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Lighting at Trustpuram playground enhanced



On February 15, trees on roads and properties surrounding the Trustpuram playground were not looking their free-spreading, intrusive selves. They had been snipped to size. Only the trees that were obstructing the lamps illuminating the ground at night were the target of the exercise, shares a Greater Chennai Corporation official. The GCC official adds that around two months ago, the playground received two high-mast lighting systems, one at the northern and the other at the southern end. Besides, LED lamps were replaced in the other lights at the playground.
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

Squalid pavement on Ramakrishna Street



This is how a section of the pavement on Ramakrishna Street in T. Nagar looks. R. Chandra Rambabu Naidu, a resident, says, "The pavement is damaged and used to dump trash."

Pedestrians use this section to walk to Mambalam and Kodambakkam railway stations and areas in T. Nagar and Kodambakkam.

Besides, the road itself has not been relaid for a long time now.

PHOTO AND TEXT: T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Moving the 'goalposts' on Sterling Road



A gap in the median on Sterling Road (near its junction with Sivaganga Road) in Nungambakkam is adding to the traffic chaos on this stretch. As the presence of the moveable plastic median blocks illustrates, this gap is not meant for vehicular traffic. But motorcyclists move a plastic block and have their way. The median gap should be secured better than it is now. TEXT AND PHOTO: T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN



A bumpy patch on Anna Salai in Teynampet

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

On Anna Salai in Teynmapet, ahead of Rostrover Garden (Railway Officers' Enclave), the bitter aftertaste of an infra work is lingering on. It has left behind a horizontal cut that extends deep into the road. A road trip is pleasant when the road under the tyres is not felt. The cut does the opposite of it, giving the motorist an unmistakable sense their tyres are suddenly up against drudge work. Uneven and ear-

then, the cut is avoided, especially by motorcyclists, when the road is sparsely populated with vehicles. But with motorcyclists skirting around it, the section of the road gets unnaturally narrow. And when the road is choc-a-bloc with traffic and the patch cannot be avoided, motorcyclists are assured of a forgettable experience. An un-navigable or challenging patch is an anomaly on any road, more so on an arterial road. The highways department should act promptly and get this patch fixed. The images were taken on February 15, 2024.



PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

'Floating' tiles and 'creative' manhole covers on a busy road in Nandanam

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

On Nandanam First Main Road (where it meets Turn-bulls Road), pedestrians are indulged, having been provided with two walking pathways – that is, on the face of it. A regular one at the extreme end of the road sports coarse granite tiles, certainly anti-slip. Alongside this pathway runs another track that is characterised by interlocking tiles. This track hides a stormwater drain network. However, both tracks do not serve pedestrians well anymore, having acquired a mind of their own and being bent on “reinventing themselves”.

On the primary pathway, the granite tiles are not unlike shaky teeth. With the retraining stone barrier missing, some of the tiles have drifted off the pathway. “Drifted” is the word for this situation, as regulars at the road point out that during last monsoon's heavy rains, some of the tiles floated off their resting place.

A couple of SWD manhole covers on the secondary pathway are sunk as if they were burrowing themselves into the earth like badgers. Another manhole cover seems to have got creative as it is broken in a manner that suggests pattern and design. It resembles a flower, the chipped pieces giving the impression of neatly arranged petals. Only that someone who trips over this manhole cover would least appreciate its creative bent of mind. Greater Chennai Corporation has to “rein in” the walkway (with its “floating tiles”) and also have the manhole covers replaced and ensure a pleasant user experience for pedestrians.



“Disintegrating” pavement at Nandanam First Main Road. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



‘Junctions involving Brindavan Street need traffic signals’

The busy junction of Arayagowda Road and Brindavan Street in West Mambalam is chaotic. Motorists coming from Veeraswamy Street and Raju Street take this junction to access Ashok Nagar, K K Nagar, Arcot Road, Porur, Mangadu and Iyyappanthangal.

As traffic flow is continuous, pedestrians find it difficult to cross the road. Speed breakers and traffic signals are required at this junction.

