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READERS WRITE

Thoraipakkam residents, GCC officials discuss park maintenance

Improvement work on a green space at Balamurugan Garden Third Main Road has begun

BALU N

Recently, Balamurugan Garden Core Team had a meeting with Greater Chennai Corporation's Ward 193 AE, Zonal parks head, park maintenance contractor and supervisor regarding improvements to be carried out on a park on Balamurugan Garden Third Main Road in Thoraipakkam.

During the meeting, GCC officials assured us that all pending park maintenance issues would be resolved within one month, and we note that some work is indeed progressing as committed.

However, due to the lack of support in clearing park waste by the Corporation's conservancy staff, the overall progress has been delayed. In addition, more than 12



electric lights inside the park remain non-functional. Some poles are also damaged and require replacement at the earliest.

Regarding road works, GCC had committed to relaying at least two main roads of Balamurugan Garden before the onset of the monsoon. We sincerely hope the Corporation will fulfil this promise without further delay.

(Balu N is a representative of Balamurugan Garden Residents Core Team)



Glimpses of the park.



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Roll out into the streets

As GCC is preparing a road between two MRTS stations for road-skating sessions at certain hours of the day, here is why more such arrangements have to be made without delay

LIFFY THOMAS

Recently Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner J. Kumaragurubaran in a post on X shared a video of children practising skating on the MRTS road between Perungudi station and Velachery station.

GCC, in coordination with Greater Chennai Traffic Police, will make the road impervious to motorised vehicular traffic for a few hours every day for skating and cycling, he announced in the post. Currently, “heavy vehicle arresters” have been fixed and a few leftover works are to be completed on this stretch.

While this should come as good news for academies scouting for ideal locations to train children in

skating, seeing it implemented is far from easy. This road has been used by young learners even before the pandemic for the minimum hindrance it presents.

Complaints by motorists when an entire carriageway of the road elsewhere is made out of bounds for them have meant that skaters have to scout for new location all over again. Manpower challenges in the police department to regulate such stretches mean this sport takes a backseat.

Three popular stretches sought by skating enthusiasts and training academies for road skating are: service lane on Marina Beach, near Light House; carriageway of Swami Sivananda Salai near MLAs Hostel; and Elliot’s Beach Road in Besant Nagar.

R. Pratap Kumar, president of Tamil Nadu Roller Skating Association, says despite many requests by the association none of these roads is officially given for practice ses-

sions.

“Before major competitions, we manage to get permission but that is not enough. Sports needs regular practice and a dedicated place that is accessible and affordable to all,” says Pratap.

Skating academies only seek 1.5 to 2 hours in the morning hours to practise this sport. “The stretch has to be barricaded and police officials should patrol the stretch; volunteers will take care of the rest,” says Pratap, who was former Tamil Nadu State Information Commis-

sioner. Of the 11 disciplines in skating, ‘road’ is one of them which is why a city needs to provide the infrastructure. A tar surface is preferred over a cemented one.

“In December, Chennai will be hosting the 63rd National Roller Skating Championship but we have only taken six disciplines. As we do not have the infrastructure for ‘road’ and ‘rink’ category, these events will be held in Bengaluru,” he says.

Other cities

Screenshot of the post on X by GCC Commissioner; children warm up before a practice session on the road near Perungudi MRTS station; and file photo of an event at Swami Sivananda Salai.



Chandigarh, he says, is one of the best when it comes to road infrastructure for skating. “Many medal-winning skating aspirants go to cities such as Chandigarh and Bengaluru to practise before a meet as they have dedicated stretches,” he says. R.M. Anbunathan, a skating coach for more than two decades, agrees that finding an ideal location is a challenge and many a time they practise in neighbourhoods till residents raise an objection.

Currently, Anbunathan has managed to get permission from a senior police official to occupy 700 metres of the road at Swami Sivananda Salai in the morning between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m.

“Before we could do a full circuit of Swami Sivananda Salai covering 3.7 km. Now, 700 metres is what is permitted,” says Anbunathan who runs the Marina Academy of Speed Skating.

