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A SALE WITH A SOCIAL FOCUS

Today, a Jumble Sale at Valmiki Nagar would give a modern twist to the Robinhood legend by decluttering the lives of the haves to fill those of the have-nots with essential items, creating a win-win situation **P4**



BIOGAS PLANT AT CORPORATION SCHOOL

The facility was established by ROKA with the support of EFI and Avris **P7**

Presidency College faculty's attempt to showcase works of visually challenged writers

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

If you are planning to visit Chennai Book Fair, do drop in at stall number 102 near the entrance. K. Kumar, associate professor of Tamil with the Presidency College, has put up this stall to showcase works by visually challenged writers and poets, he being among them.

There are 120 Braille books and many others brought out by visually challenged authors that have been showcased. "Not many people are aware that there is lit-

The professor and a few students manage the stall at Chennai Book Fair

erary talent in this community and this was an attempt to showcase their works," says Kumar, who has been associated with the college for 17 years and is also an alumnus of the same institution.

The books are all in Tamil and cover a variety of categories in-



Professor K. Kumar at the stall.

cluding research articles, novels and short stories. Kumar himself has authored 16 books.

The stall runs under the name Bharathi Trust, an Adam-bakkam-based foundation for visually impaired persons that the professor oversees.

"Under the banner of the Trust, we have been helping many students appear for various competitive examinations," says Kumar, a resident of Ponneri.

He says many students come from rural areas to Chennai in search of education and the Trust has been helping them in many ways. "At Presidency College alone we have 100 visually challenged students studying various courses," adds the professor who is helped by a few of his students. His request to the organisers of the book fair is that if there is a help desk with assistance then many more persons with disability can be taken around the venue.



Athulya Senior Care, which provides holistic living solutions for seniors, has launched a pilot project – under its #CaringForASenior campaign – at the Arulmigu Sri Parthasarathy Swamy Temple in Triplicane, seeking to address mobility and comfort challenges faced by elderly devotees.

In an event, it introduced wheelchairs for seamless mobility within the temple premises and chairs strategically placed as resting spots for elderly visitors. These thoughtful additions aim to improve the comfort and accessibility of the sacred space for senior citizens. To further enrich the experience, Athulya deployed trained caretakers who volunteered to guide and as-

Accessibility for elders enhanced at Triplicane temple



At the launch of the #CaringForASenior campaign; and a view of the temple.

sist the elders, ensuring their safety and active engagement in temple activities, says a press release.

The #CaringForASenior campaign seeks to enrich the lives of senior citizens by taking a comprehensive approach to their well-being, the release adds.

The project's success can be attributed to the strong collaboration between Athulya, the temple administration, and local senior citizen groups, the release says. This partnership ensured effective outreach and smooth execution, maximising the initiative's impact. Through this model, Athulya envisions creating a replicable framework that can inspire similar accessibility projects at other temples and community spaces, the release adds.

The event witnessed heartfelt participation from senior citizens who expressed their gratitude for the thoughtful provisions made for their comfort and mobility, says the release.

Alumni meet ends today

The two-day alumni reunion of St. Mary's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School, Armenian Street, will end on January 5 (today). According to a press release, the meet is held at Tru Liv Villa Ivory, Kovalam. For details, call Bhoopal Sreenivasan at 63835 99778.

Workshop on mushroom cultivation

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is organising a workshop on mushroom cultivation on January 9. Also, a culinary workshop on making brownies will be held on January 10. According to a press release, various flavours of brownies such as walnut, butterscotch, peanut butter, mint, coconut, salted caramel, raspberry, and a few more. The session will focus on both egg and egg-less brownies. For details, call 044 - 29530048.



Students walked from Kodungaiyur to Madhavaram to enter the Nobel Book of Records; (left) G. Jagateesan is in an orange shirt.

PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



RAJALAKSHMI V.

Sticking it out for a cause

A group of government school students, aged 5 to 18, recently achieved a record by performing silambam walking. With sticks tied to their legs, this feat performed on January 1 was an effort to raise awareness about drug abuse.

More than one-third of the students that made up this 300-member group, which walked for a distance of five kilometres from Kodungaiyur to Madhavaram, are from Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Silambam and Welfare Association.

