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ROKA's 10th waste collection drive on February 1 and 2

Together we can" is the theme for Residents of Kasturbanagar Association (ROKA) has inked in its 10th waste collection drive – based on the theme "Together We Can" – for February 1 and 2, 2025 (from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m on both days). The drive is spread across five centres.

(ROKA) has been in the solid waste management and environment work since 2018 and has so far, through just its collection drives, diverted close to 60 MT of waste into effective processing, says a press release.

The items that are being handed over can be in any condition but should be clean and dry. Items that are soiled and dirty would be rejected,

the press release adds.

The following categories of items can be brought to the collection points – clothes; footwear; bags; e-waste; tablet strips; ballpoint pens; mattresses/ pillows (accepted only at the collection point in Adyat); X ray films; glass bottles; hard and soft plastics and newspaper and books

Many apartment communities in Perumbakkam, Adambakkam and residents associations in Kotturpuram, Nawab Gardens, Vadapalani, Karpagam Gardens are part of this drive, the release adds. The recycling partners are: Recycle Mart, SPRECO Recycling Pvt. Ltd., and Wasted 360.

For more details, call 86674 99135.



Snapshots of previous editions of the event. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The collection centres

1. KNRA Hall in Adyar
2. On Axis, Velachery
3. RMSM aastn - The Public Gym, Sivakamipuram Second Cross in Thiruvanmiyur

4. Spreco recycling facility in West Tambaram
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SUSTAINABILITY

This team hits the roads of Chennai looking for used cooking oil



RAJALAKSHMI V.

Amidst the bustling traffic, an electric vehicle is doing the rounds stopping at restaurants, cloud kitchens and hotels to collect cooking oil that cannot be used anymore – in fact, dangerous to human health if it were pressed into cooking duty any longer.

Founded by Vasanth J.B., Venka-

teshwaran S., and Srindhi B. in 2020, Uranus Oil Company is partnering with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in this work; and is collaborating with bio-diesel plants, only those registered under FSSAI.

It has a giant footprint in Chennai, having born as a startup in this metro, and according to Vasanth, also has a foot gently planted in a few states across India, carrying

out operations there with the help of channel partners.

"We are a young company driven by the goal of promoting sustainability and a circular economy across the country," says Vasanth. "We focus on used cooking oil (UCO) because it is not only widely available but also a hazardous waste when reused and consumed by humans. We collect UCO from star hotels, restaurant chains, go-



nered biodiesel manufacturers who convert it into biodiesel.

This business also fosters entrepreneurship among youth.

"We identify regions to promote entrepreneurship among young people. Many aspiring entrepreneurs want to create a sustainable livelihood, and we offer them the opportunity to collect UCOs. This not only provides them with a revenue stream but also builds a positive ecosystem. They collect and supply UCOs to us, while we handle compliance and transfer the oil to biodiesel manufacturers. Currently, we have over 150 young entrepreneurs running localised drives and collaborating with us," Vasanth explains.

"For our operations, we exclusively use electric vehicles to minimize fossil fuel usage, further aligning with our commitment to sustainability," adds Vasanth.

They are accredited by FSSAI, FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry), and have applied for ISCC (International Sustainability and Carbon Certification). Their team consists of a mix of young tech enthusiasts and experienced professionals.

Uranus Oil's collection process focuses on gated communities and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) to ensure efficiency. "We have established partnerships with apartments and RWAs where a designated member oversees the collection process," explains Vasanth. The electric vehicle does not head to individual houses for collecting used cooking oil.

For UCO collection, call +91 733894419 or email ruco@uranusoil.com.