Skating coaches say Tamil Nadu is currently one of the top states in skating. Chennai District Unit is one of the biggest in roller skating in Tamil Nadu, and Chennai district holds many National and International medallists. There are more than 20 registered clubs, so to ensure this momentum is maintained the State government must accord importance to the sport.

“There are at least eight events in the road category including 100 mt, marathon, lap race, so we need affordable and safe space,” says the senior coach.

Koyambedu is getting a sport complex and arrangements should be made there to support road skating.

Two skating facilities promoted by private players in Medavakkam and Gerugambakkam are being accessed by many skating enthusiasts. While they are maintained well with good infrastructure, distance and the cost of availing the facility discourages many from adopting them.





The 'roof' over the Nedunchezhiyan Salai-Kumaraswamy Nagar Main Road junction in Sholinganallur.
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

PRINCE FREDERICK

A natural shade pavilion

At a T-junction in an interior but busy section of Sholinganallur, two banyan trees meet mid-air to provide a bulwark against the sun and a leaky sky; the highlight is that the aerial roots form what resembles decorative, arched bead curtains

At the T-junction of Nedunchezhiyan Salai and Kumaraswamy Nagar Main Road in Sholinganallur, the branches of two banyan trees converge creating a rich canopy of shade. Aerial roots grow down from the branches of both trees, located diametrically opposite each other, one within the premises of a temple and the other at the junction. The aerial roots are suspended somewhat like a decorative bead curtain, where the strings of beads are long on the sides and short in the middle, creating an arch.

Between them these trees together put out three such "aerial root arches", two of them well-defined and "decorating" Nedunchezhiyan Salai. These are obvious-

ly natural arches, but not occurring entirely naturally. The defining shape of these natural arches is reportedly engineered. A worker at what is loosely called Aalamaram

fruit shop without fanfare but accurately, because it is parked right under the banyan tree at the junction, notes that Greater Chennai Corporation workers (Ward 199 office is



located further down Nedunchezhiyan Salai) trim the aerial roots when they grow too long to stay out of motorists' face and their windshields. The result: natural arched decorative bead curtains.

The leafy branches of the two banyans locked in a gentle embrace mid-air over the junction is a bulwark against the sun and a leaky sky. During a downpour, motorists huddle under the massive banyan at the junction. And the

branches and foliage of both banyans offer a reliable roof during hot weather for a queue of ration-card holders waiting to fill their bags with supplies from a public distribution outlet at the junction. A Urbaser Sumeet facility is located down Nedunchezhiyan Salai, and following the ending of a day shift at 2 p.m., a clutch of conservancy workers can be seen sitting by a quiet side of the junction taking shelter under the banyan.

Events to mark wildlife week at Vandalur zoo from October 5

As part of Wildlife Week 2025, the Arignar Anna Zoological Park (AAZP) in Vandalur has lined up a series of events on the theme 'Human Animal Coexistence'.

On October 5, a 'Bird and Tree Identification Walk' will take place between 8 and 11 a.m. Those aged 15 and above can par-

ticipate in it.

On October 7, a national symposium on 'Human-Wildlife Conflict – Challenges and Solutions' for college students will be held (Topic: Voices For Wildlife) between 11.30 a.m. and 1 p.m..

On October 8, drawing and poster-making events will be con-

ducted for school students in three categories.

For students of Classes III to V, the topic is 'Elephants vs Farm Lands' or 'Monkeys vs Urban Areas', VI to VIII, 'Broken Wildlife Corridors' or 'Innovative Solutions to Reduce Conflict', and IX to XII, 'From Conflict to Co-exis-

tence' or 'Balance between People and Wildlife'.

Animal keeper talk series, an awareness programme on 'Wildlife and Us, Learning to Co-exist' and a poster-making contest are among the other events.

