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Playground work at Shenoy Nagar nearing completion

Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority is carrying out the work at a cost of ₹8.62 crore



The playground which is under construction at Kamarajar Street in Shenoy Nagar.
PHOTOS: AKHILA EASWARAN

The development work at the Greater Chennai Corporation playground at Kamarajar Street in Shenoy Nagar is nearing completion. Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority is carrying out the work at a cost of ₹8.62 crore.

Spread across 4.265 acres, the ground will have a foot-

ball court, a basketball court, a volleyball court, a gallery, a paved walking track and a gym, says a CMDA official.

The gym will have a treadmill, an EFX machine and an exercise cycle, all two each. There will be specially designed toilets for persons with disabilities. The capacity of the parking facility is 17 cars and 113 two-wheelers.



READERS WRITE

‘Gas pipe-laying sites on CTH Road is unsafe during night’



A private firm is laying natural gas pipe on CTH Road for the past few years. But safety measures at its work sites are not satisfactory, raising the risk of accidents, especially at night.

The worksites are not sufficiently illuminated and the reflector tapes on the barricades are sparse. It is learnt from Avadi police officials that the private firm is expected to “restore” the dug up sections of the road after completion of the work. But one would find

the road work falling short of the necessary standards. Hindu College, Sekkadu bus stop, Charles Nagar, Babu Nagar and Gandhi Nagar are a few examples where the pipe-laying work is over and the dug up roads have been closed but these stretches are uneven and motorists and pedestrians are unable to use them.

T Sadagopan, Tamil Nadu Progressive Consumer Centre, a citizens group based in Avadi

‘Open manhole poses a threat to safety’



A cow fell into an open manhole of a stormwater drain, on Vanagaram-Puliambedu Road, a few months ago. However, no measure has been taken to cover it. This manhole is open for the last one year. During night, it is risky as the road is not adequately lit and the open manhole can be easily missed. At least barricades with signboards cautioning the public should be placed at this spot.

The road comes under the purview of the State Highways and the stormwater drain was constructed by the Thiruverkaadu Municipality.

‘Relocate information board to a prominent spot’

An electronic information board has been installed on platform one at Villivakkam railway station.

At present, it is near the rooms of the station’s officials which is in interior section.

The information board should be displayed near the track, as is the case at the Chennai Central suburban railway station.

M. Senthil, Villivakkam



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Spaces under flyovers **poorly maintained**



The status of a beautification exercise under Koyambedu flyover. The images were taken on April 10. PHOTO: VEDHAN M

In its budget for 2025-2026, Greater Chennai Corporation has announced ₹40 crore for beautification of spaces under flyovers. Besides, another ₹5 crore has been announced for installation of new fountains.

However, most of these spaces developed earlier are in a state of neglect today for want of regular maintenance. The vertical gardens have gone dry; the paintings on the pillars have become faded and the fountains are out of order.

Spaces under the flyovers in Koyambedu, Amnijkarai, and Moolakadai are a few examples.

Gandhipuram residents decry **inadequate water supply** at public toilet



The public toilet at Gandhipuram in Vysarpadi. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Open defecation is becoming conspicuous at Gandhipuram in Vysarpadi, notes Community Welfare Brigade, a citizens group.

Of the two public toilets, the Greater Chennai Corporation demolished one of them, a couple of months ago, as the building was dilapidated. The demolition was a result of the several complaints raised by the forum and Gandhipuram residents.

The forum is urging the Corporation to reconstruct the facility at the earliest as a sizeable number of the residents in this neighbourhood rely on public toilets.

"In the case of the other toilet, there are four enclosures, two each for men and women. But water supply is inadequate," says Raghukumar Choodamani, the forum's convenor.

S. Shanmugham, secretary of Aarvam, a non-governmental organisation working with underprivileged women and children in Vysarpadi, points out that Gandhipuram residents, including women and adolescent girls, are forced to defecate in the open. Besides, women residents complained of poor maintenance and non-functional sanitary napkin devices.

