

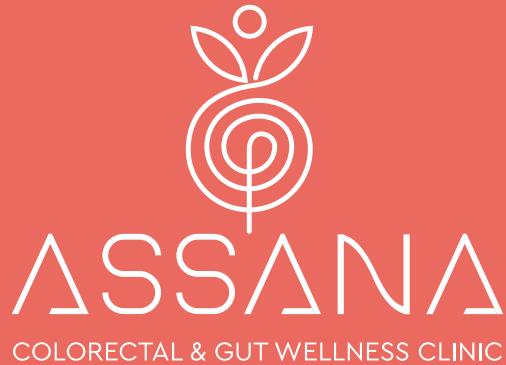
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FOMRRA discusses garbage-related problems with Thiruporur MLA

S.S. Balaji gives residents of OMR a patient hearing; the issue of garbage burning takes centre stage

BHUVANA RAJ

On February 15, local residents and representatives from the Thiruporur constituency gathered to discuss pressing garbage issues with MLA S.S. Balaji and BDO Thiruporur at PBEL City, OMR. Organised by FOMRRA, the meeting focused on the hazardous practice of burning mixed garbage in the Kelambakkam and Muttukadu areas.

PBEL CITY residents including Jebahar Deva Dhason and Cannane voiced concerns over waste burning on the Muthukadu backwaters, which has led to intense smoke, disrupting outdoor activities for children and the elderly. Similar reports of illegal dumping, including construction debris and poultry waste, emerged from various neighborhoods, prompting calls for action.



Lalitha from Mantri Synergy criticised nearby institutions for burning waste, worsening air quality, while Priyadarshini from Wastewinn, a private waste management firm, highlighted issues caused by local jurisdiction boundaries affecting waste management.

Rakesh Ohri from FOMRAA requested the MLA to develop a com-

prehensive Solid Waste Management plan for Chengalpattu district, rejecting incinerators due to their polluting nature. Vijay Kumar from Akshaya Today emphasised the need for a list of compliant vendors, Micro Composting Centres, and stricter enforcement against illegal dumping.

MLA S.S. Balaji acknowledged the concerns and emphasised the

importance of a unified Solid Waste Management department for the district, urging collaboration among residents, RWAs, and local bodies for effective waste management solutions.

FOMRRA's Harsha Koda urged long-term, localised garbage solu-

tions along OMR, emphasising composting for developing areas to avoid costly large-scale projects.

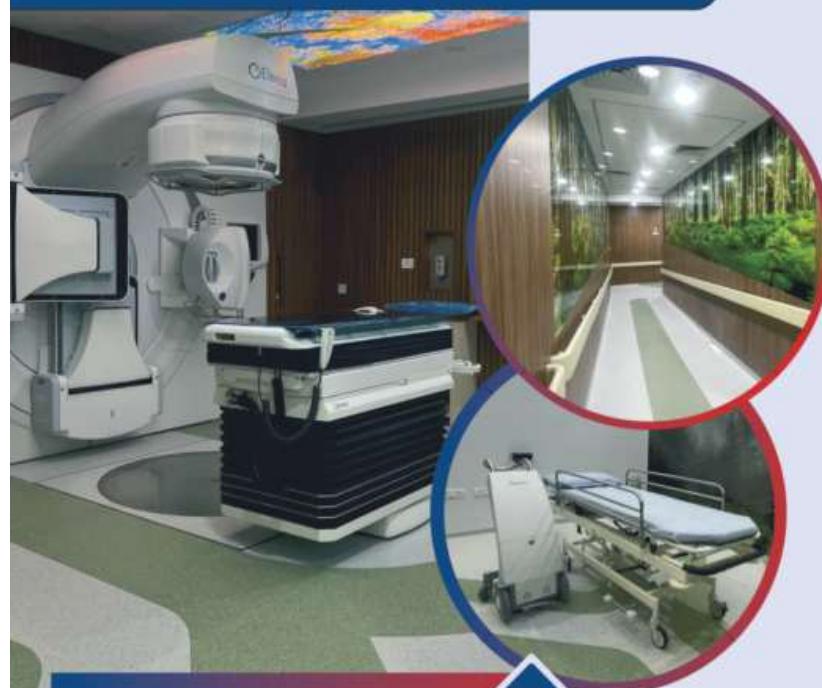
We need to deal with it sooner rather than later.