To participate, register at <https://aazp.in/wildlifeweek2025/>

'Dr. Jane Goodall DBE, *the Light* that lit my path'

Chennai resident Supraja Dharini recalls her long association with the conservationist



SUPRAJA DHARANI

The passing of Dr. Jane Goodall DBE marks the end of an era. And for me personally, the end of an inspiring association. Her life and words shaped the path that became 'TREE Foundation'. Without Dr. Jane, I might never have found the courage to dedicate my life to sea turtles and marine conservation.

In December 2001, as I walked along Periya Neelankarai beach, near my home in Chennai, I saw a

large creature on the beach. As I walked close to it, I realised it was dead. A fisherman nearby explained that it was an Olive Ridley, one of the ancient mariners who return to our beaches along India's east coast to nest every year between December and April. That encounter disturbed me deeply.

Only weeks earlier, I had watched a National Geographic documentary featuring Dr. Jane. I so vividly remembered, hearing her say: "Every individual can make a difference". The words gave me strength at a moment when I felt

overwhelmed by the sight of the dead turtle before me. Her voice convinced me that even a single step could matter.

That single step became TREE Foundation, which I formally established in 2002 and the same year also became the Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots, first India member (a Global Network of Volunteers).

The inspiration

Inspired by her ability to connect people with nature, I began with the same fisherman who first told me about the turtle. His knowledge

Jane Goodall during a visit to Chennai; Supraja Dharini is seen next to her. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was invaluable, and from there, we slowly built trust with fisher communities. Just as Dr. Jane had shown the world that science must walk hand in hand with empathy, I realised conservation in India could only succeed by working with people whose lives are tied to the sea.

Dr. Jane's Roots & Shoots movement, which empowers young people to care for the planet, inspired us to make students central to our conservation programmes. Today, children and young adults across Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Goa are part of biodiversity awareness campaigns, beach clean-ups, and ecosystem walks building the next generation of guardians for nature.

Dr. Jane taught us that change is never immediate, but requires patience, compassion, and courage. Her story helped me overcome scepticism in the early days, when some communities questioned why a woman was speaking to fishermen about sea turtles and walking on the beach at night time. Now artisanal fishermen along our project area coast, release entangled endangered marine megafauna including sea turtles caught in their nets or ghost nets and release back to the sea.

The meeting

In 2007, destiny granted me the chance to meet Dr. Jane in person

for the first time. To sit with her, to be encouraged by her kind words, and later to welcome her into our home during her 2009 visit, remain among the most treasured experiences of my life, even though I had the opportunity later to spend time with her multiple times again in the United States of America. She was always delighted to hear about our accomplishments and sent her warm wishes when I was selected by The Explorers Club in 2021 as one of the '50 People Changing the World'.

During her visits to India, at Chennai and Hyderabad, she met fishermen, interacted with the TREE Foundation's Sea Turtle Protection Force members, students, conservation leaders and even officers from the Indian Coast Guard, Forest Department and consuls from various country consulates.

A personal farewell

Though she is no longer with us in body, Dr. Jane's legacy will always live in our work. Her Jane Goodall Institute continues to inspire globally, and here in Tamil Nadu, her light shines in every turtle hatchling released to the sea, every child who learns to care for the ocean, and every community that chooses coexistence.

For me, Dr. Jane was more than an inspiration she was the guiding light of my life. Dr. Jane thank you for showing us the way. We will keep walking the path you lit for us.

(Supraja Dharini is founder-chairperson, TREE Foundation)

A tractor on duty at Anna Street in Thiruvannamiyur

PRINCE FREDERICK

These are times when a tractor is seen parked at an inundation-prone spot, a predictable question forms itself in the mind. Which district is the human at the wheel from? At Anna Street in Thiruvannamiyur, on October 3, 2025, that question being asked, the human on the tractor, P. Periannaswami answered it, "Villupuram", a natural affability, untouched by urban coldness, shining through a gap-toothed smile.

Located not too far from the gates of Kalakshetra Foundation's

Craft, Education & Research Centre, this spot gets quickly saturated with rainwater and fills up a section of the road, much like a first-time drinker's low tolerance for post-alcohol emesis resulting in the entire bathroom floor being splattered with the previous day's dinner and lunch, and possibly scraps of an ill-digested breakfast too.