It should be noted that this toilet was set up using funds allocated under Swachh Bharat Scheme. The forum also pointed out that the public toilet at Kalyanapuram, another neighbourhood in Vysarpadi was under lock-and-key.

Gandhipuram and Kalyanapuram are in Ward 46 in Zone 4.

Text: L. Kanthimathi

Footpath work on Pantheon Road



The footpath on Pantheon Road on the side where Ashoka Hotel is located is being relaid, according to a GCC source connected with the work.

PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK



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An enhanced 'service' on Palm Sunday

Today at Risen Christ Church, Palm Sunday, which marks the beginning of the Holy Week, will accommodate a blood donation camp. This church has a culture of organising organ donation awareness sessions and similar exercises during this time of year. And the Perambur branch of the All India Anglo Indian Association is working round the clock to honour a home-grown Eastertide tradition marked by the spirit of giving

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

For the past 15 years, at Risen Christ Church on Paper Mills Road in Perambur (near Perambur), the Holy Week services (beginning with Palm Sunday and culminating in Easter Sunday) have been long-drawn-out processes, the extended hours providing congregants with an opportunity to put into action what they heard preached from the pulpit. It is about making a donation to the needy – someone up against a nervously ticking clock, chewing their nails off waiting for a donor. It is not donation straight out of a cheque book. The donor and their donation are organically linked.

This year, on Palm Sunday (April 13), Risen Christ Church (Which comes under the Arch Diocese of Madras Mylapore) is partnering with ESI Hospital to host its annual blood donation camp, and church expects a turnout of 250 to 300 donors. The blood donation camp is scheduled between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. The main eligibility criterion: healthy individuals aged between 18 and 60. Meeting this criterion, anyone can participate



in the camp.

The church has created a benchmark in terms of social outreach by promoting organ donation among congregants. In 2017, when an organ donation awareness talk by Mohan Foundation was squeezed into an extended Good Friday service. Reportedly, the initiative sparked interest among parishioners, causing many of them to step forward and sign up for it. It ushered in a culture of openness to organ dona-

tion, and successive parish priests have kept this interest alive.

Father M. Arulraj, who took over as parish priest of the church in June, 2024, has taken a personal interest in eye donation, often reminding his congregation: "The eyes are the lamp of the body. What better way to let your light shine than by giving someone the gift of sight?" Outside the church, a board proudly displays the names of those who have pledged their eyes – a quiet yet powerful

reminder of selflessness.

Why host these events during Holy Week?

Ronald Victor, vice president of Risen Christ Youth, explains why. "Easter is about hope, sacrifice, and renewal. It is a reminder that we are here not just to receive but to give. This is our way of honouring that message." Ronald has been associated with Risen Christ Youth since he finished school, and every year, he has been watching the community reach newer heights of generosity.

Over the years, the church has accommodated newer forms of generosity as well: besides the annual blood donation camp, it has been organising general health camps, eye screenings, dental check-ups and awareness sessions – all rooted in the belief that faith is best expressed through service.

Ronald observes that this year, the word about the Palm Sunday blood donation has spread far and wide – through schools, churches and social media. The hope is that this Holy Week, more people will step forward – not just to give blood but to embrace the spirit of giving in whatever way they can.

Ensuring no one feels forgotten

Easter (or any festival, for that matter) has its time-honoured traditions. The Perambur branch of the All India Anglo Indian Association has appended a home-grown tradition to that Eastertide lineup and steadfastly persisted with it, even in those years when its coffers looked emaciated and, understandably, begrudged support.

During a previous edition of the blood donation drive at Risen Christ Church; and (below) beneficiaries of the 2024 edition of the initiative by Perambur branch of All India Anglo Indian Association. The gift hampers were handed out to the beneficiaries a day before Easter. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

This branch plays the Easter Bunny to families within the Anglo-Indian fold that would do with some kindness.

"Easter is a time of giving, but the scale depends on what we receive," says Penelope Mckertich, president of the Perambur branch.

It does not want to have anyone forgotten. Whether it is 150 families or 350, whether the donations are plentiful or paltry, they ensure that those who need help stay helped.

