

DOWNTOWN

Sunday
January 18, 2026

THE HINDU

TAMBARAM

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Increased focus on public health sought

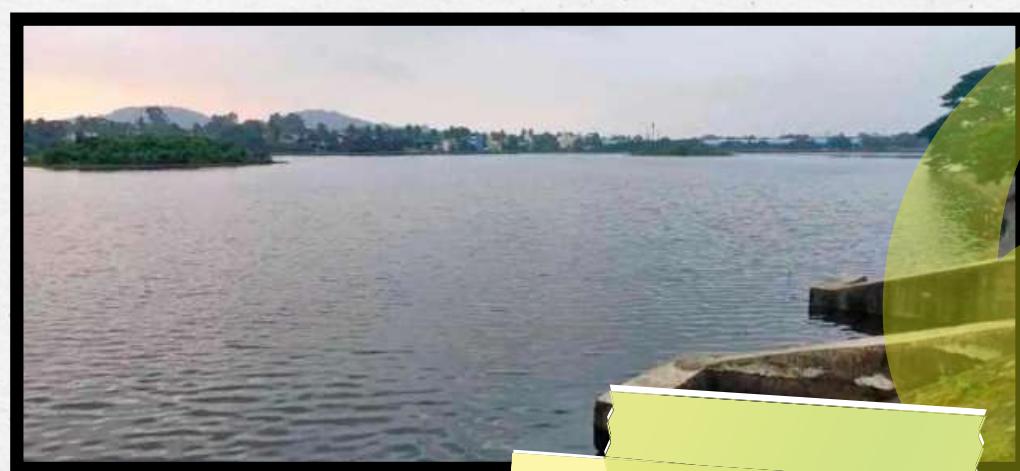
J. Moses, a social activist and a resident of Chromepet (East) points out that in 2025, Tambaram City Municipal Corporation faced major public health issues due to dengue and viral fever outbreaks, as well as ongoing problems with sewage and greywater entering stormwater drains. This situation posed a serious health risk and should have been actively addressed by the Corporation. Although the Corporation used Bacillus thuringiensis and diflubenzuron for larval control, investing about ₹11 lakhs, these measures needed ongoing monitoring to stay effective.

In heavily polluted street drains, the effectiveness of such measures usually declines within 7-14 days after application. Unfortunately, the Corporation's inadequate supervision contributed to the spread of infections and the subsequent hospitalisation of residents.

Instead of relying solely on repeated chemical treatments, Tambaram Corporation should focus on preventing the discharge of sewage and greywater into stormwater drains and canals. Tackling the root cause is crucial for keeping the environment clean and salubrious.

It is sincerely hoped that 2026 will bring a better and more proactive approach to environmental health and public safety for the residents of Tambaram Corporation.

WHAT RESIDENTS WANT



'Construct underground drainage system'

L. Sundararaman, president, Chitlapakkam Muthulakshmi Nagar Welfare Association, has a five-point reminder note for the Tambaram Municipal Corporation. In addition, he has a couple of requests, one for the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) and the other for Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL).

First, the note for Tambaram Municipal Corporation – construction of an underground drainage system to address the issue of sewage water running in the stormwater drain networks and contaminating the Chitlapakkam and Sembakkam lakes; reconstruction of a stormwater drain network on Viswamitra Street for the rainwater to flow into Sembakkam lake; completion of a 360-degree walkway on the bunds of Chitlapakkam lake; construction of a bridge across the Chitlapakkam lake connecting Periyar Nagar, Tambaram Sanatorium and Chitlapakkam Third Main Road, Chitlapakkam; facilitating a proper roundtana at the junction of Chitlapakkam First Main Road, Chitlapakkam Main Road and Chitlapakkam Second Main Road; and restoration of an open well behind a park in the locality. Along the well boundaries, tree branches should be pruned and a grill cover should be installed. Last week, a dog jumped over the wall and fell into the well. The Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services personnel responded quickly and rescued the dog.

