

T. NAGAR

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



The facility at Nganaoli Street in West Jhaffer Khanpet.



'GCC's land at Nganaoli Street should be put to optimum use'

Greater Chennai Corporation developed a parcel of land, approximately measuring 5,000 sq.ft., at Nganaoli Street in West Jhaffer Khanpet into a space for leisure many years ago. A notice written on the wall states that the facility is meant for women and senior citizens. Except for a walkway and a play equipment, there are no amenities inside the premises. It is in a state of neglect today and the facility

is being misused to consume alcohol and drugs.

We request GCC to redevelop this facility into a park with facilities including a gym, a library and a badminton court, because West Jhaffer Khanpet lacks a park and residents go to Shivan Park in K.K. Nagar.

P. Sudhakar, secretary,
Federation of Residential Welfare Association - West Jhaffer Khanpet

You can be our volunteer-writer

Dear readers, you can be our volunteer-writer by writing to us about issues and events in your neighbourhood. You should send the write-ups to downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in.

Letters must carry the postal address and contact number.



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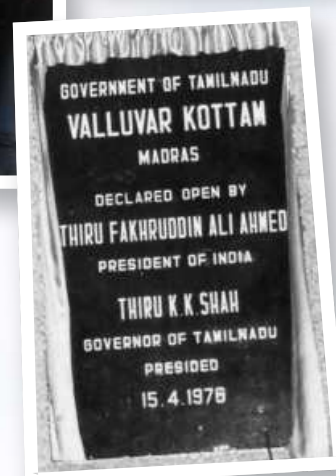
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(Clockwise from top left) Then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran presents a Tanjavur plate to Mother Teresa on March 2, 1984; children parked on the elephant sculptures; a handicraft fair; and children participate in a drawing contest. PHOTOS: THE HINDU ARCHIVES



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Of protests, picnics and fairs

With Valluvar Kottam undergoing renovation, *The Hindu Downtown* walks down memory lane to take in the monument's early years

Valluvar Kottam in Nungambakkam saw the light on April 15, 1976 as a grand memorial to the Tamil sage-poet Thiruvalluvar. It was aimed at promoting the poet's monumental work *Tirukkural*. According to *The Hindu Archives*, when the construction of the memorial was under way, the auditorium was billed as one of the Asia's biggest measuring 7.05 metres long and 30.50 metres broad.

Designed without any intermediate support (pillar), Valluvar Kottam was capable of accommodating 4,000 people and was designed with the best acoustics and modern lighting techniques. The granite stone chariot was another attraction.

The report also makes a mention of the challenge the city administration faced while working on this project as the Valluvar Kottam was being built on an area that was formerly a swamp and subsequently filled with garbage. "On account of the loose layer of the ground, piles, reaching to

depths of 15 metres, had been driven to take the load," reads the report.

The auditorium was to be utilised for educational and cultural functions

In May 1976, Valluvar Kottam was opened to the public on the entry fee of 25 paise was levied.

Many associate Valluvar Kottam with protest meetings, exhibitions and expos. But in the early years many VIP events including State Government-organised events were hosted here. One such event reported by *The Hindu* is that of Mother Teresa being honoured by then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran in 1984. A Tanjavur plate was presented to Mother Teresa during that event, which was attended by many school students.



VOICES

Whenever we plan an event with an attendance of 500-1000 people then the choice is always between Valluvar Kottam and Kamaraj Arangam in Teynampet. I was personally involved in organising some events where Valluvar Kottam was chosen as the halls were spacious and it was centrally located. The District Navarathri festival which features cultural programmes was one event for which the place served as venue.

