

## TAMBARAM

Chromepet » Pallavaram » Tambaram West » Rajakilpakkam » Mannivakkam » Guindy » Keelkattalai » Nanganallur » Guduvanchery » Hasthinapuram » Pammal » Tambaram East

Medavakkam » Srinivasa Nagar » Kathipara Junction » Kovilambakkam » Sadasivam Nagar » Potheri » Selaiyur » Sembakkam » St.Thomas Mount » Madipakkam » Urappakkam » Paranur

## Kilambakkam station to be ready by May

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

The work on constructing the Kilambakkam railway station, which is diagonally opposite Kalaingar Centenary Bus Terminus, is expected to be completed by May.

Once opened, the station between Vandalur and Urappakkam will be the 21st facility on the Chennai Beach- Chengalpattu section.

On February 4, when this reporter visited the work site, a significant portion of the long-distance train platform construction work had been completed.

The supervisor in-charge at the site said the track on which electric trains run towards Chennai Beach will be shifted along the track towards Chengalpattu.

"We have been given a deadline to complete the work by May so that it can be opened to the public," said the in-charge.

The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority has dug trenches along the long-distance platform to facilitate the construction of a skywalk connecting the station and the terminus.

Integration of the station and the terminus will play a crucial role in making the daily commute of hundreds of people more comfortable.

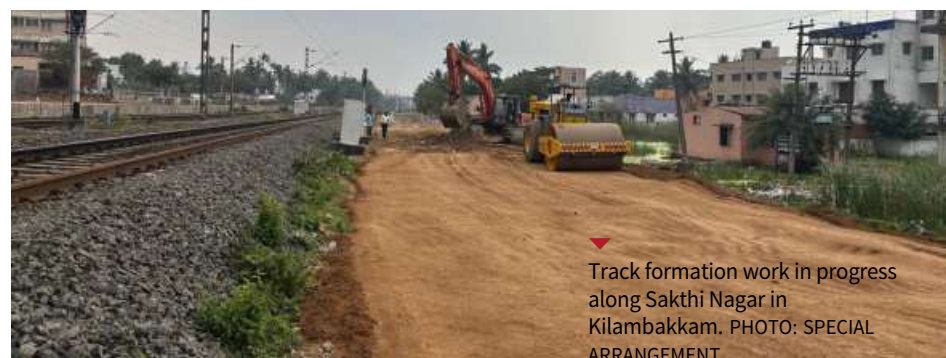
J. Prabha Jambulingam, a resident of Van-



dalur, says that once the skywalk and station are opened passengers will not have to travel far.

"Passengers boarding long-distance buses from the terminus to the Southern districts do not need to bargain with auto drivers to reach the terminus from Vandalur railway station," she says. Residents of Deivasigamani Nagar, Devendra Nagar, and Sakthi Nagar in Vandalur and Kilambakkam, have been anxiously waiting for the work to be completed as this station would reduce their travel time to Urappakkam station considerably.

According to reports in *The Hindu*, the "halt station" would have three platforms, with two platforms for suburban trains and one for express and mail trains.



Track formation work in progress along Sakthi Nagar in Kilambakkam. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Have a grievance? Just send a 'hi' message

Have you forgetfully left any item behind in a MTC bus? The transport corporation has facilitated a WhatsApp chatbot. Commuters can present details about the missing items, get information on bus info and fares, lodge grie-

vances regarding bus services, and make general inquiries. The WhatsApp chatbot number is 9445033364 (just message "Hi"). The service is available 24/7, according to a release issued by the MTC.

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▼ (Clockwise from left): A temporary measure being undertaken on Nattu Kalvai; an awareness rally at Thiruneermalai Periya Eri; and a view of Nattu Kalvai. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



## **‘Take up work on Thiruneermalai Periya Eri, Nattu Kalvai on a war footing’**

PRINCE FREDERICK

**T**hiruneermalai Periya Eri is a supersized waterbody lying spread-eagle and claiming pieces of three wards (29, 30 and 31) within Tambaram Municipal Corporation limits. This waterbody has a neighbour, only a few addresses removed, named Veeraraghavan Eri.

During NE monsoon, the connectedness between these lakes stands out in bold relief.