For CMWSSB, a plea for the inclusion of Chitlapakkam in the Chembarambakkam drinking water scheme.

For CMRL, a reminder that it has to commence its network expansion from Chennai International Airport in Tirusulam to Kilambakkam.

A plea for drinking water supply

B. Saravanan, a social activist and a resident of Thiruneermalai, points out that around 20,000 people reside at Saraswathipuram, Saraswathipuram Extension, Ranga Nagar, N.S.K. Street, Kaasi Garden, Subburayan Nagar, Temple Town, Navarathna Flats and Jain Housing, a multi-storeyed apartment complex, under the jurisdiction of Ward 31 of the Tambaram City Municipal Corporation for years. But residents of these areas are yet to receive drinking water facilities. This section of the region is neglected by the civic body despite numerous appeals. I hope the authorities con-

cerned would do the needful this year.

Further, the Water Resources Department has completely drained the water from Thiruneermalai Periya Eri as part of the ongoing restoration work at the lake.

The groundwater level has also been reduced, and its total dissolved solids exceed 2,000, making it neither drinkable nor suitable for purification and use for washing or sanitary purposes. The residents rely on water tankers and water cans for drinking purposes.

The State Government should allocate funds to desilt and deepen 'Nattu Kalvai', construct a retaining wall around it, and make a closed canal from Parvathipuram, through Saraswathipuram Extension, Ranga Nagar, and Temple Town till the canal reaches Adyar river.

During the monsoon, the region floods due to heavy runoffs from Thiruneermalai Periya Eri and rainwater collected from surrounding areas. The present retaining walls are not able to prevent flooding. The Water Resources Department should carry out and complete the Thiruneermalai lake restoration work, desilt and deepen it, and remove the sludge, strengthen the bunds, plant native trees such as palm and neem trees, and construct a walkway.

Once the Water Resources Department completes the project, it should hand it over to the ESI and the MEPZ to carry out their projects, such as beautifying the lake and installing an STP to treat sewage water.



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SCAN TO LOCATE



As evening walkers gather by the waterbody, a small music ensemble led by a retired insurance officer presents a performance to raise funds for visually challenged artistes and underprivileged families

Ragas at Chitlapakkam lake for a cause



T. ARVIND

When the Chitlapakkam lake shimmers in the gloaming, music floats across the promenade, disrupting walkers' routine, turning them into eager rasikas. The "disrupter-in-chief" is V.S. Anantharaman, a retired Development Officer, United India Insurance Company, who wades in with a modest set of instruments, a microphone and a donation box. A donation box indeed! A small ensemble of visually challenged musicians assist Anantharaman in these daily music performances and are in turn benefitted by the generosity of the

listeners. The objective of these daily music performances travels on a dual-track: one, supporting those visually challenged musicians as well as underprivileged families; and the other obvious one has to do with keeping lake visitors entertained.

The concert begins at 5.30 p.m. first running through a set of Hindu, Christian and Muslim devotional songs, striking the chord of unity in a resounding manner. Following this, as the shadows deepen, the lake is doused in sounds of popular film songs.

Anantharaman founded this karaoke orchestra, "Ananda Raaghavam Innisai Kuzhu", following his

retirement from UIIC, Tambaram, letting his passion for music drive a social service. Among the regular performers are Syed, known for his effortless renditions of T.M. Soundararajan's songs, and James, whose repertoire of Hindi songs includes classics by Kishore Kumar and Mohammed Rafi. Their music, lake regulars say, adds warmth to the renovated public space.

"With the lake now a hub for walkers and nature lovers, the music enhances our daily routine," says Charles, an IT professional and regular visitor.

An active singer himself, Anantharaman had earlier been part of Ayyappa troupes performing devo-

tional songs in praise of Lord Ayyappa, besides amateur music orchestras. "Meeting Prabhakar, a talented but physically challenged singer at the mobile orchestra in Tambaram, moved me deeply. I felt this should become a public cause," he recalls.

