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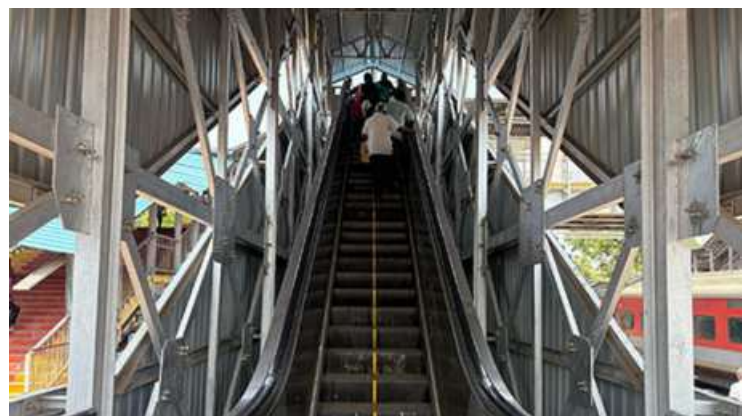
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READERS WRITE

'Escalators are needed at the entrances of Avadi railway station'



Escalators were inaugurated at Avadi railway station on platform one and four at Avadi railway station last week. But both are meant for ascending. Climbing down the staircase is also equally difficult, especially for senior citizens.

It should be noted select long-distance express trains halt at this station and passengers with luggage would need both as-

cending and descending escalators.

Also, escalators are needed at both the entrances of the station.

Otherwise, people would continue to cross the tracks. Southern Railway should do the needful.

T. Sadagopan,
president, Tamil Nadu Progressive
Consumer Centre (a citizens group) Avadi

ONE GOOD TURN DESERVES ANOTHER

Meet the conservancy workers who endeared themselves to residents through their acts of honesty **P4**



A SILKEN TOUCH TO THE LANDSCAPE

It is the time of year when silk cotton trees draw attention with their seed pods. Recalling how these trees furthered a sustainability goal, tree conservationist T.D. Babu points out that their presence in Chennai is dwindling **P6**



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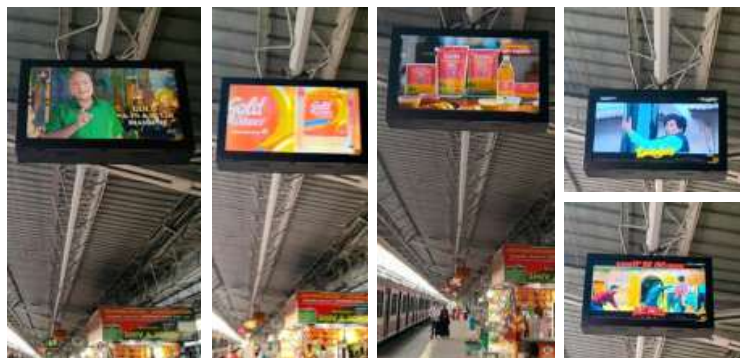
‘Walls marred by paintings from trade union poll campaign’



It is six months since railway's trade union elections were held. However, the posters and paintings on the walls relating to election campaigns continue to mar the premises of Vysarpadi Jiva railway station. This is the case in most of the stations

Raghukumar Choodamani,
convenor, Perambur
Neighbourhood
Development Forum

‘Information boards are of no use’



A series of advertisements in less than five minutes being played at electronic information boards at the Chennai Central sub-rurban railway station. The images were taken on April 29.

The electronic information boards at Chennai Central sub-urban railway station are not helpful as most of the time they are devoted to advertisements. In the recent days, only advertisements are played

and there is no information regarding the trains.

K. Baskar,
former member Divisional
Railway Users' Consultative
Committee, Chennai Division

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Rotary Club donates generator to school



Rotary Club of Madras T. Nagar donated a 62 KVA generator to Smt. Krishna Moolchand Maheshwari Vivekananda Vidyalaya at Nachiar

Chatram in Thiruninravur. According to a press release, the initiative was supported by Rotary Foundation and Aravind Laboratories.



Safety feature at Korattur railway station called into question

A fence at platform two is supposed to secure people from falling into the tracks or getting hit by a moving train, but it is too low to serve as an effective safety barrier

L KANTHIMATHI

The purpose of having a safety fence at platform two at Korattur railway station is defeated, thanks to its height. This platform handles local trains on one side and long-distance express trains on the other.

Long-distance express trains do not halt at the station; they just pass through it. And the fence is along the platform where express trains pass. Its purpose is to secure people from falling into the track or getting hit by a moving train. But commuters find the height of the fence too low to serve as a safety barrier.

