

MYLAPORE

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CHANGE BEGINS ON THE TERRACE

Residents on the nitty-gritty of welcoming solar power into their homes and how different the EB bill looks now **P4&5**

No Spitting campaign launched in Mylapore

The exercise would be extended to other parts of the city with the help of citizen groups



Posters were displayed on autos.

Chennai streets can expect an explosion of 'No Spitting' signboards now. StopIndiaSpitting, the movement launched during the pandemic in March 2020, is back in Chennai. To start with, they are making their presence felt in Mylapore.

On April 3, in partnership with Ecoconnectors group of Mylapore and Beautiful Bharat, 10 volunteers set out to kickstart the campaign against public spitting on the streets across Mylapore. Their goal: making it clear that public spitting is unacceptable by putting up 'No Spitting' signs in prominent spots.

Joined by local residents, the group had conversations with the public, especially security guards, auto drivers and shopkeepers, about the ill effects of spitting. Besides being a source of diseases, spitting can make for the filth on streets, a factor that can impact swachh city rankings, said a press release.

Odette Katrak, co-founder of volunteer group Beautiful Bharat, who is driving this movement, is reactivating the campaign in Chennai with the support of residents. She says that five years after COVID, it is as important to address the scourge of public as spitting can cause TB the same way it enabled the spread of COVID.

Ganga Sridhar of Ecoknnectors and a resident of Raja Street in Mandaveli says they plan to put up signs across Mylapore to start with, to reinforce no-spitting behaviour.

Among places that this volunteer group has so far put up no-spitting signboards are a primary health centre, apartments, shops and auto rickshaws. This will continue in the coming weeks to deter those habituated to spit anywhere without a second thought from doing so, says the press release.

Odette highlights that no spitting signs are not seen, and in the absence of signs or bystanders stepping in with a word of awareness, those with the habit of spitting would continue with the practice. "We need to change this with more signs and more conversations on the ground; and every person can play a role with polite requests."

K.L. Balasubramanian chose the park at R.K.Nagar to put No Spitting signs apart from other locations and even autos. "More people tend to spit in open spaces, but spitting in a park where people of all ages come for health reasons, is also a habit to be changed. Children play on the grass unaware that others have spat in the same place. We hope to bring change with signs and conversations," he says.

Public spitting incidentally is one of four criteria in Swachh Surveshan ratings impacting visual cleanliness, the other three being litter, urination and open defecation, added the release. To activate the campaign in your locality and get signs in specific languages, write to stopindiaspitting@gmail.com. Follow them on Instagram at stopindiaspitting

A double whammy at a busy junction



Traffic violation in two directions caught in one frame at the Anna Salai-Wallajah Road junction. A motorcyclist takes a U-turn where none is intended, and heads towards Spencer's. He is not alone: a horde of motorcyclists do just that during rush hour. This traffic violation in fact happened outside of the rush hour. Simultaneously, two cyclists "illustrate" another common traffic violation at the junction: a violation by motorcyclists committed with impunity. Motorcyclists (and well, cyclists too) heading out of Wallajah Road or even Ellis Road take a transverse route down Anna Salai to get to the other side of the arterial road toward Parrys. They avoid taking the U-turn provided further up Anna Salai and join the traffic towards Parrys. A battery of cameras are trained on vehicular traffic moving in both directions on this section of Anna Salai. And reportedly, they are checking violations. Digital challans are being sent to those who flout the rules. But right here at the centre of the junction, violations of the afore-mentioned variety escapes the notice of these digital eyes, as they take a longer view, being focussed on the vehicular traffic barrelling into the junction on both sides of Anna Salai. According to traffic police personnel on the field, the cameras trained on this patch of the junction (where motorcyclists take wrong turns) are old and non-functional. The image was taken on April 4, 2025. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK


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▼ Snapshots of the procession on April 5. PHOTOS: SRINATH M



SRINATH M

Panguni Brahmotsavam is being held at Sri Kapaleeshwarar Temple in Mylapore in grand style.

This is one of the most significant festivals of the temple, celebrated over nine days. This year, the festival stretches from April 3 to 12. The festivities commenced with the Kodiyetram (flag hoisting) on April 3 at 6 a.m., marking the beginning of the Brahmotsavam. Each day features unique events and processions, with deities paraded on various vahanams (mounts) around the temple's four Mada Streets.