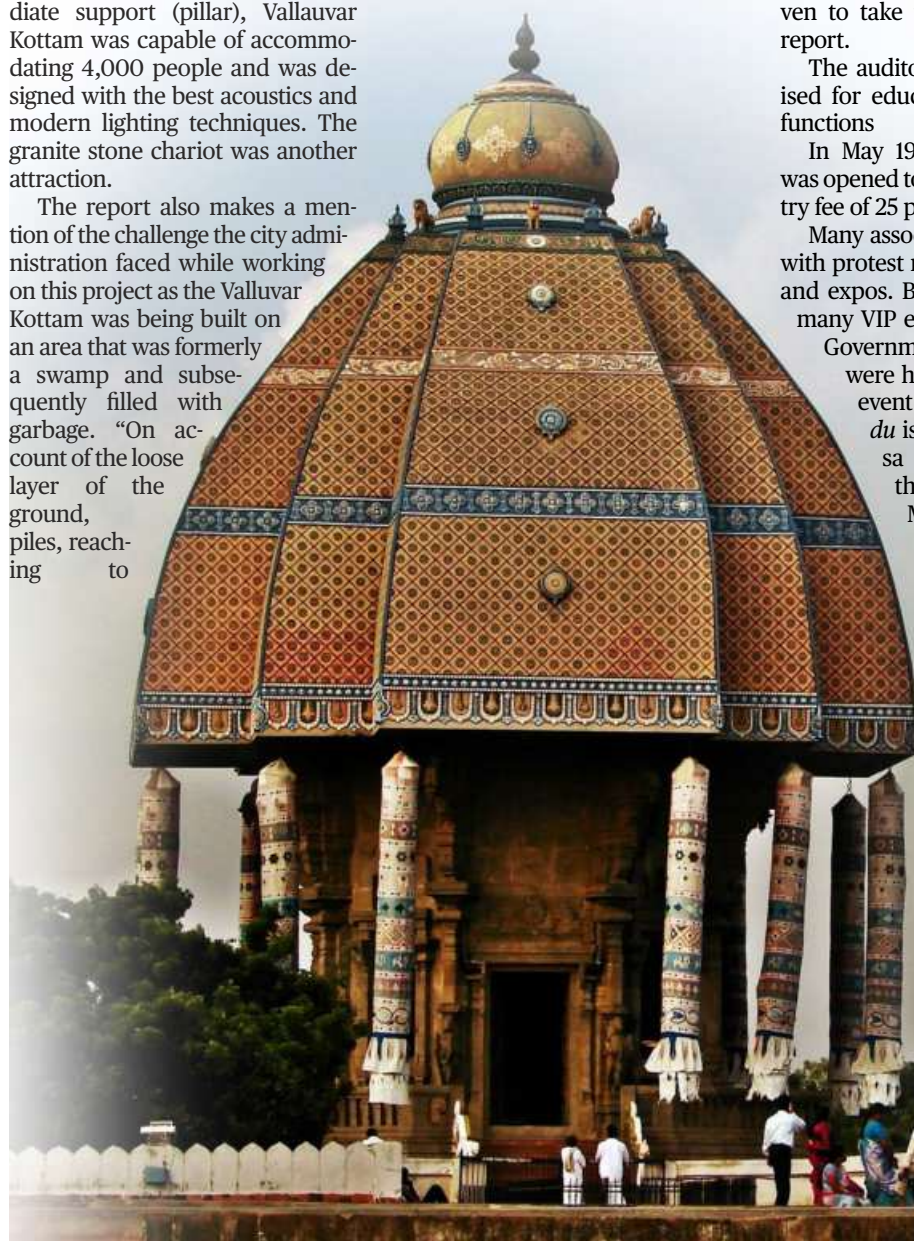
—Lion R. Murali
past president, Lions Club of Madras Fort St. George

Valluvar Kottam was our first choice when it comes to conducting exhibitions. Since 2006, we would have conducted at least eight editions of Silk Mark Expo at this venue as it always has a good recall value among shoppers and artisans thanks to its proximity to T. Nagar which is the main shopping hub during the festival season. Apart from it being centrally located, the length and breath of the halls inside was a big advantage for exhibition organisers to customise stalls as per their requirements. There were no pillars, and the verandah was so big that customers could wait there at ease. Parking was another attraction.

—Prabakara Rao,
deputy director, Silk Mark

In 1992, while studying at the Government College of Fine Arts, we chose Valluvar Kottam for our outdoor study where we spent the day sketching on the campus. The place was largely empty and peaceful. The structures of Valluvar Kottam packed a punch in terms of visual appeal, being easily seen from the road. Not so now, because the compound walls cover up the structures inside.

—Immanuel Jackson, art director





Klothberg launched in city

House of Klothberg, an apparel store was launched in the city on February 16.

The store is located on Harrington Road, Chetpet.

Founded by Rajiv Raj Jagasia, the store is a blend of sustainability, style, and wellness.

The boutique offers eco-friendly fashion and ayurvedic therapies, sustainable apparel, vegan leather footwear, and handcrafted accessories.

The café at the store serves organic, locally sourced dishes and vegan ice creams.

For details, call 90920 70099.

Football club launched



SV High School, Vanagaram, has launched a football club. The FC Marina Academy club was inaugurated by Ramachandran, chairman of Sri Venkateshwara Group of Institutions.

The academy will coach children from age four to eleven. It is open to students from other schools as well. It aims to coach children to compete in the Tamil Nadu Youth League.

