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### TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONS HONOURED

SK Academy in Periamet hosted its first awards function to celebrate players and coaches **P3**



### ON THE TAIL OF A TAGGED CURLEW SANDPIPER

At the end of every wintering season, one can have only a broad idea about where a migratory bird would breed, unless it is tagged **P6**



## *Thirumayilai MRTS: full of suppurating wounds*



M. SRINATH

Walking around Thirumayilai MRTS station premises is hardly an inviting prospect now. One of the most popular stations on the MRTS line, Thirumayilai suffers due to poor upkeep.

A majority of the lights are non-

functional, some of them being broken.

Outside the station, the Buckingham Canal flows green.

The whole building looks old and shabby and a coat of paint is badly needed. There are spaces inside that betray the effects of open urination. Regular commuters want no compromise on safety. They want RPF to patrol the station and the main-



These images were taken on April 24.  
PHOTOS: SRINATH M

nance staff to be deployed on a regular basis to keep the vast station premises clean. One wonders if Southern Railway has relegated this station to a less-important category.

Last year, *The Hindu* reported that Chennai Metro Rail Limited plans to upgrade both Thirumayilai and Tiruvalikkeni MRTS stations.

An agency was also identified to study the two stations and present a report on ways to modernise them. There were also plans to integrate Thirumayilai MRTS station with the Chennai Metro Rail station. One only hopes something like that comes to pass.

## Postcrossing meetup today at Nageswara Rao Park

The event will celebrate Samuel Morse's birth anniversary

Postcard enthusiasts are invited to a special Postcrossing meetup to celebrate the birth anniversary of Samuel Morse, the inventor of Morse Code. The event will take place on April 27; 4 p.m. at Nageswara Rao Park in Mylapore.

Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about Morse Code and its significance in communication history, while also enjoying the camaraderie of the Postcrossing community.

Postcrossers will also come together to exchange postcards and make new friends. Postcrossing is a global project that allows members to send and receive postcards from all over the world. It connects people from different cultures and backgrounds through the simple act of sending and receiving postcards, said a release.



File photo of a Postcrossing event

Interested participants can register for the meetup through the following link: <https://forms.gle/wzM5vK2CF5u7CVeG6>

For more information, contact Mouli Priya PC at +91 8148566110.



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## Visual lesson from design professor

SAHANA MIRA S

**W**hen assistant professor of Interior design and decor, Karthiga T from JBAS College for Women went out on an early morning ride to Marina beach at the end of last year, to catch the sunrise, what greeted her was a shoreline littered with plastic waste – bags, large water cans,

abandoned slippers, mosquito bats, and other debris tossed ashore.

Deeply disturbed by what she saw, this Velachery resident felt compelled to turn her emotion into action. "This is when I decided to take this issue to a wider audience, but through the language of art. We need to keep the conversation going, one way or another," says Kar-

Karthiga T, who teaches at JBAS College, draws attention to coastal waste through art



Karthiga T. with her mural artwork; and the JBAS team that collected coastal waste.

thiga. She later incorporated this into her PhD research project after receiving ethical clearance to collect coastal waste and transform it into art, which marked the beginning of her mural art, "Coastal Cry in Plastic".

"While my artwork used only plastic waste, our aim at the end of the day, was to clean the beach. Together with my students from JBAS, we collected all forms of coastal debris from Marina and Besant Nagar beach over a span of 30 days," she explains.

After spending another month sorting through the collected waste, separating plastics, and

sending the rest for recycling, Karthiga began working on her mural artwork from home. Between parenting her toddler and teaching at college, she used whatever spare time she had – often on her terrace to bring the piece alive. The artwork is a statue of a pregnant woman form which has around 20 kilograms of plastic waste. "I wanted

it to be a commentary on environmental degradation," says Karthiga. "The mural work is constructed entirely from coastal waste which we collected where I mainly used plastic bottles, bags, caps, wires, and discarded containers. I wanted viewers to reflect on their own con-

sumption and disposal habits, and think about the sustainable practices of these discarded items through the mural art," says the interior decor professor, who used eco-friendly paints.

"This pregnant female figure is a metaphor for Mother Earth, carrying the weight of our waste," she adds.

