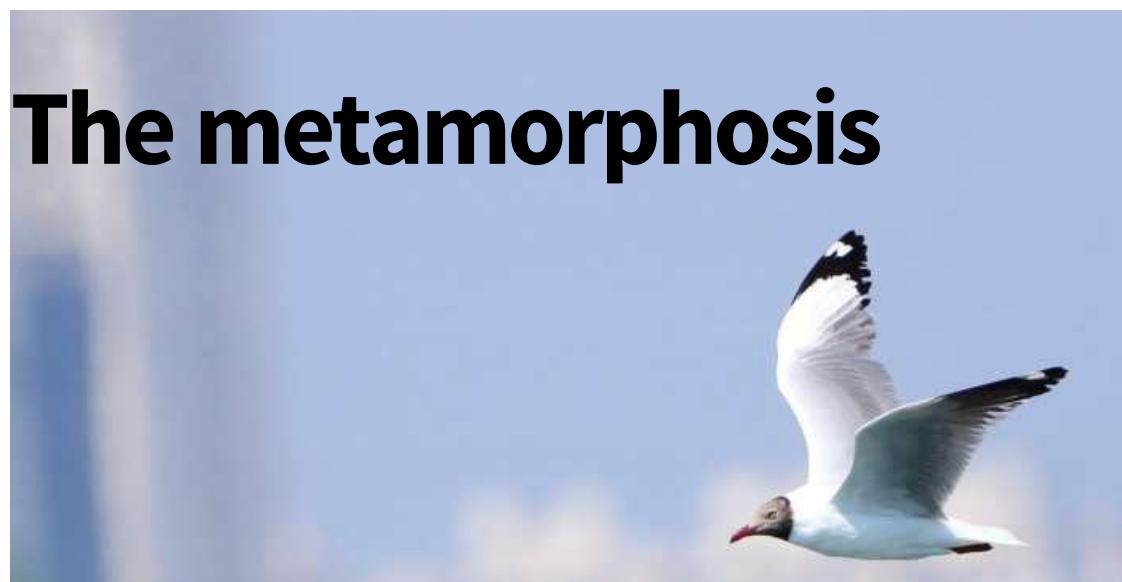
downturn in the gastronomic fortunes for many waterbirds – a familiar picture for those accustomed to watching the Perumbakkam wetland during the winter-migratory season. In stark contrast, the appearance of watery mud does not have a demoralising effect on the Eurasian curlew. Shorebirds that stick tenaciously to water systems that bear a strong whiff of the sea, the Eurasian curlew and its cousin, the Whimbrel, are in an environment

An Eurasian curlew in a feeding frenzy at Kelambakkam on March 28. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

affected by tidal action. They will therefore never run out of watery mud, but the biological clock would direct them back to the breeding grounds – only that this clock seems to tick a tad slower than it does for most other water birds in their wintering grounds. Therefore, in a winter migratory season, one might see these two birds tarrying a little while longer than most other water birds. However, variations in decisions taken by individuals on

when to take off for the breeding grounds cannot be ruled out.

The brackish waters of Kelambakkam and the estuarine system at Muttukadu host the Eurasian curlew and the whimbrel, and they usually come across as remnants of a migratory horde, waiting in the “boarding area” a few minutes longer, as they take a return flight that taxes in slightly later in the day than the ones taken by most other waders.



At the Covelong-Muttukadu estuarine system on March 28, a brown-headed gull with a fully-formed hood and another in the process of developing one. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

Migratory water birds relying on inland wetlands would be hopping in the direct path of climate change. They would be noticeably impacted by effects of erratic rain patterns, particularly untimely drying of wet-

lands. Pelagic birds – the gulls and terns – are on more favourable ground, as their “play area” is around the shore. They are not immune to erratic and frequent weather systems on the coast, but riding out these storms, they manage to have a full wintering season

in the same place. In contrast, birds relying on inland water systems might have to live out of suitcases, chasing resilient water systems when their current one dries up faster than usual.

