

T. NAGAR

Saidapet » West Mambalam » Vadapalani » Porur » Kattupakkam » Irungattukottai » Nungambakkam » Manapakkam » Ashok Nagar » Valasaravakkam
Gerugambakkam » Mangadu » Choolaimedu » Egmore » K K Nagar » Kodambakkam » Virugambakkam » Somangalam » Poonamallee » Chetpet



A long-standing request for a passageway under a rail overbridge in Chetpet is now being considered

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Fresh hope for Chetpet residents

The destination they sought has been long in the coming – they felt the way someone travelling on the trans-Siberian train route probably would. This comparison is in fact ridiculous: unlike the one holding a ticket on a trans-Siberian train journey, they were never certain about reaching their destination.

And now, twenty-three years on, they are seeing the hazy outlines of the “destination”, which is close to the Chetpauk railway station. It is really an objective (and not a destination) and there are encouraging signs that it could be met, finally.

Residents of Chetpet have been seeking a safe passageway under the Dr. Gurusamy ROB (Rail Over Bridge) for decades, from one side of Chetpet to another as this would enable residents, particularly children of five schools, to reach the Chetpet railway station safely without having to cross the ROB.

On July 19, 2025, the solution avidly sought for well over two decades seemed to resonate with the

powers that be. Dr. Gurusamy ROB comes under the bridges division of Greater Chennai Corporation.

Kripa Sagar Janardhanan, who has been in the vanguard of the effort by Chetpet residents to have this safe passageway, reports what transpired on the day at Dr. Gurusamy ROB. “J. Kumargurubaran, Commissioner of GCC accompanied by Egmore MLA I. Paranthamen and engineers from the Bridge

GCC Commissioner J. Kumargurubaran, accompanied by Egmore MLA I. Paranthamen and engineers from the Bridge Division of GCC, visited the site and studied the problem. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



division of GCC visited the site and studied the problem. As per discussion it is understood that GCC is likely to insert prefabricated concrete boxes having about 12 feet height by pushing them inside the ROB to make a walkway as they have done similar works elsewhere,” says Kripa Sagar.

Based on the discussion with engineers of GCC’s Bridge Division, Kripa Sagar notes that as the columns between which the passageway is expected to be created are a safe distance away from tracks, an NOC from Southern Railway might not be required; and even if it were required, it could be obtained.

Kripa Sagar observes that when a safe passageway under the ROB is facilitated, the event would signal a return to the past. He offers a peek into a history, which also includes residents’ battle to recover what was lost.

“The pathway beneath Dr. Gurusamy ROB which connected the South West and South East of the ROB, enabled the residents, stu-

dents and teachers of five educational institutions and office goers to reach the Chetpet Railway station safely with ease. In 2002, Southern Railway extended their shunting line over the Path way to shunt their long length trains depriving the public their comfortable and safe access to the railway station.

Since then MCC School and the local residents have been making efforts to get safe access. Various proposals were made but nothing materialised. Construction work by CMRL at Chetpet Metro and diversion of traffic from Harrington Road by the traffic police only piled on the misery as they had to take a long circuitous route to reach the Chetpet railway station. In response to efforts taken by the MCC School and the local residents, Egmore MLA I. Paranthamen took up the issue with the Commissioner of GCC. If this passageway comes up, the problem pending since 2002 will end.”

A wheelchair user’s experience at the Chintadripet MRTS station



Many commuters using MRTS have often reported that lifts and escalators are non-functional causing inconvenience, particularly to those with mobility challenges. On July 18, a commuter in a wheelchair, who regularly travels between Velachery and Chintadripet, was seen being helped by a small group of commuters to descend the stairs of the station as the lifts were not working. It was around 11.30 a.m. and the commuter who works as a fruit vendor stopped fellow commuters and sought their help. A few school students also joined in. TEXT AND PHOTOS: RAGU R

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‘Smart Water ATM at T. Nagar bus stand remains locked’

V. JOHAN DHANAKUMAR

Fifty smart water ATMs – free drinking water dispensing systems – were ushered in last month, across Chennai. One unit was installed at the T. Nagar bus stand.

They could not have got the location any better than that. Being a key commercial centre, T. Nagar is always bustling with people from all walks of life. People from the poorer strata of so-

ciety including school children would benefit from this smart water ATM. That is, if they have access to it. Unfortunately, this unit has remained locked for several days.

Will the agency concerned do the needful at the earliest, taking into account the sweltering heat Chennai city is currently undergoing?

