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SUSTAINABLE FASHION BRAND BOWS OUT IN STYLE

Oh Scrap! Madras, which has carved a niche for itself by upcycling fabric scraps to make clothes, jewellery, home decor, toys and a variety of other fabric-related creations is officially shutting down on January 15 **P5**



HOW TO HOST A COLLECTION DRIVE

Meet volunteers in Chennai who have thrown open their homes for NGO Goonj to take up relief work for families affected by Cyclone Fengal **P3**

SWD line skirts around rare strychnine tree on ECR



When the expansion of East Coast Road was on the drawing board, what seemed a possible death sentence for an old strychnine tree at Ponni Amman Koil in Injambakkam was revoked. When the State Highways Department spelt out its plans for the trees on ECR to the Chennai district green committee, it was inevitable that this strychnine tree would take a generous bite out of the powwow. Though this tree fell well and truly in the line of the expansion work, a hedge of protection would be placed around it. In Chennai, strychnine trees signify a rarity. This tree being old, the possibility of transplanting it elsewhere was ruled out. It had to be protected where it stood. The promise that was spelt out behind closed doors is being fulfilled on the ground, as is evident from the curve the just-constructed stormwater drain has taken to avoid running into the tree. The images were taken on January 10, 2025. **Photos: Prince Frederick**



READERS WRITE

‘Sub PHC in Perumbakkam closed most of the time’

The Sub Primary Health Centre equipped with pharmacy that functions on the premises of the office of the Perumbakkam Village Panchayat on Semmozhi Salai in Perumbakkam is witnessing good patronage.

In compliance with guidelines, it is being manned by a nurse who is authorised to conduct basic health tests (blood pressure, sugar and a few more). The nurse is authorised to issue medicines prescribed by doctors.

But in the last six months, we find the nurse is being deployed to other health centres and due to this, the centre remains closed. Besides, regular patients find shortage of medicines at the centre. The authorities are requested to attend to this issue.

N.K.Raja,
president, Nesamani Nagar Residents' Welfare Association, Perumbakkam

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Malayalam Mission opens a new centre on OMR

An IT professional teaches Malayalam to residents of the area



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Software professional Anupama Amanangad will start donning the teacher's hat from January 19 when she would receive students at

her home in Bollineni Hillside, a gated community. They would be there for easy-to-learn lessons in Malayalam.

On January 5, the latest centre of the Malayalam Mission, a project of the Kerala government to teach non-resident Malayalees the moth-



At the inauguration. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

er tongue, was inaugurated at an event held at the park inside Bollineni Hillside in Semmancherry.

Keen that her daughter join Malayalam classes before her eighth birthday, Anupama stumbled upon this initiative where the classes are absolutely free and the teachers work on a voluntary basis.

She was inspired by the training programme she attended with 40 others to become a voluntary teacher. Later, Anupama decided to extend her love for the language

to others in the neighbourhood.

"There is no fun teaching my daughter alone, so I thought: why not get some of my friends in the community as well? And that is how I got entrusted with managing the activities of this centre," says Anupama, who studied in a Malayalam medium school at Malappuram district and is a resident of Semmancherry for the last 10 years.

The centre has already received a heartening response: 18 have

signed up for the weekly classes and this includes a family of three and three seniors citizens.

The new centre is hoping to attract more Malayalees working in this part of the city, a majority of them employed in the IT and ITeS sector. "BHAMA (Bollineni Hillside Association of Malayalees) is a close-knit group that meets for special occasions including festivals such as Onam and Vishu and many of those who enrolled for this programme got to know about it from the posts shared in this online community," she says.

Malayalam Mission has been running classes in the city, since 2011, at homes of residents, association offices, parks, temples, churches and mosques.

"Currently Malayalam Mission has 196 centres in the city, with a majority of them being managed by homemakers trained to teach the language in an easy to learn way," says P.R. Smitha, Tamil Nadu convenor of Malayalam Mission.

These centres have students ranging from ages 10 to 90. "Our Ayanavaram centre which is run in a church currently has 93 students across age groups," says Smitha teacher, adding that the Palavakkam centre is opening on January 26.