Recently, in April, the mural was installed at the Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai. "The mural now sits in a space surrounded by artists," Ms Karthiga says. "I hope to create conversations and inspire more artists to choose sustainable practices in their work."

## Soaring over the din: a work in progress

In geometric terms, it is a simple curve. In engineering terms, a massive structural work. In experiential terms, it promises users a 'high', one enabling them to soar over the din of traffic as they take in the sights of Tholkappia Poonga. The Tholkappia Poonga is under renovation and the experience of traipsing down the skywalk, connecting Phase I and Phase II of the eco-park, has to wait for some time even after it is constructed. By the look of it, the construction of the skywalk would be wrapped

up soon. It is already drawing attention with motorists gawking at the structure sail over the head. The elevation planted at the junction of DGS Dinakaran Salai, Santhome High Road and South Canal Bank Road is distinctive. According to those connected with the work, the skywalk construction has been set an early deadline, around mid-May. Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust is steering the Tholkappiya Poonga restoration. The images were taken on April 25, 2025

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



# Table tennis champions honoured

SK Academy in Periamet hosted its first awards function to celebrate players and coaches

K. KEERTHIVASAN

**S**harath Kamal Academy or SK Academy as it is now called is one of the most popular and well-known table tennis clubs in Chennai. Earlier, known as the Hall of Table Tennis, situated at Nehru Stadium in Periamet, the Academy took the name of Sharath Kamal, one of India's most celebrated paddlers, recently.

Run by Sharath's father and uncle, Srinivasa Rao (71 years) and Muralidhara Rao (68), accomplished coaches themselves, the

Academy has 55 trainees and is now helmed by Sharath's younger brother Rajath Kamal, who is the head coach.

The Rao brothers are the Academy's mentors.

SK Academy recently conducted its first awards night honouring players and coaches from their Club who had brought laurels to the state and country.

Speaking at the function, Rajath said the Academy would bring in performance incentives as it moves forward.

"This is the first year we have started giving out these awards. We have recognised the performances at State and National level. Gradually we will bring in performance incentives for international events as India has been doing quite well globally too," he said.

Sharath said he wanted the players to win an Olympic medal, a dream he could not realise.



The award winners with the guests and SK Academy coaches.

cess. "Our idea is to show you a way to learn for life and become the best player you potentially can be. Try to learn a little more every day and go to practice with an idea of what to improve. Our promise is that we will do the same to make SK Academy a little better every day," he said.

The guests of honour for the night were couple and table tennis players Nitin Thiruvengadam and K. Shamini.

The award winners: S. Yashini (National championship, team 2023-24, silver medalist); S. Karthikeyan (Tamil Nadu State champion, 2024-25); S. Manikandan (National silver medalist in u-19, 2024-25); M. Mohammed (Tamil Nadu State no. 4 in u-15); H. Tanish (current u-11 State champion and India no. 3).