V. Johan Dhanakumar
Choolaimedu

Registrations open for Madras Day quiz

Ispahani Centre in collaboration with X Quiz It presents the second edition of Quiz@123 – it is quiz that celebrates the spirit and legacy of Madras.

Part of the Madras Day celebrations held every August to commemorate the founding of the city, this quiz promises a delightful journey through the streets, stories and heritage of Madras, says a press release.

The highlights of the quiz contest are as follows: it is a team-based quiz with two participants per team. It is open to all age groups. It includes rounds that cover history, culture and landmarks. The quiz will take place on August 23, 2025 at Ispahani Centre in Nungambakkam.

The link to register for the quiz is: <https://bit.ly/123quiz2025>

Inter school quiz competition

Union Christian Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Chetpet will host the 18th edition of the Rajan V. Chacko Memorial Inter School Quiz Competition for students of classes IX to XII on July 25. Hosted by renowned quiz master Terry Ashley, winners would get cash prizes. Calling all Chennai schools to register using the QR code on or before July 23.



READERS WRITE

‘New MTC services from Ramapuram lack frequency’

N. SUBRAMANIAN

Metropolitan Transport Corporation introduced four new routes this May – 26G, 18E, and 21E (which provide connectivity to Broadway) and 70C Cut – for the benefit of Ramapuram commuters. While their routes have been well charted out, their frequency leaves a lot to be desired.

Route number 26G covers Nungambakkam, Kodambakkam, Virugambakkam, and Alwarthirunagar; Route numbers 18E and 21E share a common route between Guindy and Ramapuram but their routes are different between Broadway and Guindy. While 18E covers the entire stretch of Anna Salai covering Teynampet, Nandanam, and Saidapet; 21E is operated via Kamarajar Salai which covers a good section of Marine Beach and also covers Pattinapakkam, MRC Nagar, and Adyar.

The routes 26G and 18E provide connectivity to Central railway station and LIC and 21E covers Secretariat and Reserve Bank of India. And, 18E and 21E provide connectivity to Guindy railway station and



Ramapuram bus terminus. PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B

Guindy Industrial Estate. These three routes cover a good number of educational institutions.

Likewise, the service to Kilambakkam, known as 70C Cut, is operated via GST Road covering Alandur, Saint Thomas Mount, Pallavaram, and Chromepet. This route helps in accessing Alandur metro station, airport, and TB hospital.

Another feature of the new services is that they are operated from an interior road in Ramapuram – Kamar Salai.

The aim is to spare the commuters the trouble of going all the way to the main road which is Mount Poonamallee High Road to board

buses.

However, commuters from Ramapuram have stopped waiting for these services as their frequency is poor. The buses hardly show up. Further, there is no timetable at Kamar Salai bus terminus nor is there a timekeeper.

MTC should introduce small bus services to important areas nearby, with good frequency.

They include Vadapalani bus terminus, Koyambedu bus terminus, Vanagaram toll gate (also known as Porur toll gate), Guindy sub-urban railway station and Alandur metro railway station.

N. Subramanian,
Ramapuram

Winners of contest on entrepreneurship receive awards

The award ceremony of an innovation and entrepreneurship competition organized by the Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute (EDII), a Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of Tamil Nadu, was held at Vivekananda Auditorium, Anna University, Guindy, last week.

According to a press release, the contest called “Tamil Nadu Student Innovators Challenge Programme,” is an annual event held for government and government-aided school students with an aim to inculcate entrepreneurial skills in them.

The Minister for MSME, T.M. An-



barasan, presented cash award worth ₹31.25 lakh and certificates to 50 winning teams in the presence of the Additional Chief Secretary, MSME Department, Atul Anand; Director - EDII, R. Ambala-

vanan; and Deputy Director - EDII, N.A. Kamalakannan.

On the occasion, the Minister also launched an initiative called “Nimruthu Nil” for the benefit of students in higher education institutions; gave away financial assistance to the tune of ₹19.23 lakh to 15 enterprises under Innovation Voucher Programme; and inaugurated a skill development programme for which 9,000 beneficiaries from tier two and tier three cities have been identified, adds the release.

In his address, the Minister listed the various schemes and training programmes of the MSME Department.

A session on chocolate making

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a culinary workshop on making chocolates on July 24. According to a press release, various flavours of chocolates from cocoa, fruits and dry fruits would be demonstrated.