For details about the classes, call Smitha at 9544151820.

LIFFY THOMAS

Just before Christmas when homes were getting decked up with colourful lights and cribs, Mangala Chandran's home at Sriram Nagar West Street in Alwarpet was getting ready to accommodate old but useful stuff.

She was receiving cartons and bags of gently used clothes, dry ration, stationery and other usable items – the entrance of her house could have been mistaken for a godown.

This drive for NGO Goonj that Mangala initiated racked up a decent collection. This old stuff could have ended up in landfill, but now they are being diverted them to families that lost much due to Cyclone Fengal.

"Mangala is regular in conducting such collection drives, sometimes it is held once in three to four months, opening up her house for people to drop in items that could touch somebody else's lives," says her neighbour L. Hariharan, who has been actively volunteering for Goonj for more than 11 years now.

Until a year ago, his home was the drop-off point for people in and around Alwarpet to donate reusable items. The donated items would then be transported to Goonj's main centre in Kovil-

How to host a collection drive

Meet volunteers in Chennai who have thrown open their homes for NGO Goonj to take up relief work for families affected by Cyclone Fengal



Iambakkam.

During the Christmas week last year, at Karpagam Avenue in RA Puram, The Little Caterpillar, a play school, also assumed the



Items kept in front of a house in Alwarpet; and (right) the Goonj stall at The Little Caterpillar. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

responsibility of conducting a collection drive for people affected by the cyclone. The school also played host to the Goonj team who interacted with visitors at

planning to conduct such drives are required to reach out to Goonj at least five days in advance to receive the help they would need. They are also required to take responsibility of the logistics of stocking the items and transporting them to a central collection point.

"For many people, space is a constraint but we expect one to host it for not more than two days. Some hesitate as the cost of transportation has to be borne by them," says Anisha.

Hariharan, who helps people set up camps, says many volunteers sign up through conversations on WhatsApp groups. "With one's network it is possible to find interested people," says Hariharan, who has helped collect more than 20,000 garments so far and is secretary of Sri Ram Nagar Association.

Nikita Viswanath, founder, The Little Caterpillar, believes creating a buzz around some drives is of paramount importance or people would otherwise be unaware of them. "We are planning another soon with some interesting takeaway workshops for visitors," says Nikita. They also invite volunteers to participate in its other activities which includes packing of items, creative writing to promote a drive and designing posters for the same.

the centre and had a stall selling upcycled items.

While many residents have been throwing open a section of their house to stock items for those affected by Cyclone Fengal and other natural calamities, NGOs working on the ground say they still need more helping hands.

"Since Cyclone Fengal made landfall on December 1, we have had nearly 10 collection drives, a majority of them in the central parts of the city," says Anisha Baura, team member, Goonj.

Our plan is to reach out to 15,000 families but we have so far only reached out to 3,000 families, she says.

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Sustainable fashion brand bows out in style

Oh Scrap! Madras, which has carved a niche for itself by upcycling fabric scraps to make clothes, jewellery, home decor, toys and a variety of other fabric-related creations is officially shutting down on January 15

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

The inexorable clock has quickened its feet, rushing through a final countdown for Oh Scrap! Madras. On January 15, the Chennai-based upcycling enterprise would have officially retreated from the sustainability stage, one it filled admirably for five years. Until the *coup de grace* is delivered to it that day, Oh Scrap! Madras would be kept on "life support", its website (www.ohscrapmadras.com) open for a clearance sale with prices marked down by 50 to 60 per cent on all products.

While it lasted, Oh Scrap! Madras enunciated the shibboleths of sustainability flawlessly. The finery and artsy trinkets and home decor and utilitarian bags and a spectrum of other fabric-related creations it shipped from a well-appointed but unpretentious 2BHK flat Thiruvanmiyur were born of upcycled fabric scraps. Women constituted more than ninety percent of its workforce. On top of that, both co-founders were women. Designer Priyanjoli Basu and demographer-epidemiologist Dominique Lopez, the co-founders, made sure the fabric scraps came from local addresses, drawn from the godowns of textile factories, local fashion brands and the wardrobes of individual donors. The employees got to work from home not as an occasional perk, but by default. A tailoring machine was parked at home.