After Prabhakar's passing, the group continued its support for Syed and James, who have since become familiar voices along the lake. Several walkers, including Amritaraj and Ramaswamy, have

also joined the effort as volunteer singers.

An extended mission

Beyond supporting the two artistes and their families, the group funds the education of six children from economically weaker sections and provides essential provisions to an equal number of underprivileged families. The annual expenditure, Anantharaman says, is around ₹3 lakh. Anantharaman can be contacted at 9444269926.



Visually challenged singers Syed and James are beneficiaries of this exercise. V.S. Anantharaman (in maroon winter jacket) is the founder of Ananda Raaghavam Innisai Kuzhu
PHOTOS: T. ARVIND

READERS WRITE

'Shift trash bins out of street in Pazhavanthangal'



The Alandur Zone of Greater Chennai Corporation should relocate the trash bins on Poonthottam Main Road in Pazhavanthangal.

The road is 20-feet wide, and when garbage overflows from the bins there is hardly any walking space. Sometimes, cows topple the bins, making the place messy.

Besides pedestrians heading to Meenambakkam railway station, students studying at Prince Srivari Senior Secondary School, Agur-chand Manmull Jain School and Infant Jesus English School use the stretch. The other option is to take a detour through A.M. Jain College.

N. Narayanan is a resident of Pazhavanthangal

'Development work should not be at the expense of greeneries'

To facilitate drinking water supply system for the residents of Madambakkam, Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) has axed trees and plants on the service road along the western lane of Agaramthen Road and the eastern lane of Bypass Road (along Agaramthen Road) to lay the pipes.

It is painful to see these deve-

lopments coming at the expense of green trees and plants.

The pipes will carry water to localities in the region from the 400 MLD seawater desalination plant at Perur near Nemmeli. Even residents of Tambaram, Pallavaram, Pammal, and Sembakkam regions will benefit from this project.

R. V. Baskaran is a resident of Selaiyur



'Tambaram residents face power cuts often'

Over the past few weeks, residents of Sundaram Colony in East Tambaram have been experiencing frequent power outages and voltage fluctuations, causing significant

inconvenience.

Residents have reported damage to essential electrical and electronic appliances and other household equipment.

This has resulted in financial losses and disruption to daily activities for people working from home and students attending online classes.

I request that Tamil Nadu Pow-

er Distribution Corporation Limited to take immediate steps to identify the causes of these issues and ensure a stable, uninterrupted power supply to our area. Besides, necessary preventive measures and proper maintenance of transformers must be taken up.

A. N. Lakshmi pathi is president of Sundaram Colony RWA, East Tambaram

RWAs reroute textile and footwear waste this Pongal

Threads & Treads, an initiative that gets communities in the OMR and Tambaran regions to dispose of their old clothes and shoes responsibly, gets off to a flying start with nearly three tonnes of this waste being stopped from hitting the dumping grounds



HARSHA KODA

In a significant step toward urban sustainability, the inaugural edition of Threads & Treads has successfully diverted almost three tonnes of post-consumer waste from landfills. Initiated by Spreco Recycling, the community-led collection drive saw active participation from 17 residential societies across the Tambaram-OMR belt. The drive was organically linked to the

season with the poster crafted in appreciation of the 17 communities' effort, reading: "Members from 17 RWAs got new clothes for Pongal and gave us their old ones!"

The drive specifically targeted overlooked waste streams, collecting 2,100 kg of textiles and 650 kg of footwear. Unlike traditional disposal methods, this initiative ensures a circular lifecycle for every item; all collected materials will be responsibly repaired, refurbished, reused or recycled.

By establishing a transparent, community-level system, Threads & Treads addresses the growing challenge of fabric and shoe waste. The project's success was bolstered by strategic partnerships with Simple, FOMRRA, ReCity, and Bisleri's Bottles for Change. This collaboration highlights the power of collective action in building scalable, eco-friendly solutions for a cleaner Chennai.

