

T. NAGAR

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



Small efforts add up: an illustration from KK Nagar

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

This is true of any group that has a sharply-etched mission and seeks to fulfill it with extravagant commitment. The group should be kept impervious to outside influences that could dilute the mission, and sufficiently ajar to let in those that can further its scope.

KK Nagar Friends Helping Group enrolled in this school of thought and seems to have passed the tests with flying colours.

D. Sivakumar, founder and prime mover behind KK Nagar Friends Helping Group, notes only those that have a "helping hand" to show can be part of its WhatsApp group. The prerequisite for membership is an effort in the past to have promoted an act of mercy.

Little wonder that its WhatsApp group is sparsely populated – 25 members, according to Sivakumar.

And the group has been in existence since the early part of the pandemic – in 2020 – formed essentially to address the problem of hunger. "For one month, we provided lunch to 65 frontline workers, preparing the food ourselves," says Sivakumar.

Members of the group – largely residents of KK Nagar and sur-



Snapshots of interventions by the group.
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

rounding areas – pass the hat around and mobilise funds whenever an act of mercy needs to be performed. Besides the residents, Sivakumar notes, the group looks in other directions where help can arrive to activate a planned charitable act.

Sivakumar is a member of the Rotary Club of Alandur; and he observes that contribution from Rotarians is immense.

There are eight balwadi schools in and around KK Nagar, and the group has mobilised funds to provide amenities whenever a need for them arose.

"We have provided television sets to five of those Balwadi schools; water purifiers to four of

them; and we have 20 chairs each to four balwadi schools and are in the process of reaching the same number of chairs to other four," explains Sivakumar.

Individuals with needs are also on this group's radar.

Here are examples.

"In a single-parent family, where the lady has to take care of three children, one child had undergone heart surgery. There was no cot in the house for the child to lie down on. We collected money to buy a cot and a fan and also enable them to purchase medicine," he says.

Two covered pushcarts, meant for ironwallahs to ply their trade – one in West KK Nagar (Jeevanandam Street) and the other in neighbouring Virugambakkam – bear the name of this collective, "KK Nagar Friends Helping Group". Sivakumar volunteers information about them: the pushcart in KK Nagar was repaired and returned to the ironwallah; and the one in Virugambakkam bought afresh for the ironwallah.



THE GROUND THAT REMAINS TO BE COVERED

As Area Sabha meetings are set to unfold tomorrow across Chennai, a look at what needs to be done to make them more participatory **P5**

READERS WRITE

A street goes 'nameless'

R.L. NARULA

This nameboard of Subbarao Avenue at its entrance (off College Road in Nungambakkam) was removed eight months ago as it was in the way of a civic work – carrying out repairs on sewage channels.

Though the work appears to have been completed, the will to plant the nameboard in the spot it was removed from.

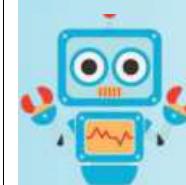
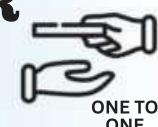
Due to the lack of a nameboard, many a time visitors/taxi drivers miss the turning, ending up doing a meandering drive via Haddows Road to get back to this spot. The nameboard has to come back.

(R.L.Narula is a resident of Third Street, Subbarao Avenue)



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On uncertain ground at Egmore museum



In the recesses of the Egmore museum, on the northern and eastern sides, a facility integral to the road infrastructure and serving multiple purposes wears a gap-toothed grin. From its outward presentation, one can see this facility serves as a pavement above and at least a couple of things below -- a conduit for utility cables; and when it rains, a stormwater drain. Slabs, either missing or chewed off with rusty steel rods exposed much like a prey picked clean to the bone by a Peregrine falcon, appear with disturbing regularity. As the facility winds its way, it finds itself in the space right outside the Museum theatre, a well-hoofed section on account of events. Though the carriageway is usually free of vehicular traffic and anyone on shank's mare can walk down that path, during crowded times, which can result from cars being parked on the carriageway, pedestrians would have a need for this pavement. Events are known to stretch on well into the evening, and during the late hours, these gaps can be missed until one's feet has sunk into one. The PWD, which bears the responsibility of maintaining the infrastructure at the Museum, has an office parked on the premises. The images were taken on April 8, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

Key road in Guindy unsafe for pedestrians



PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B

At Olympia Road, off Jawaharlal Nehru Main Road in Guindy, pedestrians have a sense of being unwelcome outsiders.