Oh Scrap! Madras' work processes could have gone into a primer on United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, painting an illustrative picture of them – not all the 17 goals, but some of them certainly.

Beyond the gravitas of meeting SDGs, Oh Scrap! Madras brought a levity to its business. The name carried a chant-like appeal and even a winsome irreverence. As Priyanjoli puts it, "I just wanted something fun and something that would stay with people in their



A glimpse of the product line.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



This section spotlights initiatives undertaken by residents of Chennai to minimise the waste that reaches landfills



mind." And it did, becoming a synonym for sustainable fashion in Chennai.

The enterprise gave both its co-founders a huge and uplifting sense of purpose. But paradoxically, the things that fill us with purpose also deplete us. Over the last five years, Priyanjoli and Dominique had been lurching from one product to another, one sale to another. It was in fact baptism by fire for Oh Scrap! Madras. Established in August 2019, the fledgling enterprise would soon find itself catering to a closed world. The pandemic had shut down avenues of growth even before they were fully open to this enterprise. During this period, it put much of its fashion line on hold, and was largely making masks.

Sustainable fashion is usually a hard sell. As the duo puts it, each in different phraseology and accent, Oh Scrap! Madras would have taken what was considered dead and imbued it with new life, but the magic was never in the discarded and upcycled fabric; it was in the act of transformation. But the buying public was largely fixated on the former (discarded fabric scraps) and often altogether missed the latter, the creative treatment it received.

"People did not understand why they should buy something made from discarded fabric," Priyanjoli sighs. Shaping the fabric was not half as challenging as resh-

aping perceptions. Have they succeeded in the attempt? Yes and no. They have made many proselytes having won them over to sustainable fashion, but the naysayers still abound. The business of upcycling discards is largely viewed with brow-knitting suspicion, often brusquely cast in the domain of desperation, not innovation. The market for sustainable fashion remains niche. If Oh Scrap! Madras with 100 products on its catalogue now and a product shipping history covering four major metros in India (Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi; besides, of course Chennai) even parts of the United States should decide to throw in the towel, surely, there is still considerable work on perception engineering to be done.

As Oh Scrap! Madras bows out of the scene, its co-founders strike a positive note. There is something comforting about this ending.

"Ending something is not the same as giving up," Dominique notes. "It is about knowing when the work you set out to do has been completed."

The journey would have ended, but it was on track when it lasted.

The numbers bear this out. In a post titled "5 years recap" they put out on Instagram, they note that more than 850 garments were made available in their thrift store; and Oh Scrap! Madras "has successfully upcycled, recycled, thrifited or donated 5.5 tons of fabric scraps since 2019".

Furthermore, as Dominique says: "We also used to have upcycling services for clients where they could send their old fabric and we could revamp it. We ran a donation service where people could donate their old clothes. We conducted upcycling workshops, both offline and online, regularly; and we organised talks about sustainability." In a generous final act, Priyanjoli and Dominique donated piles of fabric scraps to up-and-coming designers who had been following Oh Scrap! Madras for years.

Back to the recap note, it says "we were a wonderful team of 12 out of which 11 are women and seven are local women artisans."

"The women we empowered are no longer just part of the brand – they are the brand," Priyanjoli says with quiet pride. These women, once bound by societal constraints, now hold the tools to write their own stories. Priyanjoli continues: "What we were creating was not just art from scraps. We were giving women a voice, an identity and a chance to reclaim their own story."

"What we have done," Dominique reflects, "is not just upcycle fabric, but upcycle lives."

Some of the women were house helps, and what they earned from Oh Scrap! Madras was a big boost to the family income – in fact, during the pandemic it was a lifeline, says Priyanjoli.

Would Priyanjoli and Dominique want to recreate the magic, but in a different form?

To answer that, Dominique goes to the very beginning of this initiative.

Through a chance encounter, the duo had met – Priyanjoli back in Chennai after her studies in fashion design in London; and French national Dominique who had settled down in Chennai with her family – and discovered they were on the same page about how to put sustainability ideals into practice. And Oh Scrap! Madras was born in 2019. They want to recreate the magic, but individually, each taking a different road to purpose, one paved with sustainability-driven goals.