Pachai Malai, a dwarfish hill in Tambaram Sanatorium, “supplies” rainwater to Chitlapakkam Lake on its east and Veeraraghavan Eri on its west. Filled-up, Veeraraghavan Eri discharges rainwater, which gushes into Thiruneermalai Periya Eri. Thiruneermalai Periya Eri spits out the excess water into a rainwater-carrying channel called Nattu Kalvai, which courses through residential areas, slithers under the Maduravoyal-Irumbuliyur Bypass Road and meets Adyar river. The course of Nattu Kalvai being beset with challenges, neighbourhoods on both sides of it face flooding during NE monsoon, says B. Saravanan, a resident of Thiruneermalai and a member of Thiruneermalai Periya Eri Paathukappu Kuzhu and a social activist, while presenting this graphic picture to nail the rainwater-flow dynamics of the region.

Prominent members of Thiruneermalai Periya Eri Paathukappu Kuzhu, including Perumal, Arulmozhi, Kumaran and Saravanan are in the forefront of a drive to have residents’ concerns about flooding in these parts heard by officials in government line agencies that can reverse this situation. On



May 4 and July 28, both in year 2024, the group organised a clean-up drive at Thiruneermalai Periya Eri and an awareness rally around the issue respectively.

Saravanan continues: “If you imagined a funnel, you would gain

a mental picture of Nattu Kalvai. Where the Nattu Kalvai nuzzles close to Thiruneermalai Periya Eri, it is 60 feet wide, serving as a Kalangal, a catchment area for water overflowing from the lake.”

And a 50-metre amble later,

when it crosses over to the other side of Thiruneermalai Main Road, it appears emaciated, reduced by half (just 30 feet wide now), as if it had been through an ill-advised diet plan.

“When it crosses Saraswathipuram First Street, it would be 20 feet wide, and while running parallel to Saraswathipuram Fourth Street Extension, it gets narrower still, slimming down to 15 feet. It heads to Ranga Nagar Third Street, followed by an area called Temple Town; after which it would run near the entrance of a massive gated community, Jain Alpine Meadows, and 300 metres further, it touches the Maduravoyal-Irumbuliyur Bypass Road, which comes under NHAI. Before it reaches the bypass road, it gets slightly wider, and its movement towards Adyar river on the other side is enabled by a box culvert under the bypass road. The flow of rainwater through Nattu Kalvai in this part is hampered by the presence of a pipeline of four-feet diameter pertaining to the Veeranam water supply scheme, which comes under the State government. The pipeline crosses Nattu Kalvai, slowing down the rainwater flow in the latter,” says Saravanan.

“Ten feet away from the Veeranam pipeline, rainwater has to flow through a 3X3 box culvert (ten feet high) under the bypass road, and due to the dimensions of this culvert, the flow slows down further. As a compounded effect of all the impediments during its course, Nattu Kalvai spews out rainwater into various residential settlements – Alpine Meadows, Saraswathipuram Fourth Street Extension, Ranga Nagar Third Street, Subbarayan Nagar, MSK Street, Kaasi Garden and Temple Town.”

Saravanan sent a petition to National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) through Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) seeking their help, and an NHAI reply stated that the regional officer and project director would study the issue, making an inspection and also meeting with residents.

“They made good their promise, arriving for an inspection by

the end of October in 2024. We were present during the inspection and raised our concerns. They heard us out and promised to carry out a temporary measure ahead of the NE Monsoon. They pointed out that they would need to have three more box culverts, each ten feet high to increase the width, thereby facilitating easy flow of rainwater past the bypass road. They said this has to be communicated to the regional office with a clearly drawn estimate to find out if it could be cleared with permission from the regional office or from the head office in Delhi. Meanwhile, as a temporary measure, workers were employed to clear the sediment formed under the Veeranam pipeline to ensure smoother flow of rainwater. The help from this measure was negligible.”

Saravanan notes that an RTI petition he had sent to the state government had elicited a reply on October 10, 2024, stating that a project plan for a Water Resources Department-led restoration of Thiruneermalai Periya Eri and Nattu Kalvai at a cost of ₹53.3 crores had been drawn up. It was awaiting sanction, having been placed on a priority list.