A look at Ripon Building's 'dress sense'



Ripon Building changes its colours according to the dictates of a software, Dynamic Architecture Lighting. The variations in lighting follow a monthly sequence that sits like a humongous rock. But this "rock" is gently pushed aside and the sequence broken from time to time. That is when a special day, a day of special observance comes knocking on the door. A specific colour that is aligned with that day would come on. The programming would be suitably altered to accommodate the new display, says a Greater Chennai Corporation official familiar with the system that operates the coloured special lighting of the structure. He adds that for example, for Glaucoma Day, it would be all blue. Orange for Bone Day; pink for Women's Day. On Independence Day, the colours in the tri colour would come on. The GCC official notes three colours have been kept out of the system -- brown, dark violet and black. On Sundays alone, there would be a pageantry of all the available colours. They will arrive in a procession, each striding in separately, and then at intervals, there would be a mix of colours. The image was taken on January 22, 2025. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

A full-page advertisement for Anai Jewellers. The top right corner features the text "HAPPY 76TH REPUBLIC DAY 26.01.2025". The central part of the ad shows a woman in a pink sari smiling, wearing traditional gold jewelry. To her left is a large gold "76" with the words "PER GRAM OFF" and "ON GOLD MARKET RATE". Above the "76" is the text "ONE DAY SALE". The top left corner has the Anai Jewellers logo and the text "ANNAI JEWELLERS". The bottom left corner has the text "CONDITIONS APPLY". The bottom right corner includes links to the brand's online presence: "Scan to Download from Android & iOS App Store", QR codes for social media, and the website "www.annajewellers.com". The bottom right also features the text "Thoothukudi | Kovilpatti | Rajapalayam | Tenkasi | Chennai" and "Shop Online" with a small icon.

Small sustainable businesses might espouse a lofty philosophy, but that does not insulate them against the rough edges of the market, one largely driven by hyper consumerism and a throwaway culture. Here is a survival kit based on the experiences of a few green businesses in Chennai

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Obviously, what applies in the larger business world, applies in the world of small green businesses too. Probably more so here.

Thendral Manimozhi, founder of Kamarkattu Ecostore, a Velachery-based micro enterprise that makes sustainable alternative skincare and homecare products, ensures she walks the brand's customers through its workday realities through Insta reels, quickly crafted and free of frills. In this manner, the brand introduces its customers – even potential customers – to the invisible value that goes into the products through a stringently followed sustainability-driven production process. Over time, in her journey running Boutique Bougainvillea, Sherin realised that working value into her textiles would not suffice; she needed to speak value into them as well. She believes the road to sustaining a brand is paved with education and engagement. She extends an invitation to the boutique's customers to be participants in her brand's story. Sherin's boutique doubles as a "classroom", where customers are introduced to the intricacies of the weaving techniques in use and how the weft of sustainability is drawn through the process.

The customers also get to learn about the artisans behind each piece. "When people step into Boutique Bougainvillea, they step into a story. And once they know that story, it changes the way they see value," says Sherin, adding that her loyal client base is not drawn by the lowest price but by the highest intention. "The people who come to us are looking for something more. They want to feel good about their choices. It is about making a connection – once that bond is formed, it is hard to break."

LARGER COMMUNITY

A cause inevitably creates a community; birds of the same feather flocking together and swearing allegiance to the cause. Where sustainability is the cause, micro businesses espousing it should foster the community built around it. Small green businesses need to rally round one another. Through Boutique Bougainvillea, Sherin drives an initiative called The Handmade Story. It is a special event she holds every year to support smaller women-run sustainable businesses. "We offer our space for free," Sherin explains, "and we all pitch in for the marketing, so everyone benefits." The idea is simple: small businesses can come together, show off their work, and help one another grow. It is a perfect example of community support in action, all the while keeping sustainability at the core. Sherin also organises something called Kids Craft Carnival. "It is a fun event where we pick a few kids interested in crafts, mentor them for a month, and then help them showcase their products at an exhibition," she says. For Sherin, the objective is two-fold. It nurtures creativity in the next generation, and also swells the ranks of the green community.

