

MYLAPORE

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Washermenpet » Tondiarpet » Manali » M.R.C.Nagar » Teynampet » Mount Road » Broadway » Kondithope » Tiruvotiyur



SPEAKERS FORUM CROSSES A MILESTONE

Members will gather to celebrate their 1000th weekly meetup at Nageswara Rao Park today **P2**



A FEEDER SERVICE BETWEEN A METRO STATION AND A COLLEGE

Revisiting two initiatives that are aimed at encouraging people to cycle to work **P4**

READERS WRITE

'Rusty items lying abandoned on the sands of Marina'

R. KASIM RAZVI

A regular walker to the Marina Beach, I notice a number of broken iron materials left abandoned on the sands. These materials belong to vendors who have stopped trading at the Marina. Such materials are particularly seen on the section of the Marina ranging from Gandhi Statue to Vivekananth Illam. Similarly broken wooden materials including pushcarts are seen on the sands, posing a danger to walkers.

I have reported this to the Greater Chennai Corporation but no action has been taken yet.

R. Kasim Razvi is a resident of Srinivasa Road, Mylapore



Link Road: 'keep it clean'

With respect to the news item on the Link Road, one may note that there is no consistent "housekeeping". Earlier, the GCC had assigned the maintenance of the stretch to a private conservancy agency, but for the last three years, we do not see any such clean-up happening.

Whenever I raise an online complaint, GCC would do some "housekeeping" on the road –that too, after several reopenings of the same complaint. On May 26, I took a photo of an uncleared spot on the road.

Johnson Samuel



A 21-day challenge in Mylapore



Representational image

Over the next three to four weeks, Mylapore residents have something to busy themselves with.

EcoKonnectors Trust and Bisleri Bottles For Change are launching what they call "Recycle to Revive Mylai – 21 Day Challenge".

Set to kick off this World Environment Day (June 5, 2025), the Challenge seeks to promote good waste-management behaviours among apartments and residents' groups of the locality. If they practised segregation and recycling for 21 days, the habit will stay with them – that is the rationale behind the Challenge.

According to a press release, participants have to segregate waste and keep aside plastics (any type of bottles, covers and wrappers among others). Bisleri Bottles for Change

will provide participating apartments with a one tonne bag with standie. The plastic items should be cleaned and stored at their premises in the bag provided, the release says

The plastic collection drive will be organised on the 10th and 21st day of the Challenge by Bisleri Bottles for Change.

Twenty-one days of this practice will bring about a behavioural change, which includes segregating waste and sending recyclable waste to the collection drives, and this environment friendly habit will stay with them forever.

Together we can save tons of plastics ending into the landfills and sent for recycling.

Registration closes on June 3, 2025. For details, call 9003016783; or visit www.ecokonnectors.com

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Mylapore chapter of Thiru Vi Ka Speakers Forum crosses a milestone

Members will gather to celebrate their 1000th weekly meetup at Nageswara Rao Park today; a book is set to be released on the occasion

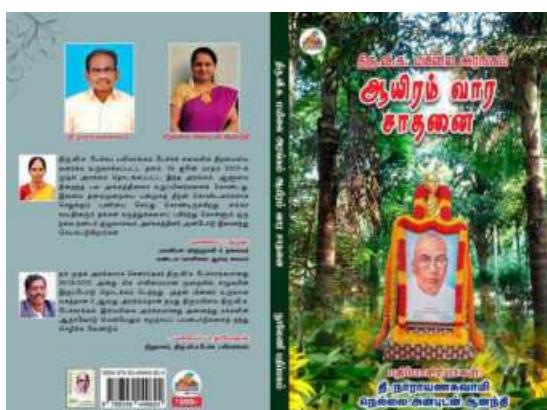
BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Thousand is a big number in a majority of contexts. And it is without any shadow of doubt, when a speakers forum reaches its 1000th weekly meeting. On June 1, the Mylapore chapter of Thiru Vi Ka Speakers Forum hits that coveted mark.

