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'Key road' in West Saidapet unsafe for pedestrians



Kodambakkam Road at Mettupalayam in West Saidapet. PHOTOS: UMESH KUMAR . V



S.N. RAJARAM

Kodambakkam Road at Mettupalayam in West Saidapet is plagued by encroachments. Here, the footpaths are out of bounds for pedestrians. Owners of all kinds of shops including those of eateries misuse the footpaths to keep their belongings. Customers of these shops park their vehicles on the road. Pedestrians are at the risk of being hit by vehicles.

Overflowing garbage bins and recurrent instances of sewage over-

flow add to the problem.

Metropolitan Transport Corporation buses frequent this road as the terminus of West Saidapet is located in the vicinity. MTC bus drivers find it difficult to drive through this stretch.

The stretch witnesses heavy traffic because it connects Ashok Nagar, West Mamabalam, and Guindy Industrial Estate via Alandur flyover.

It may be noted schools are located on this road.

S.N. Rajaram is a resident of Saligramam

'Stick magic' on display in Porur

Students of RV Hockey Academy and OMEGA International School interact with legendary hockey players

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Boys and girls from RV Hockey Academy and OMEGA International School got a unique opportunity to get trained in basic hockey skills under the tutelage of former and current Indian internationals at a special session organised by JSW Soorma Hockey Club. The programme was held at Sri N.P.V. Ramaswamy Udayar Hock-

ey Centre, located within the Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (SRIHER) campus in Porur.

The young players learnt basic skills, drills and engaged in interactive discussions with former Indian internationals Sardara Singh, Rani Rampal, Arjun Halappa and Jude Felix, along with foreign coaches from JSW Soorma Hockey Club, who shared insights into modern playing tech-



Students of RV Hockey Academy and Omega International School with Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh

niques and professional training methods. Adding to the excitement, the students also got a rare opportunity to interact with Olympians V. Baskaran and Mohammed Riaz, whose presence inspired the youngsters and offered a glimpse into India's rich

Olympic hockey legacy. Indian men's captain and JSW Soorma HC skipper Harmanpreet Singh, who is here for the Hockey India League, beginning at the SDAT-Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here on January 3, signed autographs. All the activities were an

on-ground initiative by JSW Sports' Soorma Hockey Club, that brought together legends of the game, current internationals and young academy players for an afternoon that celebrated both heritage and the future of the sport.



Bird walk at Porur Wetland

The awareness programme organised for the children of birders with the group Birders Tribe included an art-based activity

Birders Tribe recently organised a special Kids Bird Walk at the Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Wetland Eco Park, popularly known as the Porur Wetland, with the objective of introducing children to avian life and creating awareness about the importance of urban wetland ecosystems.

According to a press release, children aged between 5 and 14 years (from UKG to Class IX) participated in the guided walk. The programme sought to spark curiosity, enhance observation skills and build early awareness about nature and conservation. Parents accompanying the children also found the walk informative, gaining valuable insights into the region's local biodiversity.

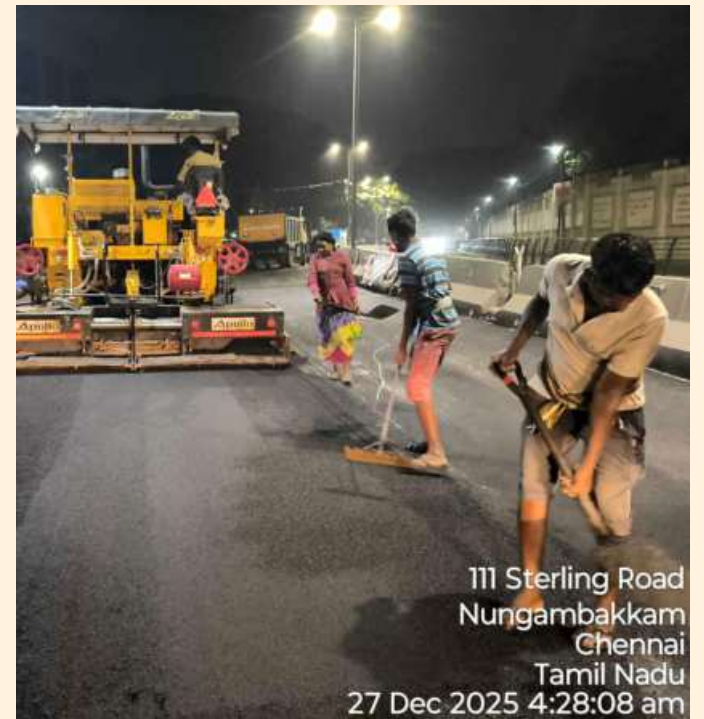
The walk was led by naturalist Badri, who guided participants through bird identification, behaviour and habitat awareness using live field observations. During the walk, children were visibly amazed to observe a wide range of bird species including Bronzewing jacana, Moorhen, various egrets, Coppersmith barbet, Rose-ringed parakeet, Pied kingfisher, Plain prinia, and Greater flameback woodpecker. Notably, Moorhens were seen with their chicks, allowing children to closely observe the protective behaviour and gestures of the parent birds. Thirty-six bird species were recorded during the session, the release says.