Broken and sometimes marked by elevated manholes, the pavements – essentially stormwater drains doubling as footpaths – not only fail to serve pedestrians, but threaten to trip them.

Construction material and wares and equipment of commer-

cial establishments have their share of the pavement. Metro rail work at the junction of Army Road and Mount - Poonamallee High Road in Nandambakkam has caused vehicular traffic to be diverted through Olympia Road, pushing pedestrians further to the sidelines.

Besides, the road is battered and water keeps leaking from underground pipes.

Text by L. Kanthimathi



Air-conditioned enclosures at Alandur bus stop in a sorry state

The three air-conditioned enclosures at Alandur metro rail station bus stop (the one meant for buses toward Kathipara flyover) in Asargana hardly serve any purpose.

Without seats and air-conditioners, the facilities, set up in 2015, are not in an usable state any longer.

According to commuters and auto-rickshaw drivers at the bus stop, it must be close to seven years since the AC facilities fell into a derelict state.

Commuters also complain of lack of seats outside the AC enclosures at the bus stop.

"Alandur metro rail station is an interchange station as trains of blue line and green line corridors intersect. Given the importance of this station, the bus stops near the station ought to keep with it," says a commuter.



The AC enclosures at the Alandur bus stop. The images were taken on April 10.
PHOTOS:
VELANKANNI RAJ B



STATUS REPORT

Subways wait for mending exercise



In its budget for the financial year 2025-2026, Greater Chennai Corporation announced ₹14.40 crore for 18 vehicular subways. From the GCC's website, it is learnt that the fund will be used for works pertaining to flood mitigation, installation of lights and beautification with painting (artwork). The public are of the view that the aesthetic component should take a back seat as the painting (artwork) keeps fading. The artworks at Nelson Manickam Road subway is an example. They also pointed out the carriageway at the subway should be the point of focus. The public also drew attention to the carriageways of the subways at Nelson Manickam Road and Duraisamy Road.

The subways at Nelson Manickam Road and Duraisamy Road (left bottom)
PHOTOS: AKHILA EASWARAN & VELANKANNI RAJ B

READERS WRITE

'Garbage burning goes unchecked in Noombal'

At Erikarai Road in Noombal, garbage pile-ups on vacant land are regularly set to fire.

Greater Chennai Corporation and Thiruverkaadu Municipality shift the blame to each other. The parcels of vacant land fall under the limits of GCC and the road under Thiruverkaadu Municipality. Door-to-door garbage collection of waste does happen here.

P Senthil Kumar
Iyppanthangal



'GCC should consider a battery-driven vehicle in skywalk'



Inaugurated in May 2023, the 570-metre-long skywalk connecting T. Nagar bus terminus and Mambalam railway station is a very useful facility.

Built along Madley Road and Railway Market Road, the facility spares pedestrians the trouble of the walking through the congested streets, especially Ranganthan Street and Natesan Street.

However, Greater Chennai Corporation should consider operation of a small-size battery-driven vehicle factoring in the difficulty experienced by senior citizens, expectant mothers and differently-abled persons in covering the distance.

The operation of one such vehicle would suffice. The authorities should do the needful.

V. Johan Dhanakumar
Choolaimedu

'Buses to Broadway and Tambaram should halt at Ashok Nagar metro rail station bus stop'

Metropolitan Transport Corporation's bus services which take a right turn at the Ashok Pillar junction do not halt at Ashok Nagar metro railway station bus-stop while proceeding from K K Nagar to ESI Hospital.

In other words, those services which go to Broadway via West Mambalam (11G, 12G and 12M) and the ones to Tambaram via Jhafferkhanpet (70C and 70G) do not halt at the Ashok Nagar metro railway station bus-stop.

This arrangement is probably in place in consideration of the inconvenience MTC drivers could face while changing the lane from left (where the railway station stop is located) to the right by manoeuvring through a congested traffic.

But MTC should make a sincere attempt to ensure halting of these buses considering the convenience faced by commuters.

E. Ramesh,
Jafferkhanpet

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An enhanced ‘service’ on Palm Sunday

Today at Risen Christ Church, Palm Sunday, which marks the beginning of the Holy Week, will accommodate a blood donation camp. This church has a culture of organising organ donation awareness sessions and similar exercises during this time of year. And the Perambur branch of the All India Anglo Indian Association is working round the clock to honour a home-grown Eastertide tradition marked by the spirit of giving

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

For the past 15 years, at Risen Christ Church on Paper Mills Road in Perambur (near Perambur), the Holy Week services (beginning with Palm Sunday and culminating in Easter Sunday) have been long-drawn-out processes, the extended hours providing congregants with an opportunity to put into action what they heard preached from the pulpit. It is about making a donation to the needy – someone up against a nervously ticking clock, chewing their nails off waiting for a donor. It is not donation straight out of a cheque book. The donor and their donation are organically linked.