Having its genesis on March 3, 2005 at Thiru Vi Ka Park in Shenoy Nagar, the Forum (started by B. Damodaran) helps its members oratorical skills without any damage to their wallet. Members are allowed to speak for five minutes each either in Tamil or English.

The Mylapore chapter was the second to open in the city the same year. The Forum has swelled to 32 chapters, which meet at various parks across Chennai.

The Mylapore chapter has had



Nageshwara Rao Park as its venue since inception. "The Chess Square is where you will find us every Sun-

day from 8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m.," says T. Narayanasamy, the chapter's organiser.

110th meeting.

One of the most touching moments experienced by the chapter is a review from a passer-by at the park: he had been depressed and about to take the extreme step, but what he listened to changed his mind.

"The person was motivated listening to us speak and it changed his mind," says Narayanasamy.

Book launch

A book titled "Thiru Vi. Ka. Payilarangam 1000 Vaara Sadhani" will be released on the occasion. Commissioner of Income Tax Office V. Nandakumar will be the special guest. He will also be presenting awards to five individuals for their acts of service.

C. Anbazagan of Ajantha Earth Movers; Mylapore MLA Tha.Velu; former Member of Parliament Mu. Krishnaswamy; C.Balamurugan, I.R.S.; S.Natarajan, retired IAS officer; and M. Ravindeeran, director, Raj TV Network Ltd are among those who will be taking part in the event. The 1000th week event is being conducted at Savithri Ammal Oriental Higher Secondary School, Royapettah High Road, Mylapore, near Sanskrit College, between 4 p.m and 7 p.m. All are welcome. For more details, contact T. Narayanaswamy at 9841096091.

Except during natural calamities, Cyclone Vardah and Chennai Rains being two prominent examples, the group has not missed its weekly meetup. During the pandemic, they meetups happened online. An average of 25-30 members attend every meet-up.

During the pandemic, the Mylapore chapter started "Helping Hands Mylapore" to reach out to families in need – food was cooked and served to the needy with money pooled in from well-wishers.

"We continue to help the underprivileged by meeting their educational expenses or other needs," says Narayanasamy, a retired banker who is with the group since the

Cable drums removed



▼
Cable drums that were sitting squat on the pavement where Durgabai Deshmukh Road meets Greenways Road have been removed, as this image from May 29, 2025 shows; an earlier image that *The Hindu* Downtown ran in these pages shows them parked on the pavement.

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



Brahmotsavam celebrations



▼
Golden garuda vahanam of Srinivasa deity being taken in a procession at Sri Vedanta Desikar temple in Mylapore as part of the third day of the Brahmotsavam. The car festival will be held on June 10 and the festival will end on June 12 with Theerthavari and Thirumanjanam. TEXT AND PHOTO : M. SRINATH

PANORAMA



A *summer well spent*

This summer, sixty-nine higher secondary school students added a new element to their skill set – photography. The fourth edition of a free summer camp in photography for students of classes XI and XII concluded recently with a photo exhibition at Nageswara Rao Park in Mylapore.

Initiated by MLA Dha. Velu, the summer workshop has grown over the years with new resource persons and students from private

schools joining in.

"In the first edition, we had 30 students all from Corporation and aided schools in Mylapore. The MLA's office was the venue for the theory classes. This time, the number has more than doubled. Lady Sivaswami Ayyar Girls School played host to the programme," says M. Madhan, a photojournalist with *Mylapore Times*. He was helped by five other resource persons: Sathya from *The Hindu - Tamil*, Sanjay from *Deccan Chronicle*,

The fourth edition of the free photography workshop for higher secondary school students in Mylapore region concluded recently

Akhila Easwaran from *The Hindu*, Anandhu from *Eenadu* and Sathiah from *Dhinakaran*.