“The wall is too low, less than one foot: it has to be raised to four feet. Four Vande Bharat high speed trains pass through this station every day,” says K. Baskar, former member of Southern Rail Users Consultative Committee and Divisional Rail Users Consultative Committee.

He had also registered a complaint about this safety hazard with Southern Railway but finds its reply unsatisfactory.

“The reply states the location at



▼ The fence at Korattur railway station.

the station stated in my complaint is a “non-platform area” and not a waiting area for passengers. My point is how anybody would know it is a non-platform area; there are no signboards to indicate that. The reply also pointed out that the fencing has been constructed in accor-

dance with the “Schedule of Dimension Norms” of the Indian Railways. If that is the case, why are the fences at other stations higher? However, on a positive note, the reply has added the feasibility of increasing the fence’s height will be explored,” he adds.



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S. Ravi: *a bond that got stronger*

Even after scraping the bottom of his savings, S. Ravi found himself distressingly short of what it took to keep his grandson in college. The college fees had to be arranged; and it was, in the nick of time, with help pouring in from expected quarters. Residents of Mandaveli Raja Street stepped in with financial support towards payment of the grandson's fees.

Why would these residents be so generous in their offer of support to Ravi?

Let us set the clock back by 11 months, and replay a scene from Mandaveli Raja Street.

A late breakfast following an early shift has the desirability of an oasis discovered after a long trudge through a desert. S. Ravi, was settling in for that kind of a breakfast, when his hand was "stayed" mid-air between the plate and the palate. Homemakers from a nearby household had searched high and low for a five-sovereign gold chain in vain, and as a last resort, were now turning to the only place they had not brought under their dragnet – the garbage bin – and the only man who can turn hope into reality. Without a second thought, Ravi put his meal aside. Calmly and carefully, he began sorting through the waste pile he had just collected.

Bit by bit, layer by layer, he shifted through the mess – until a soft glint of gold shone from beneath the rubbish. He handed it to the family, their relief and gratitude knowing no bounds.

Moved by Ravi's honesty and effort, residents of Mandaveli Raja Street passed the hat around, collecting ₹8,000 to give away to Ravi as a token of appreciation.

"It is not just about the money," Ravi says. "When people care, you feel like you belong. That is what matters. If I ever go hungry or need anything, I know they would be there for me."



Bomma Devi: *'adopted' by a neighbourhood*

The day dawned in drab, customary colours for this conservancy worker, but ended with a lustre that has not dimmed to this day. Bomma Devi, posted at Srinivasapuram in Foreshore Estate, found herself face-to-face with a resident – a differently-abled woman beside herself with anxiety as only someone who has lost a one-sovereign gold chain can be. The resident surmised the chain got inadvertently swept into the garbage.

"We had just started our work," recalls Devi, "but I promised her I would keep an eye out for the chain." Devi went beyond the promise: she sorted out the garbage thoroughly, and found the valuable piece of yellow metal. When Devi took the one-sovereign gold chain to the resident, the latter was overwhelmed with gratitude and she could not stop proclaiming Devi's honesty to anyone with ears that crossed her path. As the day ended, Devi had a sense of being accepted by the residents as their own; she felt belonged. Displays of gratitude and admiration have not ceased: many a morning, after sweeping the streets near the beach, she would be greeted not with an empty hand, but one holding a warm cup of tea or a refreshing glass of juice. These gestures, though small, speak volumes of the bond she has forged with the community.

Antony Samy: *being of help to someone brings joy*

One morning in September 2024, while Antony Samy was at his stomping ground in KK Nagar, he found himself having to accommodate a special, unusual request in his workaday duties. A security guard from Windsor Park Apartments brought him news of a lost diamond necklace, worth ₹5 lakh, mistakenly thrown away with the trash. The owner, distraught, had turned to the guard for help, who in turn sought Antony's assistance.

With permission from his supervisor, Antony sifted through the discarded rubbish. And after a few minutes, his efforts fructified – there was the unmistakable glint of diamonds in the refuse. Antony says the act of retrieving the diamond necklace and giving it to the resident filled him with immense joy.

Antony, a BOV operator and on Urbaser Summet's payrolls for the last five years, notes that the episode remains one of his cherished memories.

One good turn deserves another

They did not seem to be made for the spotlight, but they made their way to it by giving more than what their work demanded of them. Meet the conservancy workers who endeared themselves to residents through their acts of honesty. And when grounded by life's unexpected battles, these foot soldiers have found an uplifting hand in these residents

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL



Brand ambassadors: unappointed but unrivalled

Urbaser Sumeet, employed by Greater Chennai Corporation to handle solid waste management operations in seven of its zones, has a list to flaunt: one that reels off the names of conservancy workers whose acts of honesty upended what seemed "loss", in some cases a huge loss, to residents.

