

TAMBARAM

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Free-flowing U-turn eases traffic flow



PHOTO: R. RAVINDRAN.

R. RAVINDRAN

In keeping with the trend of creating free flowing U-turns, the Tambaram City Police Commissionerate has created a two-sided U-turn on Tambaram Velachery Main Road in front of Balaji Dental College in Pallikaranai.

With this move, motorists can take a U-turn to proceed towards Velachery as well as in the opposite direction, which is towards Tambaram.

To facilitate this provision, they ensured a section of the median was broken down. Earlier, motorists had get to a signal nearby and wait there to take a U-turn.

This signal has been disabled for vehicular traffic and is now meant only for pedestrians to cross the road.

Pitted roads and a dreary ride



Residents of Perumbakkam point out that a few roads that provide quick connectivity to Perumbakkam and Pallikaranai regions are pitted and uneven, and on account of this reason, they are being avoided like the plague.

These roads are: Erikarai Street, Veerathamman Kovil Street, Oil Mill Road and Rice Mill Road in the Perumbakkam - Jalladiampet region. S. Nagen-dran, a trader, says, "Erikarai Street in Perumbakkam meets Veerathamman Kovil Street, but the former has been in a deplorable condition for months." On Veerathamman Street, the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board carried out digging last year for a sewage pipeline project. Cement patchwork was carried out after the work, but the road has gone from bad to worse. Outside a gated community on Veerathamman Street, no patchwork was carried out. Veerathamman Kovil Street, Oil Mill Road and Rice Mill Road come under Zone 15 of the Greater Chennai Corporation. Text by T.S. Atul Swaminathan



Veerathamman Kovil Street in Perumbakkam.
PHOTOS: R. RAVINDRAN AND T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN



During the meeting; and (below) a view of a garbage dumping spot.

FOMRRA discusses garbage-related problems with Thiruporur MLA

S.S. Balaji gives residents of OMR a patient hearing; the issue of garbage burning takes centre stage

BHUVANA RAJ

On February 15, local residents and representatives from the Thiruporur constituency gathered to discuss pressing garbage issues with MLA S.S. Balaji and BDO Thiruporur at PBEL City, OMR. Organised by FOMRRA, the meeting focused on the hazardous practice of burning mixed garbage in the Kelambakkam and Muttukadu areas.

PBEL CITY residents including Jebahar Deva Dhasan and Cannane voiced concerns over waste burning on the Muthukadu backwaters, which has led to intense smoke, disrupting outdoor activities for children and the elderly. Similar reports of illegal dumping, including construction debris and poultry waste, emerged from various neighborhoods, prompting calls for action.

Lalitha from Mantri Synergy criticised nearby institutions for burning waste, worsening air quality, while Priyadarshini from Wastewinn, a private waste management firm, highlighted issues caused by local jurisdiction boundaries affecting waste management.

Rakesh Ohri from FOMRRA requested the MLA to develop a comprehensive Solid Waste Management plan for Chengalpattu

district, rejecting incinerators due to their polluting nature. Vijay Kumar from Akshaya Today emphasised the need for a list of compliant vendors, Micro Composting Centres, and stricter enforcement against illegal dumping.

MLA S.S. Balaji acknowledged the concerns and emphasised the importance of a unified Solid Waste Management department for the district, urging collaboration among residents, RWAs, and local bodies for effective waste management solutions.

FOMRRA's Harsha Koda urged long-term, localised garbage solutions along OMR, emphasising composting for developing areas to avoid costly large-scale projects.

We need to deal with it sooner rather than later.

(Bhuvana Raj is a resident of OMR and part of FOMRRA)



Watch out for such bumps in Chromepet

Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board dug up Thiruneermalai Road between Chromepet and Thiruneermalai region to install drainage manholes. But, it never carried out a patchwork. Though, at points, the areas have been levelled with white and red sand and jelly stones, it is not helpful. The stretch lacks speed breakers, and untarred areas pose a risk to motorists and pedestrians. At Nagalkeni, red sand has been spread on the pitted area and not levelled, making driving difficult. The Board should relay the areas at the earliest, says B. Saravanan, a Thiruneermalai resident. Text: T.S. Atul Swaminathan.