It was led by G. Jagateesan, a plumber from R.A. Puram who has been teaching silambam to underprivileged children for the past five years, offering lessons for free. He has garnered various accolades, including an international championship.

"My silambam journey started at the age of 13 when I learnt the

Plumber G. Jagateesan, who learnt silambam from a cobbler, is well-known in RA Puram for imparting martial art skills to children free of cost

ropes of the art from my guru Perumal, a cobbler," says Jagateesan.

Later, he started coaching government school children, aiming to improve their lives through this discipline.

Currently, 50 students are learning silambam under Jagateesan, with 30 having completed their training and turned professional. Many of his students have competed at both national and international

levels, winning championships.

In 2024, his students set a record by walking for three hours with sticks tied to their legs.

"My students have gone to tournaments in Malaysia and Thailand, where they have won gold medals. These victories help them gain admission in colleges through sports quotas," Jagateesan says.

For students who want to participate in international tourna-



ments but cannot afford the travel costs, Jagateesan covers the expenses. "It is a small investment for their future academic success. I plan to continue coaching as long as I can."

While Jagateesan is happy with the accolades his students have brought him, his journey to continue teaching this art form has not

been easy. Finding a good venue has been a challenge.

Initially, classes were held at the Chennai Corporation playground on Brodies Road, but due to the CMRL work to facilitate a station, the classes were moved to a corporation school. However, that venue soon became unavailable as the school was hesitant to allow outsiders. Now, Jagateesan and his students are searching for a new space to continue their training. "I prefer a ground or a park in and around Mylapore where I don't have to pay any fee, and many other deserving students will get to know about this martial art form," says the 70-year-old who is a familiar figure in the neighbourhood. As a run-up to the record event, students were seen practising at the interconnected roads in RA Puram with the members of the resident association giving them all support.

For more details, contact Jagateesan at 97908 47537.

Learn tailoring and get help to start your own enterprise

This is the fourth free skill development centre of its kind under the Rotary brand

Rotary International District 3234, in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Madras and the Women Empowerment, Economic Development, and Vocational Services Team and Access Healthcare, has inaugurated the Rotary Skill Development Centre at Dr. MGR Janki College of Arts and Science for Women. Here, women will be provided free training in tailoring.

The new centre will offer a 120-hour tailoring course, spread across three

months, to women from all walks of life, in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Government's Skill Development Department. The centre will also facilitate women in finding tailoring jobs or launching their own tailoring units by distributing power sewing machines free of cost. According to a release, Rotary International District 3234 is planning to train 1,500 women every year through its four skill development centres (the other centres are in Selai-

ur, Sembakkam and Mylapore).

Dha Velu, MLA of Mylapore, and Rtn. N.S. Saravanan, District Governor of RID 3234, inaugurated the skill development centre. Close to 200 power sewing machines, worth about ₹ 20 lakhs, were distributed to women trained at Rotary's existing skill development centres in Selaiyur, Sembakkam, and Mylapore, added the release.

For details, call 9840033802



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▼ Snapshots of the Jumble Sale from its previous editions.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Sustainability exercises can scream their heads off. A typical case: massive bio-mining machinery massed up at a landfill to segregate and process legacy waste. You can tell what is going on from a mile away.

Sustainability exercises can also speak in soft tones, the message gently dropped into an ear here and another there. A typical case: a guild of volunteers sharing a club affiliation squirrelling away pre-loved items (that have turned white elephants to their owners) and, finally, quietly placing them in fresh pairs of hands. In rare instances, the whispered syllables of this unobtrusive initiative would multiply and assume the intensity of a scream.

Hold that idea in the crook of your palm and flesh it out with a name, an address, a date, people on both sides of the poverty line, wants and needs, and add a snippet of a back story to it, and the picture is inviting. On January 5, Thillayadi Valliammai Madhar Sangam would have dusted off a vast collection of items, painfully accumulated over months knocking on many doors, and line them up for a sale, a Jumble Sale. In a zeitgeisty twist to the Robinhood legend, this sale would declutter the lives of the haves and fill those of the have-nots with essential items, creating a win-win situation. These volunteers are ruling out the alternative for these pre-owned items: slipping into the maw of a landfill. Initiatives of this kind might be moving inchmeal, their results hard to see, let alone quantify, but their significance cannot be pooh-poohed: they reduce landfills even before they are formed.