(Bhuvana Raj is a resident of OMR and part of FOMRRA)



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A 'summer checklist' for Perumbakkam wetland

Two fires in recent memory

Parallels can be drawn between two fires at the Perumbakkam wetland, one in 2022 and the other in 2024

*Both fires originated from near the kuccha road on the western side.

*Both fires raged at a given time of year — in the late May-early June period, when the summer heat receives a spike.

*It took considerable effort on the part of fire & rescue services to bring both fires under control.

A section of Perumbakkam wetland with drying vegetation on February 21, 2025.



PRINCE FREDERICK

Perumbakkam wetland is beginning to develop a "tan". The bulrushes are beginning to shrink resembling ageing human skin drained of fat. These are nature's *aide-memoire* on what next to expect. It is a "gentle reminder" — using a phrase that makes nudges to action palatable in polite society — that the Perumbakkam wetland is an easy target for fires during summer. And it is time to start efforts to scuttle that possibility, checking factors that can be controlled. Summer heat can cause fires on dry vegetation, but there could be something else at work. Before proceeding further, here is what is at stake. At risk of repeating the evident, Perumbakkam wetland is not the sole preserve of waterbirds. Certain parts of it host ground-nesting birds, and these are the parts susceptible to fires, due to a cocktail of factors — brown vegetation during summer, the summer heat and burning cigarette stubs. These parts — particularly a kuccha road that marks the western border of the wetland — are hooved by humans, and unknown to themselves, some of them carry in their hands an agency to start a fire.

The Perumbakkam wetland is swamped by intense developmental activity on three sides. On its northern side, lined by the Sholinganallur-to-Perumbakkam road, Metro Rail pillars are rearing up their head. In addition to Metro Rail work, there is activity pertaining to the Water Resources Department. On its southern side is a neighbourhood that is "mo-

bilising" residents at a rapid pace. Housing projects abound on this side and frequently, a project becomes a collection of homes. There is constant work and work presupposes the presence of workers. On both sides — the northern and the southern — there is a noticeable presence of workers. Some of them live in temporary shacks arranged for them next to their worksites. Perumbakkam wetland is known for movement of people down a kuccha road on its western side, a good number of them belong to this workforce. Besides, on the other side of the kuccha road that is housing construction activity, leading to movement on the road.

A careless cigarette butt thrown on the brown, dry vegetation before it has burnt out, can cause considerable mischief. From where the fire often started in recent years — particularly in the 2022 and 2024 fires — there is reason to believe it was the trigger and the intense summer heat did the rest. This spot needs to be seen for what it is: the wetland's Achilles tendon, and needs to receive a pre-emptive cast of protection.

On the southern side, a breach in the wall in a couple of places used to be entry point for humans. Stones have been massed up to plug one breach, and dead tree branches to plug the other, but climbing over the stones and branches and setting foot in the wetland still remains an easy option. In fact, it does not take the pole-vaulting prowess of a Sergei Bubka to scale the protective wall, even where it is fully intact. Continual monitoring holds the key to addressing the issue.

As water levels drop, bovines wade in

A section of Perumbakkam wetland with water having largely drained out, is marked by movement of pint-sized birds such as the little ringed plover, the little stint and Temminck's stint and also wagtails. They poke around for food in the semi-dry wetland soil. The two avian images show a little ringed plover and a citrine wagtail. On these semi-patches one would find hoof marks left behind by bovines. Bovines browse on grass and herbs on an elevated section of Perumbakkam wetland. They do not stay restricted to this patch but trudge through the boggy sections where waterbirds are stationed, wallow in the slush and disturb their peace. Stray cattle in Perumbakkam wetland is a recurrent issue that is stubbornly ignored. The images were taken on February 18 and 21, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



STATUS REPORT

Free-flowing U-turn eases traffic flow

PHOTO:
R. RAVINDRAN.



R. RAVINDRAN

In keeping with the trend of creating free flowing U-turns, the Tambaram City Police Commissionerate has created a two-sided U-turn on Tambaram Velachery Main Road in front of Balaji Dental College in Pallikaranai.