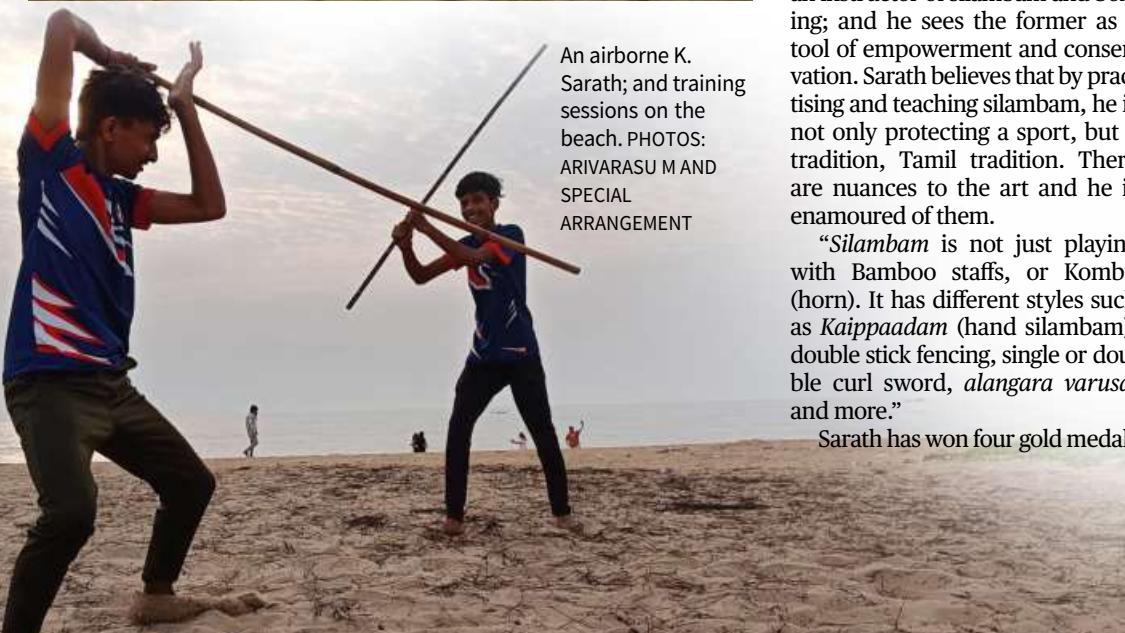
K. Sarath turned his back on a corporate career to take up silambam coaching; given the inclusion of silambam in the quota for employment in Tamil Nadu, he is keen on teaching underprivileged children for free

ARIVARASU M

**W**hen his friends wielded the cricket bat, K. Sarath was encouraged to brandish another piece of wood, thinner and longer. Though he had scampered down the 22 yards himself, Palavakkam resident Krishnamurthy wanted his son Sarath to choose silambam (stick fencing) over cricket for spe-



## The swish of a magic stick



An airborne K. Sarath; and training sessions on the beach. PHOTOS: ARIVARASU M AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cialisation.

Sarath found generous encouragement as he took this path at age four: his grandfather and his uncle had mastered silambam. He began silambam classes under Balasekar's tutelage.

Sarath would go on to acquire a BBA and an MA (Journalism) degree from Hindustan College, Padur, enter the corporate world, thrive as an executive in a multi-national company; but he could not stop his ears against the swish of the silambam stick. So, here he is: an instructor of silambam and boxing; and he sees the former as a tool of empowerment and conservation. Sarath believes that by practising and teaching silambam, he is not only protecting a sport, but a tradition, Tamil tradition. There are nuances to the art and he is enamoured of them.

"Silambam is not just playing with Bamboo staffs, or Kombu (horn). It has different styles such as *Kaippaadam* (hand silambam), double stick fencing, single or double curl sword, *alangara varusai* and more."

Sarath has won four gold medals

in silambam at a national-level competition held in Chandigarh, bested the competition in the *Thodumurai* fighting style in Chromepet competitions; and twice claimed victory in the *Thanithiramai* category at Coimbatore's tournaments. His name has a mention in the Asia Book of Records for a feat. Sarath was a state-level champion in boxing in 2013. Sarath has trained Shipping corporation of India Ltd (SCI) personnel in silambam-based self-defence; the sessions were based on hand silambam. Silambam techniques were meant to be an ally to these personnel when they return home from night duty – against chain and mobile snatchers, says Sarath.

Sarath has students from the IT sector, the IT corridor being a parallel road to East Coast Road. Naiveen, an MCA graduate and a software professional, says "silambam engages both body and mind in a way most other workouts do not."

Sarath sees the silambam stick as a tool of empowerment; the sport, a path to dignity. "I teach poor children for free, though some families still offer what they can, unsolicited. Tamil Nadu's government inclusion of Silambam in the 3% sports quota for government and government-owned undertakings ties the sport to social and economic empowerment."

For details, call 9940316610.

# VOLUNTEERING

One does not associate notebooks and textbooks with World Book Day, but there are students out there who cannot afford to buy them fresh off the shelves. A spotlight on Prakrith Arivagam, a library in New Perungalathur that is scripting a charity on the unused pages of used notebooks



## *Take a page out of their book*

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

**O**n World Book Day (April 23), Sriram Gopalan was desk-bound at his non-profit children's library and thumbing through pages – not pages that flaunted printed words, but empty pages that hoped to host words, handwritten words.