You can be our volunteer-writer



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

'Barricade the transformer at Arkeeswarar Colony'

There is an EB transformer at the junction of Fifth Street and Sixth Street in Arkeeswarar Colony, Chromepet.

When heavy vehicles negotiate this junction, the vehicles hit the transformer.

The pillar on which the transformer is established and its base have suffered cracks due to collisions by heavy vehicles. Even a portion of the power equipment has sustained damages.

Our requests to Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited to barricade the transformer hasnot been met with a positive response for months.

R. Balaji,
Chromepet



Suggestions for decongesting RP Road



Rajendra Prasad Road is an arterial stretch facilitating connectivity to Hasthinapuram bus terminus. It is lined with marriage halls and a variety of commercial establishments. The road space is inadequate, leading to traffic congestion. The absence of parking spaces and encroachments have added to this chaos. The situation

gets exacerbated during rush hour and on wedding days. The State Highway Department and the traffic police should consider the following solutions.

The deployment of traffic police to enforce discipline, designation of parking spaces for commercial and business establishments, implementation

of traffic management plans, one-way traffic or restricted access during rush hour, and removal of encroachments to clear the pavements for pedestrians.

The measures will alleviate the congestion and improve commuting for motorists and pedestrians.

V. Santhanam,
Chromepet

Public toilets needed at Tambaram West station

Standing near the new Tambaram flyover exposes one to a nauseating smell due to the lack of public toilet facilities on the west side of Tambaram railway station. Many people including schoolgoing children and working women use the flyover because it is an easy way to reach different parts, but you find buses stopping there and drivers and conductors urinating. Similar scenes prevail near the railway station's two-wheeler parking lot.

Nawaz
Tambaram



Annual day celebrated



The Sujay Public School, Medavakkam, recently celebrated its fourth annual day. Sakkotai Anbalagan, MLA, Kumbakonam constituency, was the chief guest.

Students who excelled in academics, sports, and extracurricular activities were honored. The school honored Varnika Bhodheesh of Grade Two with a cash award for winning a gold medal in the national field archery competition at Lucknow.

The MLA lauded the students for their exemplary performances and encouraged them to pursue excellence in all endeavors. The event featured cultural performances by the school students.

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



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Of protests, picnics and fairs