It is the third edition of the Jumble Sale by Thillaiyadi Valliammai

Madhar Sangam, a ladies club with coordinates in Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvannmiyur.

Jayanthi Premchander, a member of this ladies club and one of the masterminds behind the Jumble Sale, explains how, between the first and the third edition, the initiative has grown in stature and reach and acquired something approaching a scream.

In its second edition, when the sale was scheduled to start at 2 p.m., the crowd had already begun to form by 1:30 p.m., eagerly standing outside like a tide waiting to crest.

“We were all a bit anxious,” Jayanthi recalls with a chuckle. “We had no idea that so many people would show up. It was like a flood-gate opening!”

That crowd signalled the transformation of what began as a modest attempt to declutter a few homes into a full-fledged community tradition, one that attracts families from near and far.

What to expect from the Jumble Sale?

It is the kind of event where pre-loved clothes, well-worn toys, and gently used household goods, including furniture, find a new home. It plants on the faces of donors the warm glow of knowing their discarded treasures will be cherished once more, and places within easy reach of the underprivileged, items they would think multiple times before buying spanking new off the shelves of a showroom.

A sale with a social focus

Today, a Jumble Sale at Valmiki Nagar in Thiruvannmiyur would give a modern twist to the Robinhood legend by decluttering the lives of the haves to fill those of the have-nots with essential items, creating a win-win situation

The cost factor

It is close to free, not entirely free – a sale presupposes transfer of currency, but the figures are on the lower side.

The pricing is as accessible as it gets: 20, 50, and 100 rupees. And, of course, there are those irresistible 10 rupee items – things that may not have much value in the commercial market but are worth their weight in gold for the right person.

“We keep it simple,” says Jayanthi, “100 for the really great items, and then we have categories for 50, 20, and even 10 rupees.” All the three editions of the Jumble Sale put together, the maximum price for an item stays pegged at ₹500. A mini fridge went for that price in the second edition.

Each item is meticulously cate-

gorised and sorted into boxes. As these items are received from donor hands, there is no telling what would make it to the “marketplace” until they do. Some items would not “fit” into those boxes.

If a high-ticket item, something based on electronics and of intricate workmanship comes through, the price may be adjusted, but the philosophy remains: keep it affordable, keep it real. Well-maintained furniture can also fall outside the boxes.

“The pricing is part of the charm,” Jayanthi says. “No one leaves empty-handed. It is about making sure everyone can find something that fits both their budget and their heart.”

The Jumble Sale is a day’s affair, spanning just hours – but considerable forethought goes into how

The origins of the Jumble Sale

In 2022, the committee at the helm of affairs at Thillayadi Valliammai Madhar Sangam were brainstorming over organising a sale (possibly, a garage sale) that would help residents of Valmiki Nagar find a fair price for their used goods. They backtracked on the idea when it became clear that such an initiative would cannibalise on an existing one, something that was running like a well-oiled machine. It was “Marketplace”, established under the Sangam’s entrepreneurship wing, which allowed members to sell even items as expensive as smartphones, pre-owned. They decided a sale with a social focus would be a better idea, and thus was born the Jumble Sale on 2 April, 2023, with the now well-entrenched philosophy of decluttering the homes of the haves and filling those of the have-nots with essential items.

The second edition of the Sale took place on 7 January, 2024.

A dedicated space

Thillaiyadi Valliammai Madhar Sangam operates from a dedicated room in what is called “Valmiki Nagar club area”, earmarked as a community space when plots were established and the locality was born decades ago.

The Sangam is focussed on women’s empowerment and charity-related initiatives.

Among the notable activities the space witnesses are: Hosting

Entrepreneur’s Day to support local entrepreneurs such as bakers and artisans in Valmiki Nagar; organising charitable events, including distribution of funds and materials to various organisations; conducting meet-and-greet events with Urbaser community members, accompanied by gift distributions; and organising Christmas and Navratri celebrations to bring the community together.

and it would be all hands on deck when the Sale is in the works. The efforts are steered by a core group which includes the president (Rama), secretary (Lalitha) and treasurer (Vaidehi).