Adhikara Nandi (Lord Shiva on the sacred bull) procession was on April 5. Rishaba Vahanam on April 7 is a midnight procession where the deity is mounted on the silver Rishaba (bull).

Therottam (Chariot Festival) is on April 9 and will happen in a grand chariot procession which will begin around 7 a.m. Arubathimoovar Festival is on April 10 which honours the 63 Nayammars (Shaivite saints) who will be taken in procession. Thirukalyanam is on April 12. The festival culminates with the celestial wedding ceremony of Kapaleeshwarar and Karpagambal.

Panguni Brahmotsavam at Sri Kapaleeshwarar temple

The annual festival ends on April 12

Workshop on yoga therapy for Parkinson's

YogaVahini, a specialised yoga therapy, training and research institute, is organising a free workshop on April 12 on yoga therapy for Parkinson's Disorder (PD).

Parkinson's Disorder is globally the second most prevalent degenerative neurological disorder. Common motor symptoms include tremors, muscle stiffness, and loss of balance. In addition, PD can lead to depression, anxiety, hallucinations and cognitive challenges.

This free workshop is co-facilitated with Dementia Care Foundation (at Curi hospital) as the venue partners and in association with Parivarthan for Parkinson's Foundation, a non-profit working to improve the quality of life of people with PD. The Dementia Care Foundation, Curi Hospital is at 148, 3rd Floor, Okkiyam Thoraipakkam, OMR.

Time: 9:30am - 1:00 pm
For registrations call / WhatsApp 98846 42456

DYING METIERS: LET US USE SOME REUSE CULTURE

When was the last time the mender of plastic buckets knocked on your door?



▼ Plastic buckets with the itsy-bitsiest of cracks are being jettisoned without a second thought. If that comes across as a sweeping statement, it was meant as one. That statement is obviously not entirely truth-aligned, but when was the last time one expected 100 per cent veracity in a hyperbolic utterance? In the classic mould of hyperbolic shockers, this one exaggerates to amplify an observed fact: menders of plastic buckets who advertise their craft as they cycle or walk down streets are a disappearing tribe, that is if they have not already disappeared from the scene. Even in peri-urban areas, one that still holds on to a semblance of a repair-and-reuse culture, these workmen are hardly on the horizon. Here is an exposition of a trade and tradesperson that might signify esoteric wisdom to younger generations but is common, everyday knowledge to those preceding them. These workmen would carry around plastic pieces of different colours to match buckets with gaping holes or slivers of cracks. They would execute the patchwork with a modest soldering gizmo. The work would be done for a measly compensation, and the trajectory of a bucket headed possibly towards the landfill (if not the street-corner kayalaan-kadai) would be stopped mid-air. Mending of plastic buckets, wherever it may happen, happens in DIY stations at homes. Mend them and reuse them, and if you are looking for plastic pieces to carry out the patchwork, you may find them in Broadway at Kasi Chetty Street.

TEXT AND PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

PANORAMA

Cottoning on to a piece of natural history on RK Mutt Road



On RK Mutt Road, the Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board (TNUHDB) East I Circle "shares" its place of work with a variety of other government departments -- a fact as plain as daylight to anyone who sets foot in the premises. There is however a "twin" to TNUHDB out there that goes unnoticed despite its presence in a prominent spot. The story goes that a cotton tree which forms something of a facade to the building was planted by TNUHDB personnel when they moved into the facility. The tree is prodigious in its output, but the cotton has never been harvested. On March 28, 2025 when these images were taken, the tree was sporting clumps of green, immature seed pods. It is April and by the end of the month, all of them are likely to ripen to maturity, burst and wisps of cotton would fly about and disappear as waste. Regulars around the place note that this cycle repeats itself every podding season. This building also accommodates the Assistant Commissioner Office Urban Land Tax and the office of the Textile Committee. PHOTOS & TEXT: PRINCE FREDERICK