The same goes for the junction of Thambaiya Road and Brindavan Street, located nearby.
*S. Murali,
West Mambalam*



The junction of Brindavan Street and Thambaiya Road in West Mambalam on February 15. PHOTOS: SRINATH. M

You can be our volunteer-writer

Dear readers, you can be our volunteer-writer by writing to us about issues and events in your neighbourhood. You should send the write-ups to downtown.feedback@the-hindu.co.in.

Letters must carry the postal address and contact number.

An uninviting space



A children's park in Saligramam wears an unkempt look, on February 15. PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B

‘Mend this Junction in T. Nagar’

For the past one year, the carriageway at the junction of Habibullah Road and G N Chetty Road is battered and vulnerable to accidents

*P R Shenoy
T Nagar*



‘Pavement awaits mending exercise’

A section of the pavement on Rathna Nagar Main Road at Ganesapuram in Teynampet is in a state of neglect since April last year. Repeated complaints at Namma Chennai App, an online grievance redressal platform of the Greater Chennai Corporation have not yielded results. Now, the spot is misused as a dumping ground and a parking lot.

*Sucharita Kamath
Teynampet*



Climate change in our backyard

This chilling reality is closer home than one would believe, as these terrace gardeners across Chennai have found out

LIFFY THOMAS

'We sow in June, not in July anymore'

"Our terrace is our farm," says Subashree Vijay, whose collection of 400 medicinal plants got mentioned in 'Mann Ki Baat' in 2021. For at least 10 years, the 52-year-old has been diligently documenting her first-hand experience raising and maintaining a terrace garden. And that includes the 'behaviours' of these plants.

The documentation contains details such as where the seeds were sourced from, the right season to sow, the first bud, when to fertilise the garden, how and when they got the first pest attack and how it was re-buffed.

Collecting and maintaining such data about these plants has ensured a sustainable yield, she notes.

She cites the example of black turmeric plant, which is said to grow only in the North East. "Sowed in 15x15 grow bags, the black turmeric returned a 4 to 5 kilo yield last March," she says.

Erratic patterns

Last year, the chilli plant bloomed in full but it never gave fruit. "On enquiring with other garden enthusiasts, I found many others experienced the same. Patterns have become more erratic," says the resident of Alwarthirunagar.



Notes from the terrace

Subashree says one cannot predict climatic patterns, but can at the least be better prepared for disappointments. Aadi Pattam or July season is when most gardeners sow the seeds. "We have advanced it to June, and ever since we did that, the yield is good," says Subashree.

With saplings, Subashree does community gardening, often outside her community, to create awareness about medicinal plants. "We have been giving away medicinal plants that we have lost and which the environment badly needs. We are working to make sure no herbal plant gets into the endangered list," says Subashree, adding that classes are conducted for schools.

'Let us help children see climate change from their windows'

The garden in Sunnambu Kolathur



The tall mango trees at Akila Kunalan's backyard in Sunnambu Kolathur seem to be acting contrary to a long-followed script. "The *imam pasand* variety started flowering in December. This has never happened before in my garden," says Akila, a software professional.

She suspects "wooly moth" infestation, on the higher side this year, could be behind the changes in the flower-bearing patterns in her garden. The banana trees have also been showing unusual patterns, especially

the *rastali* variety.

"Flowering is either too early or very late," says Akila, who started gardening to give her two children a hands-on understanding about the environment. Observations about the flowering of the mango trees and the increase in the number of birds visiting the garden on account of the wooly moth were made by the children.

The extended family loves to spend time in the backyard experiencing nature. Akila is part of an informal community

schooling group where children are encouraged to look beyond the textbooks.

Recently, they took children to a photo exhibition in Vysarpadi that had works captured by youngsters from the neighbourhood. "This time, we made sure we did not use our car. We took public transport hopping from MTC bus to the Metro and local train. That is how we can tell children they can contribute in their own ways towards protecting the environment," says Akila.