Even unsold items end up finding their unique purposes. They are donated to local charities, ensuring that nothing goes to waste and everything finds its place, a place of utility. The funds raised from the sale are channelled into environmental and community projects, creating a positive ripple effect that stretches far beyond the day of the sale. “In that sense, the sale keeps giving, even after it is over,” remarks Jayanthi.

The Jumble Sale is made known largely by word of mouth. “We make a poster, and then every member of the ladies’ club is on a mission,” says Jayanthi. “We tell everyone – our housekeepers, the drivers, security, the local vendors. The message just keeps spreading.”

In the digital age, word-of-mouth communication has an extended meaning. It is about loosely framed information getting circulated in social media. By the time the Sale starts, the digital poster is a “tattered sheet” having gone through a wringer of forwarding on social media. Sustainability circles present on social media serve as repeater stations amplifying the message to those near and far.

This approach ensures that the sale’s reach extends far beyond the immediate neighbourhood, drawing people from various corners of

the metro. Some even make it a point to tell their friends and family to participate in the sale as a donor or a buyer, even if they are themselves miles away.

A forward button on the poster shared in social media does the trick. It is as though the Jumble Sale has become a whispered secret passed along from one person to the next. Jayanthi says the buyers largely come from the fishermen hamlets nearby – lining the Kottivakkam, Pallavakkam and Neelangarai coast. The donors come from everywhere, even from neighbourhoods as distant as Egmore, Nungambakkam and Anna Nagar.

A philosophical underpinning

“We often treat waste as if it were the final chapter, but this sale proves that even the most forgotten things can have a new beginning,” says Jayanthi and notes that the Sale is underpinned by the 3Rs philosophy: reuse, recycle and repurpose. “This is not just about shifting used items from one hand to another,” she muses. “It is about transforming how we see the things we hold dear and the things we toss aside.”

Jayanthi says the Jumble Sale sends out a message and an invitation. In a world where fast fashion and disposable goods reign supreme, it is an invitation to rediscover the true value of the things we already own. Jayanthi sums it up thus: we underestimate the value of what we have, and when it loses its relevance in our lives, what it can mean to others.

The inclusivity factor

In terms of accessibility, crowd-pulling events such as the annual book fair and flower show must go beyond the obvious



LIFFY THOMAS

The ongoing Chennai Flower Show at Semmozhi Poonga has raised the bar in terms of accessibility. Permanent ramps have been installed offering the physically challenged a closer view of the floral displays.

The 10-feet wide pathway ensures those dependent on wheelchairs have a smooth access to the sprawling botanical garden, says a senior official of State Horticulture and Plantation Crops Department. Currently, 10 wheelchairs are provided at the entry point for people to access it and this count will be increased on the weekends and during Pongal holidays when more people are expected to visit the show.

Likewise, the annual book fair being organised by the Booksellers and Publishers Association of South India (BAPASI) at YMCA Grounds in Nandanam has increased its count of wheelchairs this time.

While providing wheelchairs is among the common ways to support people who have mobility issues, there is a need to make such crowd-pulling events inclusive to more sections of people regardless of their physical chal-

lenges and hidden disabilities.

Even events that tick a range of accessibility boxes – wide entry and exit points for wheelchairs, accessible washrooms, tactile and visual orientation

▼ Wheelchairs kept near a stall at the Chennai Book Fair

map and signages (some of the features mandated in the Right to Persons with Disability Act) – still has a long way to go.

During pre-pandemic years, for three continuous years, HelpAge India was part of the trade fair held at Island Grounds. It provided wheelchairs and also engaged volunteers to take the user across the venue.

The initiative however petered out due to a variety of reasons including lack of volunteers and the condition of the surface at the venue making it a challenge to operate the wheelchair.

Smitha Sadasivan, member of Disability Rights Alliance, says the accessibility was poor at the Food Festival held at Marina last month. The ticket counter was too narrow for her wheelchair to enter. Luckily, as she was

at the venue before the crowd turned up, Smitha spoke to the staff behind the counter to arrange tickets for her group.

“Providing accessibility features is one thing and making that information available is another,” says Smitha. Citing the example of the Chess Olympiad, where they had taken a group of youngsters, she says the organisers had promised it to be accessible for the differently abled but they were disappointed as the venue had many shortcomings including a steep ramp at some places and none at other places.