The event was organised by the Birders Tribe team comprising Vignesh, Sujatha, Ramya, Ganesh, and Rajeev, who ensured a well-structured safe, and engaging learning environment for all participants, the release adds.

Following the bird walk, children participated in a creative activity where they documented their observations in nature journals by drawing birds they had seen and expressing their learning through art.



Nelson Manickam Road, Sterling Road **mended**



C.R. BALAJI

Two days ago, while heading towards Nungambakkam from the Skywalk, I noticed potholes and damaged surfaces at Nelson Manickam Road in Choolaimedu.

I informed an official of Bus Route Roads section of Greater Chennai Corporation who is connected with this section, about the state of the road.

He replied that mending work would be undertaken in two days' time, and just as he had promised, the work was carried out in the wee hours of

December 27. The damaged sections of the road were relaid with proper bitumen topping. In addition, the damaged sections of Sterling Road were also relaid.

(C.R. Balaji is a resident of Mandaveli and a civic activist)

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Colleges as *civil service coaching hubs*

An increasing number of colleges in Chennai run study circles on their premises to help students prepare for UPSC and TNPSC exams

LIFY THOMAS

From January 2026, in Chennai, those aspiring to crack competitive examinations that would open doors to civil services jobs have an added place to visit to sharpen their edge – the IAS study circle established by Annai Veilankanni college at its premises in Saidapet. While offering coaching to its arts and science students at a “subsidised” fee, the college rolls out the red carpet to aspirants in their neighbourhood.

Both arts and science and engineering colleges running their in-house academies/ study circles that serve as a pathway to a career in civil services is not a new trend, just that the number of institutions offering this option has been on the increase over the years.

From government colleges to self-financing institutions, a focused group or centre providing coaching, mock tests, inviting expert speakers and offering personalised guidance for success in examinations conducted by UPSC and TNPSC has become an important talking point.

While a majority of institutions offer these classes at no cost, some levy a nominal fee. Many of them do not promise intensive coaching, just a launch pad. This academic year, A.M. Jain College in Meenambakkam opened two study circles, one for careers in armed forces and the other for UPSC coaching, both offered free of cost.

“In a class of 40 if one cracks the exam then it motivates the others. The preparation for the exam is such that there is greater collaboration among students and there is a plenty of resources available on the campus for students to get much out of it. We only see students gaining by preparing for such examinations,” says M. Ramya, dean, AM Jain College. A faculty related to the subject is asked to handhold the students. “We ensure there is separate remuneration for any value-added course a faculty takes up,” she says.

For those keen on intensive training, A.M. Jain College has a MoU with an external academy that comes to the campus to train students at a cost.

For students focused on cracking the exam, the college grants them on-duty leave to prepare before exams or gives a re-test if they have missed an internal exam, says the Dean of A.M. Jain College.

Colleges opening their doors for external coaching academies and roping in guest speakers means students save on the addi-



Students of A.M. Jain College who aspire to civil services jobs immersed in a discussion. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tional travel they would have to undertake to access these resources.

Last year, Guru Nanak College set up a committee to support students keen on a career in the civil services.

The website of KCG Tech says

its Civil Service Aspiration Club conducts classes every alternate week for two hours, which includes exam preparation and talks from UPSC achievers and high-ranking civil servants. Easwari Engineering College calls its programme Civil Services Training

Programme. CTTE College in Perambur is increasingly focusing on helping its students excel in Group II and IV exams.

Janani G, a Union Public Service Commission aspirant and a tutor at academies, says, “When I graduated from engineering college 12

years ago, we did not have such avenues being opened to us. There may not be many success stories from colleges, but that is fine as long as students are getting exposure even while pursuing under graduation.”