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

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

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

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

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

The auditorium was to be utilised for educational and cultural functions

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

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



VOICES

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

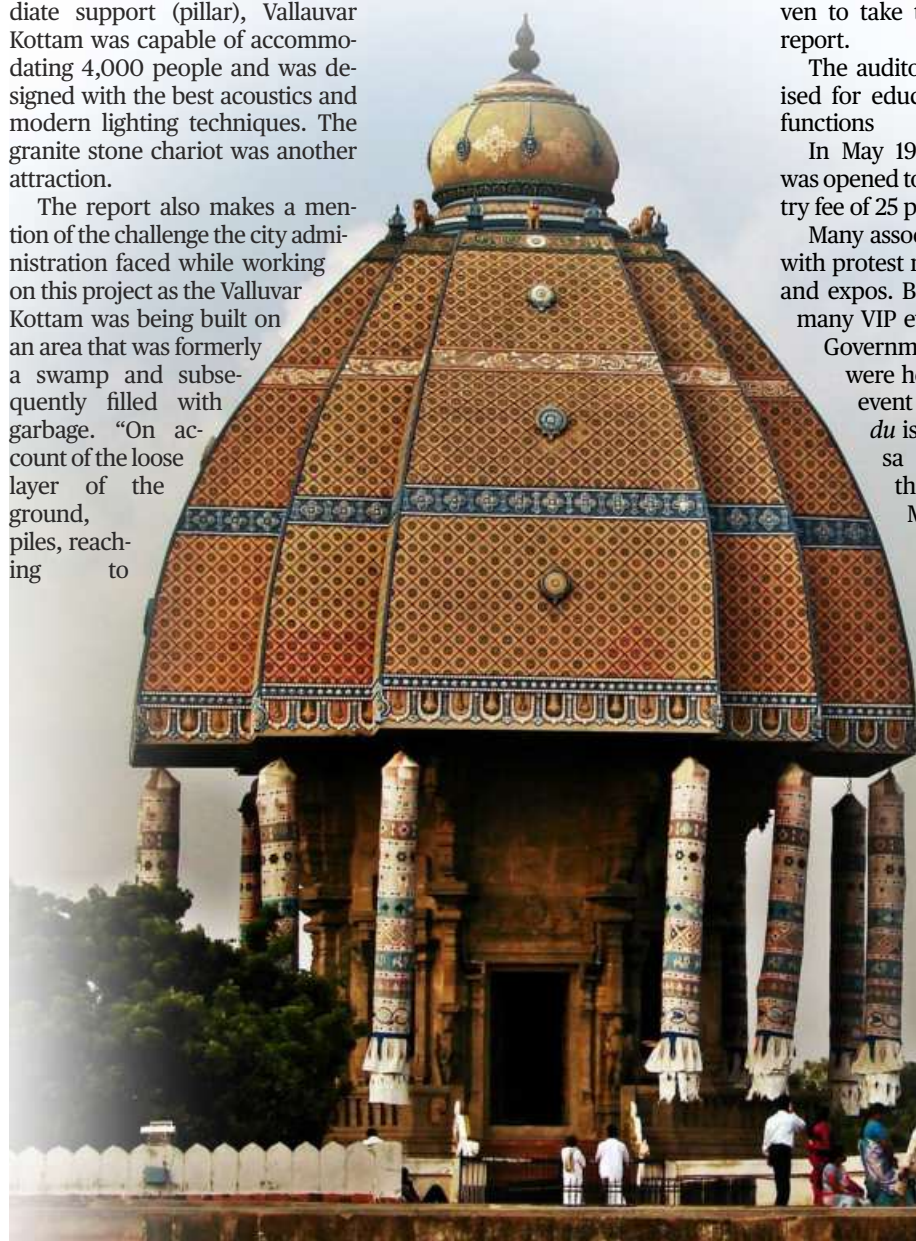
—Lion R. Murali
past president, Lions Club of Madras Fort St. George

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

—Prabakara Rao,
deputy director, Silk Mark

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

—Immanuel Jackson, art director



A 'summer checklist' for Perumbakkam wetland

Two fires in recent memory

Parallels can be drawn between two fires at the Perumbakkam wetland, one in 2022 and the other in 2024

*Both fires originated from near the kuccha road on the western side.

*Both fires raged at a given time of year — in the late May-early June period, when the summer heat receives a spike.

*It took considerable effort on the part of fire & rescue services to bring both fires under control.

A section of Perumbakkam wetland with drying vegetation on February 21, 2025.

PRINCE FREDERICK

Perumbakkam wetland is beginning to develop a "tan". The bulrushes are beginning to shrink resembling ageing human skin drained of fat. These are nature's *aide-memoire* on what next to expect. It is a "gentle reminder" — using a phrase that makes nudges to action palatable in polite society — that the Perumbakkam wetland is an easy target for fires during summer. And it is time to start efforts to scuttle that possibility, checking factors that can be controlled. Summer heat can cause fires on dry vegetation, but there could be something else at work. Before proceeding further, here is what is at stake. At risk of repeating the evident, Perumbakkam wetland is not the sole preserve of waterbirds. Certain parts of it host ground-nesting birds, and these are the parts susceptible to fires, due to a cocktail of factors — brown vegetation during summer, the summer heat and burning cigarette stubs. These parts — particularly a kuccha road that marks the western border of the wetland — are hoofed by humans, and unknown to themselves, some of them carry in their hands an agency to start a fire.

The Perumbakkam wetland is swamped by intense developmental activity on three sides. On its northern side, lined by the Sholinganallur-to-Perumbakkam road, Metro Rail pillars are rearing up their head. In addition to Metro Rail work, there is activity pertaining to the Water Resources Department. On its southern side is a neighbourhood that is "mo-

bilising" residents at a rapid pace. Housing projects abound on this side and frequently, a project becomes a collection of homes. There is constant work and work presupposes the presence of workers. On both sides — the northern and the southern — there is a noticeable presence of workers. Some of them live in temporary shacks arranged for them next to their worksites. Perumbakkam wetland is known for movement of people down a kuccha road on its western side, a good number of them belong to this workforce. Besides, on the other side of the kuccha road that is housing construction activity, leading to movement on the road.