AI GENERATED IMAGE: M ARIVARASU

RESIDENTS' CONNECT

Increasingly, residents' groups are pushing themselves to the front lines of the circular economy. Sustainable businesses can tap into the reach enjoyed by such associations. Ar. Sherin Joseph of Velachery-based Boutique Bougainvillea (which promotes slow fashion, valuing artisanal wisdom and selling handcrafted clothing) keeps a perennially active communication line with groups such as ROKA. Now, in Chennai, Residents of Kastubanagar Association (ROKA) is an exemplar of an association that has transcended the intrinsic hyperlocality of its green initiatives to create impact far and wide.. ROKA's dry waste drives (its latest scheduled for February 1-2) are usually pan-Chennai events. ROKA has become an inalienable part of Chennai's sustainability scene, being a compelling voice, one commanding attention from many other residents' associations in the metro, GCC and enterprises engaged in the circular economy. Through ROKA, Sherin's green circle got wider, particularly when she was introduced by the Adyar-based residents association to On Axis Green Consulting Pvt. Ltd., which has proved fruitful in terms of learning. In addition, Sherin is engaged in influencing residents in her own neighbourhood, Seva Nagar in Velachery to make eco-friendly choices. Sherin has taken steps to reduce waste in her local community, and as part of that, as recently as January 12, 2025, Boutique Bougainvillea hosted a composting workshop exclusively for Seva Nagar Welfare Association. "We are a small neighbourhood – about 80 households – and we are working on going zero waste," she says. Sherin launched an e-publication to raise awareness on waste management, helping her community live more sustainably.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Get the business model right for your small sustainable business – the model that suits your business the best. Mamta Jain of Samposhan (@thesamposhan) seems to be on a mission to promote Sustainable Development Goal 12 (sustainable and efficient use of natural resources and reducing waste). SDG12 pops along to define her, be it her Instagram page or LinkedIn profile. SDG5 too – which is about upholding gender equality and empowering women and girls. Her Adamabakkam-based small business Samposhan prides itself on "saving 1615 plus kg of fabric scraps from Chennai's landfills and converting them into products of everyday use and decor." Here is a valuable insight from Mamta.

Sustainable small businesses often ignore a vital step, stakeholder mapping. In Mamta's words, "I first had a direct-to-consumer (B2C) approach in mind for my brand. The idea was to sell upcycled products directly to individual customers. However, after some time, I realised this model would take longer to yield results than anticipated. While there is a growing awareness of sustainability, convincing consumers to choose upcycled products over traditional ones was a slow process. The demand for these products simply was not as strong as I had hoped. This realisation prompted me to pivot my strategy from B2C to a business-to-business (B2B) and a business-to-government (B2G) model. By targeting corporations, businesses and government bodies, I could reach larger audiences and make a greater impact on sustainability. I saw an opportunity to work with businesses that could incorporate sustainable practices into their operations, as well as government bodies that could help implement policies supporting sustainability. Through these partnerships, I hoped to bring my products to a broader market while encouraging larger-scale environmental practices. The switch from B2C to B2B/B2G allowed me to scale the impact of my products and build relationships that could foster more substantial changes in the industry. This strategy was not only about expanding my customer base, but also about contributing to the larger goal of making sustainability a priority in businesses and government sectors."

A kit for green businesses to stay evergreen



A brand story

Micro enterprise Kamarkattu Ecostore has harnessed the power of authentic storytelling; its Insta reels might be a bit jagged around the edges but they inspire trust for their simplicity and unvarnished presentation

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Kamarkattu Ecostore is putting its digital foot impressively forward. Swipe through its Instagram page (@kamarkattu.ecostore) to see how. The micro enterprise puts out visual stories that revel not only in its finished products, but also in the mundane processes that bring those creations to a sustainability shelf.

Before anything else, an outline of this Velachery-based enterprise's place under a green sun. It fits the classic mould of a micro business. If you counted its workforce on your fingers, three fingers would remain unfolded: a seven-member, all-women production team. It offers skincare and homecare essentials with the circumflex accent placed firmly on top of sustainable alternatives. It notes it sources toxin-free, natural native ingredients.

Back to its Insta page, check out these posts. Titled "Plastic free & proud", a reel with visuals of orders being tucked into eco-friendly packaging presents this line: "Every time we get your orders ready, we smile with pride on how much plastic we avoided." And in a series of posts, it wove a visual story around the Yule season in December 2024, "embossing" recognisably Christmas motifs in its sustainable "soaplets" (as it calls its small-sized soaps). So, there sat these eco-friendly soaps shaped like Santa, a Christmas tree and a train.

