

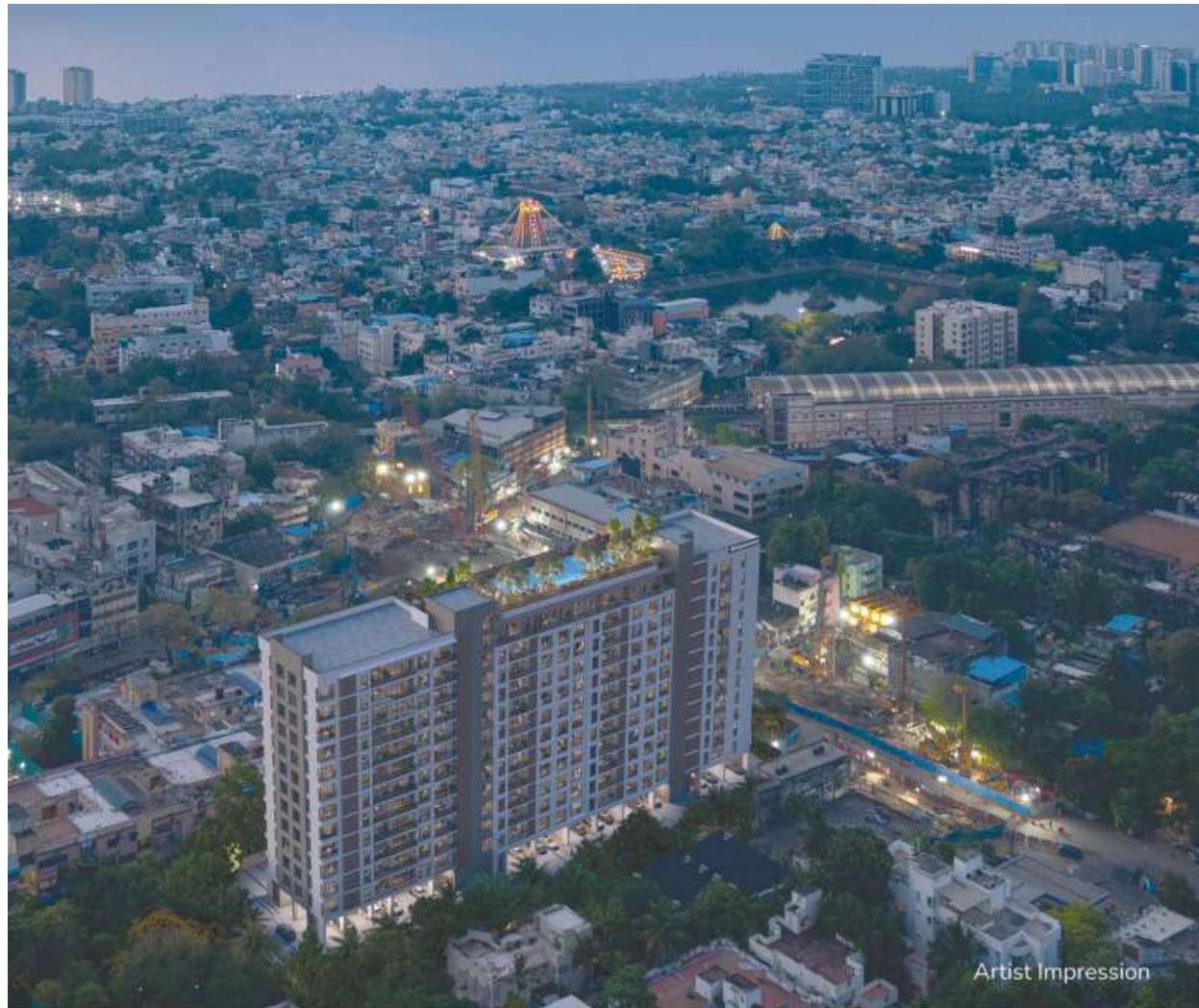
# DOWNTOWN

Sunday  
February 1, 2026

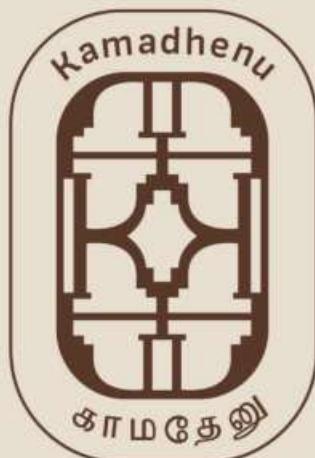
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# Amid heavy rains, a daring rescue

V. Sankar, who won the Anna Medal for Gallantry 2026, recalls the series of events that led to this moment in the spotlight

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**T**he news of bagging 'Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Anna Medal for Gallantry' came as a surprise for V. Sankar, working as driver mechanic with Esplanade Station of Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Service.