With government funding

Even before Chennai began to witness a craze for civil services, Queen Mary’s College started providing free training since 2001 for

Colleges opening their doors for external coaching academies and roping in guest speakers means students save on the additional travel they would have to undertake to access these resources

women graduates who are selected through an entrance exam and interview. The free coaching centre is funded by the government of Tamil Nadu. But more still needs to be done. Despite having Anna Nagar, which is hailed as a magnet for civil service coaching centres and colleges grooming students to think of a career in UPSC, Chennai is yet to see a string of success stories. Delhi continues to see the highest number of successful UPSC candidates.

Fashioning civil servants for 25 years

For the last 25 years, Directorate of Employment and Training has been running ‘Study Circles’ that function at all the district employment and career guidance centres in the State. These centres assist aspirants in various competitive examinations including UPSC, TNPSC and RRB by conducting mock tests and inviting experts to conduct sessions. According to www.tnvelai-vaiippu.gov.in, free coaching is offered to the differently-abled aspirants by engaging sign language interpreters and Braille assistance is given to the visually challenged.

Coaching classes are also conducted at various universities and affiliated arts and science colleges to help economically weak students studying in the final year. In 2024 and 2025, at least 10 students who attended classes at the



Candidates take a mock test at the Study Circle.

Study Circle have cleared TNPSC examinations. One can avail these classes on all weekdays (between

10 a.m. and 1 p.m.). They also have a library with a good collection of books. The Study Circle is

located at Alandur Road, Thiruvika Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 94999 66026.

Handcrafted wishes

In a few days, there would be a burst of greetings. They would resonate with different wavelengths of emotion and effort. Simple and insincere. Simple but sincere. Complex yet insincere. Complex and sincere. That last category would encompass physical greeting cards that come at some price to the sender, the cost more hidden than revealed. These are customised and handcrafted cards; if the reader fancies sending them when 2026 dawns, they might want to pick the brains of these two residents of Chennai, one a corporate professional and the other yet to outgrow the school uniform



Jyotsna K and a couple of her works; and (below) Kavya Aravind and a display of some of the greeting cards she crafted. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

ASAP tech analyst Jyotsna K has an additional name card, one qualifying her as a crafter of greeting cards, always customised and sometimes elaborately so with the process of creation taking bites out of multiple days. Her works are up on Instagram (@that.corporate.artist), the page title underlining two parallel universes she occupies. Handcrafting greeting cards with a tone meant for the receiver and no other being in the entire cosmos was not meant to be her day job; it never was, and did not morph into one along the way. On the grounds that the works, as presented on Insta through reels, are strikingly good, it can across as her primary job. Hence a clarification from her is in order.

"I never planned this as a business," Jyotsna spells out. "People kept asking me to make something meaningful for someone they loved. That trust pushed me to continue. Working an evening shift as a SAP tech analyst (4 pm to 1 am) gives me a few quiet hours in the mornings, which I dedicate to my art – usually around three hours for creating orders or filming reels. On weekends, I shoot content in bulk and schedule it through the



week. It's not always easy to balance both, but doing something I truly love brings immense joy and keeps me going."

Besides making personalised greeting cards for customers, she also teaches how to make them, through workshops. A cache of reels on her Insta page function somewhat like tutorials, dishing out DIY greeting card ideas for special days – Teacher's Day, Father's Day and so on.

Handcrafted cards obviously do



days, obviously given her corporate job, with free hours snatched out of those days. But Jyotsna also runs marathons with these greetings. Scrap books with ten to twelve pages take several days, while resin elements require up to six days simply to dry. "Waiting becomes part of the experience," says Jyotsna, a resident of Adyar. "When someone orders a New Year card early, it already shows care."

Personalisation is ever an unpredictable child, there is no telling what new demand it has tucked in its armpit. Some customers arrive with reference reels saved on their phones, but many come with stories instead. "They tell me about their journey, their relationship, their memories," she says. These narratives are translated visually through photographs, handwritten messages, song references, dates and timelines. "It is never just decoration. It is about their story."

Handmade greeting cards start at ₹200, while scrapbooks are priced per page depending on

fort, multiple revisions, and quality material. Only the maker understands the patience involved."

Jyotsna notices that younger customers respond strongly to handmade New Year greetings. "Gen Z values emotional connection," she says. "They want something intentional. Something that feels chosen, not forwarded."