Due to this stability, when pelagic birds turn their backs on their



wintering grounds, they would be leaving with a fully-assembled breeding plumage, one that would come in handy for the business awaiting them at home. You can now see these transformed gulls and terns at the Muttukadu-Covelong estuarine system and the Pulicat lake.

The change is particularly dramatic in the brown-headed and black-headed gulls. What is a spot behind the ear in winter grows into a striking hood when it is time for these birds to return to their breeding grounds. Both birds put on a hood that is brown. In the black-headed gull, the hood is a dark shade of brown, and the other gull sports a lighter shade of the brown. The brown-headed gull is more easily differentiated from its cousin by the lighter shade of the iris (ranging from white to yellow), the thicker bill and two white spots in an otherwise black outer primaries.

At the time of this article going to print, these gulls at the Covelong-Muttukadu estuarine system were sporting hoods with varying intensity of colouration. Some have fully formed hoods, and others with patches and a clear outline of the hood that waits to be “coloured”.

Children to read out from their manifesto on April 4



LIFFY THOMAS

On April 4, a group of children representing different regions of Tamil Nadu would meet the press in Chennai to spell out their manifesto. The manifesto brought under the banner of Federation of Children's Movement for Right to Participation would essentially reiterate the basic rights they should enjoy as children but most often do not. They would make an old demand one more time: voices of children be given a hearing before schemes and policies are inked in for them.

Ahead of the big event, Chennai-based NGO Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children maps out the details of the manifesto-drafting exercise. This exercise is conducted for not

only Lok Sabha polls, but also Assembly and local-bodies elections.

This year, the preparations began in January and through several rounds of discussions, the manifesto was drafted. Children groups from 15 districts were involved.

"Just before the DMK manifesto was released, we made sure the children's manifesto reached the manifesto committee at Anna Arivalayam," says Virgil D. Sami, executive director Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children and convenor of the facilitation task force. "This time, RTE finds a mention in the DMK manifesto and we are happy about it as we have been seeking that it be extended to all children up to 18 years."

Many of their representations at the local level have been addressed.

"For instance, MLA from RK Nagar took to the state assembly a representation made by children on the need for a bridge in Ezhil Nagar. Because of the railway crossing, children were being late to school every morning. Construction of the bridge is now under way," says Virgil.

A playground in Korrukupet was another demand made by children last year.

The exercise to collect wish lists by children evokes considerable participation. The group has found that many of the children have become aware of their rights. Says Virgil, "I have seen children lobbying with parents, insisting that they do not vote for money. There is clearly a discussion at home. A good number of inputs provided by children during the drafting of the manifesto are based on discussions at home."

A good number of inputs provided by these children during the drafting of the manifesto are based on discussions at home



A meeting organised by children.

'Children are influencers at home'

Building the children's agenda works on this principle: children do not have a vote, but their parents do. Children aware of the children's agenda can further it through their parents.

According to M.L. Alphonse Raj, state convenor, Forum for Promotion of Child Participation, children started presenting manifestos to political parties since the mid-2000s.

He says issues concerning children are significant and political parties must consider a separate segment while formulating their poll manifestos.

"At least in the Assembly elections, they are a powerful tool and many of the demands presented through these manifestos have been addressed in the past," says Alphonse Raj.

But children's manifestos

must evolve. Currently, children's groups representing Federation of Children's Movement for Right to Participation also visit offices of political parties to hand over their demands in person.

"I wish to see political parties having consultations with children groups as this will increase trust and helps them understand issues better," he says.

This year, one of the demands in the manifesto is that political leaders must give a report card every year on what they have achieved in their constituencies.

Another demand is about having a separate ministry for children (currently women and children are grouped as one) to take care of the basic rights of every child. Children have started presenting their grievances at Grama Sabha meetings.

Have you signed this online petition?

We may not be voters, but we believe that the voices of children can be stronger than the votes of adults and it is necessary for us to speak up now to secure our future.

This is an excerpt from the "NINEISMINE" declaration that introduces one to this online petition by PRATYeK, a not-for-profit that has assisted in the drafting of the children's manifesto in the past as well.

The Google form is an attempt to get one million children and their parents to sign up and prioritise the children's manifesto, created by

children across the country, a work that is under way for the last two years.