A bag of groceries, a small sum of money, a hamper filled with essentials – nothing is too small when given with intention. And here is the most beautiful part of it: the younger generation is stepping forward, hearts sparkling red and large with kindness and hands calloused with charity work. The youngsters pack food, sort donations and make sure the proffered succour reaches the right people.

(In Chennai, the All India Anglo Indian Association has seven branches, and Penelope notes that all "the seven branches do whatever is possible within their limits for the less fortunate on the eve of Easter.")

This focus is kept sharp, and it does not matter that Insta-worthy frames are on the lower side. This group in Perambur might not throw grand feasts or organise vibrant celebrations during Easter, but its quiet act of kindness, though not quite making it to the radar of wider public attention, has left an indelible imprint on the minds of those who benefitted from it, deepening community bonds.

The ebb and flow of membership is inevitable. Some families move on to other parts of the city or country, some others cross oceans in search of new beginnings. But the Perambur branch remains steadfast in its purpose.

"We do what we can, with whatever we have," Penelope avers.

And often, that is more than enough to make a difference.





An Area Sabha meeting at Anna Nagar West J Block in January 2024.
FILE PHOTO: VEDHAN M

The ground that remains to be covered

As Area Sabha meetings are set to unfold tomorrow across Chennai, a look at what needs to be done to make them more participatory

LIFFY THOMAS

Preparations are under way at various wards for the Area Sabha meeting of April 14. Some councillors *The Hindu Downtown* spoke to say they received the message from Greater Chennai Corporation on April 9, which gave them some time to reach out to citizen groups and residents and inform them about the timings and venues. While many plan to use social media to publicise the meeting, some engage autorickshaws fitted out with loudspeakers.

Giving prior notice about the meetings was among demands made by civil society organisations such as Voice of People which has been pushing the State Government to initiate various steps to strengthen Area Sabhas and Ward

Sabhas.

Tamil Nadu introduced Area Sabhas for urban local bodies in 2022 and has earmarked four days – January 25, April 14, September 15 and December 10 every year – to conduct the meetings. As per the government order, each ward is divided into 10 areas and each of the city's councillors must organise meetings to address grievances of residents.

Now, how popular are these platforms? Were residents able to raise their concerns about issues

pertaining to their areas? Are these forums facilitating participatory planning? Are grievances being addressed?

Area Sabha meetings have a long way to go in the city, say organisations working in this area of grassroots democracy.

For the December Area Sabha meeting Nallor Vattam founder Balasubramanian, a resident of Choolaimedu, had to return home disappointed. "I visited the GCC Division Office in Aminjikarai to enquire about the meeting a day be-

fore the scheduled event, but left with little clarity. The next day I waited for over an hour for the organisers to arrive only to hear from them that they are not organising any meeting," says Balasubramanian, adding that awareness about Area Sabha meetings is low.

He says just like Grama Sabha meetings, Area Sabha meetings hold huge potential provided they are conducted as per norms.

Last year, Voice of People through an RTI found that most urban local governments including some zones of the Chennai Corporation had failed to conduct adequate Area Sabha meetings. None of them was maintaining information in the public domain.

Gurusaravanan M., chairperson, Institute of Grassroots Governance, says Grama Sabha meetings are a major force to strengthen democracy at village panchayat level; and a lot can be done through such meetings at Urban Local Bodies. "In a Grama Sabha, resolutions are passed and cannot be challenged by any court of law. Likewise, Area Sabha meetings must be given more power so that it gets more meaningful and there is active participation," says Gurusaravanan.

Organisations working to promote this participatory form of democracy point out that before all of that, more political will is required to strengthen Area and Ward Sabhas in Tamil Nadu.

A bilingual handbook

For those keen on knowing more about the functioning of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees, "People Participatory Platforms in TN Urban Local Governments" would be a valuable resource. The 30-page bilingual book published by Thannatchi and Voice of People with the support of Tambaram Makkal Kuzhu gives an introduction to Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. The guidebook also discusses the roles of citizens and the functioning of these sabhas.

"There are other platforms where grievances can be aired and so many people do not see a need for these sabhas. Just as government schemes are advertised, rights-based initiatives such as Area Sabhas should be promoted through multiple channels," says Gurusaravanan.