Another workshop on making fabric ornaments will be held on July 25. Both the sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. Prior registration is required. For details, call 044 - 29530048.

Garland making workshop

Jothi Madhar Sangam, a women's club, is conducting a workshop on making garlands on July 26 at Sukalayam, 70/44, Burkit Road, T. Nagar. According to a press release, no fee will be charged. Time: From 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. For details, call 98949 37906, 9841158018.

Choolaimedu club to meet today

Choolaimedu Exnora is organising its annual meet on July 20 at Karur Vysya Bank Staff Cooperative Society hall, No: 2, Fourth Street, Sowrastra Nagar, Choolaimedu. For details, call 98406 06162.

A roofless bus stop opposite Rosary Matriculation School in Santhome on November 8, 1978. PHOTO: THE HINDU ARCHIVES



In the run-up to Madras Day in August, look for features about iconic institutions of the city in these pages

75 years of education in a nutshell

Old students and associates of Rosary Matriculation Higher Secondary School jog their memory and seek to capture this institution's place in the city's history

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

'One of the early Matriculation schools in Madras'

I am from the first batch of students (1950) who went to Rosary Matriculation School. My sister was studying at St. Raphael's Girls School, which followed Tamil medium of instruction, and the nuns asked my father to enrol me with Rosary as it had just opened. It was kind of trendy to study in a matriculation school then and there were only four such schools for girls in Madras of those times – Sacred Heart, Good Shepherd and CSI Ewarts being the others. Most of our school years were spent on the campus at Kutchery Road, and for a while we also shared space with Stella Matutina College of Education.

Students of all matriculation schools had to come to Lady Wil-



lingdon College to write their exams and it was customary to be taken to St. Thomas Mount before appearing for the examination. Our results were displayed on the Madras University's big notice board and parents would troop in early in the morning to see their children's marks.

There are many life lessons that I have learnt from the school; and picked up many skills too, in-

cluding communication skills that I developed thanks to Ms. Paul (English teacher) and principal Mother Teresa Xavier who was strict but kind at heart. Every time I recite my sloka, I am reminded of the Sanskrit master.

Dr. Swarnalatha Selvaraju is 79 years old and lives in Malaysia

'Rosary used to be a co-educational institution'

Now, one would automatically associate Rosary with education for girls, but in its early years until Fifth Form this was a co-educational institution. I have shared bench with boys as my classmates. While a majority of the staff were women, Sanskrit and Tamil subjects were handled by two male teachers.

Among the gains from studying at this institution are: a disciplined approach to life and work



and a whole lot of skills including good spoken English.

The sisters were particular about how we dressed to school, and plays and dance drama brought out histrionic talent in many of us. We had two houses – Loretto and Fatima, the former identified by pink and the latter, blue. Pinafores and half saris were worn as uniform.

I was once made the "bank agent", an activity where we collected money for certain occasions and learnt how to maintain an account. We used to have cooking sessions, needle work and sewing classes under domestic science.

Whatever we learnt at school contributed to our holistic development.

Vanamala Parthasarathy is a multilingual scholar of Vaishnavism and lives in Bengaluru. She is from the 1958 batch of the school.

'Those classes kindled my interest in nutrition'

Classes in household arts or home science, as it was later called, kindled my interest in nutrition and dietetics and I would go on to build a career in that discipline.

I still remember how we were taught to make ice cream in the pantry. The cycle rickshaw was our favourite mode of transport to school.

Saroja Raghavan retired as head of department of Dr. Mohan Diabetes Specialities Centre in Gopalapuram

'Rosary and its equally illustrious neighbours'

Much before Santhome High Road was lined with schools, the tram line ran from Luz Church Road to Santhome. Many working professionals used this network to head to Parrys. Later, for many Mylaporeans, this road would gain in prominence for the row of schools run by Christian organisations. St. Raphael's was one of the oldest schools. Sometimes, one would find students moving from one school to another on the same road. Once they completed middle school at Montfort School, they would move to the next building, which would be San-

thome High School. And students of Dominic Savio would join St. Bedes.

My two sisters pursued their school education in Santhome, one studying at St. Raphael's and the other at Rosary. Rosary operated a school bus, a novelty in those times. My elder sister, Late Meenakshi Subramanian served as chemistry teacher at Rosary and many of her students including "Apollo sisters" and retired Judge Prabha Sridevan were in touch with her.