This Insta story titled "Soapy's Christmas Story" was accompanied by catchy Yule music. A note that went with it read: "Our girls got so excited with all these cute Christmas soaps and made a little story out of it... we will post the

story one pic every day". And they went on to do just that in the days that followed, creating two characters Bubbles and Soapy made out of their soaplets who would take the narrative forward.

Thendral Manimozhi, founder and prime mover behind Kamarkattu Ecostore laughs at the recent memory: the idea for "Soapy's Christmas Story" came from someone interning with us, she reveals. The reels carry an endearingly personal touch which actually enables the viewer to gloss over the raggedness around the edges that they carry. The reels seem to have been created off the cuff with the staff themselves featuring in them with hurriedly readied scripts. But it is difficult to question their effectiveness, their dilettante quality being their strength as it inspires trust.

This micro business' strong digital moorings makes sense when you check its date of origin. It was born in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. A civil engineer with 10 years of experience in sales and marketing, Thendral cranked started it following an a-ha moment. It was a moment of truth one that led her to question the effects of using regular toothpaste and soaps. Within the framework of that questioning, she discovered the motivation to create toxin-free products, promote conscious consumerism and also make it an affordable

Popular products by the brand include shampoo bars, dishwash bars, "takeout dishwash powder", laundry powder and a face scrub made with 30 herbs and flowers in powder form. The brand also sells coir, neem and bamboo products from a cooperative society in Kanyakumari. Thendral notes that they educate customers on sustainability by continuously reiterating the basics. She emphasises the brand's focus on long-lasting products, holding up as illustration a shaving bar used by a customer for over 1.5 years. The name "Kamarkattu" reflects this philosophy, inspired by the lingering sweetness of the candy and the concept of "naked" products, free of toxins and preservatives.

Thendral observes that small sustainable brands often close down due to consumer scrutiny over cost and authenticity, while large brands engaging in greenwashing face less questioning. Despite the challenges, Kamarkattu continues to promote its values of sustainability and conscious consumerism, adds Thendral.



A lighter moment at Kamarkattu Ecostore.

Transforming hearts through arts



A winning team from the previous edition; (below) teams from Chennai Public School and NSN Memorial School. Photos: Special Arrangement

LIFFY THOMAS

On February 2, more than 200 children from various schools will attend the awards ceremony of 'Art to Connect 2.0' at Kalakshetra Foundation in Thiruvananthapuram.

The event marks the culmination of an initiative to connect children from mainstream schools with children who have special needs. In the run-up to this event, both have showcased their skills in music, dance, painting and singing.

More than 100 schools and 300 specially-abled peers, referred to as "buddies", across major cities participated in the second edition. Four teams (each comprising an able-bodied child and a buddy) were selected as the national winners of 'Art to Connect 2.0'. Besides, awards will be presented in other categories such as "Harmony and Diversity", "Transformative Connect" and "Inclusive Creativity".

Winning is not the ultimate aim of this initiative started by Nirmala Krishnan, who has worn various hats including as principal of Mahindra World School and Country Head Education for the Jindal Group.

The event meets one of the criteria of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 10.3 of reducing inequalities and offering equal opportunities to all. The collaboration is also aimed at fostering empathy, promoting art and culture and encouraging children to develop an emotional connection with society.

Shruti Malaar, a Class XI student

'Art to Connect' unites children from mainstream schools with children who have special needs in a special bond that is crowned by creative pursuits. In its second edition now, the initiative is bringing more schools on board



of Chennai Public School, took this initiative forward to get nine students to enrol for the event. With the help of two teacher coordinators their task was to figure out how to bond with the buddies and co-create a piece of art together.

Shruti was assigned the role of videographer-cum-editor where she had to shoot the work of teams to get the best out of them.

"I volunteered for this event as I wanted to overcome my fears of interacting with children with special needs and this role got me to experience nine stories," says Shruti. Wielding a Nikon camera, she captured a variety of emotions as her schoolmates engaged with buddies from Apple Valley Special School.