The classes are held over five weekends, Saturdays set aside for theory and Sundays for practical lessons on the ground. The DSLR camera is purchased on rent for all the participants to give them a hands-on experience. The Marina



beach, Nageswara Rao Park and Mada Streets are among places where the students had their shoots.

The highlight of the workshop is the photography competition

where students have to take photos based on a theme.

The top three winners receive prizes, with the first prize winner taking home a bicycle, over the years, says Madhan.

Tree near Saidapet Metro subway crashes, traffic police personnel swing into action



Chennai City Traffic Police personnel were clearing a massive Sterculia tree near the Saidapet Metro Rail subway on Anna Salai on May 27, 2025. It was a major crash, the tree having fallen on a few bikes. Fortunately, no one was injured. To avoid a rush-hour logjam, the traffic police personnel waded into the scene close to 5 p.m. with chainsaws and started cutting the fallen tree into easily portable logs. They made the work easier for Corporation workers who arrived on the scene later, a JCB in tow. This incident highlights the need to check the strength of trees in public places to avoid untoward incidents. PHOTOS: R. RAVINDRAN.

Revisiting two initiatives that are aimed at encouraging people to cycle to work

LIFFY THOMAS

Kothari Petrochemicals in Manali did not just tell its employees to cycle to work; it enabled them to do so.

It gifted Hercules cycles to over 140 employees on its rolls on National Safety Day in March 2022. The management's request to its staff: pedal to work at least once a week. Incentives nudging employees to take the eco-friendly route followed.

And that "route" is well-travelled. In addition, the company has been taking other routes to energy conservation and pollution control. All these efforts have resulted in a plethora of recognitions for Kothari Petrochemicals including the National Award for Excellence in Energy Management 2024 by the Confederation of Indian Industries. The biggest encouragement however comes from the fact that neighbouring companies in Manali emulate its example by gifting bicycles to their employees.

"Once a month, usually on the fourth Saturday, we observe "No Bike Day" encouraging employees

'Manufacturing' a cycling movement in Manali



Employees of Kothari Petrochemicals take part in an awareness rally.

to pedal to work or use public transport," says Premapiriyam P., vice-president, Kothari Petrochemicals.

Next, the company switched to vehicles running on liquefied natural gas (LNG) for employee transportation. Two electrical cars were added to the fleet, and a fork lift was converted from diesel to electrical.

Employees who bicycle to work the maximum number of days in a month are incentivised with cash awards and carbon offset certificates.

DOWNTOWN
SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 2022

Company encourages employees to cycle to work

The Manali plant of Kothari Petrochemicals gifts its workforce a bicycle and wants them to pedal to work once a week.

LIFFY THOMAS

When fuel prices are on the rise, employees of the Manali plant of Kothari Petrochemicals do not have asked for a better gift than their employer. The company recently rewarded its workers by gifting them a bicycle each.

The message was loud and clear: stay fit and do your bit for the environment.

The plant has 142

employees on its rolls, and right from then at the beginning level to the highest level of the same - a bicycle.

"We have already distributed 80 bicycles and the remaining will be distributed in the next 15 to 20 days," says V. Mangayarkarai, senior manager (Human Resources) and HRBP, Kothari Petrochemicals, adding that the cycles were distributed at an event held to observe National Safety Day.

The company has been promoting green modes of transport among its workforce for a few years now. Last year, in pursuit of the same, the company organised a cycle rally to encourage

A majority of the employees in Manali and are either dependent on their own transport or vehicles. By launching such an initiative, the management is confident some employees will make the switch.

Suresh Pachappan from the production department is one of them. The day after he received his bicycle, Suresh has started cycling to work. "I stay in Madhurawada, which is located around 4.5 km from my workplace. Pedalling to work takes me double the time it used to take by my car. It's a great experience in this. I am already seeing a fringe saving on my fuel."

Suresh says that the management keeps that employee inspire each other work. "We slowly start asking employees to switch to bicycles. Once they get on to a road, then enter it in to the days," says Mangayarkarai.