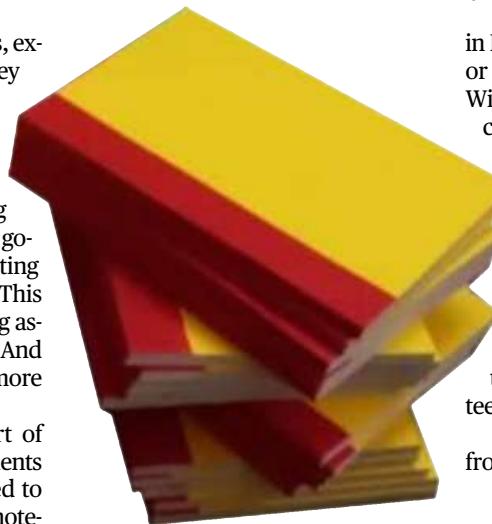
At Prakrith Arivagam, as this library at Alapakkam in New Perungalathur is called, Sriram was swamped by stacks of half-used notebooks. Ruled and unruled, long and short, white and yellowed, smudged and dog-eared notebooks. He was tearing out the untouched pages to settle them between new covers and find them a new pair of hands. Sriram was not labouring at this work alone. The sound of pages being ripped out intact filled the room: he was with people who are on the same page about how half-used notebooks ought to be treated.

They collect used notebooks, extract the blank pages which they would ultimately bind into fresh notebooks: on for weeks now, this activity would extend through May. The epilogue to the exercise: donating the notebooks thus made to government schools and benefitting underprivileged children. This "summer-vacation volunteering assignment" is in its second year. And by the look of it, it has added more pages and chapters.

Last year, with the support of volunteers from the local residents community, the team managed to repurpose and distribute 800 note-



An initiative by Prakrith Arivagam reaches notebooks to students of government schools.  
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



books to children at a Panchayat Union school at Alapakkam under Nedungundram panchayat in the New Perungalathur region. This year, the bar has been set decisively higher.

"This year, we started collecting in March itself, hoping to reach two or three schools," Sriram says. With over 1000 used notebooks collected already and volunteers

working nearly every day, the distance between the effort and the goalpost is shrinking rapidly.

This annual exercise is promoted in WhatsApp apartment groups, library circles, and social media – to seek half-used notebooks and the volunteers to deal with them.

Responses came from near, far

### A word of praise from the PM

Prakrith Arivagam, started on January 1, 2023 by techie Sriram Gopalan after his return from the United States to pitch permanent tent in Chennai, originally had the character of an exclusive children's library.

Its scope was subsequently expanded to include books for all age groups, says Sriram. He however adds that 90 per cent of the books still cater to children. Besides, it focusses on promoting activities that would contribute to the holistic development of children. It therefore essentially remains a children's library and resource centre.

In the 116th edition of Mann Ki Baat (dated November 24, 2024), Prime Minister Narendra Modi showered encomiums on Prakrith Arivagam for how it promotes the reading habit and creativity – through memory-training classes and robotics among others – among children with the use of the latest technology.

He made this reference about Prakrith Arivagam while discussing the lofty goals of children's education and the role played by libraries in achieving them.

and wide, with Mumbai and Mylapore among places where the initiative found resonance.

The project is being powered by more than 20 volunteers this time. "It is a rotational effort," says Sriram. "Even if someone cannot make it every day, a few hours here and there really adds up."

Up to this point, the helping hands belong largely to adults. With educational institutions now closing for summer, college and school students are expected to walk into the volunteering exercise.

Volunteers collect used notebooks, either through drop-offs or home pickups within nearby areas. Sorting the pages is the most labour-intensive: it is about removing used pages, then classifying the clean sheets. "We classify everything – long books, short ones, ruled, unruled. Then we send them to a local binder, who binds them at cost," he explains. "We do not earn from this. The binder we work with has agreed to do it at cost price. We cover the expenses through small fundraisers within our community."

Sriram sums up, defining why they do what they do.

"I think this generation does not realise how much they waste. Schools now provide new books with the fees. Most of them are not even fully used. But there are still thousands of children in government and rural schools who go without basic stationery. That gap is what we are trying to bridge."