An offline version of 'Stumble Guy', available at Anna Salai



It can put Stumble Guys to shame. An online game that presents obstacles to participants, the latter comes with a limit on players. With its own home-grown, modified version of "Stumble Guys", a patch of pavement on Anna Salai (the landmark being Porr & Sons) has no cap on participants. There is a procession of participants and the game gets "more watchable" after sundown. On a serious note, this patch of the pavement is beset with multiple ills and has been allowed to continue in this fashion for a long time, with only temporary measures put in place to avert the danger. Or just minimise the damage. When there is a break in the pavement, pedestrians have to negotiate its uncomfortable height. To ease the ascent and descent, sand bags have been placed. But even these sand bags can cause someone of unsteady footing to stumble. Seniors and others with restricted mobility can find these sand bags a stumbling block. The sand bags have been there for a long time, signifying the elevation of a temporary relief into a permanent solution. Besides, a row of slabs in the pavement are at a slope with one slab dangerously sticking out. A pedestrian can stub their feet against it; worse still, trip and fall over it. The uneven and sloping slabs need to be pulled out and that patch redone; and the height of the pavement where it breaks into an entrance to a facility needs to be worked on to provide a comfortable slope for pedestrians to ease on to the pavement and off it. The images were taken on April 4, 2025. TEXT & PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK





Change begins on the terrace

Residents on the nitty-gritty of welcoming solar power into their homes and how different the EB bill looks now

LIFFY THOMAS

From the terrace of John Praveen's villa, one can see sloped panels stretch away, glinting in the sun. These are John's neighbours at a gated community in Sholinganallur; and they have gone solar just as John has.

Since June 2023, when he installed a 9.8 KW solar power plant, John has not paid anything towards electricity consumption except for the minimal network charges for a grid-tied solar power system. He is not practising austerity; he is generous with the use of his ACs and various other gadgets.

"Prior to switching to solar power, electricity bills in summer months would hover around ₹20,000 (bi-monthly). Now our bi-monthly bill ranges between ₹800 and ₹900, which is the basic network charge we are covered under," says John. The family was inspired to adopt solar power by a school project on affordable and clean energy their son was assigned.

John was also inspired by his father-in-law in Kerala who was an early adopter of solar technology with a solar inverter system.

Switching to solar power has been an immensely satisfying experience for this family of four. Here is the math of it. "Our solar plant has so far generated 27 KWh of electricity, equivalent to 27,000 units annually. The environmental impact, as per the solar inverter app, is significant: 15.4 trees planted (carbon offset equivalent), 27.7 tons of CO₂ reduction and 11.2 tons of coal saved," he explains.

The question of maintenance

Many houses that have invested in rooftop solar plants point out that the key to keeping the electricity bill to a minimum lies in how the panels are maintained.

Many service providers offer annual maintenance contract where the panels are cleaned periodically, and even warranty for five to eight years.

At John's home, the panels are washed every

fortnight with a hose pipe and spray gun to remove any dust and bird droppings. "The panels need to be kept clean for best efficiency," says John.

T.H. Jothi Kumar, who has a six panel 3 KW plant installed above the lift room of his apartment in Pallikaranai, says before zeroing in on the vendor he read reviews of them. "It is important to not just rely on recent feedback but those written more than five months ago," says Jothi Kumar. Hard objects such as stones could damage the solar panel and they need to be protected from such things. "Our solar panels come with a lighting arrestor, which safeguards the equipment from voltage spikes, so check if the vendor has provided one or ask for it," says Jothi Kumar.

R. Balaji, director, GESA Power, an authorised vendor, say they discourage consumers from investing in solar if their bi-monthly bill is less than 400 units.

"We require a minimum of 80-100 sq.ft. space on the terrace to install one kilowatt of solar. If the terrace is not able to accommodate that then we identify other spots where sunlight will be maximum," says Balaji, an authorised partner for Tata Power Solar.

Other nagging doubts from consumers have to do with metering and the functioning of the solar plant during monsoon. A 3KW solar plant is the basic one can go in for if 600 units is the bimonthly consumption.

"If one installs 1KW of solar it generates 4 units a day and between 5 and 6 units during peak season, which is good enough. Generation happens from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and increases during afternoons," says Balaji.