"Our main aim is to force the employees to make the switch to bicycles, evaluation should be available."

How good is the infrastructure in the neighbourhood for cycling? "The roads are not very good. So, the main idea is to make the infrastructure and even ask for a sega-

Carbon dioxide emission has been reduced by 650 kilos on account of employees commuting by

bicycle, says data shared by the company.

With a good number of em-



ployees living within a five to seven km radius of the plant, the management had a solid reason to push for a bicycle commute.

Once an employee pedals to work for a minimum of 10 days, a carbon dioxide math is done and certificates and gifts are given accordingly.

M. Rajavel, whole time director, Kothari Petrochemicals, says currently 20-25% of employees bicycle to work on a regular basis and they want to raise this percentage by another 50% this year.

"It is also important to understand the bottlenecks that employees face while cycling, which could be due to bad roads or chaotic traffic in the city, so I have asked the team to study the reasons. If their concerns can be addressed by the company then we will take it up or we can represent it to the Corporation," says Rajavel.

The management will be purchasing another round of bicycles to be given to employees who have joined the organisation in the recent years.

A feeder service between a Metro station and a college

When the new academic year kicks off at M.O.P. Vaishnav College in June, the students and staff will have the advantage of taking a feeder service from the closest Metro Rail station to the college campus on Nungambakkam.

Chennai Metro Rail Limited is offering this service to support the college's "No Vehicle Day" launched in August 2024.

"CMRL authorities got in touch with us and wanted a schedule in advance for them to arrange a service for the benefit of students, which we plan to take up from June," says Archana Prasad, principal, M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women.

Currently, DMS or Thousand Lights are the closest metro stations accessed by a majority of the students. The shuttle

service, if implemented well, would encourage more students to ditch their vehicles on other days of the week as well to rely on public transport - which was also the larger goal of keeping vehicles off the campus every last Thursday of the month, later changed to any one day in the month, based on students' feedback.

The principal notes that students' comfort level had to take precedence: if No Vehicle Day fell on an exam day, students

would be handicapped by not using their own vehicle. There could be delay in reaching the college. So, the date and day of No Vehicle Day have been kept flexible.

The initiative runs on the steam of flash mobs and messages on social media earlier on. No campaigns are needed today: just an announcement a day before No Vehicle Day.

Archna says the initial two months the departments tried not to schedule visitors on the campus on the D-Day but now guests are also asked to switch to public transport.

The agenda for the coming academic year is to encourage students to pedal to college and also to get students and staff to switch to e-vehicles, says the principal, adding "on No Vehicle day, e-vehicles are allowed."



SUSTAINABILITY



Connecting the dots

Ahead of World Environment Day, here are two stories from Chennai that serve as a reminder that the circular economy thrives when organic linkages between stakeholders are noticed and then strengthened

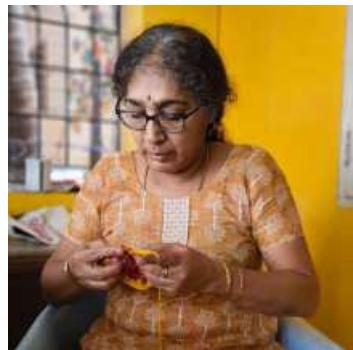
SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Sometimes, one discovers with amused wonder that someone integral to one's landscape and therefore inconspicuous, is pitted in the same battlefield as an ally by default. And the discovery extends to the fact that what they do can be a helpful tie-in to one's own work.

Kavitha Sivakumar, a resident of a gated community in Medavakkam, recently added this truth to her worldview, thanks to a casual conversation with a neighbourhood kabadiwallah, Suryagandhi Kumar. She found out he welcomes sirattai – coconut shell – into his storing house in Pallikaranai, and when a substantial amount of it is aggregated, sells the pile.