To volunteer or to donate old textbooks, call 9445411121

# Out for a charge

Have you spotted the latest addition to the landscape: an EV station next to a supermarket or any other major congregating point? Private players and even Greater Chennai Corporation are seeking to establish charging points in locations that can be quickly and comfortably accessed

LIFFY THOMAS

**T**wo years ago when Kiruba Joy brought home a new electric car, he did not anticipate objection from the residents association to having the machine charged from his individual meter. The 300-unit apartment community in Porur had only two EV users then. The association would go on to invest in a common charging point, which did not impress Kiruba as he found the rates to be on the higher side.

"We shifted from our own flat to a rented accommodation in Kolathur to be able to have EV charging at home as well as to enrol my daughter in a nearby school," says Kiruba.

Kiruba would have loved to make use of a public charging station, but he found none within a five kilometre radius.

In the last six months, the EV landscape in Chennai has improved, EV charging infrastructure keeping pace with people's openness to travelling electric.

#### A changing landscape

Greater Chennai Corporation has started work on identifying locations for public EV charging stations across its 15 zones. Private players are parking EV charging stations near crowd-pulling establishments like malls and cafes.

"Currently, our preference is in establishing two-and-three wheeler charging points as many electric vehicles in these categories have hit the roads in the recent months, and the charging point for such vehicles is not yet universal," says Sriram J, senior manager, charging infrastructure at Bolt.Earth.

The company has 97 public charging stations in Chennai and is in the process of establishing 10 more.

"The recent fleet of Pink Autos and load vehicles launched by the State Government are electric, so the charging infrastructure has to keep pace with the demand," says Sriram.

Plugzmart, a Chennai-based EV charger manufacturer for high-power charging, has 25 charging stations on the highways to help long-distance travellers.

The Union Government has also asked power distribution compa-

**We are seeing a lot of improvement on the ground. Now we have an EV cell where concerns raised by us are being looked into**



nies to set up common charging stations every 25 km along national highways.

According to Bureau of Energy Efficiency, as on April 12 2025, Tamil Nadu has 1,524 public charging stations installed over the last five years, with Chennai accounting for 218 (tier 2 cities have 459 and tier 3 has 847). Karnataka and Maharashtra are way ahead of Tamil Nadu.

EV users note that besides addressing charging infrastructure gaps in public places, signages have to be put up to improve the visibility of charging stations.

Vignesh N. works as a delivery partner and commutes more than 100 km on his e-bike from his home in Ambattur Industrial Estate to Parrys. He says the city needs not just more charging stations but the existing ones need to be better maintained and be made user-friendly. "You reach a charging point to realise it's not working or there are a queue of people waiting

for their turn or the filter option is the app is such that it directs you to a gated community where you are not allowed," says Vignesh.

Exclusive charging points for gated communities is also in the wish list.

Ragavendra Ravichandran, co-founder and COO, Plugzmart, says the focus is more on getting developers of new projects on board than persuading an existing apartment community to invest in an EV station. "Having an EV charging infrastructure is now an essential selling point for developers," he says.

Some real estate players have been opening up these unmanned charging stations for those beyond their community. Ragavendra cites the example of SKCL Prime in Guindy where

An EV charging station established next door to a supermarket on ECR Link Road in Sholinganallur; and (below) near Saidapet station.

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

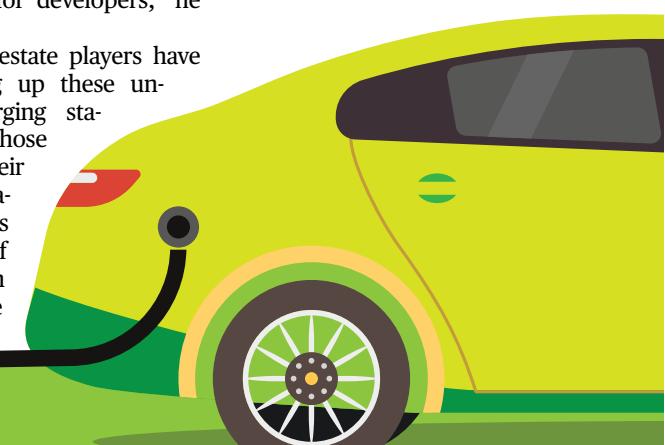
employees working in the IT park as well as those from the public can avail the charging facility inside the campus.