Nehan, for instance, was paired with a student on the spectrum to work on a piece of art. But when the buddy saw other teams dancing he too wanted to dance. Harshini's buddy did not want to communicate in a certain way and she had to mellow down her conversational style to ensure she felt safe.

"I got to converse and cap-

The process

Schools are required to register with Art to Connect and agree with a set of rules and regulations for the event. There is no entry fee, and every participating team is required to send a one-minute video of their interaction and another one-minute video of their art.

Entries must also be uploaded with a 600-word write-up about their journey. For details, visit linkthethdots.online or email linkthethdots13@gmail.com



to our campus. While the rapport was built on the same day, a few required more time and a different approach," says Shyamala V., coordinator for this event from the school.

Other noteworthy entries include a national winner from a school at Kamathipura, a neighbourhood with social fractures in Mumbai. "Some schools have told me that their students had an emotional transformation by bonding with a peer," says Nirmala.

There is also an international winner from Tajikistan, Zuhra, who danced with Amir, a boy with speech impairment.

Growing strong

The first edition of 'Art to Connect' was held in 2020 with 20 schools qualifying for the finals. This time, it has grown to more than double the number. Last year, Pune registered the maximum number of participants. This time, Tamil Nadu tops the list.

Nirmala says this is an event for mainstream schools and she expects them to do the ground work of locating a buddy.

"In Delhi, many schools have children with special needs across classes but that is not the case in the South," she says.

Nirmala says the larger goal of Art to Connect is to strengthen the bond and show children the need to cultivate patience, compassion, empathy and gratitude. The jury looks at the effort made by a participant to bond.

As part of the competition, participants also take a pledge that when they grow up and attain positions of power they will try to bring in policies that are inclusive.

"Transformation is what I am looking for and this is just the beginning," says Nirmala, who comes from the pharmaceutical industry and has authored books on education.

STATUS REPORT

Desilting work is under way at Sholinganallur Lake. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.



Sholinganallur Lake to be given a fresh lease of life

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Siruthuli, a Coimbatore-based NGO, in coordination with Zone 15 (Sholinganallur) of the Greater Chennai Corporation is restoring the sprawling Sholinganallur Lake.

Located on Rajiv Gandhi Salai, the bhoomi puja ceremony was inaugurated by Sholinganallur MLA K. Aravind Ramesh on January 22.

The NGO is restoring the lake, with technical support from the Public Works Department.

According to Hariharasudhan R., the programme manager of the NGO, the 24-acre lake is being desilted with earthmovers, followed by formation of bunds. The activity will be carried out over two months.

Two bunds (paths) will be formed, one for rainwater and the other for untreated wastewater, which will be treated through the 'Vetiver' plant, a floating treatment. The treated water will be discharged into the lake.

"Currently, the lake's catchment areas are blocked. Steps will be taken to ensure rainwater enters the lake and flooding is prevented around the lake," said C. Chinnasamy, chief operating officer, Siruthuli.

The waterbody can hold 158 million

After restoration, the lake can hold 368 million litres of water, its storage capacity having been increased.

litres of water. After restoration, the lake can hold 368 million litres of water. The restoration work will deepen the lake's storage capacity and prevent flooding.

"The lake has a good number of catchment areas. We are planning to harvest the rainwater from the catchment areas. After two months, a paver block walking path will be laid on the bunds," said Hariharasudhan.

Trees, solar lamps and a yoga hall are other improved amenities that the lake will get.

The GCC is preparing a detailed project report on the lake's restoration project, which includes creating a park, lawn formation, footpath, recreational area, fencing the area around the lake, and construction of walls on the waterbody's boundary areas.

The Department of Fashion Communication of the National Institute of Fashion Technology is organising an art exhibition called "The Imaginarium" on January 27 and 28 at its premises in Taramani. According to a press release, the event

commemorates 30 years of NIFT Chennai and 40 years of NIFT as a premier institution in fashion education.

The exhibition features the works of artist Keshav V. He has served at the national daily *The Hindu* for 29 years, contributing impactful cartoons, adds the release.