Kavitha works with Namma Ooru Foundation (NOF), and she realised straightaway that Suryagandhi and his ilk could further a NOF initiative.

Ever since the team at NOF realised coconut shells go into the making of activated charcoal, useful in water purification, and that there are entities looking for sirattai for the same purpose, Sustainable Sirattai Campaign was born, its details spelt out by NOF founder Nat-arajan.



Recently, NOF notched up 150 kg of coconut shells, having aggregated it for a while, notes Kavitha. The source of coconut shells is currently "responsible citizens and green events". Kavitha now advocates empowering local scrap dealers as aggregators of coconut shells, educating residents on cleaning and storing the shells, and

tapping into apartments for them.

"The biggest hurdle is connecting the dots between households, collectors and buyers. Without proper segregation, most shells end up in dumping grounds."

Hygiene concerns such as mould and pests also deter scrap dealers from collecting shells, she adds. Collecting sirattai, Suryagandhi comes across as an outlier. He buys them at Rs 10 per kilogram and selling at a small profit. "Sirattai is used to make activated charcoal, which helps in melting gold," he explains. Though only a few households contribute regularly, the numbers are growing.

Every piece of fabric matters

A massive part of humanity would give the thumbs up to this observation. College education of the first



Fabric jewellery created by Vijayalakshmi; Suryagandhi Kumar at his scrap collection shop; and Vijayalakshmi at work.

adept in beaded jewellery, paper quilling, crochet, and finally fabric accessories, particularly fabric jewellery.

People who know Vijayalakshmi would use an epithet to describe her – "creative".

Fabric jewellery is closer to her heart as it is the ne plus ultra of creativity. Besides, it takes care of the smallest pieces of leftover fabric.

Enter Ganga Sridhar, a resident of Mandaveli, a sustainability campaigner and a connoisseur of upcycling-based fashion. An aficionada of Vijayalakshmi's delicate fabric accessories, Ganga was impressed with Vijayalakshmi's ability to turn small-sized fabric pieces into stunning fabric jewellery. Giving her leftover fabric pieces from

cloth that went into making customised kurtis, Ganga urged her, "Can you turn these into earrings or bangles?" During COVID, matching masks became the norm, and Ganga took it a notch higher. She would keep sending fabric to Vijayalakshmi to create accessories that perfectly matched her outfits (and of course, masks too). Making fabric jewellery for the last seven years, Vijayalakshmi now has a full accessory line – earrings, necklaces and bangles – all lightweight, affordable, and eco-friendly. "It is exciting to get exactly what you want by recycling fabric instead of settling for store-bought accessories," Ganga says. "I have recommended Viji's work to many. It is a simple idea with a big impact."

After years into it, Vijayalakshmi passes her verdict on fabric jewellery: "easy to make, profitable and loved by customers."



An annual books distribution event by RYA Book Bank in the past . FILE PHOTO

As RYA Book Bank invites new students to register with it, the window of opportunity open this year till August 31, one cannot help notice what made this long-standing charity a synonym for free college textbooks in the Chennai Metropolitan Area — digitalisation of its processes

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

If you popped by ryabookbank.com now, you would notice the home-page header has relinquished its top slot, offering it magnanimously to a tangerine-coloured panel. It is the season (one returning every year) when this transfer of power happens. Ensconced at the top, the panel "hollers" at you: "RYA Book Registration Open. New Application Registration Open from 12-05-2025."

An invitation to another wave of students

The announcement ends with a blinking imperative, one demanding a click of the mouse: the hyperlink leads you to a page where old members can check in with their credentials, and to-be members start the registration process with the Rajasthan Youth Association (RYA) Book Bank.

The student can check off the course and the year for which registrations are open. Proceeding infield, the student has to provide a wide range of details, the highlights being Aadhar card and 12th mark certificate and college details to establish the registrant is a *bona fide* college student seeking textbooks on loan. By the time they wrap up the process — either registering a new member or an old member looking for new textbooks — they have an inkling of what made RYA Book Bank a synonym for cost-free lending of college textbooks in the Chennai Metropolitan Area. Beyond the Rajasthani communi-

ty's commitment to social responsibility and the dedication of the book bank team, there is a clear and undeniable element — digitalisation of mundane processes.