With this move, motorists can take a U-turn to proceed towards Velachery as well as in the opposite direction, which is towards Tambaram.

To facilitate this provision,

they ensured a section of the median was broken down. Earlier, motorists had to get to a signal nearby and wait there to take a U-turn.

This signal has been disabled for vehicular traffic and is now meant only for pedestrians to cross the road.

Pitted roads and a dreary ride



Residents of Perumbakkam point out that a few roads that provide quick connectivity to Perumbakkam and Pallikaranai regions are pitted and uneven, and on account of this reason, they are being avoided like the plague.

These roads are: Erikarai Street, Veerathamman Kovil Street, Oil Mill Road and Rice Mill Road in the Perumbakkam-Jalladiampet region. S. Nagendran, a trader, says, "Erikarai Street in Perumbakkam meets Veerathamman Kovil Street, but the former has been in a deplorable condition for months." On Veerathamman Street, the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board carried out digging last year for a sewage pipeline project. Cement patchwork was carried out after the work, but the road has gone from bad to worse. Outside a gated community on Veerathamman Street, no patchwork was carried out. Veerathamman Kovil Street, Oil Mill Road and Rice Mill Road come under Zone 15 of the Greater Chennai Corporation. Text by T.S. Atul Swaminathan



Veerathamman Kovil Street in Perumbakkam.
PHOTOS: R. RAVINDRAN AND T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

READERS WRITE

Design changes sought in SWD networks



Stormwater drains on Gandhi Nagar Second Main Road in Adyar.

PHOTOS:
SPECIAL
ARRANGEMENT



mukh Road in Adyar, outside a public sector bank, the SWD network manhole lid is broken and covered with a plastic board. It has been in this state for months.

C. Ramakrishnan,
Adyar

The Adyar Zone (Zone 13) of Greater Chennai Corporation should restructure the stormwater drain network at Gandhi Nagar and Kasturba Nagar.

The network takes a haphazard course. On Second Main Road and Canal Bank Road in Gandhi Nagar, and on Kasturba Nagar Third Cross Street, the network has been constructed in a manner that does not allow rainwater to flow easily. These roads had stagnant water during the North East Monsoon rains. Did GCC supervise the work when it was being carried out by the contractor?

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Don Bosco alumni 'gift' a STEM lab to a government school

With Grundfos India's support, they establish the facility at a girls school in Choolaimedu



A view of the STEM lab; and snapshots of the inauguration.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Learning at Jaigopal Garodia Government Girls' Higher Secondary School in Choolaimedu has been enhanced by a STEM lab that was unwrapped recently, a few days removed from International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The first classes pertaining to STEM lab teaching took place on February 21. Grundfos Pumps India Pvt Ltd., and Don Bosco Egmore 1997 batch alumni are the architects of this social initiative. Bringing LMES Foundation into the picture, they have designed a three-year hands-on programme for 50 students in Grades 6 and 7, focusing on basic to advanced STEM concepts including physics, electronics, robotics, AI and aerospace, says a communication from the DB 1997 alumni group. The communication further notes that the initiative was driven by Don Bosco 1997 batch alumnus and Thousand Lights MLA Dr. Ezhilan (who is also a member of the 1997 DB), as a step towards achieving the State Government's mission of bridging the gender ratio gap in the STEM workforce.

This intervention gives the DB 1997 batch a "fifer" – five social initiatives in as many years.

"In 2021, during the pandemic when education went online, the 1997 DB batch alumni mobilised 150 laptops for students of an Adi Dravidar school. When education returned to physical classrooms,



for three years on the trot, from 2022 to 2024, the batch came together to build classrooms in government schools. The batch aims at one social project every year. And every time, the batch has made a contribution, YRG Care would match that contribution. Dr. Sunil Suhas Solomon, chairman and managing trustee, YRG Care, is a member of the 1997 DB batch. Sunil is with John Hopkins University School of Medicine, USA but heads the YRG Care foundation," elaborates Deepu Anthony, a member of the batch.