#### Wiring in

Among the challenges faced by private EV players is finding a good location where electricity load is good.

"EV vehicles need good wiring. In many cases, the wiring component is not suitable and the cost of setting up the wiring runs into lakhs of rupees. The "load fixed deposit" that has to be paid to the government is also high," says Sriram.

The process of engaging with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board is also time-consuming. "We are seeing a lot of improvement on the ground. Now we have an EV cell where concerns raised by us are being looked into. TNEB has also asked its senior staff to give preference to EV users," says Sriram adding that a meeting of charge point operators was held on April 24.



At the end of every wintering season, one can have only a broad idea about where a migratory bird would breed, unless it is tagged. The latest illustration of how bird tagging helps conservation efforts comes from Kelambakkam backwaters on the southern rim of Chennai



## *On the tail of a tagged Curlew sandpiper*

PRINCE FREDERICK

**W**hen a wintering bird doubles back to its breeding grounds to attend to the visceral business of procreation, it becomes essentially "unreachable" for the human friends it has made in its wintering grounds. It is impossible to keep tabs on the bird. One only knows its vast breeding range, which could straddle countries. Trying to

trace this bird down to its "hearth" would amount to looking for a needle in a haystack.

Birder Jithesh Babu is rummaging through a haystack: he is trying to trace the soon-to-be address of a curlew sandpiper (he made friends with, on April 18, 2025 at Kelambakkam backwaters). Jithesh would likely succeed in this effort. The Curlew sandpiper (already wearing its breeding plumage and likely to be around in its wintering

grounds for some more time) is wearing a tag.

A bird with a tag usually has a recorded history to fall back on. It is a matter of time before Jithesh knows where exactly the Curlew sandpiper would go. The tagged Curlew sandpiper having crossed his 150-600 mm telephoto lens, he has a photo of the creature, which he has sent to Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) along with a request for information about it.



A Curlew sandpiper with a tag at Kelambakkam on April 18, 2025; a tagged Greater flamingo at Pallikaranai marshland on April 21, 2021.  
PHOTOS: JITHESH BABU

And Jithesh knows what exactly to expect.

Around the same time four years ago – April 21, 2021 – he found a tagged Greater flamingo at Pallikaranai marshland and he wrote to BNHS seeking information, and in response, Tuhina Katti, a scientist with the Wetlands Programme, BNHS, wrote back to him: "From the combination on the tag, it appears to be 'AAP'. This individual was tagged in Panje, Navi

Mumbai (on the outskirts of Mumbai) on 24 September 2018. It was resighted in Chennai in August 2020 and since then it has been resighted in Sholinganallur on a couple more occasions. It is interesting that the bird was still present there in April."

Jithesh remarks: "As this happened at the height of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the response took some time. Usually, it is prompt."



Different stages of domesticity

▼  
Two pheasant-tailed jacanas, one in full and the other in partial breeding plumage, at a boggy patch on Nookampalayam Link Road in Semmancherry on April 22, 2025; and at same patch, a moorhen was seen feeding its young, on April 26.  
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

## PLAN YOUR WEEK

### Summer camp to develop inter-generational bonding



dementia. With rising life expectancy and age being the biggest risk factor, this number is expected to increase by 20 percent by 2050. This unique initiative aims to foster empathy, inter-generational bonding, and awareness about dementia among young minds and the community at large, said the release.

The camp will feature a wide variety of activities designed to engage both children and elders with dementia: yoga, karate, storytelling, music and dance, kolam drawing, flower garland making, arts and crafts, fireless cooking, sewing, and traditional games like *Paramapadam*, *Pallanguzhi*, *Goli*, and *Adu Puli Aatam*, along with laughter therapy. The event will conclude with a valedictory celebration, where children will showcase performances, reflect on their experiences, and create lasting memories with the elders.

For details, call 9344257901 / 044 24964555.