Smitha says any public event must have a help desk where anyone irrespective of disabilities and gender must be able to seek the use of a wheelchair or have any other doubts clarified. “The inclusivity factors should be in the agenda right from the planning stage and there must be concerted efforts towards achieving that,” adds Smitha.



Humour across barriers

How stand-up comedian Arun Sriram makes his shows inclusive

Arun Sriram, a chartered accountant turned stand-up comedian from Chennai, makes his shows as inclusive as possible. Arun specialises in sunshine humour, and has an Indian Sign Language Interpreter at his shows or chooses venues that are friendly to wheelchair users.

He reaches out to the differently-abled community first and if there is response a sign lan-

guage interpreter is called over.

“My thinking is: let me build the supply first then demand will come. But I have not seen the demand coming yet. I am on a mission to make inclusion commonplace in performing arts,” says Arun who resides in Bengaluru.

At Offbeat in R.A. Pura, he had sign language interpreter A. Raja perform while he



took the audience through many hilarious moments.

“I have done many corporate events including one for Unilever, which had a sign language interpreter,” says Arun.

An ensemble event at Museum of Possibilities was another of his recent events.

“I make it a point that the shows with ISL access are open to all. That is when it is truly inclusive,” he says, adding that wheelchair user Madhavi Lata has been his inspiration. Elements to boost inclusivity include making sure all reels have subtitles and all images on Facebook and Instagram have Alt Text.

A close look at milk packaging

Is introducing an alternative to the plastic pouch a tenable solution?

LIFFY THOMAS

Recently, National Green Tribunal directed Aavin to explore the possibility of using alternatives to single-use plastics in milk packaging. This was brought up after huge quantities of plastic waste had accumulated at Aavin's Ambattur dairy unit.

Asking the Tamil Nadu Diary Co-Operative to explore the possibility of using reusable plastics or glass bottles for milk packaging is a great move, but these suggestions might not win favour because of economical or logistical hurdles. There is no hope to be found in the experiences of other states.

In 2018, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike made a suggestion to the Karnataka Milk Federation to find alternatives to the plastic packaging of its Nandini milk. The effort did not take off.

To reduce plastic use, the Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) mooted 'Milk ATMs' where people can come with containers to buy milk. The initiative remained on paper.

Last year, students and faculty of Rathinam College of Arts and Science in Coimbatore did a study (with a small sample size) on impact of using milk pouches with special reference to Aavin consumers in the district. Consumers preferred carton to glass bottle as the former was lightweight, inexpensive and shatter-proof. The respondents perceived milk pouches as convenient and affordable but expressed concerns about their environmental impact.

Hand over milk covers to recyclers/citizen groups dealing with dry waste.

Do not snip off the corners of the milk cover to empty the contents. Disposing of the tiny pieces becomes an additional challenge.

Durable and recyclable

T.K. Bandopadhyay, Technical Director and ENVIS Coordinator at Indian Centre for Plastics in the Environment (ICPE) in Mumbai, says their studies have shown that plastic packaging of milk in sachets is so far the best.

He says India is the largest milk producer in the world and its packaging model is one of the contributory factors. "All grades of plastics cannot be used for packaging of milk. A particular grade of LDPE (low density polyethylene) is used and this is by far the most environment-friendly and used in most dairies in India because of its quality, cost effectiveness and ease in transportation," says Bandopadhyay.

The plastic milk pouches sent for recycling are used for a variety of purposes, especially in making tarpaulins. Bandopadhyay says the situation in India is way different from what exists in the West.

"In the United Kingdom plastic bottles are used for milk distribution but the consumption is considerably lower than in India and the distribution pattern is also different," he explains. In comparison with plastic bottles, glass bottles are more energy-efficient but washing them is a challenge, he says.

LDPE plastics if not disposed of properly can clog drainage systems, leading to flooding and environmental damage. But in most cities, milk pouches are collected by recyclers and rag pickers for it offers high recyclable value.

There is also the debate on switching to sustainable packaging materials with studies showing that bio-degradable plastic is costly, has poor functionality and has higher carbon footprints.