Saravanan observes: “It is the Thiruneermalai Periya Eri Paathukappu Kuzhu’s plea that the Chief Minister prioritise this project and sanction it so that work could be executed during summer and residents are spared flooding during NE monsoon,” says Saravanan. “What is required to prevent flooding in these parts is deepening and desilting of Thiruneermalai Periya Eri, creation of walkways on the bunds, which would ensure protection of the lake and also ensure the bunds would not be broken during heavy rains. Nattu Kalvai is shallow just two to 2.5 feet deep; it has to be deepened, and the side wall raised higher so that water does not overflow. Besides, Nattu Kalvai should be made a closed channel. In addition to this measure by WRD, provision of additional box culverts at the bypass road by NHAI will ensure flooding-free residential areas in these parts during NE Monsoon.”



## ‘Poor patchwork on road in Chitlapakkam’



Months ago, a contractor appointed by the Central government dug Third Main Road in Chitlapakkam to lay gas supply pipes.

When the pipes were inserted, they came into contact with the water supply pipe, leading to leakage. Though the leakage issue was resolved immediately, the patchwork is yet to be done.

Near Gandhi Street, on the lane towards Varadaraja Theatre, motorcyclists avoid the dug-up portion and come close to the pedestrians, who are forced to walk on the stormwater drain network due to heavy vehicular traffic on the road.

Through the stretch, thousands of students walk and cycle daily to attend classes in two educational institutions in Saraswathi Nagar and Thirumurugan Nagar.

**P. Viswanathan**  
Chitlapakkam

## ‘Revisit road-relaying work; complete it’



A few months ago, Tambaram City Municipal Corporation dug up Thirumalai Nagar First Main Road in Hasthinapuram to construct a stormwater drain network.

After the work was completed, the Corporation cemented only a

portion of the road.

The walkway is currently uneven. During rain, people find it difficult to walk as the stretch turns slushy and slippery.

**Karthik Ragupathi**  
Hasthinapuram

## ‘Resume small bus service S90’

Small bus route number S90 plying between Tambaram and Perungalathur Anna Nagar Gundu Medu was discontinued a few years ago.

We were told that the route was not making enough collection, but I don't think so. This route was popular among residents of Captain Sasi Kumar Nagar, who are mostly daily wage earners, and students studying in schools in Perungalathur region.

Commuters had significantly benefited from the S90 services, and cannot afford to travel by autorickshaws. I request MTC to reintroduce this service.

**V. Pitchumani**  
New Perungalathur Post



## ‘Allow pedestrians to cross GST Road at Irumbuliyur signal’

The Tambaram Police Commissionerate's traffic wing should strictly regulate the Irumbuliyur signal area on GST Road.

Although a pedestrian crossing signal has been facilitated, motorists come from all directions, showing little regard for

the pedestrian signal.

The traffic police remain mute spectators and allow heavy vehicles to make u-turns when pedestrians cross, increasing the risk quotient.

**K. Sowmiya**  
Irumbuliyur

## A meetup for Chitlapakkam residents



Chitlapakkam Muthulakshmi Nagar Welfare Association, which entered its 35th year recently, held its first executive committee meeting. C. Jagan, member of Ward 43, Tambaram City Municipal Corporation, attended the meeting.

He cautioned the residents about theft in the locality and requested members to lodge police complaints whenever even a minor theft happens.

## ‘Allow commuters to disembark at IT Corridor’

Metropolitan Transport Corporation should designate Sholinganallur (on Rajiv Gandhi Salai) as the last stop for route numbers 95x (a cut service), 99A, 555G and 555S.

The drivers drop off the commuters at the regional haltover on Medavakkam High Road.

The move would benefit women and senior citizens who struggle to walk. Commuters must walk through the traffic, which includes having to deal with wrong-side driving on the stretches

as well as insufficient lighting.

These route number buses pass through the haltover (Rajiv Gandhi Salai) and take a U-turn at Karapakkam and Sholinganallur regions to reach the lane towards Perumbakkam on Medavakkam High Road. 555S and 555G buses start from the haltover. From the haltover on the IT Corridor, commuters can board buses to other regions in the city.

**S. Malliga Saravanan,**  
Perumbakkam.



## ‘Relay MGR Road in Nanganallur’

Crossing this section of M. G. R. Road in Nanganallur, between SBI Colony Extension and Nanganallur Fifth Main Road, is a backbreaking task for motorists.

In 2024, the stretch was dug up by Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board to lay underground drainage pipes. La-

ter, cement concrete patchwork was undertaken but the work has done more damage than good to motorists.

Motorists travelling to Pazhavanthangal, Moovarasampet and Madipakkam take this stretch.