This year, on Palm Sunday (April 13), Risen Christ Church (Which comes under the Arch Diocese of Madras Mylapore) is partnering with ESI Hospital to host its annual blood donation camp, and church expects a turnout of 250 to 300 donors. The blood donation camp is scheduled between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. The main eligibility criterion: healthy individuals aged between 18 and 60. Meeting this criterion, anyone can participate



in the camp.

The church has created a benchmark in terms of social outreach by promoting organ donation among congregants. In 2017, when an organ donation awareness talk by Mohan Foundation was squeezed into an extended Good Friday service. Reportedly, the initiative sparked interest among parishioners, causing many of them to step forward and sign up for it. It ushered in a culture of openness to organ dona-

tion, and successive parish priests have kept this interest alive.

Father M. Arulraj, who took over as parish priest of the church in June, 2017, has taken a personal interest in eye donation, often reminding his congregation: “The eyes are the lamp of the body. What better way to let your light shine than by giving someone the gift of sight?” Outside the church, a board proudly displays the names of those who have pledged their eyes – a quiet yet powerful



reminder of selflessness.

Why host these events during Holy Week?

Ronald Victor, vice president of Risen Christ Youth, explains why. “Easter is about hope, sacrifice, and renewal. It is a reminder that we are here not just to receive but to give. This is our way of honouring that message.” Ronald has been associated with Risen Christ Youth since he finished school, and every year, he has been watching the community reach newer heights of generosity.

Over the years, the church has accommodated newer forms of generosity as well: besides the annual blood donation camp, it has been organising general health camps, eye screenings, dental check-ups and awareness sessions – all rooted in the belief that faith is best expressed through service.

Ronald observes that this year, the word about the Palm Sunday blood donation has spread far and wide – through schools, churches and social media. The hope is that this Holy Week, more people will step forward – not just to give blood but to embrace the spirit of giving in whatever way they can.

Ensuring no one feels forgotten

Easter (or any festival, for that matter) has its time-honoured traditions. The Perambur branch of the All India Anglo Indian Association has appended a home-grown tradition to that Eastertide lineup and steadfastly persisted with it, even in those years when its coffers looked emaciated and, understandably, begrimed support.

This branch plays the Easter Bunny to families within the Anglo-Indian fold that would do with some kindness.

“Easter is a time of giving, but the scale depends on what we receive,” says Penelope Mckertich, president of the Perambur branch.

It does not want to have anyone forgotten. Whether it is 150 families or 350, whether the donations are plentiful or paltry, they ensure that those who need help stay helped.

A bag of groceries, a small sum of money, a hamper filled with essentials – nothing is too small when given with intention. And here is the most beautiful part of it: the younger generation is stepping forward, hearts sparkling red and large with kindness and hands calloused with charity work. The youngsters pack food, sort donations and make sure the proffered succour reaches the right people.

(In Chennai, the All India Anglo Indian Association has seven branches, and Penelope notes that all “the seven branches do whatever is possible within their limits for the less fortunate on the eve of Easter.”)

This focus is kept sharp, and it does not matter that Insta-worthy frames are on the lower side. This group in Perambur might not throw grand feasts or organise vibrant celebrations during Easter, but its quiet act of kindness, though not quite making it to the radar of wider public attention, has left an indelible imprint on the minds of those who benefitted from it, deepening community bonds.

The ebb and flow of membership is inevitable. Some families move on to other parts of the city or country, some others cross oceans in search of new beginnings. But the Perambur branch remains steadfast in its purpose.

“We do what we can, with whatever we have,” Penelope avers.

And often, that is more than enough to make a difference.

During a previous edition of the blood donation drive at Risen Christ Church; and (below) beneficiaries of the 2024 edition of the initiative by Perambur branch of All India Anglo Indian Association. The gift hampers were handed out to the beneficiaries a day before Easter.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

GOVERNANCE



An Area Sabha meeting at Anna Nagar West J Block in January 2024.
FILE PHOTO: VEDHAN M

The ground that remains to be covered

As Area Sabha meetings are set to unfold tomorrow across Chennai, a look at what needs to be done to make them more participatory

LIFFY THOMAS

Preparations are under way at various wards for the Area Sabha meeting of April 14. Some councillors *The Hindu Downtown* spoke to say they received the message from Greater Chennai Corporation on April 9, which gave them some time to reach out to citizen groups and residents and inform them about the timings and venues. While many plan to use social media to publicise the meeting, some engage autorickshaws fitted out with loudspeakers.