Role of consumers

Green activists say pushing for extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes, creating awareness among public and offering incentives for sustainable packaging practices are some ways to check the harm these plastics are causing the environment.

Like Himani Datar, the Chennai representative of the Milk Bag Project who collects washed and dried milk covers from citizens, stores them at her house in Anna Nagar before they are sent to the recyclers, we need more eco-conscious citizens. We also need more recyclers coming forward to set up decentralised collection and processing infrastructure for milk pouches.

Aavin

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Biogas plant at Corporation school in Adyar

The facility was established by ROKA with the support of EFI and Avris

On January 3, 2025, at the Chennai High School in Kamaraj Avenue, Adyar, two batches of students – one from a higher, and the other from a lower grade – had a rather uncanny learning experience. The lesson does not figure in their programme of study, but is crucial to their development as responsible citizens. They had a front-row view of a bio-gas plant (named 'Vayu'), whose wraps were off just moments ago. They acquired information about its functioning. In the days to come, batches of students from other grades would have the plant's functioning decoded for them as well.

Residents of Kasturbanagar Association (ROKA) has established the bio-gas plant with Environmental Foundation of India (EFI) picking up the tab, much of it; and Avris Environment Technologies, the company that installed the bio-gas unit, meeting a part of the expenditure as its CSR outreach.

Arun Krishnamurthy, founder of EFI, remarks: "Community level conservation through collaboration is what we aim to achieve through this project. Localised action for cleaner, greener tomorrow."

Food circulates around the campus three times every working day: breakfast being brought in for the 200-plus students from a community kitchen and lunch and snacks being made at a kitchen in situ. The food waste collected from the campus would fuel the production of biogas that would in turn "fire" the

kitchen on the campus.

"The biogas plant can handle 75kg of food waste in a 24-hour time frame of food waste to biogas conversion," says ROKA secretary Janani Venkitesh.

It is a virtuous cycle: food produced in the kitchen going back to

work that same kitchen. For the students, it is a practical demonstration of a sustainable practice – an addition to the other green processes they see being illustrated on the campus.

ROKA's engagement with the school has to be retraced to 2021;

this association has borne a variety of fruits. A kitchen garden established by ROKA at the school that students get to tend to. ROKA also imparts environment education to these students on a voluntary basis, teaching them about plastic waste management and compost-

During the inauguration.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



ing, among other things.

According to information shared by ROKA, "the ideation and permissions started when Sharanya Ari was the DC -Education, Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and it was decided to have this as a pilot, and implement the same at various other schools and community kitchens run by corporation." The biogas plant was inaugurated by Dr. T.G. Srinivasan, Health Education Officer, GCC and AEO R. Sumathy. The event was represented by officials from Zone 13 of GCC, representatives from UNICEF, UNDP, INDIA NGO & CHEER. Environment enthusiasts from other communities, Urbaser Sumeet officials and Kasturbanagar residents were supportive of this initiative and present during the inauguration, the ROKA communication adds.

AGUA Gifting Smiles spreads joy and hope to thousands of children

This year, Gifting Smiles, an annual flagship initiative of AGUA Women Foundation, witnessed over 800 volunteers working tirelessly to bring smiles to thousands of children aged 1 to 12. The journey began in October – hours spent collecting funds, choosing toys with care and wrapping them with love. By December, these gifts of joy made their way to the hands of children who could not believe the treasures they were receiving, says a press release.

This year, Gifting Smiles crossed borders: after covering Tamil Nadu, it crossed borders, state and international.

Volunteers in Bangalore and Mumbai reached children in tribal communities such as Adivasipada, Bhattipada, Ambivili, and Titwala. The initiative crossed over to the United States, with Rohit Bharadwaj, AGUA's youngest volunteer, spearheading the effort in New Jersey. In Chennai, the team brought smiles to children in fishing communities across Panaiyur, Nainarkuppam, Kanathur, Karikattukuppam, Kovalam, Semmancheri, Nemmeli, Sulur and Pattipulam. They



Two-day programme opens avenues in fashion for tribal welfare students

This is the second edition of the initiative by Tribal Welfare Department and National Institute of Fashion Technology

Close to 150 tribal welfare students from Tamil Nadu got an exposure to careers in fashion and design at National Institute of Fashion Technology - Chennai recently. A two-day residential fashion awareness programme was initiated for them by the Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Principles of design, hands-on workshop on drawing skills, colour theory, personality development, storytelling exercises and problem solving activities were some of the programmes that were covered during the two days.