**K. Marudhaiyan**  
Nanganallur



# Reuse culture

Two hyperlocal WhatsApp-defined groups in Chennai formed during the pandemic are showing residents in their respective localities how to free themselves of the tyranny of underused items in a socially and environmentally responsible manner

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

During the pandemic, life was reduced to its barest and most essential minimum. Wardrobes could be pared down: the regular sweatshirt and nightie were *haute couture*. One could get by on fewer possessions with the most indispensable one being the face-hugging mask. The commute became redundant. One could be parked at home along with their fancy car, and still enter workstations parked at homes thousands of miles away. The period offered gratuitous advertisement for minimalism. The birth of these two decluttering groups seemed organically linked to this pervasive climate.

These two groups – Declutter Elcot Avenue in Sholinganallur (date of birth: first half of 2020) and Marketplace @ Valmiki Nagar (DOB: November 2020) – facilitate the selling and buying of used items to promote a culture of reuse at the hyperlocal level, within communities defined by geography. These groups have gained loyal members by the dozens over the last four years while helping them “lose” underused things, thereby decluttering their spaces.

Here is a peek into their inner workings.

## Declutter Elcot Avenue

It was formed a decluttering group. In a case of twisted irony, it needed the very solution it was offering the community.

A scrawny neonate when the pandemic crept in, this group grew into a hulk of a creature before the global health crisis was past, eventually becoming full to bursting. It was not alarming corpulence to be chipped away at, but valuable muscle that needed to be evenly distributed. Some members were “evacuated” from the primary WhatsApp group before it imploded from the pressure of its ballooning size and ushered into group two, which displays a similar growth pattern. The numbers for both groups: Declutter Elcot Avenue 1 (it hit the ceiling in terms of the number of members that can be accommodated in a WhatsApp group) and Declutter Elcot Avenue 2 (700 members).

Benazir Tehrani, who started this initiative and continues to watch over it, can allow herself some smugness. “It is definitely really big because it has maxed out on one group, and now it is going to the other,” Benazir emphasises, adding that a telegram group existed but was struck off the list as a majority were not savvy in using it. She takes pride not so much in the size of this initiative as in its ability to galvanise the community into positive action.

The initiative had an unassuming genesis: at her gated community in Elcot Avenue, Sholinganallur, she noticed items with some years still left in them being

rudely carried to the burial ground, well dumping ground. It tantamount to burying someone alive.

“There were certain times, near the dustbins, I used to see huge mattresses in good condition. It did not look like there was anything wrong with them,” she recalls. Inspired by similar decluttering initiatives in other cities, Benazir decided to replicate the concept in her own community. “During COVID, we all had a lot of time on our hands. And this was a concept which I know a few complexes in Bombay had adopted; I thought, why not just start something here?”

As the group continues to expand significantly, Benazir and the team (Ramamany, Arun, Rakesh Ohri, and Sujatha) often find themselves in the challenging role of guiding and managing it and striving to maintain order.

Among the instructions continually relayed to members are: “If you are part of declutter one; you cannot hope to be part of declutter two.” “Business promotions are not permitted; no real estate listings please!” “Please include detailed descriptions in your posts, such as: ‘Cycle, 4-5 years old, used for 1 year, selling for Rs 700.’”

Benazir believes in the concept of “a reuse culture fostered locally” which would be defeated if the group extends beyond Elcot Avenue.

Benazir shares a hope for the future: “I wish someone would really just create an app,” which can be used by groups locally for decluttering exercises in their communities.

### How to run a declutter group

- 1 Have the rules carved in stone
- 2 A suite of admins will help maintain order
- 3 Make sure the group does not get unwieldy
- 4 Create multiple online groups to keep each manageable
- 5 Be strict; take prompt punitive action against spammers
- 6 Ensure the group does not abandon its hyperlocal moorings

## Marketplace @ Valmiki Nagar

With greater disposable time, during the pandemic, people broke new ground: by developing a latent talent, mastering an altogether new skill or enhancing their qualifications through certifications from online learning programmes. Gripped by the zeitgeist of those times, Valmiki Nagar Residents Welfare Association steered its sustainability journey into partly uncharted territory.

Now, if there were a sustainability school for resident welfare associations, this RWA would be among the class toppers: a student who would turn in their assignments with the time-keeping ability of Big Ben; and redefine weekends as a time for library-hopping. Its solid waste management track record has often ensured the RWA a coveted place in Greater Chennai Corporation’s consultative meetings with residents.