On the evening of October 3, the road around the spot was moist from fresh "washing". This was not what the skies had thrown up, but the earth. The smell of sewage was hanging thick in the air. In addition to rain-



At Anna Street in Thiruvannamiyur, on October 3, 2025

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

water inundation, this section of Anna Street is notorious for a leaky sewage manhole, the symptom of a systemic illness – a recurring block in the sewage line. During the rainy season, the problem is more recurring than before.

The overnight showers being gentle, Periannaswami did not have to get down to work with his tractor and the suction pipe on October 3. It is only a matter of time before he knuckles down to it, and when he does, the suction pipe would likely quaff not just rainwater, but also sewage from that manhole.

It certainly would help to have a permanent solution for both forms of liquid accumulation, particularly because Anna Street is a major link road, more widely used by motorists than its width would justify.



Compost artworks, including the one titled 'Malar', from @onelittlepalette; Saraswathi Shanmugasundaram; and a sustainability diary. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ing it is neither smelly nor dirty – simply soil in formation.

A starting point

Nilayaan, a community-focused environmental initiative that works to promote sustainable waste management, and composting practices takes compost art to boardrooms and classrooms, since 2022. Deepesh Bhaskar, founder of Nilayaan, believes compost art can be a powerful starting point in environment and climate education for children.

“The whole idea is to make children aware of composting in a unified and nature-centric way,” says Deepesh.

The adventure starts with a nature walk, where kids from Play-KG to 8th standard collect fallen leaves and twigs. “We do not let them pluck anything,” says Deepesh, “but they do get a handful of compost to work their magic.” Then, divided into groups and given themes inspired by the elements – air, water, fire, earth and space – they create art that literally grows from the ground up.

And here is the twist: most kids do not even realise they’re working with compost. “Towards the end, we reveal that the materials came from kitchen waste, and suddenly they are touching, smelling, and learning all about it,” Deepesh explains. It’s not just about making art; it’s about making the invisible world of microorganisms visible and fun.

In corporate wellness programmes, Nilayaan offers lessons in composting neatly wrapped in compost art. The overall theme of these sessions is “Composting Against Climate”.

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Green souls have to acknowledge reality. #compost will remain gently clicked. Composting advocates are voices in the wilderness, their messages often echoing back to themselves unheard. So, in a crowded digital space where more exciting hashtags, some of meretricious character, are being peddled, how can their message get noticed? Saraswathi Shanmugasundaram, a resident of an apartment at Luz in Mylapore and a composting advocate, offers an answer, actually demonstrates it. On her Instagram page @onelittlepalette, the hashtag #compostart is as profusely distributed as colourful ixora in a rain-drenched garden.

Saraswathi, also wearing the work badges of an IT professional and yoga instructor, has experienced the misadventures pre-destined from every greenhorn compost enthusiast. Despite failing in the first few attempts at composting – one bin even got swept into a burglar’s heist bag – she stayed resiliently at the composting post and in time, became a composting evangelist. And just like that, she discovered compost could be a canvas; and that #compostart can bring the missing visibility to the green practice.

She recalls the discovery: “People usually sieve compost after the cycle finishes to remove small plastics like apple stickers or threads from puja flowers and to catch chunky particles for the next cycle. When I sieved compost, I would spread newspaper and sieve it out. It spread like a flat bed and looked like a black slate where you could write or place something, like scribbling on mud or sand. Touching and feeling the compost led me to think of drawing and creating art from it.”

The first sketches were simple smileys, but they gradually grew elaborate, festival motifs and seasonal designs entering the picture.