Workshop on terrace gardening

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on terrace gardening on February 27. Another workshop on organic farming will be held on February 28. Both the sessions will be held at the centre's premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048.

Graduation Ceremony at Loyola



Loyola College, Chennai hosted its 96th Graduation Ceremony coinciding with its centenary celebrations.

Chief guest Satish Gupta, Founder & CEO of SB International Inc.,

and a distinguished Loyola alumnus presided over the event held at the Open-Air Auditorium.

A total of 2,565 students received their degrees, including 2,013 undergraduates, 545 post-



graduates, and 13 M.Phil. scholars. Additionally, 65 gold medalists were honored for academic excellence. The college also celebrated its notable achievements, including its A++ NAAC accreditation and an 8th-place ranking in the NIRF 2024 rankings.

Addressing the graduates, Satish Gupta inspired them with his words: "If I could do it, you can too. Rise like the sun, embrace the new, with courage, passion, and

wisdom true, the world awaits the best in you."

Speaking on the occasion, Rev. A. Louis Arockiaraj, SJ, Principal of Loyola College, said, "Loyola takes great pride in shaping up the lives of young people."

As part of its centenary festivities, the college inaugurated the Loyola Centenary Park and will soon open a new Centenary Building.

READERS WRITE

'A safety hazard at a street entrance'



A big stone is placed at the intersection of an interior street with the service lane of Perungalathur - Puzhal Chennai Bypass in Vanagaram. The aim is to prevent motorists from taking a close turn as the spot is a sharp V-shaped bend. However, the stone poses a danger during night as the place is not adequately-lit.

P Senthil Kumar,
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STEM lab at government girls school in Choolaimedu

With the support of Grundfos India, the Don Bosco Egmore 1997 batch establishes the facility



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

STEM-related courses. It had to be a long-term investment in these students. When we told Ezhilan about our plan, his team evaluated a few schools in his constituency and chose Jaigopal Garodia Government Girls' Higher Secondary School because of the enthusiasm towards the idea evinced by the HM and science teachers in the school." At the heart of the three-year application-oriented programme is an effort to make students curious about STEM concepts and provide them with the resources to master them, says Deepu. "This programme is an experiment we are carrying out with Jaigopal Garodia Government Girls' Higher Secondary School. Analysing the measurable outcomes, we

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.

Vending carts with different designs expected to *join the party*

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

On certain streets designated as vending zones, vending carts are parked. They look alike, lacking variation. These steel vending carts bear a streamlined body and seemed suited for food trade. These vending carts were directed at the Marina beach and now, they are being “recycled” to different addresses in Chennai across Greater Chennai Corporation’s 15 zones.

There is indication that a plan to bring variety to the vending carts lining vending streets is gaining traction in Ripon Buildings.

Other vending carts markedly different from these are likely to join in.



The vending carts now parked in some of the vending zones in Chennai.

According to Greater Chennai Corporation’s Revenue Department sources, a move to have made-to-measure vending carts that suit specific vending activity is on. The official notes that the top brass in Ripon Building is keen on having vending carts of different designs, each suited for a particular trade.

There would be vending carts specifically made for flower vendors; then those for petty shops; and so on.

The official notes that the thinking in Ripon Building is that besides enhancing functionality, such carts would add to the beauty of the landscape.

Listen to this: it is ‘*Truly Nazareth*’

An initiative by the visual communication students of Nazareth College of Arts and Science in Avadi, this podcast has drawn avid listeners from various quarters

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The voice of podcast host Vinisha Suresh is booming as she explains the significance of World Soil Day observed on December 5 and how anyone can contribute to the cause it represents.

“A seed will not grow in every soil. We too as students bloom when we are planted in the right environment and we take advantage of the opportunities it offers. We need to make use of the opportunities provided by the institution and beneficial things around us,” the host explains in a chatty tone. This one marks the 150th episode of the podcast.

For two years now, the Visual Communication students of Nazareth College of Arts and Science in Avadi have been running a podcast

series titled “Truly Nazareth” sharing inspiring stories and starting engaging conversations by bringing a variety of voices on board.

Predominantly in Tamil, the podcasts dwell on mindfulness, self-development and career advice. It also provides a peek into happenings in the neighbourhood.

The weekly podcast has so far not missed its deadline. Every Friday at 6 p.m., a new episode is released on www.trulynazareth.com and Spotify immediately after which the link to it is shared with heads of departments and promoted on the college’s social media handles. This is in turn shared with other WhatsApp groups including the other institutions run by the Nazareth Group. The content creation, voiceover and editing of Truly Nazareth is led by eight students, five from Visual Communication department and the rest drawn from other departments.