Jayanthi Premchander, a key member of the RWA, begins: “Valmiki Nagar was always a little ahead in waste management and segregation, spreading awareness.” And the studious student named Valmiki Nagar RWA plumped for an elective course, though enough credits were already lodged in the kitty.

“We decided: why don’t we have a decluttering group for Valmiki Nagar, for people to exchange items such as books or sell things?” she reflects. “It was basically for reuse and recycling.”

The group – named “Marketplace @ Valmiki Nagar” – initially

grew with the growing strides of the Fibonacci series and it now seems to be hovering somewhere around a number that it was bound to yield. Valmiki Nagar does not have towering residential buildings, only a scattering of standalone apartments, each composed of dwelling units in the range of 10 to 15. The only gated community in the neighbourhood consists of four blocks, each consisting of three floors.

“The group started in November 2020, and has almost 700 members now,” she shares. As the group expanded, the focus also evolved.

Jayanthi explains, “The group has evolved from just a decluttering exercise to accommodate another quality – that of ‘yellow pages. We share useful information such as where to source items: to cite a recent example, a member in the group successfully sought information on where to

source a wheelchair. We help small businesses by letting them promote their products in the group.”

Jayanthi stressed the importance of regulatory principles set in iron to prevent the group from becoming disorderly. “We ask them to keep business deals private through private messaging; in other words, the buyer cannot negotiate over prices in the group,” she advises. “It is important to regulate the group and ensure nobody posts any content that is inflammatory in nature and creates bad blood among members.”

Keeping a tight rein on members needs a force: so Shuba, Vinay, Arvind, Abhilash Jaishanka and Jayanthi function as admins.

Jayanthi remarks, “If someone wants to start a similar initiative, they need to have a clear purpose and at least three or four admins to regulate it.”

The effort to create a sustainable and supportive community has not only helped reduce waste but also nurtured a sense of solidarity among neighbours and other constituents of the social ecosystem such as those who have ended up on the less-privileged side of life.

Subha illustrates this: she once bought toys from Marketplace @ Valmiki Nagar for her maid’s daughter for just ₹100; and these toys were of impressive quality.

## Two schools from Chennai make it to the ‘green list’



File photos used for representational purpose only

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Visualise an exercise where students formed teams to ‘monitor’ the quality and use of natural resources – air, energy, food, land, water and even waste – on their school campus. Extend your visualisation skills to picturing the students prepare a report card on the school’s performance on the environment front.

These are not just mental images, they played out in time and space, with students from schools across the country doing just that. They carried out an extensive green audit of their campuses.

A total of 356 schools across India were honoured recently with a ‘Green’ certificate at the Green School Programme (GSP) initiated by the Centre for Science and Environment.

Of these, 25 Green School Awards were presented across 11 categories to schools and educators for their exemplary initiatives in making their campuses environment-friendly and their students, environment-conscious.

### Chennai schools on the list

R.M.K. Residential Senior Secondary School received the “Sterling Schools Awards” for consistently demonstrating excellence in environmental sustainability by maintaining a Green School ranking for five consecutive years under the Green Schools Programme (GSP).

Kendriya Vidyalaya, IIT Chennai received the ‘Energy Manager Award’.

The GSP Audit 2025 saw a participation of 8,831 schools from 33 states and Union territories, said a release.

According to a release, through the GSP Audit, students evaluate their school’s performance across six key areas: air, energy, food, land, water and waste. Schools completing the audit receive a sustainability rating—Green, Yellow, Orange or Red—and a detailed performance report, guiding



them to improve year after year.

The Annual Green Schools Programme Awards Ceremony is a prestigious event that celebrates the ‘green’ achievements of outstanding schools from across the country for their ingenuity and progressive practices, added the release.

### The audit

Some of the findings from the 2024-25 audit show that 87 per cent schools do not own or use vehicles; 93 per cent of the schools do not sell packaged food items on the campus; 77 per cent of the schools use energy-efficient lighting; 71 per cent schools are single-use plastic free zones; 26 per cent of the schools use green source of energy (solar); 25 per cent of the schools have rainwater harvesting systems in place; 30 per cent of the schools segregate waste and compost wet waste; and 48 per cent of the schools have more than 35 per cent green area.

CSE’s GSP Network has over 15,000 schools across India.