So strict were the nuns that yesteryear actor and an old student of the school L. Vijayalakshmi was not permitted to sit for the matric university exam as she did not attend the selection exam.

Where the present Rosary Matriculation School is, Stella Maris College used to be before it moved to Cathedral Road in the late 50s.

K.R. Jambunathan is a long time resident of Mylapore and has been chronicling hidden stories of the neighbourhood



From The Hindu Archives

There have always been a high demand for admissions in certain institutions. And the school management would have to turn down applications by the dozens.

According to an article that appeared in *The Hindu* dated October 24, 1958, Rosary Matriculation School was much in demand and due to lack of space, the school had hugely restricted the number of students it took in. "Many children had to be refused admission".

The strength of the school increased four-fold in 25 years. Presiding over the silver jubilee celebration of Rosary Matriculation School, Sister Celine Xavier, principal, said that the strength of the school increased from 400 in 1950 to 1690 in 1975, says a report from *The Hindu Archives*.

Three Rosarians' gift to their alma mater

As Rosary Matriculation Higher Secondary School celebrates its platinum jubilee, three old students — architect Priya Lourduraj, Japanese language trainer Matengi S. Suresh and medical doctor Malini A.V. — have spearheaded an effort to gather alumni down the decades



Alumnae of Rosary Matriculation Higher Secondary School during a meeting held in June.

LIFFY THOMAS

What does it take to organise a grand all-batches alumni reunion of an institution that has 75 years behind it, and never a formal alumni association in all those years?

Three busy women professionals — architect Priya Lourduraj, Japanese language trainer Matengi S. Suresh and Dr. Malini A.V. — can take that question. If this trio's experience is anything to go by, one needs to extend one's waking hours a wee bit.

In October 2024, these three old students of Rosary Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Santhome got started on an effort to gather alumni down the decades and they are still finding themselves in a last-minute scramble to tie loose ends. The platinum jubilee meetup of old students across batches and retired teachers would also signal the formation of an alumni association. A previous attempt 15 years ago to have an association of this kind was spectacularly stillborn.

With the D-day drawing near — the alumni reunion and platinum jubilee carnival would take place on the school campus on July 26 — they are both excited and nervous.

Excited, as they survey what they have achieved in the past months and look forward to the culmination of the effort on July 26. Nervous, as

anyone is expected to be ahead of a grand event they are responsible for.

One challenge that stared them in the face was getting a buy-in from the school management to organise the mega reunion. The next major thing was to have an alumni association registered.

"We have enrolled ourselves under the Society of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the congregation that runs the school. The association is now a formal entity under the Society, so that helped us plan for the D-Day, and this also gives us more credibility," says Priya, who graduated from the institution in 2003 and is an architect by profession.

As is the case with any registered body, Rosary Alumni Association will maintain accounts and have an executive team elected.

Towards spelling out the goals and objectives of the alumni association, they have published the charter on the school website.

And then what they dreaded — bringing old Rosarians on board — seemed easier than expected thanks to social media.

"We were surprised to find the enthusiasm of students across batches in connecting with the school. When we started seeking out representatives from each batch to help us plan the reunion and find their classmates, we immediately got a response from 1962, 1964, 1965 batches," says Matengi, a student of the

1992 batch. "The WhatsApp group currently has 65 members across batches who are a big support to us," says Matengi, who is course director at the Japanese Language School of the Indo Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The batch representatives act as a first level of validation before classmates are added to the group.

The core team has been meeting in person every month. As they have reached the last leg of the preparation, intense discussions happen every day.

Matengi is in-charge of registrations, Priya acts as a bridge between the school and the alumni and Malini coordinates with the sponsors.

They have sub committees to assist them. They include a PR team, an emcee team and a cultural team. Over the last month, 35-40 representatives, each representing a batch, also met to discuss the progress as well address concerns.

Dr. Malini, who is based in Bangalore, says two major social initiatives that the alumni would be driving are sponsoring deserving students studying in the school and helping retired teachers with medical assistance and other financial support.

The trio want every Rosarian to be part of the reunion. And if one is unsure about making it to the meetup they could at least register so that they can be part of future events.



30 schools take part in inter-school cultural festival

Over 650 students from 30 schools participated in Scintillations, the annual inter-school cultural fest of P.S. Higher Secondary School, held on June 27 and 28.

The theme of this year's fest was 'The Golden Era of Music'. More than 15 events were conducted that tested creativity, quick thinking, memory and articulation of students. From music and dance to TED talks and quizzes, every moment was packed with energy.