Curating content

Running for a duration of three to four minutes, some of the episodes talk about various initiatives run by the students. For instance, one episode discussed “Feed the needy”, an initiative started by the students during the pandemic where food is packed by students from their homes or prepared in the college canteen to feed the hungry and the homeless. The initiative is still going strong.

Another episode discussed “Reformation” introduced by the col-



The team.

lege management, where students involved in malpractices or in unethical behaviour are sent to an NGO for rehabilitation.

How has Truly Nazareth evolved since it was launched on January 26, 2023?

Geetha Subbiah, head of digital media and communications, says when they started the series, the focus was on bringing out a new episode every Friday. They did not promote the content in a big way. “Based on feedback we started marketing Truly Nazareth at events where we put up a stand,” says Geetha, who is mentoring the

students.

As the college already has a news channel, the mandate of this podcast series is to take things beyond the college campus.

Vinisha Suresh, one of the podcast hosts, says when they started the series they used to read from a script. “Now, we have learnt to speak based on our experiences, which is like talking to a friend,” she says. The feedback to every episode is taken seriously.

“The initiative is student-driven, the language is colloquial and we are happy that the series has engaged with the community of

school and college students,” says Geetha. The series has been drawing requests from the public that they be given a space in it.

“A woman entrepreneur from Avadi wanted to be part of the show, so we had a question and answer session with her in one episode. Likewise, another parent wanted to come and talk. We need content and we accommodate such requests as long as it meets the objectives of the show,” she says, adding that the initiative has provided students hands-on training in content creation, audio production and digital storytelling.

Student-volunteers in the *spotlight*

“Catalysts of Change” is an initiative by Chennai Volunteers to recognise and celebrate sterling efforts by college students and their institutions to make a difference through volunteering. The 2025 edition of this awards event is taking place on February 25 at Church Park on Anna Salai



“**C**atalysts of Change” is a platform that recognises college students who have volunteered with sincerity, compassion and commitment, impacting less privileged people, through Chennai Volunteers.

This event appreciates outstanding students and faculty from 13 colleges in Chennai, on February 24, 2025 (between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.) at the Sacred Heart Tamil Medium Girls School auditorium, on Church Park campus.

This youth service award was instituted in 2023 as a platform to inspire young student volunteers to become a better version of themselves and motivate many more students to start volunteering for causes, according to a communication from Chennai Volunteers.

It is hosted closer to the end of their annual term in college and is based on consistent and committed outreach or volunteering through the year. This year marks the third edition of this event.

The power of college students as a massive volunteering force stood out in bold relief on account of the pandemic. When the pandemic retreated, the systems it had augured in did not, immediately. Work from home continued.

The need for volunteering had

snapped back to pre-pandemic levels. The field had opened up, but the “labourers” were scarce.

Rinku Mecheri, founder of Chennai Volunteers, notes that corporate volunteers were not available in the same numbers as before as they had marched off to their native towns and were continue to work remotely. It was the college students who stepped into the breach.

Rinku continues: volunteering meant a lot to these college students; they were looking forward to it. While helping people through volunteering, these students were being helped by volunteering. Though they were college students, they were essentially children just out of school, as they had missed two years of in-person college education and the regular interactions that shape personality.

These students continue to make an impact in a variety of initiatives, those pertaining to education, library setup, special needs people, environment, climate change, health, disability, child and development, women empowerment, school painting and more.



In recognition of this contribution, this award was instituted.

The chief guest of this year’s awards function is Silai Zaki, Australia’s Consul General based in Chennai.

N, Ravi, Director, The Hindu will be the guest of honour.

Both of them will address the audience; and they will of

course, be handing over the awards as well, says the communication.

The award categories

Section 1: All the colleges that have partnered with Chennai Volunteers to volunteer through the year for various causes, will be

recognised for this contribution.

The 13 colleges that have been selected for honour in the 2025 edition of “Catalysts of Change” are as follows: Loyola College; Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women; Stella Maris College; Shri Shankarlal Sundarbhai Shasun Jain College for Women; Women’s Christian College; Sathyabhama Institute of Science & technology; Madras School of Social Work; Anna Adarsh College for Women; Sri Krishnaswamy College for Women; MOP Vaishnav College; Madras Christian College; Shri Ramasamy Memorial Institute of Science and Technology; SA College.

Section 2: This section has two sub-categories, the team awards and the individual student awards that have been thoughtfully created, based on the exemplary work demonstrated on-field. Students who have shown leadership and empathy while volunteering will be awarded.