(Harsha Koda is co-founder of Federation of OMR Residents Associations)

'Save Nemilichery Lake from degradation'

T.S. ATUL SWAMINATHAN

Nemilichery Eri, a vital waterbody in Hasthinapuram, is facing environmental degradation. Once a primary source of groundwater for residents of Chromepet, Hasthinapuram and Nemilichery, today the lake is choked with water hyacinth and littered with trash and construction debris.

R. Ramadas, a social activist who was part of a team that revived the lake less than six years ago, says lack of interest by Tambaram City Municipal Corporation has put the maintenance work on the back burner.

It is common to see residents from nearby localities use the lake area as a dumping

ground. People building houses in the vicinity dump construction materials in the lake area, he adds.

The invasive 'Seemai Karuvellam' has taken over the banks.

Tambaram City Municipal Corporation should plug the illegal sewer inlets to the rainwater canal. The dumping of trash and sewage has created heavy silt deposits in the canal, blocking the natural flow of rainwater and turning the area into a breeding ground for mosquitoes and a health hazard, say social activists.

The Nethaji Nagar Main Road – situated on the lake's edge – has become a hub for anti-social activities, including liquor consumption, due to a lack of lighting and patrolling.



A view of a section of Nemilichery Eri that is in a sorry state.
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Pongal restored to ‘factory settings’

In urbania, Pongal is often a mere holiday providing respite from the everyday grind. At some corporate houses, usually one day in advance, the marbled aisle between banks of cubicles would sport the boiling rice pot and host traditional games that go link-armed with the harvest festival. For the 9to5ers, this is an act of symbolism, one designed to strengthen their bonds with teammates. Here are two corporate professionals from Chennai who decided to go in for the real McCoy — having all of these festivities in its original settings, on the earthen path with stubbles of grass separating paddy fields. For them, this is an act of gratitude, one that renews their bond with the land where they grow their own food. Treading separate paths, these two represent a growing tribe among the urbane that seeks greater purpose by pausing the bustle, if not muting it entirely



At Chennai-based tech consultant Kiruba Shankar's Vaksana Farms in Rettanai village, Tindivanam.

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Only a toehold in Chennai

Parameswaran Natarajan has exchanged the fast lane for a pace of living best described as a leisurely lumber. There is a literality to what was just said. From being an auto journalist with reputed publications who test-drove cars that pretend to possess the speed of light, almost convincingly, he settled on a form of existence where pauses for ‘just being’ are as pronounced as bursts of activity.

Welcome to Lazy Grasshopper Farm set in a parcel of land (a two-hour drive from Chennai, at Ozhavetti village near Madurakam) that he and his wife Ayesha Chandy purchased a few years ago. Residents of Pudupakkam, where the bustle from the nearby IT Corridor (aka Old Mahabalipuram Road) is only barely muted, the two have created the option of cutting out the noise entirely when they choose to.

The farm is a demanding entity with fields of paddy seeking care, cows bellowing for their share of attention and farmhands needing supervision.

Parameswaran and Ayesha,

who is a chartered accountant, grow organic paddy on a limited scale, primarily for friends and family and then for the larger world (check out thelazygrasshopperfarm.com). Guests are accommodated at the farm. Growing their own rice has altered Parameswaran’s understanding of the harvest festival. “You are not just boiling over some Pongal at home. Out here, you are part of the land. You are part of what the celebration is.” Parameswaran’s switch to a lower gear was expected, having been marinated in J Krishnamurthy’s philosophy organically through education in a KFI school in Chennai. Seeking the same educational anchor for their son keeps Parameswaran and Ayesha still tethered to Chennai, Ayesha more so than Parameswaran. Parameswaran comes into Chennai only when he absolutely has to. “Very occasionally,” is how he would like to put it. The primary reason for having a toehold in Chennai is his son Armaan’s education. The boy is in Class XI at a KFI school in Thazhambur. For now, Parameswaran lives mostly on the farm, while his wife spends most of her time in the city. When his presence is required Chennai, the arrangement is reversed; Ayesha holds the fort at Ozhavetti.