Besides touching upon health, education, rights, protection and development, the survey questions raises empathy among children.

In one of the questions, political parties and candidates are asked to devote one day each year to report to children, on the progress made in fulfilling child-centric promises. They have also sought a child-friendly online annual report with an interactive ongoing online system for children to give feedback and

rate the progress based on the children's own on-ground personal experiences.

Besides an English version, PRATYeK has brought out versions in Tamil, Telugu, Assamese, Kannada, Urdu and Bengali. At last count, the Assamese version, launched as a petition on Change.org, received more than 800 signatures.

The New Delhi-based NGO has six zonal offices (Guwahati, Kolkata, Bhopal, Bangalore, Mumbai and Ranchi) where it has begun to create awareness about signing the petition.

Ahead of LS polls, children's parliament at Kannagi Nagar holds a session

Certain organisations working for child rights are sparing no effort to get children's agenda to be reflected in political parties' manifestos.

This exercise begins with building the children's agenda. Among NGOs engaged in this exercise are The Concerned for Working Children, People's Voice for Child Rights - Telangana State, Care India and Child Rights Trust.

There are other groups that are making a maiden attempt at highlighting what children expect from leaders. On March 23, a group of children belonging to the Neighbourhood Children Parliament at Kannagi Nagar met to prepare a wish list they can send to political leaders. Facilitated by NGOs

Vidyal Suder and SPAN, the group consisting of children in the age group of eight to 12 years wanted the concept of Neighbourhood Children Parliament to be adopted across India.

According to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), children and youth have the right to be heard. They are directly affected what decisions leaders make in education, environment, child and social protection and urban planning, but are often excluded from the decision-making process.

"Listen to young people's voices in the run-up to the election campaign and make space for them to express their vision for the municipality," says a UNICEF blog post.

LEARNING

Government school students hold court at IIT-M

A project propelled by a group of Chennai-based volunteers brought students from rural pockets to showcase their digital and programming skills

KANNAL ACHUTHAN

On a bright Wednesday morning, the auditorium at IIT Madras Research Park was abuzz with excitement. But it was not industry leaders or PhD students talking about their innovations and ideas. Instead, it was a group of 75 government school students who had come to demonstrate their skills in computational thinking, presentation and teamwork.

The schoolchildren had received six months training through a unique project run by the Chennai chapter of Asha, a non-government organisation that has been working to improve access to quality education.

And with the school year drawing to a close, it was time for these students to showcase their prowess and learning at a competition organised for both junior and senior categories. Fifteen presentations, 12 Scratch programming projects and 12 advanced computing projects were selected for the finals from about 180 projects that the students had submitted.



Students, teachers, judges and ASHA volunteers at the programming and presentation competition held at IIT-Madras Research Park

The digital literacy competition was called "RTC Impressions", with RTC standing for rural technology centres. In these RTCS, free computer courses are taught to the government school students. As a part of their six-month long courses, the students develop a detailed project.

"Project work is not only an evaluation tool but is also a very important instructional tool," says Rajaraman Krishnan, one of the core volunteers of Asha Chennai.

Some of the students were from Asha-supported schools. In these

Volunteers do all the operations of the Asha Chennai chapter. Those interested may reach out to chennai@ashanet.org for enquiries. You will then get added to the mailing list and be informed about meetings and activities. Those with Computer Science knowledge can train teachers or help with course design.

What is the curriculum at the RTCS?

Basic Digital Literacy and Basic Programming are the introductory courses. Advanced courses in Web Development, Javascript Animations and Physical Computing are also taught. All the three advanced courses are part of Code.org. Computer Science Discoveries course intended for students from Classes 6 to 10. The courses help students build their own websites, apps, animations and games.

schools, the organisation has offered Computer Science teaching support with a collection of content already available free on the web and mapped to the appropriate lessons for each class.

IIT-M Pravartak and Asha run six RTCS, four in Thiruvallur district and two in Thoothukudi district, from where the children travelled

to take part in the contest in Chennai. Seeing the work done by other students and interactions with judges provided much-needed exposure to the students.