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# Winning hearts

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# free surgeries

Following her retirement from the Institute of Child Health and Hospital for Children, Dr. P.S. Sreemathi leads an initiative to treat underprivileged children with heart ailments

LIFFY THOMAS

In 2002, when P.S. Sreemathi retired as Head of Department of Paediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery from the Institute of Child Health and Hospital for Children, Madras Medical College, there were 700 cases of children waiting for heart surgery.

Sophisticated cardiac devices and equipment were not so common in the 80s. "When I first came to the hospital in 1988 on transfer, the paediatric cardiology department had 200 children waiting for surgery. Later, in 1990, through funding from the State Government, Government of Japan and the World Bank the hospital received equipment that lent themselves to performing four, back-to-back surgeries a day," recalls Dr. Sreemathi.

This motivated the cardiothoracic surgeon to initiate a project where economically disadvantaged children with congenital heart diseases could be treated free in a quality set-up with experienced doctors and paramedics.

Hearts for Hearts (H4H), a public charitable trust, was born in 2011 to ensure cardiac surgery reached the poor. Under the project Solution for Cardiac Afflicted Needy (SOCAN), the trust had conducted 460 surgeries so far, with the Public Health Centre (PHC) in West Mambalam, a 70 plus year old voluntary non-profit, serving as a generous hospital partner.

While the state government and some corporate hospitals offering free cardiac surgery, what makes H4H's initiative extra special is that it bears the entire cost of the treatment which includes diagnosing the patient, the travel expenses incurred in coming to Chennai for surgery, finding a place for lodging and offering support with medication.

Non-profit Udhavam Karangal

has been lending support by offering its centres for patients convalescing after the surgery.

From finding the most deserving children in Tamil Nadu, today the team conducts medical camps in various other states to identify cases that need to be accorded utmost priority.

H4H has a long-term technical agreement with Boston Children's Hospital in the United States

for monitoring and upgradation of the skillsets of its team of medical and para-medical professionals.

"Through their rapport with the 'International Quality Improvement Collaborative for Congenital Heart Disease' we have improved and benefited considerably. We ask its team of doctors to help us if we find a case is complicated and they have the expertise," says the 80-year-old doctor.

During a meetup of beneficiaries and donors; and (below) Dr. P.S. Sreemathi examines a child.  
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

H4H has a team of cardiologists, cardio vascular surgeons, anaesthetists, physician assistants, male and female nurses and technicians that work together. A team of five trustees provide policy guidance and mobilise resources.

The big challenge before H4H is reaching out to different corners to create awareness about congenital heart diseases. The high cost of surgery and lack of awareness are reasons why many do not manage to get the needed treatment for their kids on time.

"We attend camps with the help of NGO networks and identify cases, this also includes tribal communities and uncharted areas," says the Mylapore resident.

## Funding

H4H has been able to touch many little hearts because of the contribution from various donors including philanthropic organisations and some corporates. Any basic heart surgery starts from ₹1.5 lakh onwards and the money pooled in is used to meet various expenses.

"We are trying to create a large fund pool, so we welcome donors to reach out to us to see if they can donate a corpus fund and the interest earned from the amount will keep us doing more surgeries and keep the project sustainable," she says.

In its efforts to get funds the non-profit makes sure a rapport is built between the beneficiary and the donor to develop a bond.

"By funding surgeries of the poor, one is being more empathetic and offering a child the right to live which is a Fundamental Right," says the doctor citing the example of an elderly couple that made a donation of ₹25 lakh.

While children between one and 18 years are the major beneficiaries, in some cases they have made the surgery available to adults. For details, visit [h4h.in](http://h4h.in)





## ‘Optimise U-turns on OMR’



The u-turn near BSR Mall.  
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A. SIVAKUMAR

**T**he elimination of traffic signals and the introduction of U-turns have been beneficial in managing congestion on OMR.

However, certain U-turns, particularly the ones near Geetham in Thoraipakkam and Neuberg in Perungudi, should be relocated further down the road (approximately 100 meters) to facilitate smoother traffic movement.

A successful example exists at the U-turn near BSR Mall, where separate lanes are designated for two-wheelers, light motor vehicles (LMVs), and heavy motor vehicles (HMs), providing a model that could be replicated to enhance traffic flow.

(A. Sivakumar is a resident of Prestige Courtyard in Sholinganallur)

## RWA conducts medical camp

More than 130 people benefited from a free ayurvedic camp conducted by Sri Sarvamangala Nagar Residents' Association in Chitlapakkam, in coordination with Sanjivani Kerala Ayurveda Hospital.