Technology has reduced the workload on the team at RYA Book Bank, which largely consists of volunteers whose time is a freewill gift, and cannot be coaxed out of them, even less demanded.

Casting his mind back to the time when a truckload of processes were carried out manually, Raj Kumar Dugar, past chairman of RYA Book Bank, presents the contrast ushered in by technology: "Students' records are now better maintained, and caution deposit payments (just ₹ 500) have become more convenient. Earlier, payments were made in cash at the office, which was difficult when staff were unavailable. Now, all transactions are processed smoothly through banking channels, eliminating cash handling."

Non-profits struggle with marshalling human resources, and RYA Book bank has demonstrated how technology brings a shedload of invisible hands to the deck. Interactions between the staff and students happen more online than at Atkinson Street in Vepery, where RYA Book Bank is located.

RYA Book bank has impressive numbers to bear this out — be it the number of colleges, beneficiary-students or the textbooks distributed — and much of it was racked up in the last 10-12 years through digital processes.

On the e-registration form, the dropbox for colleges seems to list every college in the Greater Chennai, Kancheepuram and Chengalpattu districts, displaying RYA Book Bank's immense reach.

The years behind RYA Book Bank, born in 1963 — do the math and know the distance of this charity run. At any given time, more than 9,000 students are in possession of books provided by the project, says Raj Kumar. He continues: more than 1.45 lakh students have benefited from the project since its

inception, and each year, over 1,500 sets of books are distributed.

Initially, the book bank built the girth of its books inventory by collecting old textbooks from outgoing students, and as this approach was riddled with "if's" (the major 'if' having to do with the willingness of the students who have bought textbooks from the market to part with them), the switch was made to purchasing new textbooks under various disciplines and loaning, collecting and reloaning them till the book displays the effects of age and sustained use and, of course, slips out of the curriculum on account of a syllabus rethink.

Donors are encouraged to support the initiative in any of two ways: Gyan Deep (a donation of ₹11,000 to cover the textbook costs for the entire course of a student in the arts, science and commerce streams) and Vidya Deep (a donation of ₹21,000 for a deserving engineering student for the entire eighth semester).

On the future trajectory of this RYA Book Bank, Raj Kumar notes the project is considering the integration of e-books into its offerings. He is quick to qualify it: "However, it presents certain challenges, especially since students still prefer reading from physical books. The effectiveness of building a robust e-book section is yet to be determined."

For this year, RYA Book Bank registrations close on August 31, 2025.



Students' records are now better maintained, and caution deposit payments have become more convenient

PLAN YOUR WEEK

Pickle-making workshop

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting culinary workshops on June 4 and 5. The sessions focus on preparation of chaat-based items and pickles respectively.

According to a press release, the chat items include *pavbhaji*, *kachoris*, *panipoori*, *sevpoori*, samosas and *bhelpoori*.

In the other workshop, pickles will be made from tomatoes, mint,

coriander, ginger and a few more.

Also, another workshop on organic farming of vegetable crops will be held on June 6.

The session will focus on chemical-free ways of pest management and soil nourishment.

All the sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy.

For details, call 044 - 29530048



'Focus on individual development'

Montessori methodology is a child-centric approach that focuses on individual development, says Manisha Kanoria Lohia, founder of iSpark Holistic Happiness Studio.

She says it enhances the child's physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual aspects, leading to holistic well-being, according to a press release.

iSpark focuses on developing "iron muscle, nerve of steel, and

thunderbolt mind" in children from a young age. It offers a non-mechanised gym and a healthy cafe catering to the child's nutrition under the guidance of trained experts and nutritionists, says the release.