Giving prior notice about the meetings was among demands made by civil society organisations such as Voice of People which has been pushing the State Government to initiate various steps to strengthen Area Sabhas and Ward

Sabhas.

Tamil Nadu introduced Area Sabhas for urban local bodies in 2022 and has earmarked four days – January 25, April 14, September 15 and December 10 every year – to conduct the meetings. As per the government order, each ward is divided into 10 areas and each of the city's councillors must organise meetings to address grievances of residents.

Now, how popular are these platforms? Were residents able to raise their concerns about issues

pertaining to their areas? Are these forums facilitating participatory planning? Are grievances being addressed?

Area Sabha meetings have a long way to go in the city, say organisations working in this area of grassroot democracy.

For the December Area Sabha meeting Nallor Vattam founder Balasubramanian, a resident of Choolaimedu, had to return home disappointed. "I visited the GCC Division Office in Aminjikarai to enquire about the meeting a day be-

fore the scheduled event, but left with little clarity. The next day I waited for over an hour for the organisers to arrive only to hear from them that they are not organising any meeting," says Balasubramanian, adding that awareness about Area Sabha meetings is low.

He says just like Grama Sabha meetings, Area Sabha meetings hold huge potential provided they are conducted as per norms.

Last year, Voice of People through an RTI found that most urban local governments including some zones of the Chennai Corporation had failed to conduct adequate Area Sabha meetings. None of them was maintaining information in the public domain.

Gurusaravanan M., chairperson, Institute of Grassroots Governance, says Grama Sabha meetings are a major force to strengthen democracy at village panchayat level; and a lot can be done through such meetings at Urban Local Bodies. "In a Grama Sabha, resolutions are passed and cannot be challenged by any court of law. Likewise, Area Sabha meetings must be given more power so that it gets more meaningful and there is active participation," says Gurusaravanan.

Organisations working to promote this participatory form of democracy point out that before all of that, more political will is required to strengthen Area and Ward Sabhas in Tamil Nadu.

A bilingual handbook

For those keen on knowing more about the functioning of Area Sabhas and Ward Committees, "People Participatory Platforms in TN Urban Local Governments" would be a valuable resource. The 30-page bilingual book published by Thannatchi and Voice of People with the support of Tambaram Makkal Kuzhu gives an introduction to Area Sabhas and Ward Committees. The guidebook also discusses the roles of citizens and the functioning of these sabhas.

"There are other platforms where grievances can be aired and so many people do not see a need for these sabhas. Just as government schemes are advertised, rights-based initiatives such as Area Sabhas should be promoted through multiple channels," says Gurusaravanan.

In a Facebook post of Voice of People, founder-member Charu Govindan urges people participating in the upcoming meeting to ensure accountability. "As this is the first quarter of this financial year, when participating in your Area Sabha be sure to ask your councillor to present their accounts for previous years," says the post.

When and where

If you have got no intimation about the meeting in your area then reach out to the local councillor. Their names and contact details are available on the GCC website <https://chennaicorporation.gov.in/gcc/council/council-address/>. The GCC division office in each ward should also provide details of the scheduled meeting.



Cemetery needs better maintenance



St. Mary's cemetery is overrun with unruly and unhelpful vegetation

R. RAVINDRAN

Snake in the grass" acquires a literal meaning at St. Mary's cemetery on St. Mary's Road. The land is overrun with vegetation and those visiting the tombs of their dear departed have complained of snakes wriggling away in the unchecked overgrowth.

The CCTV camera at the four-way junction right after one enters the cemetery is broken and non-functional. Without a camera in working order, there can be no tabs on movement of people within the premises. The meter box is burnt and of no use, for months together. Power is being taken from a street light. Though the gates are closed in the evening hours, a hole in the compound wall, raises the bogey of unauthorised entry into the cemetery. The hole is blocked by a cardboard which can be easily moved.



Photos:
R. Ravindran



PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B
St. Patrick's Cemetery smartened up

VELANKANNI RAJ B

Two hundred and seventeen years old, St. Patrick's Cemetery on Pallavan Salai wears its age well, partly because it has received a facelift.