'I go easy on the experimentation part'

For many years, the Ahmed household in Alwarpet with their terrace garden enjoyed having rose apple or *jambakkai* fruits twice a year. This year, they may not be lucky. "There are no signs of flowering in the tree till now," says Jamila Mohamed Ahmed.

Jamila says February is the main season when it starts flowering. By April, the fruits would arrive. By end of June, they would be treated to a second round of fruits.

The Bougainvilleas in the garden also display an unusual behaviour: they are in full bloom much before the time.

"Usually, it is only in summer that these ornamental plants are in full bloom," she says. The same



Bougainvilleas in full bloom

goes for the *mosambi* plant. Jamila has had to change her schedule on the basis of the plants' behaviour.

"Normally after the

fruiting season, I wait and then start pruning so as to get the plant ready for the next season," says Jamila, adding that this exercise boosts

fruiting. With the rose apple, she plans to prune close to summer so that there is some fruit by this November.

To ensure the summer sun is not very harsh on her plants, this time they are ready with a double layer of net as shade.

"The shade that my Orchids get has increased from 50% to 70%," she says. Last February, watering plants once a day was the norm. Now it is twice a day.

Cyclone Michaung also played a role in the late blooming of certain fruits and flowering plants. "My trees have gone through considerable stress due to water logging," she says.

Climatic changes have also taught Jamila she has to go easy on experimentation.

A whitefly in the bonnet

An invasive pest in coconut trees – whitefly – is keeping G. Ramakrishnan preoccupied. A former joint director with the horticulture department, Ramakrishnan has eight coconut trees in 25 cents of land in Kalpakam and with them as his object of study, he has been researching for a solution to this problem. "Not just the coconut trees but plants around the tree including ornamental ones are also being impacted by this invasive pest," says Ramakrishnan. Besides the humidity in the air that helps this pest multiply at a rapid rate, the duration of mist and direction of the wind are among factors that impinge on the health of these trees. The coconut yield is also influenced by rainfall and temperature.

Ramakrishnan read about yellow sticky traps that are tied around coconut trees to fight the pest, but experienced only partial success adopting the method. "Using organic sprays and forceful application of hose are other solutions but the latter becomes a challenge when the coconut trees are very tall," he says, adding that even guava is affected by this pest. The gardening enthusiast is working with like-minded people to study other solutions.

A thrift campaign



▼ The Virugampakkam branch of India Post conducted a special camp at Saligramam to increase the number of savings accounts. PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B



Students spruce up college premises

A cleanliness drive called “My College, My Pride” was held at Government Arts College for Men, Nandanam. The college along with Students ExNoRa conducted the event. According to a press release, former Justice of Madras High Court and former Judicial Member of National Green Tribunal Justice P. Jyothimani was the chief guest. NCC and NSS students took part.

Eye camp

Sri Krishna Sweets and Sight Care Foundation conducted an eye camp at Sashan Jain College for Women, T Nagar, recently.

According to a press release, around 80 persons attended the camp.

On the occasion, 37 spectacles were provided to needy persons.



Music contest conducted

Nalaiya Sigaranga!, a centre for music based in Adambakkam conducted its 26th annual music competition recently.

According to a press release, close to 100 contestants took part in the event held at RKM Boys' School at Dhandapani Street in T.Nagar. The centre can be reached at 9444421264

Blood donation camp on February 21

A blood donation camp will be held on February 21 at Thakka Baba Vinoba hall, No: 20/15, Sadullah Street, CIT Nagar East, T Nagar. According to a press release, the camp is conducted by The Annapoorneshwari Social Service Educational Trust, Rotary Club of Chennai Mambalam and Chennai Blood Centre. Time: From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.



A REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO ONLY

Soap-making workshop

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on making organic soaps on February 22. According to a press release, the session will demonstrate preparations of soaps from extracts of flowers, fruits ve-

getables, herbs, leaves, nuts, and oils.

Another workshop on bee keeping will be held on February 23. Both the sessions will be held at the centre's premises in Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044-29530048.

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