In a Facebook post of Voice of People, founder-member Charu Govindan urges people participating in the upcoming meeting to ensure accountability. "As this is the first quarter of this financial year, when participating in your Area Sabha be sure to ask your councillor to present their accounts for previous years," says the post.

When and where

If you have got no intimation about the meeting in your area then reach out to the local councillor. Their names and contact details are available on the GCC website <https://chennaicorporation.gov.in/gcc/council/council-address/>. The GCC division office in each ward should also provide details of the scheduled meeting.

On uncertain ground at Egmore museum



In the recesses of the Egmore museum, on the northern and eastern sides, a facility integral to the road infrastructure and serving multiple purposes wears a gap-toothed grin. From its outward presentation, one can see this facility serves as a pavement above and at least a couple of things below -- a conduit for utility cables; and when it rains, a stormwater drain. Slabs, either missing or chewed off with rusty steel rods exposed much like a prey picked clean to the bone by a Peregrine falcon, appear with disturbing regularity. As the facility winds its way, it finds itself in the space right outside the Museum theatre, a well-hoofed section on account of events. Though the carriageway is usually free of vehicular traffic and anyone on shank's mare can walk down that path, during crowded times, which can result from cars being parked on the carriageway, pedestrians would have a need for this pavement. Events are known to stretch on well into the evening, and during the late hours, these gaps can be missed until one's feet has sunk into one. The PWD, which bears the responsibility of maintaining the infrastructure at the Museum, has an office parked on the premises. The images were taken on April 8, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



READERS WRITE

'Garbage burning goes unchecked in Noombal'



At Erikarai Road in Noombal, garbage pile-ups on vacant land are regularly set to fire.

Greater Chennai Corporation and Thiruverkaadu Municipality shift the blame to each other. The parcels of vacant land fall under the limits of GCC and the road under Thiruverkaadu Municipality. Door-to-door garbage collection of waste does happen here.

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Snapshots of interventions by the group.
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Small efforts add up: acts of mercy by a residents team

This is true of any group that has a sharply-etched mission and seeks to fulfill it with extravagant commitment. The group should be kept impervious to outside influences that could dilute the mission, and sufficiently ajar to let in those that can further its scope.

KK Nagar Friends Helping Group enrolled in this school of thought and seemed to have passed the tests with flying colours.

D. Sivakumar, founder and prime mover behind KK Nagar Friends Helping Group, notes only those that have a “helping hand” to show can be part of its WhatsApp



group.

The prerequisite for membership is an effort in the past to have promoted an act of mercy.

Little wonder that its WhatsApp group is sparsely populated – 25 members, according to Sivakumar.

And the group has been in existence since the early part of the pandemic – in 2020 – formed essentially to address the problem of hunger.

“For one month, we provided lunch to 65 frontline workers, pre-

paring the food ourselves,” says Sivakumar.

Members of the group – largely residents of KK Nagar and surrounding areas – pass the hat around and mobilise funds whenever an act of mercy needs to be performed. Besides the residents, Sivakumar notes, the group looks in other directions where help can arrive to activate a planned charitable act.

Sivakumar is a member of the Rotary Club of Alandur; and he observes that contribution from Rotarians is immense.

There are eight balwadi schools in and around KK Nagar, and the group has mobilised funds to provide amenities whenever a need for them arose.

“We have provided television sets to five of those Balwadi schools; water purifiers to four of them; and we have 20 chairs each to four balwadi schools and are in the process of reaching the same

number of chairs to other four,” explains Sivakumar.

Individuals with needs are also on this group’s radar.

Here are examples. “In a single-parent family, where the lady has to take care of three children, one child had undergone heart surgery. There was no cot in the house for the child to lie down on. We collected money to buy a cot and a fan and also enable them to purchase medicine,” he says.

Two covered pushcarts, meant for ironwallahs to ply their trade – one in West KK Nagar (Jeevanandam Street) and the other in neighbouring Virugambakkam – bear the name of this collective, “KK Nagar Friends Helping Group”. Sivakumar volunteers information about them: the pushcart in KK Nagar was repaired and returned to the ironwallah; and the one in Virugambakkam bought afresh for the ironwallah.