The Scratch programming competition was held in the back of the mini-auditorium. The young contestants were called one batch at a time and asked to present their programme to the judges. The judges tried out the games and programmes themselves.

Students, out of their own interest, had gone well beyond the requirements of the course. For instance, Sivapriyan, who won the web development prize, ran a small webserver and database and had also implemented a small backend code.

K. Sukran, V. Santhosh Kumar and V. Bhuvanesh made a presentation on "vivasaayam" (agriculture). The students said they first learnt Open Office features and then picked the topic that was im-

portant to their village for their project.

The training has had a ripple effect as students who have acquired proficiency teach their peers. Priskilla, a student from Kannigaiper, has completed her programming and physical computing courses and volunteers to help her classmates with Computer Science.

Four officials from the Tamil Nadu Education department were present during the event and interacted with the children and teachers.

One of the judges, Poorva Bhattar, said, "The most striking feature of the experience is the confidence of the students. They look you in the eye and speak. They are absolutely comfortable with machines and programming, indicative of their involvement in learning. And, since they work on the programmes on their own, the projects are demonstrative of their logic."

Kamakshi hospital opens branch in Siruseri

Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospital has inaugurated a multi-speciality facility at Siruseri on Old Mahabalipuram Road. According to a press release, Suresh Raman, vice-president and regional head (Chennai) of Tata Consultancy Services was the guest of honour. The 80-bed hospital which is opposite SIP-COT is equipped with latest technological devices, the release adds.

Healthcare services include cardiology, orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, ENT, infertility, psychiatry, neurology, oncology, urology, gastroenterology, dermatology, ophthalmology, physiotherapy, and endoscopy.

In his address, Dr T.G. Govindarajan, founder and chairman of Dr Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals reiterated the hospital's commitment to inclusiveness and clinical expertise.

For details, visit www.drkmh.com



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'Help combat stone-pelting on trains'

The Southern Railway, Chennai Division, has appealed to the passengers and the public to join hands with the railway in combating stone-pelting on trains by reporting such incidents through a helpline number 139. Pelting stones on trains is a criminal offence under Sections 153 and 154 of the Railway Act 1989. The offender would be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years under section - 153 of the Railway Act 1989.

According to a release from the Southern Railway, the offenders cite fun as the reason for stone pelting. These incidents damage railway property and, in some cases, also injure

passengers. Most offenders in stone pelting cases are children playing alongside the railway tracks and throwing stones at trains as part of a game.

Apart from vigilance, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) counsels the children and their parents. Posters and pamphlets are also being distributed to the public and passengers to make them aware of the consequences of stone pelting on trains and its negative impact on passenger safety. The RPF has registered 15 cases in the current year, and 20 persons have been arrested. The release added that the public services will ensure passengers' safety and avoid damage to railway property.

Four-week Yoga classes at Nanganallur

Satyanaanda Yoga Centre is conducting a four-week yoga course from March 30. Classes will be held at Shri Sudarshan Terrace Hall, B-2, Lakshmi Nagar Main Road, Nanganallur. Time: From 5.30 a.m. to 7 a.m. According to a press release, no fee will be

charged. The centre follows the curriculum of Bihar School of Yoga. Meditation, breathing exercises (Pranayama) and recitation of Mantras are part of the programme. Besides, there will be sessions on food habits. For details, call 98412 27709 / 94450 51015.

Graduation Day held



The 24th Graduation Day of Jerusalem College of Engineering was held recently. According to a press release, a total of 242 students including 21 rank holders graduated. The ceremony was opened by Prof. M. Mala, chairperson of Jerusalem & Tagore Educational Trust. The Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, R. Velraj, who was the chief guest awarded the certificates. In his address, he advised the graduates to acquire knowledge and skills in the field of artificial intelligence, adds the release.

Cultural events at school in Perumbakkam



The Global Montessori Centre, Perumbakkam celebrated the culmination of the academic year 2023-2024. According to a press release, music, magic show, storytelling, and other cultural events marked the occasion. Parents were also invited for the event.

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