Principal Revathy Parameswaran

inaugurated the event on June 27. Sriranjani Santhanagopalan, Carnatic musician, was the chief guest for the valedictory function. She congratulated the winners and spoke of the opportunities available to the students.

Tasmai from Vidhya Mandir in Mylapore clinched the Mr. Scintillator title and bagged Nothing Phone worth ₹25,000, said a release. Chettinad Vidhyashram bagged the winners position followed by PSBB, Nungambakkam as runner up.

Workshops on making herbal cosmetic products

Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute is organising a workshop on making herbal skin care cosmetic products from July 23 to 25 at its premises at SIDCO Industrial Estate, EDII Office Road, Guindy.

dy. Time: From 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The session would focus on making soaps, shampoos, and oils.

Those above 18 years of age and who have completed class 10 can take part. Prior registration is necessary.

Air-conditioned hostel facility at affordable rates for men and women are available.

For details, call 8668102600 / 8072914694.

Workshop on electric vehicle technology

Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME, is conducting a workshop on electric vehicle technology and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector on July 23 and 24 at its premises at SIDCO Industrial Estate, EDII Office Road, Guindy. Time: From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

According to a press release, participants will learn about functioning of a motor, battery, charging systems, safety procedures, and servicing methods. Also, the session will focus on franchise business models, dealerships, and government schemes and incentives in the sector.

Prior registration is required. For details, call 9543773337 / 9360221280

Workshop on online marketing

Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME, is conducting a workshop on online marketing from July 29 to 31 at its premises at SIDCO Industrial Estate, EDII Office Road, Guindy. Time: From 10 a.m. to 5

p.m. According to a press release, the session will focus on creation of YouTube channel, website design techniques, its rules, and web hosting.

For details, call 9543773337 / 9360221280.

Inclusive classrooms on the rise

Many city colleges are effecting changes in their systems to make persons with disabilities feel welcome



Saravanan with his mother S. Kamala.

LIFFY THOMAS

Saravanan Umapathy will open a new chapter in his career on July 21 when classes begin at Dhanraj Baid Jain College in Thoraiappakkam. The 23-year-old special needs student is on the spectrum and non-verbal but exhibits strengths in visual thinking and processing that led his mother to enrol him for a course in B.Sc (Visual Communication).

"I know my son will face challenges with social interaction and communication, but he will not disappoint in academics, and I want him to surmount those barriers," says S. Kamala, adding that Saravanan communicates by writing or typing on the Awaaz app.

Brought up in Abu Dubai, where he completed his studies in a main-

stream school, Saravanan did not take the help of a shadow teacher and is good in sports as well. Over the last one year he was pursuing a data entry course at NIEPMD from where he also picked up Tamil and the confidence to apply for higher studies.

"He is currently getting trained to cycle on Chennai's busy road, so that he can get to college from his home in Pallikaranai," says a determined Kamala.

Many city colleges in Chennai are taking baby steps towards making their classrooms inclusive, a mandate under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

In the last academic year, Welfare of the Differently-Abled Persons Department issued a circular to 19 universities in Tamil Nadu reminding them that they have to reserve five per cent of the seats in



S. Muralidhar (centre) with friends during the Onam celebration in the college

higher education for persons with benchmark disabilities.

As per data from NIEPMD, 18 of their students with intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, special learning disability and multiple disabilities enrolled in various city colleges in the academic year 2024-25 for higher education. These include courses in hotel management, arts and science and polytechnic.

"Our programmes offered here act as a bridge to integrate those with special needs into higher education," says K. Balabaskar, lecturer-AIL, NIEPMD. He says the Institute has an exclusive coordinator, R. Dhakshnamoorthy, to support parents to select the right institute.

Higher education plays a transformative role in the lives of persons with disabilities, which contributes to their personal growth, employability and social inclusion. "Although some city colleges have exclusive batches for PwD or inclusive classrooms, it is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 that mandates a 4% reservation for persons with benchmark disabilities in direct recruitment to government jobs, that has come as a big encouragement for parents to find appropriate career courses in higher education institutions," says Balabaskar.

Parents have to do their homework about institutions and career paths that best suit their child.

B. Sumathy, whose son S. Muralidhar is pursuing his second year of B.Sc (visual communication) from A.M. Jain College in Meenambakkam, says many parents of children with special needs do not make an effort to place their ward in a mainstream college fearing the environment. Or, they think of distance education.