Tangedco replaces the main EB with bi-directional metres and also charges an amount for this. Stressing on the need to choose an approved vendor, Balaji says under the terms of agreement they are required to serve the customer for five years. "Tangedco can revoke us if a complaint is made by a consumer," he adds.

Basking in the sun

Help for RWAs to set up solar plants

Taking stock of a government scheme a year down the line

Until February 2025, a total of 26,755 domestic consumers in Tamil Nadu had installed solar rooftops availing the Prime Minister Surya Ghar subsidy scheme, launched during the same time last year.

Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) officials say more ground needs to be covered.

Prabhakaran Veeraarasu, environmental engineer and member Poovulagin Nanbargal, says solar rooftop is critical for energy transition and the state government should consider incentivising con-

sumers and also encourage more R&D in battery storage. "While there is some awareness on solar rooftop, there are hurdles that prevent people from switching to solar energy," says Prabhakaran. Currently, the Government is working on a tool that will simplify the process of installing a solar plant.

Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) officials say more ground needs to be covered.

He says Tamil Nadu government

plans to ensure 20,000 MW of solar power capacity and 10,000 MW of battery storage by 2030.

Many consumers and vendors The Hindu Downtown spoke to say wrinkles in the processes pertaining to submission of the application process and getting the reimburse-

ment have been ironed out in the last one year.

Tangedco's five zones have been initiating various activities to create awareness among people about solar energy.

In March 2025, the Chennai

North Circle under Tangedco started a grievance meeting exclusively to address concerns of consumers and vendors regarding solar roof-top.

Besides all the documentation, a GPS-enabled photo of the consumer standing next to the solar panel, and an agreement with the vendor and the consumer are required to get the refund.

The scheme subsidises 60 per cent of the solar unit cost for systems up to 2 kW capacity and 40 per cent of additional system costs between 2 kW and 3 kW capacity. At current benchmark prices, this means a ₹30,000 subsidy for a 1 kW system, ₹60,000 for a 2 kW system, and ₹78,000 for a 3 kW system or higher.

"After the regular grievance meeting that Tangedco organises, we have set aside time from 3 p.m. to meet domestic consumers and vendors," says Jayachandran, superintendent engineer (north circle),

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The challenge posed by a shared terrace

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Restrictive roof space, shared ownership of the terrace and lack of buy-in from residents make solar adoption in apartments a massive challenge.

For the last two months, N. Balakrishnan, a vendor listed in the PM Surya Ghar scheme, has been waiting to get the "no objection certificate" from a customer in T. Nagar who is keen on investing in a rooftop photovoltaic (RTPV) plant.

"The customer lives in a 14-unit apartment in T. Nagar; he had been inspired to switch to solar power by the example set by his father who has installed a 10 KV solar plant in his independent house. This apartment's terrace is not being used by residents to dry clothes but it has a water tank and cable lines run over it. Other residents are not ready to allow him to install the solar plant," says Balakrishnan of Shiva Shakti Solar.

"Getting consensus from all residents in apartment complexes over adopting rooftop solar power is a tedious process," agrees Hari Subbish Kumar, senior programme manager, Asar Social Impact Advisors Pvt. Ltd., a partner company in a report prepared by C40 on implementation of solar rooftop in Chennai. The study says that Chennai accounts for 25% of the electricity consumption in Tamil Nadu but its rooftop solar power contribution is on the lower side. Due to high prevalence of multi-storey buildings and multiple electricity connections in the same building, the progress in rooftop photo voltaic adoption has been slow, says the report.

Absence of a "group net metering regime" in the state was also cited as a hurdle. For tenants, persuading landlords to let them to install rooftop solar plant is often a massive challenge.

Hari say they are working with large apartment communities and developers to resolve various teething issues in green energy adoption. Asar along with its partners has also been encouraging RWAs to adopt rooftop solar power for common amenities so that it brings down the maintenance charges for all residents.

Hari adds that many resident welfare associations are not registered under the TN Apartment Ownership Act, preventing them from availing subsidies for rooftop solar plants in common areas.

vices and consumption but it did not work out for various reasons, one of them being persuading the eight households sharing the roof space to agree to have solar plants installed.