Warmth on paper

At age 11, a child would not be expected to carry projects from craft class at school over to the home, let alone carry the weight of a craft-based brand on their slender shoulders.

Kavya Aravind, 11 years old, carries the latter responsibility without flinching from its rigours. A student of Velachery-based Sunshine Chennai Senior Secondary School, Kavya runs Krafty Kings, quilling greeting cards, patiently coaxing flowers, trees and festive motifs (an immediate example being Christmas trees) out of thin paper strips. Greeting card making fits into the margins of her days shaped around school, homework and weekends – the support she receives from her parents ensures she does the balancing act commendably well.

"I started making greeting cards when I was in third grade," Kavya says. She learnt the art of quilling from a neighbour, beginning with a simple card adorned with quilled flowers. While not placing a cap on creatively, Kavya respects the power of seasonality while crafting greeting cards. For example, Christmas and New Year have their unique idioms, flavours and even tropes. She settles designs into the language of the season without a frown. "My friends asked me to make a Christmas greeting card with a tree," she says, as if such requests were inevitable.

Simple greeting cards can be completed in twenty to thirty minutes; the one with intricate designs, close to an hour. The tools are modest. Paper. Quilling strips. Glue. A slender quilling tool. Yet the smallest step often proves the most unforgiving. "The sticking part is the most difficult," Kavya admits. "If we do not put the right amount of glue, it will come off and we have to start again."

Kavya prices her greeting cards at ₹ 200; and canvas wall hangers at ₹ 250. Orders now arrive through WhatsApp groups.



not roll off the assembly line, and they gobble time like a gourmand. On an average, work on a handcrafted card is wrapped up in two

complexity. Pricing often invites questions. "To some people it looks like just paper," she admits. "But behind it is time, creative ef-

Volunteers spruce up temple



As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sri Krishna Sweets, in coordination with YACD Trust, Gopalapuram, held the 165th 'Paramam Pavithram' (cleaning seva) at Sri Raghavendra Swamy Tem-

ple in Triplicane.

More than 70 volunteers, formed into four groups, handled different aspects of the Seva, including cleaning the silver vessels and the temple premises, said a release.

More than 1,200 students (undergraduate and postgraduate courses) and Ph.D. scholars were awarded degrees and doctorates at the two-day 19th annual convocation of Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research (MAHER).

Additionally, 103 meritorious students received medals and certificates in recognition of their outstanding academic performance, said a release.

The ceremony was held on December 22 and 23 at the Meenakshi Medical College Hospital and Research Institute, Enathur in Kancheepuram district.

Renowned ophthalmologist Dr. Amar Agarwal, chairman of Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital, was the chief guest.

He emphasised the importance of lifelong learning and encouraged graduands to pursue success through hard work, perseverance and discipline.

During the two-day cere-

Headmaster of government school honoured at convocation



mony, Professor Nihal Thomas, head of the Centre for Stem Cell Research, Christian Medical College, Vellore, was conferred the 'Degree of Doctor of Science' in recognition of his contributions to the field of diabetology.

S. Ayyappan, Headmaster of the Government Tribal Residential School, Udumalpet, Tiruppur district, was honoured with the 'Jayanthi Radhakrishnan Award' for

educating tribal students.

The 'Akash Prabhakar Distinguished Sportsman Award' was conferred on Shiny Gladssia, a final-year B.B.A. student, for her achievements at the State and National level athletic events.

Jayanthi Radhakrishnan, chancellor of MAHER; Gomathi R, pro-chancellor; and Sureka Varalakshmi, registrar, took part in the ceremony, the release added.

Book release



A book titled "Sidewalk Parables - Snapshots of a Simple Life and Echoes from Epics" authored by Sudhakar Narayanan, a pharmaceutical trainer, was released recently. Ganesh Nayak, Executive Director of Zyds Group of Companies, was the chief guest.

According to a press release, around 150 veterans from pharmaceutical industry took part in the event which was held at a hotel in T. Nagar.

Awareness session on cancer



A women's club called Jothi Madhar Sangam in association with the Women's Indian Association organised an awareness programme on cancer. According to a press release, the event was held as a part of its 48th anniversary celebration. The session was handled by C. Shanthi from Kalpavriksham Trust, Privaram Cancer Hospital, Valasaravakkam.

She explained about breast cancer and cervical cancer covering symptoms and the importance of early detection. Close to 65 women took part.

Jothi Madhar Sangam is at Sukalayam, No. 70/44, Burkit Road, T. Nagar. For details, call 9841158018.