Pulling an artwork out of the bin

Amidst a crowd of attention-grabbing messages, how can the less popular but essential message of composting find an audience? Two climate-action advocates in Chennai have the answer

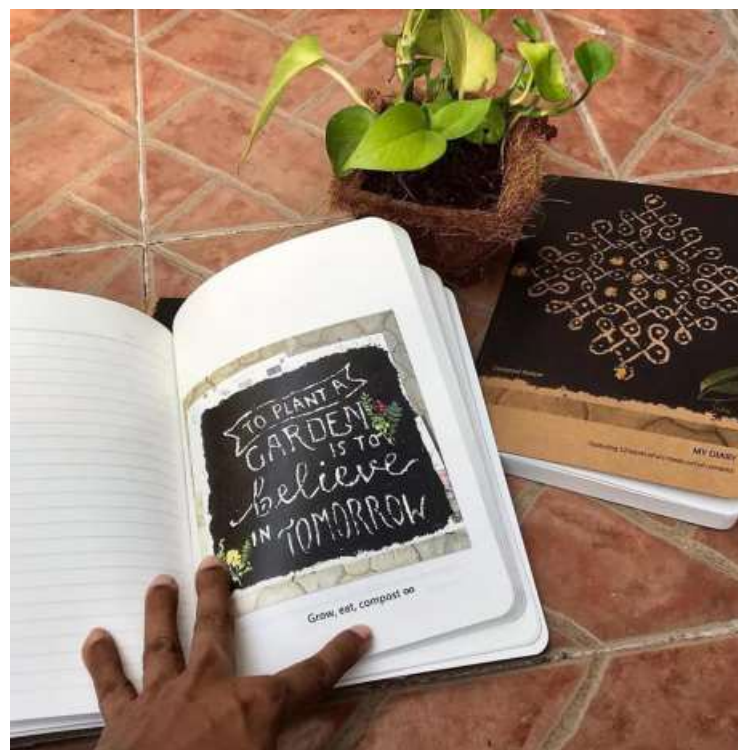


“To add colours, I use natural materials like fallen leaves, vegetable peels, flowers from the garden, sometimes fresh fruits or vegetable colours, everything that is compostable. Once the art is done, the compost goes to the plants and the materials used for colour go back into the compost bin or are washed if needed.”

During one Vinayaka Chaturthi, she experimented with moist compost. “I added water to the compost, but it crumbled and though that is how compost texture should be – crumbly but moist – it was not good enough to hold as an object. So I spread the sieved compost on a newspaper / old calendar sheets, and drew a picture of Ganesha.”

Saraswathi regularly posts videos of her #compostart on her YouTube channel (also “onelittlepalette”) and in Instagram reels. Her documented artworks and #compostart track record include Nature Cake made from compost for Forest & Bird, a New Zealand-based organisation, for its 100th year celebration, compost art stalls at Solitude Farm where people create their own designs and colourful installations at Rosary Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Mylapore, for its 75th-year celebrations. Her personal favourites include Malar, crafted entirely from composted puja flowers, and the simple Sunflower.

Her practice has also evolved into compost-art diaries, which she suggests make ideal gifts for anyone eco-conscious, artistically inclined, or curious about climate action. Each diary combines artwork with tips, snippets, and solutions about composting. Even in informal workshops, she encourages participants to “play” with compost, feeling its texture and realis-



READERS WRITE

‘Make these bus stops in Pallikaranai accessible’



Pallikaranai flyover.

A.V. NARAYANAN

The Dr. Kamakshi Hospitals bus stops on Velachery Main Road in Pallikaranai are inaccessible to commuters.

After traffic regulations were implemented to reduce the waiting time at the signal (180 seconds) in the four-

way intersection, commuters have been experiencing difficulties and have to travel to Balaji Nagar (towards Kaiveli) and Narayanapuram (towards Medavakkam) to board buses.

MTC bus drivers drive on the Pallikaranai flyover. Earlier, the buses plied on Velachery Main Road.

I request that the traffic authorities

to make arrangements for the buses to halt at the designated stops, as there are commercial establishments, government offices, and public sector undertakings offices nearby. It would be even better if the buses ran on the old route.

A. V. Narayanan is a resident of Rajakilpakkam

‘Install CCTV cameras along the tunnel in Guindy’

RAVI RAMANATHAN

Greater Chennai Traffic Police should install closed-circuit television cameras along the tunnel (a vehicular passage-way from Race Course Road to Anna Salai) to catch erring motorists.