The tech consultant is also the farmer

When Virugambakkam-based tech entrepreneur Kiruba Shankar is at his 13-acre organic permaculture farm (vaksanafarms.in) in Rettanai, a village in Tindivanam that is a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Chennai, he is not seeking an escape from urban life, not entirely.

This is how Kiruba, who runs a digital consulting firm in Virugambakkam, views farming:

“I consider this my second profession.”

He alternates between Virugambakkam and Rettanai, one week here and the next there.

There is therefore an earthiness to how Pongal is observed in Kiruba’s household; an expansiveness to the festive spread.

At 2.30 a.m., the household is already awake with Kiruba’s wife, mother, daughters, and Kiruba himself preparing a feast that is both abundant and grounded. Sixteen vegetable dishes are cooked, using produce grown on the farm or sourced from neighbouring fields.

The land itself shapes the celebration. The farm grows rice, pulses, greens, coconuts, and over a dozen varieties of vegetables. Its orchards hold nine varieties of mango, multiple varieties of guavas and bananas, not to mention citrus fruits such as lime and sweet lime.

For Pongal, the farmstay run by his parents is booked months in advance. Guests are mostly urban professionals who grew up in villages or watched their parents and grandparents celebrate Pongal close to the soil. They do not come to observe, but to participate. They wake early, dress in veshti and saris, cut vegetables, stir pots, and stand close by when the Pongal boils over. As evening settles, the celebration moves beyond the farm. Guests travel by tractor trailer and bullock carts to the centre of Rettanai, where the village gathers. Dressed in saris, and veshti, villagers welcome city visitors even foreign guests without ceremony. They join the games, the conversations, and the shared pulse of a village neck deep in festivities.

Farming has profoundly changed Kiruba’s relationship with food. Growing rice takes nearly 95 days from seed to plate, involving backbreaking labour, uncertainty and persistence. “When you know that journey,” he says, “you develop deep respect for food.”

Pongal fervour in the neighbourhood



Christians from various districts of the state got together to celebrate the harvest festival at St. Thomas Mount Church on January 16; and shoppers crowding West Tambaram market ahead of Pongal on January 14.

PHOTOS: VELANKANNI RAJ B AND UMESH KUMAR

Talent hunt for children with special needs

DSW Trust is conducting a talent hunt for children with special needs and persons with disabilities.

Children of all capabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, are invited to express their skills in a safe, inclusive and encouraging environment. As part of the selection process, auditions are conducted every Saturday and Sunday at Guru Vidhyashram Special School centres across Chennai, ensuring accessibility and comfort for participating children and their families.

The talent hunt features music, dance, art and other creative forms. Prior registration is a must to take part in the event.

Parents, guardians, and institutions supporting children with special needs can register through the official link:

[https://dswtrust.org/
events/talent-hunt-2026](https://dswtrust.org/events/talent-hunt-2026)

For further details, call 90434 07150 / 98408 94264.

Handloom exhibition in Selaiyur



Free yoga classes

Satyananda Yoga Centre will be conducting a four-week free yoga class at three venues (K.K. Nagar, Nanganallur and Velachery).

For registrations, call 98412 27709, 94450 51015 for Nanganallur; 87544 99334, 94450-51015 for Velachery; and 63830 08358, 94450-51015 for K. K. Nagar.

A display of talent and sportsmanship



Sujay Public School on Vadakkupattu Main Road in Medavakkam recently celebrated its seventh annual sports meet. The programme began with a lively opening ceremony featuring a student march from each house. Various track events, drills and other fun-filled games were conducted for students and parents. The Godavari House lifted the overall championship trophy, followed by the Cauvery House as the first runner-up. The meet showcased talent, unity and sportsmanship, said a release.