He has illustrated several books including Maalyada by Jeyasundhar D (2023) and Ramayanam Volume I by Dushyanth Sridhar (2024).

Workshop on heritage conservation

Hepzibah Institute of Heritage Conservation is conducting a workshop on conservation and restoration of antiquities of a church from February 3 to 8. Time: From 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. For venue details, call 9381008253. According to a press release, no fee will be charged.

Hepzibah Institute of Heritage Conservation is at 21, VOC Street, MGR Nagar.

Health camp today

Saveetha Medical College & Hospital and the South Madras Cultural Association are organising a free medical camp at Malligai-poo Nagar in Adyar on January 26. Time: From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

According to a press release, tests relating to various ailments relating to heart, lungs, vision, and hearing will be conducted. For details, call 7811958567 / 9176335555.

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Special buses for Thai Ammavasai



In view of 'Thai Ammavasai' (January 29), the Tamil Nadu State Express Transport Corporation will be operating additional special buses to Rameshwaram from Chennai city and other cities on January 28.

Buses will be operated from Kalaignar Centenary Bus Terminus (KCBT) in Kilambakkam.

On January 28, buses will operate to the pilgrimage town from Coimbatore, Salem and Bengaluru. On January 29, additional special buses will operate from Rameshwaram to Chennai (KCBT), Coimbatore, Salem, and Bengaluru.

The public can book the tickets through www.tnstc.in and the official TNSTC app.

Shop for maternity clothes online

Expecting moms and new parents do not have go searching to buy maternity and baby wear. STB Delivery Kit, an online store, provides comfortable clothing for moms-to-be and their little ones.

The store is offering discounts to celebrate the opening of the enterprise, including 20 percent off on the first purchase and bundle offers on select products, said a release.

Customers can enjoy free shipping on select orders. Log on to www.stbdeliverykit.com. For orders, WhatsApp 87546 00468.

A new route number between Guindy and Kotturpuram

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation has introduced a bus route number between Guindy and Kotturpuram.

Route number S30K (Guindy Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate - Kotturpuram MRTS railway station) will ply through the Estate to stop at Guindy State Multi-Speciality Hospital, Alandur Road and Bazaar Road in Saidapet, Saidapet Metro Station and Kotturpuram railway station.

From the Estate, the buses would leave at 7.10 a.m., 8.40 a.m., 10.05 a.m., and 11.25 a.m., and 12.40 p.m., 2.05 p.m., 3.20 p.m., and 4.40 p.m., said a release.



The route number S30K. PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CMDA launches mobile app for KCBT



Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority has launched a mobile app to enhance the travel experience of commuters from Kalaignar Centenary Bus Terminus (KCBT) in Kilambakkam. Available in Tamil and English, it can be downloaded free on Android and iOS platforms. In the app journey planner section, a commuter can reach the terminus using the map, check the availability of buses and find city public transport buses from KCBT to regions across the city (Chennai Bus app).

The app has sections for grievances, feedback, helpline numbers, notice boards, and frequently asked questions. The app helpline number is 78457 00557.

Two retirement community projects launched



The GT Bharathi Urban Developers Private Limited has launched two retirement community projects – 'Elements Sattva' in Porur and 'Elements Kamalam.'

The Sattva project allows senior citizens to reside within the city. The other project has introduced an 'Independent Seniors' Leasing (ISL) scheme, which allows seniors to lease their homes at 50 percent of the purchase cost, offering investors good rental returns, said a release.

To offer seniors and their families a first-hand experience of retirement homes, the real estate housing firm is conducting an expo at Ethiraja Kalyana Mandapam, TTK Road in Alwarpet that ends on January 26.

Expo ends today

An exhibition is under way on Mudichur Road, West Tambaram, near Natarasan Kottai Restaurant.

The expo features various stalls showcasing unique products, delicious food, and thrilling entertainment activities such as a Ferris wheel, a pirate ride, and water games.

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- ❖ Seepages ❖ Dampness ❖ Electrical ❖ Painting
- ❖ Leak arresting for Sump, Tank, Bath, Terrace
- ❖ Drainage Repairing & New Connection
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