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Exhibition at Egmore Museum to benefit underprivileged artists



Thamizh Nilam Arts & Crafts Trust is conducting a two-day Grand Color Art & Craft exhibition and sale (December 27 and 28) at Contemporary Art Gallery in Government Mu-

seum, Egmore. The exhibition concludes today.

Organised by artist Jaffer, the exhibition will host many talented artists and craftspeople who are unable to con-

duct solo exhibitions to showcase their works due to the cost factor. According to a press release, Jaffer is gathering all these artists and craftspeople from various places, including remote areas, to exhibit their paintings and craft works.

Besides providing them with a platform to announce their skills to the world, this event will help them economically, as the artworks and craftsworks would be up for sale.

J.A. Premkumar, Deputy Editor (retired), *The Hindu* was the chief guest.

Applications invited

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC), Chennai, has invited applications from Industrial Training Institute (ITI) students (Mechanic Motor Vehicle, Mechanic Diesel, Electrician, Auto Electrician, Fitter, Turner, Painter, and Welder)

for a one-year professional acquaintance in ITI, with a stipend of ₹14,000 per month.

On January 3, 2026, MTC will conduct a special camp from 10 a.m. at the Industrial Training Institute, Chromepet, where students can apply for a one-year training programme, said a release.



Discourse on Tiruppavai

A discourse on Tiruppavai will be held from January 1 to 14 at its premise at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, East Mada Street, Mylapore. Time: At 7 a.m.

According to a press release, Dr. Sudha Seshayyan will render the discourse with vocal support by Samanvitha G. Sasidaran. The programme is open to all.

Storytelling event

Storyteller Pretigaya Haran is organising a storytelling event in which she will share some nostalgic personal tales from her life. It will be held in Teynampet on December 28. Time: From 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

According to a press release, no fee will be charged to take part in the event. The session will be of interest to those 16 years of age and above.

For venue and other details, call 8056051247.



Workshop on digital marketing using AI tools



Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME, is conducting a certified training programme on foundations of AI and digital marketing from January 7 to 9 at its premises at SIDCO Industrial Estate, Guindy. Time: From 10 a.m.

to 5 p.m.

According to a press release, the programme aims to help participants understand the core principles of artificial intelligence (AI) and its growing role in the field of digital marketing. The session will focus on Machine Learning,

Deep Learning, and Large Language Models such as ChatGPT.

Participants will have hands-on practical exercises in using real AI tools.

They include: Jasper, a tool for content generation in social media; Canva AI, a design tool for graphics; SEMrush, a tool for keyword research; and Sprinklr, a social media analytics and engagement tracking tool. Those above 18 years of age with a minimum qualification of class 10 and basic computer knowledge are necessary to take part in the programme. For details, call 9360221280 / 9840114680 or visit www.editn.in

Training session on making bio-enzyme cosmetic products

Entrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME, is conducting a workshop on making bio-enzyme cosmet-

ic products from January 6 to 8 at its premises at SIDCO Industrial Estate, EDII Office Road, Guindy. Time: From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Those above 18 years of age with a minimum educational qualification of class 10 can apply. Hostel facility is available. Prior registration is required.

For details, call 8668102600

Workshop on organic farming



Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on organic farming of vegetable crops on December 30. According to a press release, the session focuses on chemical-free methods to nourish soil and management of pests and plant diseases. Participants will also learn about certification of organic products.

Another workshop on chocolate making will be held on December 31. Participants will learn about making various flavours of chocolates made from fruits and dry fruits.

Both the sessions will be held at its premises at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy.

For details, call 044 - 29530048

Rally on diabetic retinopathy



Radhatri Nethralaya organised a rally to spread awareness on diabetic retinopathy at Elliots Beach in Besant Nagar recently. According to a

press release, close to 400 people including doctors, optometrists, school and college students, and autorickshaw drivers took part.

The annual event is held as part of Radhatri Nethralaya's Project RADAR (Radhatri Nethralaya Diabetic Retinopathy Project in Association with Rotary). The event was held with the support of Rotary Club of Chennai Towers and Federal Bank, adds the release.

In his address, Dr. Praveen Krishna, medical director, Radhatri Nethralaya underscored the importance of eye examination to rule out diabetic retinopathy, a blinding condition.

Radhatri Nethralaya is at 12, Hindi Prachara Sabha Street, T. Nagar. PH: 9445438681.

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