On why the batch steered away from what seemed to be a pattern of social intervention – establishing classrooms at a government school – Deepu says: "Ezhilan

called me one day and apprised me about how the government is trying to bridge the gender gap in the STEM workforce. He sought to find out if the DB 1997 batch could do something that would contribute to efforts in this direction by the government. We took the idea to the batch and formed a core team for this initiative; and we decided that the gender gap in STEM workforce should be addressed at the school level, and that too in a government school. Generally, students in government schools are not aware of the application of the courses they can take up. We decided we should set up a STEM lab and design a programme that would allow for specialised teams to step in and explain the applications of various

will see how this programme can be taken to other state government schools," notes Deepu. "We decided to bring LMES Foundation on board as the implementation partner, as its parent company LMES Academy is engaged in the work of establishing STEM labs in private schools. The Foundation has been conducting a one-day STEM education orientation visiting government schools."

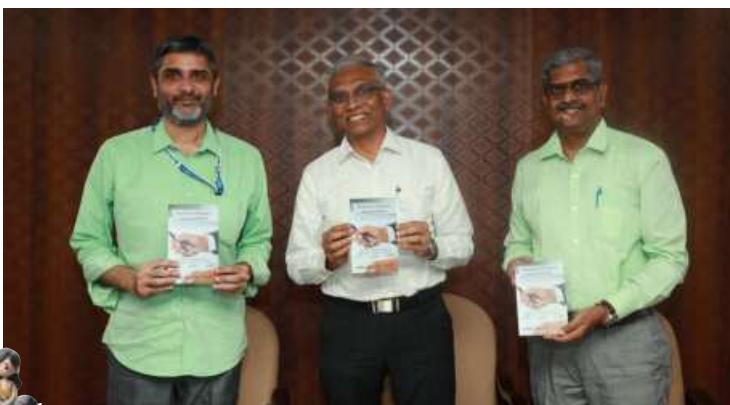
According to the communication the DB 1997 batch shared with *The Hindu Downtown*, as part of the three-year programme, the students would have sessions by industry experts, and participate in industry visits. They would also be given career guidance in the 10th and 12th grade and be eligible to apply to LMES Foundation's college education scholarship programme. The communication further adds that the project sponsors, Grundfos and the Don Bosco alumni and the implementation partner LMES Foundation, believe that this initiative would have measurable impact not just on the learning outcome dimension, but also on the number of girl students who enroll for the Science stream in the 11th grade, and thereafter when they need to choose a course in college.

Present at the inauguration of the STEM lab, Grundfos' Country President – India Usha Subramaniam and Manager – CSR Apoorva Manichandar remarked that this initiative is aligned with Grundfos' Social Impact mission, says the communication.

Pallikaranai resident launches book on business finance

Arul Shanmugavelu, a resident of Pallikaranai, has book number three to his credit. Titled *Business Finance Demystified: A Guide for Entrepreneurs, Leaders, and Teams*, it saw the light at a special event held at Anna University.

The book was released by J. Prakash, the Registrar of Anna University.



sity, in the presence of Totadhri Natarajan, Nokia Networks.

The event was organised by Mugavari Foundation to distribute scholarships to deserving students, reinforcing the spirit of education and empowerment.

The book was given to each of the 61 students who are receiving the full scholarship from Mugavari Foundation on Guindy campus and MIT campus.

The other two books that Arul has published are *French Fries - 15 Golden Ideas to Power your Career*

Growth and Daily Bytes – Lessons from Corporate Trenches.

According to Arul, by the end of February 2025, he will be completing 40 years of corporate working.

Says Arul: "I am an engineer who served in various functions culminating in a leadership role as chief executive of L&T Kobelco and later Managing Director of Kobelco Industrial Machinery, a subsidiary of a Japanese MNC. My passion is to share my knowledge and train people to do their jobs better."



Meet this young cyclist



Anish Ramkumar is 10 years old, a resident of Adambakkam, and a Class V student of DAV Public School in Velachery.

And he is cycling his way to notice. He had gone on the Tour of Coutrallam organised by Cycling Yogis. On that tour, he impressed senior cyclists by doing a 50km ride with ease, says a communication from Cycling Yogis.

He was later honoured for his enthusiasm for cycling by Pro Bikers.

Anish started cycling during the pandemic. Over the last one year, he has been accompanying his cyclist parents during holidays and weekends on cycle rides.

He began with a 5km ride and scaled it up.