In addition, there are programmes for children aged from 15 months to 12 years.

iSpark is on 8/17, Eighth Street, Dr Radhakrishnan Salai, Mylapore.

For details, call 88259 70607.

Changes in the pattern of train services

As part of the ongoing Engineering Work, a line and signal block has been permitted in the Chennai Central - Gudur section between Kavaraipettai and Gummidiyandi yard on June 2, between 11.15 a.m. and 15.15 p.m.

Consequently, the following are the changes in the pattern of Electrical Multiple Units (EMU)

Complete cancellation of EMU services

Train Numbers: 42601, Chennai Beach - Gummidiyandi at 09.40 a.m., 42413, Moore Market Complex - Sullurpetta at 10.15 a.m., 42013, and 42015, Moore Market Complex - Gummidiyandi at 10.30 a.m. and 11.35 a.m..

For complete details, log on to <https://x.com/DrmChennai>

Sustainability fair at Ampa Mall

On June 7 and 8, Ampa Skyone Mall will host Sustainability Fair 2025, an initiative of the Rotary Club of Madras and the Institute for Climate and Environment (ICE) with focus on energy, water, waste and forests/agriculture.

The fair will be a platform to check on how citizens, entrepreneurs and children are responding to the climate crisis with creativity, care, and community, said a release.

Live art and slogan competition for children and a waste management workshop are a few activities that will be conducted. Ten change-makers will be showcasing their eco-friendly products at the event that will be held from 11 a.m. onwards.

This initiative started in January at a Pongal get-together hosted by Rotarians, where sustainability was the heart of the traditional celebration.

Later in March, ICE took the idea to SDNB Vaishnav College, where two workshops—one on sustainable practices and the other on water management—drew students from Rotaract colleges.

Spiritual discourse in Alwarpet

Sri Guru Vitthal Seva Trust and Sri Guru Lokopakara Trust are organising a spiritual discourse, 'Sri Gnannanda Maha Nadhi', from June 5 to 8 at Narada Gana Sabha, Alwarpet, from 6.15 to 8.30 p.m.

At the discourse, Nama Sankirtanam by Vijayakrishna Bhagavathar and Upayasam by Govindapuram Sri Balaji Bhagavathar will also be held.

Telugu classes

World Telugu Federation is conducting Telugu classes from June 7 at its premises at Ankur Plaza, T. Nagar. For details, call 9841616465/7305557322

IYA get its first woman secretary

Anita Suresh Kochhar has been appointed as the first woman to hold the post of secretary of the Indian Youth Association (IYA).

She becomes the 60th secretary of the Association founded in 1965 to foster unity, community service, and youth engagement among Rajasthani migrants living in Chennai, said a press release.

Uttam Kankaria was appointed as president of IYA.

The oath-taking ceremon-

ny was conducted by Praveen Kumar Tatia, member of the Tamil Nadu State Minorities Commission. Other key executive members appointments include: J. Dilip Bokadia as treasurer; Rajkumar Dugar as managing trustee; and D. Lalithkumar Baghmar as trustee treasurer.

The Indian Youth Charitable Trust, affiliated with IYA, has been providing scholarships to underprivileged students.



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PRIYA DARSHINI TARAKKAD ARJUNAN

Ensuring the safety of cyclists

Ahead of International Bicycle Day, an appeal by a cyclist on steps that need to be taken to keep the roads safe for their tribe

A year ago, a young life was snuffed out on GST Road due to an accident involving a car and a cycle. Hit by the car, the young cyclist was thrown off the saddle. Earlier, a couple of years ago, another cyclist was fatally knocked down by a vehicle that was proceeding on the wrong side of the road.

Early this year, a young woman was hit by a speeding car near MEPZ Oragadam. Despite being rushed to the hospital, her memo-

ry and cognitive power diminished due to the head injuries she sustained. And it has taken a full four months for her to come back to

normality.