Dr. I. Roshini Banu, medical officer at the hospital, spoke about the benefits of Ayurveda and a healthy lifestyle, aiming to raise public awareness about the significance of Ayurveda in maintaining good health.

The residents were screened for diabetes and blood pressure. Ayurvedic medicine samples were provided.



## ‘Waste being set to fire’



Setting fire to waste is a common sight in Ponmar, a neighbourhood near Navalur. Residents allege that this is being done by the conservancy workers of Ottiyambakkam Village Panchayat. “The public including conservancy workers need to be sensitised about this health hazard. They should also know that is an offence,” says a resident.

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## The ‘banquet hall’ is filling up



Dabbling ducks do not wade into deep waters; the water level needs to be at the right level for them to patronise a wetland. With water in the Perumbakkam wetland hitting the right level, it is now dotted with migratory ducks known to make a winter sojourn in Chennai. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

## New rifle club opened in Padur

Hindustan International School in Padur opened a state-of-the-art rifle club.

C. Sylendra Babu, retired Director General of Police, inaugurated the facility in the presence of the chairman of the Hindustan Group of Institutions, Anand Jacob Verghese.

The club aims to foster discipline, focus, and sportsmanship among students while allowing

them to develop their skills in a safe and controlled environment. The club features advanced shooting ranges and equipment, according to a release from the institution.

The club is open to the general public and located on the campus of Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Padur, Kelambakkam. For details, call 044 2747 4262.

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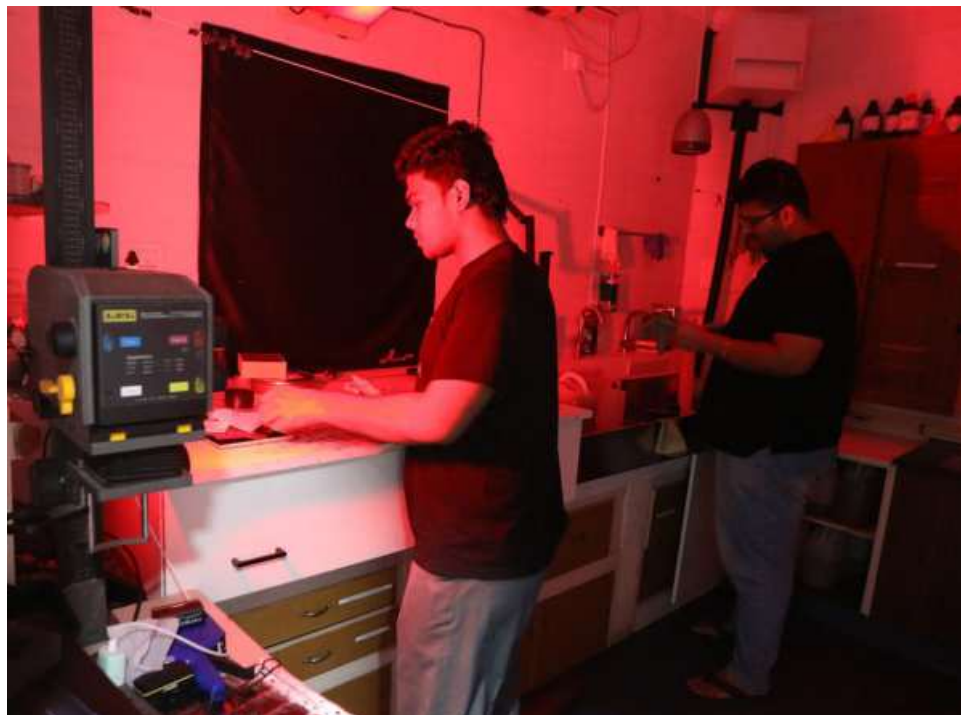
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# A surefire shot in the dark

Chennai Photo Biennale Foundation's Darkroom in Kottivakkam offers an invitation to the world of analogue photography



We buy film initially meant for motion pictures — bulk film, basically — 100 feet or 400 feet rolls meant for movies, cut them and roll them into canisters.