The venue for the awards event is: Auditorium at Sacred Heart Tamil Medium School, #216, Church Park, Anna Salai, Gopalapuram, Chennai - 600086.

For more details, call Chennai Volunteers at 9840182299.

Support for **brick kiln** workers

The 29th Mary Clubwala Jadhav Award for Humanitarian Service was presented recently to a Tiruvallur-based group that works towards the empowerment of brick kiln workers

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Many a brick kiln worker coming to Tiruvallur do not have or carry legal documents such as identity cards and birth certificates. Without a valid identity card they are denied basic social security benefits they are entitled to.

Tamilnadu Vidiyal Kattumannam Matrum Amaippusara Thozhilaiarga Munnetra Sangam has been trying to empower brick kiln



workers with a host of initiatives. Their work was acknowledged when they received the 29th Mary Clubwala Jadhav Award for Humanitarian Service at an event held recently at Madras School of Social Work in Egmore.

The award is given to organisations that have contributed to the betterment of the weaker and vulnerable sections of society, and this year it was given for outstanding work in the field of unorganised sector workers with a cash price of ₹1,00,000 and a citation,

says a press release.

The Vidiyal Union is an outcome of the programme implemented by a Tiruvallur-based NGO Integrated Rural Community Development Society (IRCDS) that works for migrant brick kiln workers. Formed and led by brick kiln workers, the union educates the workers on labour rights, duties and social security schemes and the working conditions that should be maintained for brick kiln workers. This union has promoted 63 branch unions at the vil-

lage level for protecting the rights of brick kiln workers and to improve their working conditions, says the press note.

P. Stephen, advisor to the Vidiyal, says the months from January to June mark the time when workers migrate from various districts to work in brick kiln factories with their children. "As this is a seasonal migration they find it difficult to avail various schemes, especially those offered by the State Government under TN Construction Workers Welfare Board. We act as a bridge educating them and helping them carry out the documentation process to avail these schemes," says Stephen.

IRCDS with the support of Azim Premji Foundation and in collaboration with the Labour Department, conducts a baseline study among brick kiln workers employed in Tiruvallur and Chengalpattu districts. In the last four years, Stephen says, the Union has helped more than 3,000 brick kiln workers.

Name change

Kamdar Nagar Main Road has been renamed S.P.Balasubrahmanyam Road in honour of the legendary playback singer.

PHOTO: VELANKANNI RAJ B



Two-day national seminar on **sustainable development**

The event discussed the role of regional languages in promoting sustainable development goals

The School of Commerce of S. A. College of Arts & Science and the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology - Ministry of Education organised a two-day national seminar titled "Promoting Sustainable Development Goals Through Regional Language Translation" recently.

The programme was inaugurated by Mercy Lalrohluo Hmar, Assistant Director - Chemistry, CSTT, New Delhi. Professor Girish Nath Jha, Chairman, CSTT, presided over the valediction which was held online. According to a press release, the seminar highlighted the pivotal role of language in realising sustainable development goals (SDGs) and hence it under-

scored the need for regional language translation.

Resourcepersons delved into various aspects from the perspective of SDGs.

C. Vethirajan, professor, Alagappa University, emphasized on fairness, justice, and transparency in achieving sustainable societies. Abishek Sham Ranjan, programme director, PRS Group, discussed the role of technological advancements and resilient infrastructure in fostering economic growth.

Sandeep Modi, founder, Swastick Tea Pvt. Ltd., spoke on responsible consumption and production.

Sowmiya, professor, Vel Tech University, delved into community-driven initiatives to eradicate poverty.

J.S. Bhuvaneshwaran highlighted the critical role of universal healthcare and mental well-being in holistic development, adds the press release.



A WhatsApp bot for **first aid**

ALERT, a voluntary organisation engaged in creating awareness about first-aid, has launched its WhatsApp bot for providing first-aid assistance. Called ALERTAiD, it can be contacted through WhatsApp at 9944036929.

According to a press release, ALERTAiD can be used by anyone as a quick reckoner during real emergencies. It can also be used to learn about first aid. The organisation is also offering e-learning courses in first-aid in medical emergencies. To know more about the courses, visit www.academy.alert.ngo

Both these initiatives were developed with support from Ford Motor Company, adds the press release.

Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Ma Subramanian, and Distinguished Scientist, ISRO and DRDO, A. Sivathanu Pillai, launched the WhatsApp bot at the eighth edition of Alert Being Award ceremony held recently in the city, says the press release.

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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