The Dementia Care Foundation, a non-profit organisation in OMR, is organising a free summer camp from May 5 to 9 (9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.) bringing together children and elders living with dementia for a meaningful and inclusive experience.

According to the release, India currently has over 8.8 million people living with



### Understanding patience through stories and quizzes

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) will conduct a summer camp for children and teens from April 28.

The camp will be held online and across Chennai under the theme 'Lord Jagannath and the Value of Patience' in either English or Tamil.

Children aged 6 to 12 will learn about

Lord Jagannath and the value of patience through stories, quizzes, shlokas, bhajans, fireless cooking, art and craft. Teens aged 13 to 17 will learn through theme-based stories, debates, discussions, and JAM sessions. The two-week camps will be held for close to two hours.

Course materials, videos, PDFs, and PPTs will be shared with participants through WhatsApp. Upon completion of the course, participants will receive a certificate.

For details and registration, visit [www.iskconchennai.org/summcamp](http://www.iskconchennai.org/summcamp). For queries, call 80725 99295.

### Art, culture and more at Bhavan's

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan will be starting its summer camp 2025 in performing arts, yoga, arts and crafts, storytelling, cultural tours, sloka chanting, and handwriting enhancement from April 28 to May 9. Each programme is thoughtfully curated to engage children in meaningful, joyful exploration beyond the classroom, said a release.

The short-term courses start from May 1 onwards.

For details, call 98843 35700, 98843 66700, 98843 64700

## All-women carnival conducted

Golden Sparrow, an all-women carnival organised by Rotary District 3233, was held recently at St.Thomas College in Koyambedu. The carnival was inaugurated by mayor of Greater Chennai Corporation Priya Rajan.

The all-women carnival is organised by Rotary to strengthen women, nurture, lead and transform communities, said a release.

Eminent dignitaries and women

achievers received awards during the event. Parveen Sultana, motivational speaker; Greater Chennai Corporation Mayor Priya Rajan; V.Vanitha IPS (retd) received Golden Sparrow Women Achiever Award. Representation of women members in Rotary is 16.20 per cent in South Asia and Chennai District 3233 is 18.25 per cent, added the release.

## Inspiring young readers

HarperCollins India hosts a workshop to celebrate World Book Day at Higginbothams



In celebration of World Book Day, Collins, the education publishing division of HarperCollins India, hosted a workshop titled "Foster a Love for Reading in Learners" at Higginbothams bookstore on Anna Salai. The event brought together over 30 educators including teachers and librarians from leading

schools across Chennai for a day of reflection, learning, and literary inspiration.

The workshop was led by noted educator and founder of Beyond Books S.V. Lakshmi. Through hands-on activities, collaborative discussions, and innovative strategies, the session aimed to empower

educators to transform how reading is introduced and nurtured in classrooms, said a release.

Some of the topics discussed were designing reading-friendly spaces; innovative reading strategies; and literary diversity.

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## A mix of quiet and bustle

The campus connected with postal services, located on Ethiraj Salai in Egmore, is multi-faceted in a way that not many are aware of

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**N**umber 5 & 7 on Ethiraj Salai in Egmore is associated with heritage. The Office of the General Manager, Postal Accounts and Finance functions from the sprawling premises.

Amidst the bustle that inevitably goes with an office of such gravitas and stature, stands a ochre-red building that is physically united to its past, but is aligned with the spirit of the campus.

It allows itself to be led into the daily grind, parcel post services being operated from its ground floor. The grandeur of this building can put the other buildings in the shade unless one drops in regularly for transactions with any of the sections.

If that is the case, one would not have missed the helpful services offered by some of these sections. One of them is the all-women post office which has received good reviews from users particularly for the Aadhaar-related services it offers. The all-women post office operates between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., and the Aadhaar registration and allied services can be availed between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The next stop is the canteen known beyond the gates for its purse-friendly, clean gastronomic fare. Its old building under renova-



tion, the canteen has been temporarily shifted to a makeshift facility now. The office also runs a handy

well-appointed, artistically designed creche to take care of the children of the employees.



The heritage building; the all-women post office; the canteen building under renovation; and the creche, on April 24, 2025.  
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

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