A day in the life of CPB Foundation's Darkroom.  
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



PRINCE FREDERICK

**R**evathi smiles coyly from the confines of a monochrome image plunked down on an ultra wide computer screen. The image serves as a mnemonic prop for re-collecting a celluloid success of the 1980s, Bharathiraja-directed *Manvasanai*. While the movie camera was rolling, this image had been captured from the sidelines, still photographer Lakshmikanthan pressing the shutter.

In the minutes that follow, the monitor is busy hosting other black-and-white images shot by Lakshmikanthan during the making of other movies from that day and age, displaying popular actors such as Karthik and Rathi Agnihotri in the flush of youth.

Drawn from negatives, these images are now being touched up, mildly corrected to weed out the effects of cankerous time placing a clammy palm across the negatives. This process is unfolding at the Darkroom of Chennai Photo Biennale Foundation in Kottivakkam.

Images of this ilk are being readied for a grand display curated by Nirmal Rajagopalan as part of the third phase of CPB Edition 4. The exhibition will open later this month at the 75th Independence Day Park (also known as the Thiruvanniyur MRTS Children's Park).

A member of the Darkroom, Ajay has the lowdown about this



project. Lakshmikanthan, who lives in Director's Colony Kodambakkam, his life enriched by memories of celluloid past plastered on 10,000 negatives, had allowed access to a part of his tranche for a day. Fifteen hundred images in negatives from ten films were paraded for scrutiny: 76 images in negatives were herded into the Darkroom, quickly digitised and returned to the owner.

In a knowledge sharing exercise, much like a student sliding an answer sheet to the edge of the table for a pal seated at the next table, Ajay offers a sneak peek into the display-to-be. Expect slices of Billa, Alaigal Oivathilai, Pudiya Varpugal and Manvasanai, he reels off and stops short of a total revelation, and goes back to being hunched over an enlarger fash-

ioned in-house.

This project is not vastly differentiable from this team's regular engagements. As the name implies, the Darkroom team is engaged with analogue and alternative photography.

"All of us who work here (in the Darkroom) are artists ourselves; we come from different backgrounds. For example, my colleague Anshul has more of a science background. He is the one who knows the chemicals and can make the tweaks to the chemistry to get the results," says Ayuj, who manages the Darkroom.

A roll call of the 9to5 team: Ayuj, Ajay, Anshul and Chiranjeevi, which of course is headed by Varun Gupta, the brain behind the concept of thrusting a darkroom in the face of a massively digitised world.

In a pat on the back for the team, Ayuj notes they are among the largest sellers of film and film cameras in the country. Every month, they get an order of 200 to 300 film rolls and film cameras. Beyond nostalgia and the novelty of going analogue in ridiculously digital-defined world, the idea of undertaking the journey of life at an unhurried pace and doing things under the influence of a speed governor, is amping up the attraction of film cameras.

"And there are many photographers who practise film photography commercially. We have a few plans for commercial fashion and product photographers who when it matches the subject would like to shoot on film or on medium or large format. You cannot even shoot formats that large digitally. We work with 6.5 by 8.5, 8 by 10, really really old large format cameras," explains Ayuj.

The Darkroom sources used film cameras and unsold stocks of cameras (true of point-and-shoots made, say 30 years ago, but never got sold) for those keen on having them. Film is sourced from old suppliers still lingering around the corner.

"We buy film initially meant for motion pictures — bulk film, basically — 100 feet or 400 feet rolls meant for movies, cut them and roll them into canisters. It is like a cotton factory when we do this: now we have a machine that makes

the job much easier, says Ayuj adding that they also source 36-frame canisters. A piece of large-format camera history occupies a corner of the room: an evidently anachronistic large format camera with massive billows made by Vageeswari Camera Works.

"We still use this camera once a month or once in two months, taking it outside and shooting with it," says Ajay.

The Darkroom has many walls, heterogeneous and lending multifacetedness to the analogue exercise. Ajay elaborates: besides the side of selling film cameras and rolls, the Darkroom provides a space for discussions about analogue photography enabled through workshops for students and adults, most notable workshops are Darkroom 101 and Darkroom 102.

The experience is not just about shooting on film, but also developing film; and about using the enlarger. There is also that "wall" that gives people the keys to the dark room to develop their film. "One of our regulars drives from Vijayawada once in two months just to use the darkroom to develop his rolls. And then there are other people from around Chennai who come once in two weeks to use the darkroom." CPB Darkroom is located at 2/342 A, 1st Cross St, AGS Colony, Kottivakkam.

For more details, visit @cpbdarkroom