The list spanning the period from October 2020 to now includes diamond necklaces, gold chains, smartphones, wallets filled with cash and so on that were lost in the garbage pile by residents, and then retrieved and returned by conservancy workers.

As these workers earn far less than the value of what they return, these acts are a reminder that honesty can grow in the harshest of soils. Such commendable acts by individuals has won respect for the entire community of conservancy workers. Urbaser Sumeet views these conservancy workers as brand ambassadors, unappointed to that role but equal to what it demands.

Hari Balaji, head - information, education and communication, Urbaser Sumeet notes that these acts have brought residents and conservancy workers closer in many neighbourhoods.

Urbaser Sumeet runs internal recognition programmes such as "Everyday Heroes" (honouring two workers per zone monthly with a dinner at a resort in ECR) and "Emerging Leaders" (identifies and places mid-level staff in management pipelines). It also bolsters the educational aspirations of workers' children.

Urbaser Sumeet conservancy workers.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

PLAN YOUR WEEK

Chennai Organic Market moves to a new venue in Kilpauk

The monthly Chennai Organic Market held on the first Sunday of every month has moved to a new venue at Shri M. Ct. Muthiah Memorial Matriculation Higher Secondary School at Ormes Road in Kilpauk.

On May 4, besides shopping for organic fruits and vegetables, a palm leaf craft workshop for children will be conducted at



11.30 a.m. At 2 p.m., shoppers can be part of 'Know your Keerai' workshop

The organisers have requested shoppers to carry their own bags for purchase and containers for cold pressed oil and other goodies.

Ours is zero plastic/waste organic market, said a release.

For details, call 9962043710 / 8939138207

Introduction to star gazing

The Science and Nature Club of Periyar Nagar is organising a naked eye astronomy event on May 4 at 6.30 p.m. After a brief theoretical introduction to the aspects of stargazing by Duraiswamy Navaneetham, participants will be guided to locate Mars, Jupiter, stars and stellar constellations.

Entry is free. Those interested may contact 9962565743 for details. Details of the venue will be shared through WhatsApp. For registration: <https://shorturl.at/dl7Dp>

Workshop on Bonsai

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a workshop on chocolate making on May 8. According to a press release, preparation of chocolates of various flavours including mango, pineapple, and dry fruits will be demonstrated.

Another session on Bonsai, the art of growing trees in pots and containers, will be held on May 9. Both the workshops 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.

Chennai Super Mom contest on May 11

Iris Events, in association with Mom Junction, presents the 12th edition of Chennai Super Mom 2025 on May 11 at Ampa SkyOne Mall, Aminjikarai; 2 p.m. onwards. The event celebrates the beautiful bond between mothers and their little ones.

The contest is open to mothers with babies of two

years and less and expecting moms. Mom and Me fashion show, cookery contest, debate on parenting and Instagram reel challenges are some highlights of the event, said a release.

Participants also get exciting awards and prizes, added the release. For registration, call 9884783510/ 9841206506

GRT opens in Guduvancheri

GRT Jewellers has opened its 63rd branch in Guduvancheri. Located on GST Road, Nandivaram, near Guduvancheri bus terminus, the showroom offers customers various benefits.

Customers can avail a discount of ₹250 less per gram on gold jewellery, ₹75 extra per gram on old gold exchanges, and ₹12,500 off per carat on diamond value, said a release.

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Bravery award presented to Kannan Tamizhselvan

Dream India team along with Patterns honoured Kannan Tamizhselvan by conferring Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Bravery Award and a cash prize of ₹25,000. Recently, videos of the youngster saving the life of a school-going student who got electrocuted in Arumbakkam during the rains went viral. In the video, Kannan is seen stopping his motor bike to pull the boy out of the water.

After receiving the award, Kannan in his address recollected how he had no thought other

than saving the child. He also mentioned the importance of knowing CPR, said a release. His presence inspired the entire team. Suresh Kamath, founder and managing director of Patterns, handed over the certificate and award to Kannan. Natarajan Raman, managing trustee and co-founder of Dream India thanked Patterns and entire Dream India team for the support to conduct the event at a very short notice and in a grand manner, added the release.

MTC rennumbers bus services

The Metropolitan Transport Corporation has renumbered seven bus routes on an area basis. The route map of the route numbers will remain unchanged. The details of the bus routes are as follows.

Route Numbers: 121F (Madhavaram to Tambaram) will ply as 170A, 121H (Kaviyarasu Kannadasan Nagar - Tambaram) as 170T, 11G Extension (Iyyappathangal - Broadway) as 11M, 18A Extension (Broadway - Kilambakkam) as 18A, 91K (Thiruvanniyur - Kilambakkam) as 91, 66X (Poonamallee - Guduvancherry) as 66PX, and 121H Extension (Kaviyarasu Kannadasan Nagar - Kilambakkam) as 170TX, according to a release issued by the transport corporation.