On Anna Salai, the lane leading to Little Mount, to go to Race Course Road, motorists should take a U-turn along Sardar Patel Road and Anna Salai. However, to avoid going the extra mile, motorists often drive through the tunnel, catching other motorists unawares, which increases the possibility of accidents.

Ravi Ramanathan is a resident of Adambakkam

Applications invited

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation has invited applications for its one-year apprentice training. B.E., Diploma, and Non-Technical Stream (Undergraduate, Mechanical Engineering, Automobile Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, B.A., B.Sc, B.Com, BBA, BBM and BCM) Tamil students, who have completed their degrees in the years, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 and 2025, can enrol.

The students should apply online (<https://nats.education.gov.in>) National Apprenticeship Training Scheme, Ministry of Education, Government of India, before October 18.

Storytelling session in Adyar

Healing Through Stories, a unique storytelling evening, will take place on October 6 at Odyssey Bookstore, Adyar from 5.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

This session, curated by Sheetal Rayathatha along with the Chennai Storytellers team, is designed for children and adults – for anyone who at times may feel overwhelmed, unable to concentrate, or hesitant to express themselves. Each story has been carefully chosen to address these real-life challenges, helping listeners build confidence, find focus, and feel lighter in spirit, said a release.

‘FOB will ease pedestrian traffic at Guindy subway’



D. SATHYANARAYANAN

The State Highways Department, in coordination with Chennai Metro Rail, should consider building a footbridge in Guindy along Link Road, Ganapathy Colony. This would help decongest pedestrian traffic at the subway along Mount Road.

Commuters from Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate and the Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) Estate in the area, proceeding towards GST Road and Mount Poonamallee

Road, can board the buses at the Guindy haltover along MKN Road.

Commuters need not walk to use the subway, then climb the footbridge to go to Race Course stop.

Every time pedestrians cross over from MKN Road to Anna Salai (on the lane towards Little Mount) they have to take a detour using the subway. A footbridge will benefit many pedestrians.

D. Sathyanarayanan is a resident of Guindy

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Roads wait for mending exercise



▼ Roads in Semmenchery — Nookampalayam Link Road and (below) Subhash Chandra Bose Street are in a deplorable state. PHOTOS: R. RAVINDRAN

Yoga classes

The Satyananda Yoga Centre will conduct a four-week free yoga class in three regions across the city.

The classes will be conducted at K.K. Nagar, Nanganallur, and Velachery regions.

The classes at Nanganallur will commence on October 08, at Shri Sudarshan Terrace Hall, B-2, Lakshmi Nagar Main Road, Nanganallur, Velachery, October 09, Thiruveethi Amman Kovil, Thiru Veethi Amman Kovil Street, Velachery, and K. K. Nagar, October 10, Sri Ayyappan and Sri Goshala Krishnan Temple, Sri Sastha Sangam, Ponnambalam Salai, K.K.Nagar.

The classes will be held from 5.30 to 7 a.m. (Monday to Saturday), and aimed at mental and spiritual health, stated a release from the Centre.

For registrations, call 984122-7709, 94450-51015 (Nanganallur), 87544-99334, 94450-51015 (Velachery) and 63830-08358, 94450-51015 (K. K. Nagar).

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Students participate in clean-up drive



More than 70 students of Shrimathi Devkunvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav College for Women in Chromepet volunteered to clear the bunds of Nanmangalam lake of trash.

This was the 68th such clean-up drive. Students planted around 50 palm tree saplings on the bunds to strengthen it.

Volunteers of Saving Nanmangalam Lake requested the Tambaram

City Municipal Corporation to remove trash from the water-holding area of the lake to increase its capacity for storing rainwater.

We even request the Environmentalist Foundation of India, which is involved in restoring the lake, to make the formed bunds uniform, enabling the volunteers to plant saplings and avoid littering by the people, the volunteers said.

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