An installation on a celestial theme



A celebration of vision, unity, and new beginnings unfolded at the Don Bosco Auditorium, where the Rajasthan Cosmo Club (RCC) hosted a celestial-themed installation ceremony. The evening marked the induction of the new president, Manish Kumar Chowdhari along with his board of directors.

Executed by Sunil Kumar Munoth, installation director, the evening transported members into a cosmic journey filled with inspiration and possibilities. From the thematic décor to the seamless flow of the programme, every element resonated with the power of

shared dreams and boundless ambition, said a release.

Manish Kumar Chowdhari unveiled the club’s theme for the year, “Disha Wahi, Udaan Nayi”, setting a visionary course for growth and excellence.

A moment of cultural reverence was witnessed during the traditional *chandan tilak* ceremony performed by Hastimullsa Chowdhari.

The event was further graced by esteemed honorary trustees Praveensa Tatia and Gunvathsa Baid, along with senator members and past presidents.

Anna Nagar humour club meets today

The monthly meeting of Anna Nagar Humour Club will be held on April 13 at Shri Krishnaswamy Vidhyashram, Vaigai Colony, Anna Nagar West at 4 p.m.

N. Balasubramanian, N. Karthikeyan, R. Rangadorai, R. Sivakumar, Dr A. Anantharamakrishnan and Kamala Eswaran will tell jokes on various events of this month. Admission is free. All are welcome.

For further details, contact Balu 97910 80791/Karthik 98400 76022

Danex sets foot in India

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CELEBRATING TAMIL NEW YEAR: A NEW BEGINNING AND A SPIRITUAL RESET

Haarshini Agarwal

Tamil New Year, known as Puthandu or Varusha Pirappu, marks the beginning of the Tamil calendar year and is celebrated with great fervour by Tamils across the world. Falling typically on April 14th, it coincides with the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai. This auspicious day is deeply rooted in Tamil heritage, with references found in ancient texts like the Silappadikaram and Tolkappiyam, which mention Chithirai as the start of the new year. This day holds a great deal spiritually as it's widely believed that Lord Brahma began creation on this day, adding to the spiritual significance of this day.

Preparations for Puthandu begin



days in advance as the houses get tidy up and get decorated with fragrant flower garlands and leaf garlands. The auspicious day is incomplete without an early start followed by cleaning the entrance to decorate it with colourful kollams, symbolising prosperity, abundance, and good luck. Families get together to view the kani—an arrangement of items like fruits, flowers, a mirror, turmeric, gold or silver jewellery, and betel leaves. This visual start is

believed to bring blessings for the year ahead.

Special dishes are prepared, with mango pachadi being the highlight. This dish is made with raw mangoes, jaggery, neem flowers, and tamarind, representing the different emotions one experiences in life—sweet, sour, bitter, and tangy. Other food items that make the plate on the occasion include Payasam, Kiribath, and Vadaiparuppu, which satiate both the appetite and the taste buds. Temples see large crowds on Puthandu, where devotees seek blessings for health, happiness, and prosperity. Cultural programs, family gatherings, and friends are greeted warmly with “Puthandu Vazhukal!” (Happy New Year)

Tamil New Year is more than

just the start of the month of Chithirai, it is a day that brings together traditions, prosperity, and the moment to get ready for a new start. It also brings families together and encourages a hopeful look into the future while honouring a rich past.



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+91 96772 88868 / 044-2834 4444
T&C APPLY*

GRAND Opening of
Maoitram ORGANIC SHOP
Your Trusted Organic Partner from West Mambalam is now at
MOGAPPAIR EAST
We warmly welcome you to join us
Date: 23rd April | Time: 9 am
Venue: # 2/22 A, Seethakathi Street, Mogappair East, Chennai - 600037.
Branch: 1, Mahadevan Street, Arya Gowda Road, West Mambalam, Chennai - 600033.
Mobile: +91-7550104342 / 7358620066