"The District Collector of Nilgiris had recommended our names, and I got to know I am among the awardees three days before Republic Day," says Sankar, who is two months old in Chennai, having come here on promotion.

Three firefighters – V. Shankar; S. Ramesh Kumar and P. Suresh – received the Anna Medal for Gallantry 2026 for their heroic act of saving a family of three in a flash

flood in Coonoor last year.

On May 25, 2025, three people travelling in a car to Dharmagiri via Perisolai, were caught in a flash flood on their route where a tributary of Pandyar river flows.

Trapped in the flood waters, they climbed on to the car's roof and were fighting for their lives. Upon receiving the information, the station officer and personnel from Coonoor Fire Station rushed to the scene.

Tying ropes around their waist, they jumped into the swirling waters, swam and rescued the three from the half submerged car.

The rescue operation was challenging as it was around 1 a.m. when the team reached the scene and the water levels were high. "It was a deep forest, pitch dark and

we did not know what lay 50 feet below," says the 35-year-old native of Karur.

In the 13 years of service with the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Service, Sankar has received a cash award seven times. He has taken up many other challenging tasks. "In 2020, tribal families were caught in the flood waters that had engulfed them from all sides," he says, referring to it as a daring act.

Sankar says he is still learning on the job and is grateful to the department for equipping them with new skills and his family for motivating him.

Sankar has worked both in cities and rural areas.

The award carries a cheque of ₹ 1 lakh, a medal worth ₹ 9,000 and a certificate.



V. Sankar receives the award from the Chief Minister



Dignitaries at the event.

## An honour for mothers

This is the 15th year of the initiative by Sri Krishna Sweets

**S**ri Krishna Sweets held its annual event honouring mothers of achievers for the 15th consecutive year at Narada Gana Sabha in Alwarpet recently.

Several mothers of prominent personalities were honoured with shawls and mementoes during the ceremony.

Among them were Bama Ramanan, mother of Saraswathi, founder of Event Kala; K. M. Dhanaponnadai, K. M. Annamalai, chancellor, Gandhi Gram University; Hamsa Kalyanasundaram, Meera Nagarajan, managing director of Kalyana Malai; Kalyani, Venkatesh, a spiritual speaker; Par-

vathi Subramaniam, Sundar Subramaniam, a social activist, Sathiyabama Chandran, Saini Surendran, a sports and nutrition consultant; V. Vijayalakshmi, V. Uma, founder of Suyam Foundation; Dhanalakshmi Natarajan, Senthil Natarajan, Kovai Pazhamudir Nilayam, Gomathi Lingam, Subasree Sriram of Sriram Capital; Jaya Palanivelu, Dr. Praveen Raj, Gem Hospital; Meenakshi, M. Swaminathan, a legal advisor, Subha Narayanan, Sandip Narayanan, a Carnatic singer; Sunanda Sripathi Udupa, Ganesh of Highway Motels; and Vasantha Devanathan, Anu Sriram of Integra Software Services.

Nalli Kuppuswami Chetty, chairman of Nalli Silks; V. Kamakoti, director of the Indian Institute of Technology - Madras; Ramdass Rao, president of the Tamil Nadu Hotels (Hoteliers) Association; and writer Sivasankarai attended and spoke.

Nalli Kuppuswami Chetty said the initiative to honour the mothers had deeply touched him, noting that mothers' sacrifices plays a crucial role in shaping successful individuals.

He commended M. Murali for acknowledging them and honouring their contributions.

## Award for 'most public service initiatives'

Ingenious Charm World Records (ICWR) has recognised M. Murali of Sri Krishna Sweets for achieving the world record title 'Most public service initiatives conducted by an individual as part of a continuous citizen social responsibilities movement'.