Class XI and XII students who had an inclination to-

wards a career in design and fashion were picked by the Department for this programme which is in its second year. Last year, 100 students were part of this residential programme.

"We are planning to handhold at least 10 students as we see huge potential in them provided the Tribal Welfare Department initiates it for us," says Sridhar Amanchy, associate professor, Department of Knitwear Design, NIFT.

After last year's awareness programme, 20 students secured admission at various campuses of NIFT with two currently pursuing a course in Chennai, he says.



Construction material left on CIT Colony 2nd Main Road

RAJALAKSHMI V.

Walkers vie for space here

Pedestrian pathways, originally intended for public use, are now being taken over by street vendors and for construction activities. This encroachment creates significant inconvenience for pedestrians, forcing them to walk on the road.

This issue is widespread across Chennai, especially in R.A. Puram.

In many streets of R.A. Puram, food vendors occupy the full width of the pavements. In First Main Road and Fourth Main Road, pedestrians often struggle to navigate the crowded areas. "At the entrance to 4th Main Road from Greenways Road, the entire width pavement is taken over by street-

side commerce. The area often becomes crowded, making it nearly impossible to walk or even enter the street. Customers wash their hands and spit on the pavement, creating a messy and unhygienic environment. After the day's work, leftover food and batter are dumped in the stormwater drains. Bandicoots are attracted to the leftover food and end up digging up the roads," a resident describes.

When contacted, the Sanitation

Officer of the area assured that the issue would be addressed promptly.

In CIT Colony, construction materials are often stored on the pavements along 2nd Main Road, and the pavements themselves are in poor condition, with broken concrete slabs and dislodged granite, forcing pedestrians to walk on the road.

Ramdas Naik, secretary of the CIT Colony Residents Association, says: "The pavements in our

Pavements on a few roads in RA Puram and CIT Colony have been taken over by construction materials and vendors

colony, which were built nearly a decade ago, are in terrible shape. Currently, there are seven ongoing construction projects, and many of them occupy the pavements or even spill onto the road. This forces pedestrians, including elderly residents, to walk in the middle of the street, creating dangerous situations, especially when vehicles are parked. The construction site on 2nd Main Road, where two buildings are being developed next to each other, has completely blocked a section of the pavement with construction materials. There are also two

mobile toilets placed on the pavement, further restricting space."

Residents have contacted the Assistant Engineer, GCC, but no action was taken.

Rajaram S, treasurer of the CIT Colony Residents Association, says: "With new buildings coming up, the builders frequently use the pavements to create slopes for their entrances. This has become a major obstacle, particularly for elderly residents who use wheelchairs. The pavements near the cross junction are also in disrepair, making them unsafe and difficult to use."

Employees union's gift to the visually challenged



Canara Bank Employees' Union, in association with the All India Confederation of the Blind, recently handed over a desktop computer and 100 seven-piece folding canes to visually impaired persons.

R. Karthik, joint general secretary and state secretary of Tamil Nadu Nadu, said that such an assistance was being provided with funds mobilised by way of additional contribution of one month's subscription from the members of the Union from across the country.

This year programmes were conducted in Tamil Nadu alone for a sum of ₹2 lakh.

K. Srikrishna, treasurer, AIBEA said that various programmes have been conducted by AIBEA which is the parent organisation for Canara Bank Employees' Union.

Muthuselvi, vice-president, All India Confederation of the Blind, thanked the Union for its timely help. She said canes get worn out quickly and needed replacing often.

Welcoming 2025 with a message



Students of Sri Kanyaka Parameswari Arts and Science College for Women in George Town took part in a face painting competition with a social message to welcome the New Year. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shirts and caps distributed

Sree Kannan Bhajan Mandali and Nama Sangeerthana Sath Sangh in association with Rajan Eye Care Hospital distributed T shirts and caps to football players in the age group of 10 to 20. Other gifts were also distributed to the players.

According to a press release, the event was held to mark the 69th year of the forum.