Renovation efforts were launched under Father Prakash, who took charge as parish priest of Our Lady of Dolours Chapel on June 04, 2024.

Under the Archdiocese of Madras Mylapore, St. Patrick's Cemetery is attached to this chapel located on Pallavan Salai in Park Town.

Fr. Prakash lists out the improvements that contribute to the cemetery's neat and enhanced look: "An 800-foot-long compound wall and fencing have been constructed to ensure the cemetery's security and dignity. Over 100 trees and flower plants have been planted, and 15 solar-powered lights have been installed throughout to prevent untoward incidents; another 10 solar-powered lights will be fixed. Concrete pathways have been laid, and a new church bell has been installed to pay homage to the departed souls. Toilets and a washing area are currently under construction."

On the future plans for the cemetery, Fr. Prakash notes: "More solar lights and additional trees are on the cards."



Sports meet for special children sparks a 'Smile'

Children from 22 special schools take part in the meet

The second season of "Smile 2025", a sports meet for children with special needs, was organised by Rotary Club of United Chennai along with Rotary Club of Chennai Sneham at the District Sports Complex, SDAT,

Nehru Park in Egmore.

Over 275 children from 22 special schools in and around Chennai took part. In a release, chairman Imthiyas Basha M. said the sports meet was conducted for the second consecutive year by the club involving experienced physical education teachers and special

school coordinators.

Santhosh Kumar, president, Rotary Club of United Chennai, said the Club is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and sports meet for the special children will continue every year as a flagship project of the club.

Certificates and medals were

presented to all the participants.

Past District Governor, Rotary District 3233 N.Nandakumar; Ram.N.Ramamurthy; Devendran Damodaran, District Governor Elect and Preetha Mahesh, president, Rotary Club of Chennai Sneham were among those who took part.

An installation based on a celestial theme



A celebration of vision, unity, and new beginnings unfolded at the Don Bosco Auditorium, where the Rajasthan Cosmo Club (RCC) hosted a celestial-themed installation ceremony. The evening marked the induction of the new president, Manish Kumar Chowdhari along with his board of directors.

Executed by Sunil Kumar Munoth, installation director, the evening transported members into a cosmic journey filled with inspiration and possibilities. From the thematic décor to the seamless flow of the programme, every

element resonated with the power of shared dreams and boundless ambition, said a release. Manish Kumar Chowdhari unveiled the club's theme for the year, "Disha Wahi, Udaan Nayi", setting a visionary course for growth and excellence. A moment of cultural reverence was witnessed during the traditional *chandan tilak* ceremony performed by Hastimulla Chowdhari.

The event was further graced by esteemed honorary trustees Praveena Tolia and Gunvathsra Baid, along with senator members and past presidents.



vegetable rice with kurma, halwa and Kancheepuram idly were some of the other items that were also served.

The placement of the distribution point ensured devotees got recharged after the two-hour long procession.

Close to 12,000 devotees were served during the festival, added the release.

A refreshing break for devotees

Members of Mylapore Station Vigilance Committee along with Nithya Pushpa Kainkaryam forum, who offer flowers to God and Goddess at Arulmigu Kapaleeshwarar Temple, served devotees who took part in the Panguni Brahmotsavam with food, butter milk and drinking water. The volunteers used 30 litres of curd for preparing butter milk that was peppered with curry leaves, coriander leaves, ginger paste and *perungayam*, said a release. On days when huge crowds were expected, 100 litres of curd was used to make butter milk.

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A new leisure spot in Porur



Visitors at the recently opened Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Wetland Eco Park at Sri Ramachandra Medical College, Porur.
PHOTOS: VEDHAN M

Footpath work on Pantheon Road



The footpath on Pantheon Road on the side where Ashoka Hotel is located is being relaid, according to a GCC source connected with the work. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

Workshop on rocket making



Kola Saraswathi Vaishnav Senior Secondary School, Kilpauk, organised a workshop on miniature rocket models. According to a press release, the astronomy club of the school conducted the event. Students from class six to 12 took part.

Also, a graduation ceremony was held to those who completed the first level of "Junior Astronomers Programme." The chief guest of the event P. Nagaraj, Assistant Professor, Anna University, distributed the certificates. The event concluded with a star-gazing activity held at the school's ground, adds the release.

Workshop on organic farming

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on organic farming of vegetable crops on April 17. According to a press release, concepts such as soil nourishment, chemical-free methods of pest and disease management, and organic certification will be covered during the session.

The session will be held at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048



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