Likewise, two girls cycling to school on Theosophical Society Road in Besant Nagar met with an

accident due to a pothole, and were hit by a minibus. One of the girls lost her life, and the other sustained serious injuries.

Every other day, we come across such instances of cyclists being hit by speeding cars, bikes, lorries and buses in Chennai. While some of these incidents have been recorded by the police, many go undocumented.

These incidents illustrate that despite following safety rules such as wearing safety gear, reflective clothes, having headlights and tail-lights and using hand signals, cyclists are vulnerable on our roads.

While International Bicycling Day (June 3) is more about advocating cycling for its positive impact, we want road safety to be the overarching message.

Many cities are making major changes to their infrastructure, urban development plans and policies to protect the interests of cyclists and other non-motorised transport users. Chennai must also take a leaf out of their books.

Currently, many of the city's roads are in a shambles due to Chennai Metro work. Owing to this and other reasons, the number of cyclists in Chennai has also dwindled.

Even on roads such as the ECR, GST Road and OMR where some demarcation was created for cyclists, these lines have disappeared with time.

The Greater Chennai Traffic Police ran a campaign "Zero is Good" appealing to people to be safe on roads to ensure there are zero accidents. However, its life and effects were short-lived.

We need many such initiatives, particularly those promoting a cul-

ture of safe bicycling, to be run on a regular basis.

Our demands

- Every road in the city – arterial or otherwise – must have a lane for slow-moving traffic such as bicycles and be maintained well. Other motorists encroaching upon the lane should be penalised.

- Wrong side driving violations must be handled with an iron hand as these are big threats to cyclists.

- Safe parking spots must be made available for cyclists as most people avoid taking the cycle for short distance commutes for fear of losing their bicycle despite having it locked.

- A stronger enforcement of road rules and speed limits is needed, especially during the hours when school and college students need to use the road, so that children can take to the saddle safely.

- All roads that are not children-friendly must be explicitly marked.

- Provide better lighting.

- Stricter laws that treat the cyclist and pedestrian on par with other road users must be proposed to safeguard the interests of cyclists.

- Schools should inculcate a sense of vehicular equity in the minds of children so they learn and practise on-road etiquette early on.

- The Government must come forward for collaborative efforts with passionate organisations that are making concerted efforts to make people take up cycling and other non-motorised transportation forms.

- Bicycle tourism in the city could be promoted.

(Priya Darshini Tarakkad Arjunan is a member of Chennai Cyclists)

Recognition for two referees from North Chennai

K. KEERTHIVASAN

Football referees R. Venkatesh and P. Vairamuthu are trusted friends, having toured various parts of India for several national tournaments together.

Residents of Perambur and Pulianthope respectively, the two friends made Chennai proud when they received the "best male referee award" from the All-India Football Federation at its awards function held in Bhubaneswar in early May. Venkatesh won the best referee award while Vairamuthu bagged the best assistant referee award.

In fact, their refereeing journey started together. Both became Tamil Nadu referees in 2009 and Na-



tional referees in 2014. In 2018, Venkatesh became an International referee and Vairamuthu achieved the distinction a year later.

"It feels great to receive the AIFF award for the second successive year. It was because of my consistency and solid decision-making abilities," says Venkatesh.

Venkatesh has this to say about Vairamuthu – "he knows when to interfere and when not to interfere

with the referee's decision. He has played a supportive role."

And Vairamuthu has this to say about Venkatesh – "he takes control of the situation on the field and is very good in his decisions."

Assistant referee Vairamuthu, who got the award in 2019, was happy to receive it again.

The two are keen on participating in many international tournaments and are of the view that if VAR (video assistant referee) is a



match official in football, who assists the referee by reviewing decisions using video footage and providing advice to the on-field referee based on those reviews) is introduced in India, referees' growth will be faster.

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ஜனங் 5 முதல் 8 வரை மாலை 6:15 முதல் 8:30 வரை

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