Co-founders Dominique Lopez and Priyanjoli Basu.



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The Pongal rush: special buses, help desks, helpline numbers

The State Transport Department is plying special long-distance buses on January 12 and 13 from three bus terminuses in the city. On these two days, more than 7,000 buses will be operated.

The buses are operated from Kalaignar Centenary Bus Terminal (KCBT), Mofussil Bus Terminal, and Metropolitan Transport Corporation Bus Terminus in Kilambakkam, Madhavaram New Bus Terminus, and Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus (CMBT) in Koyambedu.

From KCBT, buses to Vandavasi, Polur, Puducherry, Cuddalore, Chidambaram, Tiruchi, Madhavaram terminus, Andhra Pradesh, Salem, Kumbakonam and Tiruvannamalai, and CMBT, East Coast Road, Kancheepuram, Vellore, Bengaluru



and Thiruttani. People travelling by private transport have been requested to drive through the Thiruporur - Chengalpattu route or the Vandalur - Outer Ring Road route to avoid traffic congestion on Grand Southern Trunk Road, Tambaram and Perungalathur regions, said a release.

Reservation counters

To help passengers book their tickets, nine reservation counters have been set up on the premises of KCBT and CMBT till January 13. The counters will function from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Public can also book the tickets online through www.tnstc.in and on the official app of Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation.

The numbers

To know about bus routes and register service complaints, the public can contact the number

94450 14436 (24X7).

To register complaints against fleecing Omni bus operators, public can call 044 24749002, 044 26280445, 044 26281611, and a toll-free number 1800 425 6151.

For the passengers' safety, a control room has been set up on the premises of the Kilambakkam bus terminus, which will function round the clock. Besides, 'May I Help You' booths (buses and routes) have been set up in the terminuses.

The public must use the reservation counters and app, and online facilities for safe and hassle-free travel.

Metropolitan Transport Corporation will operate connecting buses from the Koyambedu bus terminus round the clock to reach the other two bus terminuses.

Focus on terminuses

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation will operate more than 150 special link buses on January 12 and January 13 to help long-distance passengers to board the buses from three terminals across the city.

The special buses will be operated on these route numbers.

Buses to Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus, Koyambedu: 15 (Broadway), 46 (Thiru Vi Ka Nagar), 72 (Avadi - Thiruverkadu, through the terminus), 78 (Thiruvanmiyur), 114 (Red Hills), 159A (Thiruvottiyur), 170C (Guindy Industrial Estate - Thiru Vi Ka Nagar through the terminus), 27B (Anna Square), and 48C (Vallalar Nagar).

Kalaignar Centenary Bus Terminus, Ki-

lambakkam: 206 (Avadi), 104C (Koyambedu), 104K (Red Hills), 111ET (Thiruverkadu), 121HET (Kannadasan Nagar), 18AET (Broadway), 21GCT (Mandaveli), 500P (Palavaram), 51AX (T. Nagar), 51X (Velachery), 555S (Sholinganallur), 583X (Sri Perumbudur), 66K (Kundrathur), 66P (Poonamallee), 70GCT (Vadapalani), 91K (Thiruvanmiyur), 91R (Velachery), 95XCT (Sholinganallur), 99X (Adyar Gandhi Nagar Bus Terminus), and M18 (Tambaram).

Madhavaram New Bus Terminus : 121A (Manali - Koyambedu), 121C (Ennore - Koyambedu), 121CT (Madhavaram Mofussil Bus Terminus (MMBT) - Koyambedu), 121IM (Madhavaram Bus Terminus - Koyambedu), 70F (Kilambakkam - Madhavaram Bus Terminus) and 70M (Kilambakkam - MMBT).



CMRL's recruitment drive

To increase women's representation in the technical domain, Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) has initiated a recruitment opportunity for the assistant manager (Civil) position for qualified and experienced women engineers.