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The unseen lives of Chennai's beach horses

As earnings for beach horse ride operators dwindle, the equines find themselves hobbling unsteadily on the shifting sands of malnutrition and poor health care



RHENIOUS JOHN TYSON A.
HARRY JASON ROY M.

For the people of Chennai, the Marina is not just a beach but a part of their identity. The rhythm of the tides, the cool, refreshing breeze, and the constant buzz of vendors and visitors make this beach what it is. But there is one other presence at the Marina that always manages to pull a beachgoer's attention: the horse.

A horse ride at the beach is cherished by children and adults alike, but one rarely wonders where they go once the crowds thin out. Housed in makeshift shelters under the Chepauk, Lighthouse and Triplicane MRTS stations along the Chennai Beach-Velachery MRTS

line, most of these horses have seen better days. Animal rights activists have time and again raised concerns about their upkeep, but their owners say the earnings from the rides are so little that they are unable to sustain themselves and the animals.

According to the owners, the horses used for joy rides are mostly native breeds, mainly sourced from Maharashtra, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka's Mysore and Bijapur regions. Most of them are purchased after they undergo basic training and medications. The owners claim that the daily upkeep of a single horse costs about ₹500, with earnings of ₹1,000 on weekdays and around ₹2,000 on weekends.

K. Kumar, 35, who maintains horses under the Triplicane MRTS

station, said the income from the horse rides does not amount to much and is not sufficient to feed his family. "These animals feed us, and we feed them. That is how it is," he remarked.

Microchipping beach horses

It is concerning how these animals are maintained, says Shruti Vinod



The horses are accommodated in spaces under overhead MRTS tracks

Revision in schedule of air-conditioned trains

The Chennai Division of the Southern Railway has revised the schedule and timings of following air-conditioned electric trains in the Chennai Beach - Tambaram section. The revised schedule will come into effect today and apply only on Sundays.

Train Number: 49004 will depart Tambaram at 14.25 hrs and arrive at Chennai Beach at 15.20 hrs.

Train Number: 49005 will depart from Chennai Beach at 15.52 hrs and arrive at Tambaram at 16.47 hrs.

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Raj, Member, Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board (TNAWB). In 2023, the TNAWB began microchipping beach horses to keep track of their health. As many as 122 horses were microchipped at the Marina, Chepauk, Lighthouse, Ripon Building, and Besant Nagar, in August 2023. At present, however, there are only 51 microchipped horses in the city, as per data from an inspection, Raj said, expressing apprehension that the remaining may have died or been sold.

"The Board is in the process of implementing a policy on beach horses to address these issues. The policy will outline regulations regarding horse maintenance, operating hours, and penalties for repeat offenders who fail to maintain their horses," Raj said.

She added that horses are very sensitive animals and they should not be taken out between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., as hot sand could damage their hooves and weaken them. While acknowledging that maintaining a horse is expensive, she insisted that owners must take better measures for their upkeep.

Colic, meaning severe abdominal pain, is very common among beach horses, and is caused by a lack of proper food, she said. "Horses should be rolled in the sand to prevent colic. This, however, cannot be done in makeshift shelters, causing many to eventually die," she further said, adding that while some owners take genuine effort to care for their horses, many fail to do so due to financial constraints.

Lack of Shelter

R. Devaraj, a horse owner, claimed that during heavy rains, many like him are unable to shelter the horses, leaving them exposed to the elements. "The TNAWB provides food for the animals during the rainy season. Likewise, building sheds would benefit the animals," he said. To improve welfare of horses, the TNAWB has come up with a ₹3.5-crore proposal to prevent cruelty, and to help maintain beach horses with all necessary arrangements, including stables, treatment facility, feed and medicines, manpower, and veterinary specialists.

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