A few years ago, Balakrishnan says, a dealer had to remove the solar plant in a new project as others in the complex objected to having such a facility. In another case in Nanganallur, an owner had a private terrace so it was easy to install the solar plant.

However, he says, in a few cases installing solar plant for one owner has also turned advantageous as other flats in the street wanted to go in for a similar facility.

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(Clockwise from left) When the tree was standing tall and majestic; pieces of the dead tree now; and the tree following its restoration after Cyclone Michaung. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND PRINCE FREDERICK



The mighty baobab at Egmore is gone

The death of the tree was discovered when the Forest Department was taking a count of the heritage trees in Chennai

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Sometimes, one would come to the awareness of an event long after it had occurred. And sometimes, even that discovery would be made incidentally. The death of a baobab at the Egmore Museum came to light long after the giant tree gave up its ghost. The discovery happened when someone had visited the museum, ironically, to greet this baobab tree, take its measurements, note down its GPS coordinates. That someone – who was from the forest department – out to take stock of something that was believed to be full of the sap of life, was thrust into the role of a “coroner”.

T.D. Babu, a trustee of tree conservation NGO Nizhal, reveals that this discovery was made when the Forest Department was doing a round of the trees that had been identified as qualifying for heritage tree status. The exercise was being carried out to finalise the list and



have these trees declared to be having heritage value and have a hedge of protection placed firmly around them.

“We were shocked that one more giant tree has been lost in our city due to insensitivity and ignorance. The baobab tree can easily

live for 1000 years. It is so sad it was not allowed to live its full life span. Many such green sentinels vanish regularly without getting noticed,” says Babu.

During cyclone Michaung, this baobab tree slumped; and it was helped back to its “feet” and res-



tored by PWD.

Babu says Nizhal is one of the entities associated with the Forest Department in this exercise to

identify heritage trees. “We had prepared a list of heritage trees in Chennai as early as 2013,” says Babu.

On the factors that would have caused the death of this baobab, Babu says: “They were dumping garbage around it. The continued presence of moisture could have been the baobab’s undoing. The pieces they had been thrown away are trying to sprout, but will die soon as it is getting infected with fungus.

“Forest department can make an attempt to plant these pieces to see if they will grow vegetatively, as there is a sign of life in the thrown branches, before it becomes food for fungus and termites. The main tree is dead; but having these branches sprout into new trees can be some consolation that offshoots of the mother tree are with us.”

Babu notes that the Forest Department has initiated a move “to freeze the identified trees to quickly declare the heritage trees of Chennai. This would really help in protecting our heritage trees.”

The losses

T.D. Babu, trustee of tree conservation NGO Nizhal lists out the heritage trees Chennai has lost in recent years.

“A few trees we have lost: Mavalingam near Rettaimalai Srinivasan Memorial; Vennangu near Rajaji memorial, baobab trees at Greams Road and M.A.Chidambaram cricket stadium, besides the one inside the Egmore Museum; Etti maram at the parking area of Semozhipoonga, Kaatu vadhumai in front of Semmozhi Poonga, Vaadha narayana on MG Road in Besant nagar, Siruthai pattai maram on TTK road, Illupai inside Lady Willingdon Institute of Advance Study in Education campus, Kamarajar Salai.”

Singing group celebrates second anniversary

Isai Pudhidhu, a voluntary group of amateur singers who promote Carnatic and film music, celebrated its second anniversary recently.

The four-hour long programme included "Maarum Kurgalum Mayangum Rasigargam", a thematic presentation by Indra Ramanathan, in which members sang cine songs on stage with live orchestra. More than 20 songs were sung.

A discourse from Bhagavatham "Krishna Charitham" by storyteller Ramya Vasudevan was supported by group members singing devotional songs, bhajans and playing musical instruments.

Isai Pudhidhu has been guided by the chief admin Azhagiya singher; Nagendra Bharathi and Shanthi Rasavadi as admins, said a release.

Sundarajan, editor of *Kuvikam*, a Tamil magazine, who was one of the guests, appreciated the initiative.



Inner Wheel Club of MRC Nagar gets a new team



The Inner Wheel Club of MRC Nagar was officially installed in a special ceremony led by district chairman Fathima Nasira. Sushma was installed as president and Kavitha as secretary along with other office bearers by District ESO PDC Usha Saraoji.