A careless cigarette butt thrown on the brown, dry vegetation before it has burnt out, can cause considerable mischief. From where the fire often started in recent years — particularly in the 2022 and 2024 fires — there is reason to believe it was the trigger and the intense summer heat did the rest. This spot needs to be seen for what it is: the wetland's Achilles tendon, and needs to receive a pre-emptive cast of protection.

On the southern side, a breach in the wall in a couple of places used to be entry point for humans. Stones have been massed up to plug one breach, and dead tree branches to plug the other, but climbing over the stones and branches and setting foot in the wetland still remains an easy option. In fact, it does not take the pole-vaulting prowess of a Sergei Bubka to scale the protective wall, even where it is fully intact. Continual monitoring holds the key to addressing the issue.

As water levels drop, bovines wade in

A section of Perumbakkam wetland with water having largely drained out, is marked by movement of pint-sized birds such as the little ringed plover, the little stint and Temminck's stint and also wagtails. They poke around for food in the semi-dry wetland soil. The two avian images show a little ringed plover and a citrine wagtail. On these semi-patches one would find hoof marks left behind by bovines. Bovines browse on grass and herbs on an elevated section of Perumbakkam wetland. They do not stay restricted to this patch but trudge through the boggy sections where waterbirds are stationed, wallow in the slush and disturb their peace. Stray cattle in Perumbakkam wetland is a recurrent issue that is stubbornly ignored. The images were taken on February 18 and 21, 2025. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



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



BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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

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

For two years now, the Visual Communication students of Naza-

Listen to this: it is ‘Truly Nazareth’

reth College of Arts and Science in Avadi have been running a podcast series titled “Truly Nazareth” sharing inspiring stories and starting engaging conversations by bringing a variety of voices on board.

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

The weekly podcast has so far not missed its deadline. Every Friday at 6 p.m., a new episode is re-

leased on www.trulynazareth.com and Spotify immediately after which the link to it is shared with heads of departments and promoted on the college’s social media handles. This is in turn shared with other WhatsApp groups including the other institutions run by the Nazareth Group. The content creation, voiceover and editing of Truly Nazareth is led by eight students, five from Visual Communication department and the rest drawn from other departments.

▼
The team.

Curating content

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

Another episode discussed “Reformation” introduced by the college management, where students involved in malpractices or in unethical behaviour are sent to an NGO for rehabilitation.

How has Truly Nazareth evolved since it was launched on January 26, 2023? Geetha Subbiah, head of digital media and communications, says when they started the series, the focus was on bringing out a new episode every Friday. They did not promote the content in a big way. “Based on feedback we started marketing Truly Nazareth at events where we put up a stand,” says Geetha, who is men-

toring the students.

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

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

“The initiative is student-driven, the language is colloquial and we are happy that the series has engaged with the community of school and college students,” says Geetha. The series has been drawing requests from the public that they be given a space in it.

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

Graduation Ceremony at Loyola



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

Chief guest Satish Gupta, Founder & CEO of SB International Inc., and a distinguished Loyola alumnus presided

over the event held at the Open-Air Auditorium.

A total of 2,565 students received their degrees, including 2,013 undergraduates, 545 postgraduates, and 13 M.Phil. scholars. Additionally, 65 gold medalists were honored for academic excellence. The college also celebrated its notable achievements, including its A++ NAAC accreditation and an 8th-place ranking in the NIRF 2024 rankings.

Addressing the graduates, Satish Gupta inspired them with his words: “If I could do it, you can too. Rise like the sun, embrace the new, with courage, passion, and wisdom true, the world awaits the best in you.”

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

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

VECP school students reunite after 60 years

Fifteen students of V. Ethirajulu Chetty Preparatory School had a reunion after sixty years at Hotel Abu Palace in Purasawalkam recently.

The VECP school, established by Mrs.V. Rajamanikkam, in memory of her husband late V. Ethirajulu Chetty, functioned from an imposing building called “Allathur Villa” on Poonamalle High Road from 1960 to 1983.