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A silken touch to the landscape

It is the time of year when silk cotton trees draw attention with their seed pods. Recalling how these trees furthered a sustainability goal, tree conservationist T.D. Babu points out that their presence in Chennai is dwindling

PRINCE FREDERICK

Silk cotton (*Ceiba pendantra*) trees are having a productive spell now in Chennai, and they better make the most of it, as they would soon slip into obscurity and that would be their lot when they are not sporting the eye-catching seed pods.

From lining avenues in Chennai, they have been reduced to scattered insignificance. On Anderson Road, one will come across a stand of three silk cotton trees, pointing to their preferred status in the past

as avenue trees.

Now, they live unseen and are usually ignored except when they put out their seed pods. The seed pods, elongated and oval-shaped, are green in the flush of youth, and turn brownish and open up exposing bright-white, extremely fibres when mature. Silk cotton trees can now be seen giving up their fibres, the brown-coloured pods breaking open. There are some trees that have a mix of mature and immature pods; and some, such as the one at a gated community on Santhome High Road, display a profusion of still-young seed pods (they



Silk cotton trees at Anderson Road in Nungambakkam and Besant Avenue Road in Besant Nagar.

PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

did on April 25, 2025). But they could have matured since the last time they were seen, the natural process being accelerated naturally.

T.D. Babu, tree conservationist and a member of the Chennai District Green Council, notes an unfounded argument placed against the tree led to its unpopularity.

“Word spread without any basis

that the fluffy fibres would aggravate respiratory problems,” says Babu, suggesting that it was a case of giving a dog a bad name and hanging him.

And some *Ceiba pendantra* trees have been lost on account of infrastructure work.

“We lost five trees along Royapettah High Road, near the Luz Church Road-Kutchery Road junction, due to Metro rail project,” says Babu.

He says the loss of *Ceiba pendantra* is not just loss of green cover, but a loss to sustainability. Silk cotton trees (also known as kapok trees) were intricately and inextricably tied to a mundane, everyday of life – sleep and rest.

Before the proliferation of foam-based mattresses and pillows, those made with *ilavam panju* (silk cotton) were ubiquitous.

“We are living in times when we hear of how mattresses, foam-based mattresses are among the major pollutants of marine waters, and we cannot help thinking of

how easy the silk cotton mattresses were on the environment. A silk cotton mattress would never leave a home. When the silk cotton in a mattress has grown old, lost its suppleness and therefore its cushioning effect, it would be removed and dried and it would then go into making pillows. The mattress would be filled with fresh silk cotton. When a mattress has become irredeemable, the cloth would be stitched into pillow covers. Nothing ever left a home,” recalls Babu.

On Besant Avenue Road, at Rajaji Bhavan, maintained by Central Public Works Department and housing government offices, one finds tall *Ceiba pendantra* trees. The trees are reportedly around from the time the facility was established, which was in the late 1990s. According to someone who has seen these trees grow, they give up their branches in cyclone-induced gusty conditions. And he believes that this quality makes them an unfavourable choice as avenue trees.

Academy honours IAS achievers

The KingMakers IAS Academy recently held a felicitation ceremony to honour the 2024 Indian Civil Services Examination winners.

The annual examination by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) determines candidates for various elite government positions, including Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS).

More than 130 students from the academy cleared the examination.

The candidates who were felicitated include S. Saranya, who secured 125th rank; Harikrishnan K (784); Thanigai Arasan (259); S. Sai Kiran (298); Kavin Mozhi M V (546); Arun Prakash M (639); Karan Ayyappa

(691); and Kiran P (862).

Keerthika, who secured the 21st rank in the TNPSC Group 1 examination, was also recognised.

The candidates were presented with commemorative mementos, said a release.

Several distinguished retired officials and civil servants graced the event. They offered guidance to the aspiring officers about the responsibilities and opportunities that come with a career in the civil services.

The next batch of training are scheduled to begin in May, June and July. Graduates and those pursuing higher studies are welcome.

For details, call 94442 27273.



Basketball court inaugurated in Egmore



What was once an unkempt land overrun with wild vegetation and sporting dilapidated structures has not become a state-of-the-art basketball court.

Under the government's Namakku Naame Thittam, Sainath Sports Development Foundation has helped construct a basketball court at Veeraswami Street in Egmore, says a press release. It was officially opened on April 27, 2025 by Sekar Babu, Minister for Religious Endowments, and Kalanidhi Veeraswamy, Member of Parliament, North Chennai, the press release adds.

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