The club marked the occasion with a charitable donation of a Chemoport machine to support a child battling cancer.

Applications invited for apprenticeship training

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation has invited applications for its one-year apprentice training. Those who have completed B.E., Diploma and Non-Technical Stream (Undergraduate, Mechanical Engineering, Automobile Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, B.A., B.Sc., B.Com, BBA, BBM and B.CM) Tamil students in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 can apply.

The students should apply online (<https://nats.education.gov.in>) before April 22.

Vocational excellence award presented to music composer



Rotary Club of Madras Northwest conferred the prestigious Rotary Vocational Excellence Award on Jim Satya, an accomplished composer, music producer, and session musician.

Satya has made significant contributions to the music industry, collaborating with numerous composers and producing music across multiple languages includ-

ing Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi and English. This award recognises his pioneering role in integrating cutting-edge technology with traditional music, enhancing the music production process, and transforming the auditory experience for listeners, said a release.

The award ceremony was graced by Ramesh Vinayakam, composer, music researcher, and inventor, who presented the award. Subramanian, president of the Rotary Club of Madras Northwest; secretary Ramma Suresh, and vocational service director Srinivasan were present along with other members of the Rotary Club of Madras Northwest.

Cricket camp at Gandhi Nagar Sports Club

The Gandhi Nagar Cricket and Sports Club is conducting summer coaching camp at the Club's grounds at 4th Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar for boys and girls in the age group 6 to 19, from April 6 to May 23.

The coaching sessions will be from 6.15 a.m. to 8.15 a.m. on each of these days. For details, call C.S. Ravi, honorary secretary at 8754407654 / K.Balakrishnan, honorary joint secretary at 9444824838.

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The time is ripe for wearing a new set of colours



▼ Whiskered terns are a sight to behold while they cool their feet on a perch: as streamlined as a McLaren Speedtail, their elongated bodies are displayed the best when their wings are folded and they are still, save the bobbing in the air that might be caused by a windy condition. Perched on a power wire, Whiskered terns were swaying in the breeze at Muttukadu, boats tethered in the quay at the Boat House making the backdrop, on the morning of April 2, 2025. Among the Whiskered terns parked on the power wire, some were arrayed in noticeable breeding plumage and some others, in a state of "partial dressing" that closely follows the dress code "specified" for their breeding grounds. In its breeding plumage, the Whiskered tern wears an ash-grey body, a black cap, red beak and legs. Among the terns that pop in on Chennai during winter, the Whiskered terns are the most spotted as they range over a wide terrain. They cannot be accused of the finicky obsession with coastal coordinates that a Caspian tern or a Common tern displays. The Whiskered tern would be at home hovering over Chitlapakkam lake (which is as inland as it can get) as it would be at a coastal wetland such as Perumbakkam wetland. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



Cultural event showcases Tamil tradition

Sri Sankara Vidya Kendra Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Thiruvottiyur hosted a cultural extravaganza celebrating Tamil literature and tradition.

'Vinayagar Vijayam', a mesmerising musical production blending iyal, isai, and natakam, was brought to life by around 600 students from LKG to class II. Showcasing Tamil folk arts like Karagattam, Bharatanatyam and Viluppu, the performance reflected the school's commitment to instilling Tamil culture from a young age, said a release.



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SUMMER SALE IS ON 11TH TO 12TH APRIL
Thughil, a store for handlooms is having a summer sale of curated handloom cotton-sarees, ready-to-wear blouses, dress material and eco-friendly accessories.
The range includes natural-dyed, Khadi, kalamkari sarees, and ikats from Andhra and Orissa.

The sale is on 11th to 12th April at C.P.Arts Centre, Mini hall (1), Alwarpet. Contact no: 7395972701 Timings 10.30am to 7pm.

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(Near Mylapore Luz Corner)

mysoresilkpalacemylapore
Ph : 86951 08528 / 044 2498 1727
Store Timings: 10.30 a.m to 8.30 p.m
Lunch hour: 1.30 p.m to 3.30 p.m

THIS SUNDAY SHOP OPENED