The candidate should have experience of eight years and the maximum age is 30 (with a relaxation of age for deserving candidates). The selected candidate will be paid a consolidated pay of ₹62,000 per month. The detailed employment notification has been published on the CMRL website, chennaimetrorail.org/job-notifications/.

The last date for receipt of the application is February 10.

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Reliance launches electrolyte drink

Reliance Consumer Products Limited (RCPL) has launched a beverage product under the brand called RasKik Gluco Energy, an energy boosting and rehydrating drink. According to a press release, it is packed with electrolytes, glucose and lemon juice and is priced of ₹10 per single-serve SKU. The other flavours include: mango, apple, mixed fruit, and coconut water. This marks RCPL's entry into rehydration segment, adds the release.

"RasKik Gluco Energy represents our understanding of the Indian consumer's needs and our commitment to be an integral part of their daily lives," says Ketan Moddy, Chief Operating Officer, RCPL.

What is in store at Mylapore Fest today

The Sundaram Finance Mylapore Festival is happening at 10 venues (streets and spaces) around Sri Kapaleeswarar Temple in Mylapore. 7305630727 or visit www.mylaporefestival.in

Chennai Sangamam

Make sure you visit your neighbourhood parks, the beaches and public grounds to witness some of the best folk performances of Tamil Nadu.

Chennai Sangamam is happening from January 14 to 17 at various venues in the city.

In the Mylapore region, Bharath Scouts and Guides Ground in Triplicane and Government Music College Campus are among the venues. For details, visit <https://chennaisangamamofficial.com/>

For details, call

A series of programmes by Naadhabrahmam



Naadhabrahmam organised a series of special programmes on the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadasi on January 25 and concluded the next day at Gowri Hall, West Mambalam.

Naadhabrahmam honoured Nellai Seshappan with the title "Naadha Pravachana Sironmani" and appreciation award to Naval Narayanan. The award was conferred by Justice M.Duraiswamy, chairperson Tamilnadu Real Estate Appellate Tribunal who also inaugurated the festival.

The felicitation event followed by Pravachana by Nellai Seshappan, Shubashini Parthasarathy, CR Vaidyanathan, Gayathri Mahesh, Shubha Ganesan and Padma Seshadri Sisters.

88 universities take part in women's karate tournament



More than 400 players representing 88 universities took part in the All India South-West Zone Inter-University Karate Women Tournament hosted by B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology recently.

Baljit Singh Sekhon, Joint Secretary (YA & Sports), Association of Indian Universities, New Delhi hoisted the National Flag.

T. Murugesan, Vice Chancellor, and N. Raja Hussain, Registrar of the Institute, hoisted the University and sports flags respectively.

The inauguration commenced with the recitation of the Quirath by A. Abdul Hai Hossani Nadwi, Dean Arabic and Islamic Studies followed by the Tamil Thai Vazhthu. S. Selvakumar, organising secretary, Director and Head of the Department of Sports, provided an overview

of the tournament's significance.

Individual Kata: Amritha Vijayan, Jain University; Farshana P.P, University of Calicut; and Mathini Sri H, SRM University & Chaitra Shree N, Visvesvaraya University

Team Kata: University of Calicut won the first place; University of Kerala the second place; Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam and Jiwaji University, Gwalior bagged the third place.

The University of Calicut in Kerala was awarded the overall championship trophy, while the runner-up trophy was presented to Jain University in Karnataka. University of Kerala and B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology secured third and fourth places respectively, said a release.

A farewell party



A farewell party in honour of Rear Admiral Ravi Kumar Dhingra, VSM Flag Officer Commanding TamilNadu & Puducherry Naval Area (FOTNA), who is embarking on a new journey was held on January 4, 2025 at The Park in Nungambakkam.

Jointly hosted by Satish Jupiter and The Park, Chennai the event saw an array of consuls, expats, government officials, members of diplomatic core and prominent faces of Chennai in attendance to cherish their fond acquaintance with the officer.

Planetarium closed on January 14

The Periyar Science & Technology Centre and B.M. Birla Planetarium at Gandhi Mandapam Road in Kotturpuram will remain closed on January 14 on account of Pongal holiday. The centre can be reached at 044 - 24410025

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