She herself was planning to enrol Muralidhar in a course through distance education as it is difficult for him to sit in one place for long.

"When I enquired with Madras University they recommended courses in literature and economics, which I was not keen on as my son would not be able to study theory-related subjects," says Sumathy.

They were discouraged from taking courses that involved lab activity. "I was told programming would be difficult for him, so I enrolled him in a data entry course in NIEPMD that went on for close to a year," she says.

That brought about a huge change in Muralidhar. "He started getting more disciplined and his time management skills improved, and this gave me the confidence that he can move to an inclusive setup," says the resident of East Tambaram.

The parents are happy as the college has a supportive environment with a dedicated room where parents can wait, notes are sent on WhatsApp and Muralidhar has made many friends.

Orienting staff and students

To create and maintain inclusive classrooms, colleges are getting their faculty trained to understand the unique needs of students, getting permission from the University to exempt special students from writing language papers and finding scribes if needed.

At Agurchand Manmull Jain Col-

lege, every special need student is attached to a mentor who understands his/her unique needs based on the training they are given to handle such students.

"This academic year, we have five new special needs students on the campus, a slight increase from last year where we had four," says M. M. Ramya, dean, A.M. Jain College. While most of the infrastructure needs for an inclusive campus are largely met, the college management has been taking up steps to meet other requirements.

"We have a lounge where parents of special needs students can wait while their children attend classes. It is like a crèche; sometimes children want to meet their parents, and on an average five-six parents avail it," says Ramya. Getting peer support is one challenge and to address this concern this year students were oriented about their specially abled classmates. "This has to be a continuous process," says Ramya adding that they recommend students joining courses in visual communication and interior design as they are more hands-on.

A programme based on credits

The third batch of the programme in Diploma in Office Automation and Assistive Technology (DOAAT) for persons with multiple and neuro-developmental disabilities will start soon.

Initiated by the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with Bharathidasan University's Centre for Differently Abled Persons, this is a first-of-its-kind credit-based inclusive higher education programme, says a note.

The course is structured over two semesters and focuses on digital literacy, office auto-

mation, and assistive technologies. It offers a practice-based curriculum aligned with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 and the National Education Policy. It also strengthens employment opportunities through the 4% PwD reservation policy, including 1% for persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

Ten students are inducted per batch.

For details, call R. Dhakshnamoorthy, vocational instructor / coordinator - Higher Education for PwDs (8124862799), K.Balabaskar, lecturer-AIL, NIEPMD, Chennai (9382934157), Email Id: niepmd.dail@gmail.com

Finding purpose underwater

Archana Thiagarajan had a memorable time representing India at the World Championship in Japan; she set new Indian national records

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Archana Thiagarajan is now lolling around at her parents' home in Perungalathur, diving headlong into a world of delectable inactivity. She deserves the the spot of relaxation she has found in a familiar environment.

Squadron Leader Archana (retd) is back from the 34th AIDA Freediving World Championship in Wakayama, Japan. She is the first woman to represent India at this championship, which will remain memorable not just for the aforementioned reason. The 33-year-old athlete set four new national re-

cords across all pool disciplines, making her a 10-time national record holder in freediving.

Her journey into freediving happened by chance during a sabbatical in Indonesia, after she completed a decade of service with the Indian Air Force as technical officer.

Taking notice of the accolades she had won at the national level representing Tamil Nadu, an instructor introduced her to freediving, the practice of diving underwater on a single breath without the use of a breathing apparatus.

In less than one-and-a-half years, Archana has proved discipline and determination can break



Archana Thiagarajan at the World Championship in Wakayama, Japan.

barriers in any sport.

"Forty-nine countries and 234 participants were in the fray in this international event, and I was able to break the Indian national record in all the four events that I took part in," says Archana.

Freediving is open to those aged above 18. Over the last six months, she has been preparing for the competition, training at Puducherry and Philippines as well as at pools in Chennai and Bangalore.

"Freediving is considered an extreme sport and you cannot train alone, so my husband has been a pillar of strength. He takes care of my safety," says Archana. She notes that her background in NCC and her stint with the Indian Air Force have helped her in the sport.

An avid yoga enthusiast, Archana says the sport emphasises relaxation, breath control and mental discipline over physical strength.

She adds, "To hold your breath for four minutes underwater, one would need considerable mind power. I have to stay calm; and overcoming these challenges related to the mind was possible with yoga."