The former students of VECP School were joined by the family

members of late V. Ethirajulu Chetty -Sujatha Ramguptha (granddaughter), V. Sairam and V. Sridhar (grandsons), and Dr. V. Akash (great grandson). They were all felicitated by the former students showing their gratitude to the founder’s family.

The reunion was wonderful as it turned out to be a memorable one for those who revisited their past by 60 years, according to A. Sri Ramachandra Murthy and T. Ramesh, former students who organised the event.

Bhavan’s Tamizh Isai Vizha from February 24

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is conducting “Bhavan’s Tamizh Isai Vizha” from February 24 to 28 at its main auditorium in Mylapore. The festive series begins on February 24 at 6.30 p.m. with a vocal concert by

Vidya Kalyanaraman on “Sitham Yellam Sivamayam”. On February 25; 6.30 p.m. Gayathri Girish will give a vocal concert on “Devi Darisanam”.

The programmes are open to all.

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Pallikaranai resident launches book on business finance

Arul Shanmugavelu, a resident of Pallikaranai, has book number three to his credit. Titled *Business Finance Demystified: A Guide for Entrepreneurs, Leaders, and Teams*, it saw the light at a special event held at Anna University.

The book was released by J. Prakash, the Registrar of Anna University, in the presence of Totadhri Natarajan, Nokia Networks.

The event was organised by Mugavari Foundation to distribute scholarships to deserving students, reinforcing the spirit of education and empowerment.

The book was given to each of the 61 students who are receiving the full scholarship from Mugavari Foundation on Guindy campus and MIT campus.

The other two books that Arul has published are *French Fries - 15 Golden Ideas to Power your Career*



Growth and Daily Bytes – Lessons from Corporate Trenches.

According to Arul, by the end of February 2025, he will be completing 40 years of corporate working.

Says Arul: "I am an engineer who served in various functions

culminating in a leadership role as chief executive of L&T Kobelco and later Managing Director of Kobelco Industrial Machinery, a subsidiary of a Japanese MNC. My passion is to share my knowledge and train people to do their jobs better."



Meet this young cyclist

Anish Ramkumar is 10 years old, a resident of Adambakkam, and a Class V student of DAV Public School in Velachery.

And he is cycling his way to notice. He had gone on the Tour of Coutrallam organised by Cycling Yogis. On that tour, he impressed senior cyclists by doing a 50km ride with ease, says a communication from Cycling Yogis.

He was later honoured for his enthusiasm for cycling by Pro Bikers.

Anish started cycling during the pandemic. Over the last one year, he has been accompanying his cyclist parents during holidays and weekends on cycle



rides.

He began with a 5km ride and scaled it up.

He has completed rides organised by other cycling groups in Chennai.

He has done over 800 plus kilometres so far in his journey, says the communication.

His appetite for experimentation with cycles is huge. He has tried out MTB, Road, Hybrid and Foldable bikes, it adds.

Walkathon in Pallikaranai on March 1

Environment Awareness Protection Association, a non-governmental organisation, is organising a walkathon on March 1 from Amman Kulam park to Anai Eri lake in Pallikaranai.

According to a press release, the event aims to highlight the pollution of the lake and the importance of conserving the waterbody.

The NGO invites residents of neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the lake – Ambal Nagar, Chittibabu Nagar, Ganapathy Nagar, Prabhu Nagar, Narayana Nagar and Dilli Babu Nagar – to take part in the walkathon.



A WhatsApp bot for first aid



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

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

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

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

Webinar on methanol industry

Nandini Consultancy Centre, a chemical engineering and chemical business consultancy organisation is conducting a webinar titled "Methanol - India's missed opportunity" on March 2. Time: From 11 a.m. to 12.15 p.m.

The session will be handled by N.S. Venkataraman and Swaminathan. V, Directors, Nandini Consultancy Centre at Chennai and Singapore, respectively.

According to a press release, no fee will be charged but prior registration is necessary.

Those interested in attending the session should register by writing to nandinicheimical@gmail.com/ nsvenkatchennai@gmail.com

Workshop on terrace gardening



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

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