He has completed rides organised by other cycling groups in Chennai.

He has done over 800 plus kilometres so far in his journey, says the communication.

His appetite for experimentation with cycles is huge. He has tried out MTB, Road, Hybrid and Foldable bikes, it adds.

Walkathon in Pallikaranai on March 1

Environment Awareness Protection Association, a non-governmental organisation, is organising a walkathon on March 1 from Amman Kulam park to Anai Eri lake in Pallikaranai.

According to a press release, the event aims to highlight the pollution of the lake and the importance of conserving the waterbody.

The NGO invites residents of neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the lake – Ambal Nagar, Chittibabu Nagar, Ganapathy Nagar, Prabhu Nagar, Narayana Nagar and Dilli Babu Nagar – to take part in the walkathon.



Webinar on methanol industry

Nandini Consultancy Centre, a chemical engineering and chemical business consultancy organisation is conducting a webinar titled "Methanol - India's missed opportunity" on March 2. Time: From 11 a.m. to 12.15 p.m.

The session will be handled by N.S. Venkataraman and Swaminathan. V. Directors, Nandini Consultancy Centre at Chennai and Singapore, respectively.

According to a press release, no fee will be charged but prior registration is necessary.

Those interested in attending the session should register by writing to nandinichemical@gmail.com/ nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com

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Mahashivratri 2025: A Powerful and Transformational Night

-Simran Kumar

Mahashivratri 2025 is more than just a festival; it's a unique cosmic event. This year, it coincides with the Maha Kumbh Mela, which occurs once every 144 years. To add to its significance, a rare planetary shift happening after 60 years boosts the energy of this night, providing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reset and rejuvenate.

Mahashivratri: More than just a night

Mahashivratri is a night for deep devotion, introspection, and spiritual awakening. As thousands remain awake, chanting Shiva's name, it symbolises overcoming darkness and ignorance in life. Families come together, temples light up with lamps, and prayers fill the air, creating a sense of peace. It's a moment when individuals let go of their problems and rely on their faith and inner strength.

A Night of Powerful Alignment

For generations, Mahashivratri has been celebrated as a night of silence and introspection. This year's rare alignments create a one-of-a-kind energy shift, making it ideal for this purpose. Many people use this night to get away from distractions and rediscover peace and balance.

The Power of Meditation

The stillness of the night enhances meditation, making it easier to calm the mind. A few minutes of deep breathing or yoga can provide clarity and refreshment. In today's fast-paced world, this is an excellent moment to detox from devices.

Make the Most of This Rare Moment

Maha Shivratri 2025 is the perfect time to replenish your energy. One of the most significant places near Adyar to do this is the Marundeeswarar Temple. Nestled in Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai, Marundeeswarar Temple is a revered Shiva temple with deep spiritual and historical significance. Marundeeswarar, meaning "Lord of Medicines," is believed to have imparted the knowledge of herbal remedies to Sage Agastya, making it a powerful healing centre. The self-manifested Shiva Linga, discovered beneath the sacred Vanni tree, is said to have been anointed by the divine cow Kamadhenu. Sage Valmiki is also believed to have meditated here, giving Thiruvanmiyur its ancient name, Thiruvalmikiyur. During Maha Shivratri, the temple comes alive with thousands of devotees witnessing special abhishekams, homams, rudrabhishekam ceremonies and lingodbhava pooja, symbolizing Shiva's cosmic presence. With its divine energy, Marundeeswarar Temple remains an unmissable spiritual destination, especially this Maha Shivratri.

COTTON HOUSE LAUNCHES SUMMER COLLECTIONS

Cotton House, Thiruvanmiyur takes pride in curating an expansive collection of garments for every age group and occasion. From graceful traditional wear to chic contemporary styles, the store offers an extensive range for men, women, and children.

As the Summer season starts, Cotton House has numerous stylish cotton collections for kids, teenagers and elders. New Ramzan Collections have been stocked for Eid celebrations. Cotton House ensures that style never comes at an exorbitant cost. They aim to provide high-quality, stylish, and affordable garments for everyone.

AGS SCHOOL IN PALLIKARANAI: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FROM PLAY SCHOOL TO SENIOR SECONDARY

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