Workshop on tourism trends conducted



The Department of History, Stella Maris College, organised a workshop on Contemporary Tourism Trends recently with Sriharan Balan, Director of Madura Travels, as the chief speaker.

Among the highlights of the event was the release of the four volumes of the Tourism Resources of India books by Balan. The books are a product of the collaboration of academicians and industry professionals, the chief editor being Cinthia Jude of

the Department of History, Stella Maris College. Volumes 1 and 2, titled 'Unveiling the Hidden Gems of India,' are about the tourist resources in all the states and union territories of India. Volumes 3 and 4 focus on India's 43 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The contributing authors are from institutions across the country, says a press release. In his address, Balan mentioned the opportunities in the travel and tourism industry, and stressed that students could look forward

to rewarding and well-paying careers after gaining a few years of experience on the field, even though opening salaries perhaps were not as competitive as in other industries. He also commended the Department for its high educational standards, and for equipping students with opportunities for internships and travel experiences in India and abroad in the form of short-term study-abroad programmes. The Department has consistently organised workshops on themes in history and tourism, with leading experts as resource persons. Workshops on global cuisines and on archaeology have been particularly popular with students, the release adds. Balan reflected on the experiences of his father, the well-known V.K.T. Balan, who rose up from poverty to found one of Tamil Nadu's best known travel companies, Madura Travels.

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Flying away to a *new life*

Rescued and brought to Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary in Besant Nagar, in a state of malnourishment and paralysis, Pattu the Doberman now lives it up in the Czech Republic

PRINCE FREDERICK

Doberman Pattu's story splices experiences of extreme cruelty and kindness. The kindness the canine received has been so out of the way – as you would soon find out, 7,200 kilometres out of the way – that the effects of cruelty he suffered have been wiped out, in entirety. Indifference and abuse were replaced with a double measure of concern and care.

An animal lover in Chrome-pet rescued Pattu, his bones sticking out due to subcutaneous fat dwindling on account of malnourishment. The problem was deeper than meals having been persistently denied: Pattu was paralysed, and lying down helplessly.

The rescuer brought Pattu's plight to the attention of Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board (TNAWB), and before long, the dog came under the care of Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary (BMAD).

"He came to us on November 7,



2024," says Neeraja Venkateswaran, Head of Operations at BMAD. What followed was intense effort – as Neeraja puts it, "rigorous physiotherapy" with which "the team nursed him back to health".

"He was with us till March 2025 by then he had started walking normally again. Between March and June he was at ROA shelter run by Dinesh Baba in Koovathur on East Coast Road for temporary boarding until his departure to Czech Republic," says Neeraja.

Czech Republic it was: all the way to Prague from Chennai, and

finding his forever home 7200 kilometres away – that was the twist in the tail. After Pattu's rehabilitation was complete, BMAD posted about him for adoption.

"We were approached by many families for adoption and this one really stood out."

Pattu had caught the eye of Pavlina Buskova from Czech Republic.

"She has had Doberman dogs all her life, had an admiration for the breed," explains Neeraja.

Pattu was flown from Chennai to Vienna in Austria with a stop at Dubai. From Vienna in Austria to Prague in Czech Republic the adopters themselves travelled with him on the road.

Says Neeraja: "We employed the



Pattu with Pavlina Buskova in the Czech Republic; and Momo with Dr. Shobana Balakrishnan in the United Kingdom.

services of 'Pawfly', a pet relocation service. This is our fifth international adoption with them. The adopters chose to take up the expenses."

Recently, a buoyant Pattu figured in a video Palvina shared with BMAD.

Pattu must be just three years old, not a day over that, and he has already witnessed the duality of human nature with its capability for cruelty as well as compassion.

Another international adoption Prior to finding Pattu a home abroad, BMAD had driven another adoption of similar proportion.

A labrador in a deplorable condition had been brought to BMAD.

Neeraja recounts the events: "Momo (a name the Labrador was given at BMAD) came to us on October 4, with swollen paws and she was too weak to walk and had severe tick infestation. Chitra, a regular rescuer and feeder, brought the Lab here. Despite coming from a humble background, Chitra and her husband Kannan, an auto driver, have helped many rescues around the city."

When she heard about Momo, Dr. Shobana Balakrishnan, a long-time donor of BMAD from the United Kingdom, had no doubt in her mind that this dog had to enrich her hearth. And it does enrich Dr. Shobana's hearth at Ashgrove Gardens in Edinburgh.