According to a release, from 1996 TO 2020, M. Murali organised and executed more than 15,000 public service initiatives under the citizen-led movement "Naaldorum Nalladhu Seiyvom - Doing One Good Deed Every Day."

The initiatives addressed healthcare, education, environmental conservation, women empowerment, cultural and literary preservation, spirituality, patriotism, and humanitarian welfare, benefiting lakhs of individuals across India and internationally, added the release.

The certificate was issued in January 2026 during the prestigious "Salute to Mothers" programme by Anand Rajendran, chief, ICWR, and Bindu Priyanka, chief coordinator, ICWR.



M. Murali receives the award

## MYLAPORE

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### COUNTDOWN FOR CLEANLINESS AUDIT BEGINS

As Chennai gears up for the 10th edition of Swachh Survekshan, a reminder that participation of its residents will go a long way in improving its ranking **P3**



### THE BINS ARE STILL THE BEST BET

For Chennai residents given to long drives on ECR, the beachside expanse at Therkupattu is a familiar bivouacking spot. The patch is plagued by littering, particularly during weekends **P4**

## Remembering the teachers



**T**he alumni of St. Bede's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School in Santhome, who passed out in 1985, celebrated their 40th year reunion at a grand get-together held at MRC, Guindy.

Thirty Bedeans of 1985 batch participated including the six from the U.S. and the U.K. Members of the batch are well placed in various professions and as a mark of gratitude presented mementos to 10 teachers, three of whom are headmasters. They are former headmasters Fr. P.J. Sebastian, Fr. K.J. Antony and Fr. Santhosam John, along with teachers Rajamoni, F.Samuel, G.Ramamurthy, N.Devdoss, T.Amalraj, J.Tharcius and Mary Nathan.

Several alumni expressed their deep gratitude to St. Bede's for providing them with a strong academic foundation, discipline and opportunities in extracurricular activities, which played a crucial role in shaping their careers and personal lives.

M.A. Sivakumar from the batch recalled how the priests were very considerate when he lost his father while pursuing Class X.

"We were the early batch when the school was transitioning into a higher secondary school and many changes were effected in the curriculum including an extended academic year. The teachers gave their best. For instance, Amalraj sir, gave us the foundation in accountancy and was against us enrolling



From the event

in tuition classes. Being attentive in his class was more than enough," recalled Sivakumar.

Fr. P. J. Sebastian, in his address, said that even after 40 years, he could still recognise and remember many of the students, and expressed happiness at seeing them well settled and successful in their careers. Fr. K.J. Antony fondly recalled teaching history to the batch and expressed pride in their achievements, while Rev. Fr. John Santhosam reminisced about teaching Mathematics to the students during their higher secondary years.

The Class of 1985 collectively contributed funds, which will be utilised to support the education of needy students of St. Bede's School by assisting with school fees, added the release.

A new feature at Victoria Public Hall



A food court has been set up at the Victoria Public Hall premises for visitors.  
PHOTO : VELANKANNI RAJ B

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▼ India's 77th Republic Day celebrations at Marina, near Labour Statue saw colour, pride and patriotism. With majestic military displays, cultural performances from across the state and a strong display of national unity, the parade showcased India's rich heritage and growing strength. PHOTOS: RAGU R

## Business challenge test on February 15

Santhoshni Academy's Business Challenge Test has launched a unique diagnostic initiative designed for Grade 11 or Grade 12 commerce students. Unlike conventional tests that focus on definitions, formats or marks, this programme attempts something different, said a release.

It seeks to understand whether students are able to apply their academic learning in Accountancy and Business Studies to real-life companies, startups, and business situations that they have already observed around them. The exercise allows students to express how they understand business in the real world.

The Business Challenge Test is conducted entirely in paper-and-pencil mode, to allow students to slow down and think deeply (mobile not allowed).

The test will be held at #42-A, Second Floor, Asoka Street, Bhemanna Garden Street, Abhiramapuram, Alwarpet, on February 15. Participation is completely free, though seating is limited.

The programme is designed and evaluated by a group of Chartered Accountants and Cost and Management Accountants, each with over 15 years of experience working in corporates and teaching CA and CMA students, added the release.

Interested students can WhatsApp +91 814 814 3737 to register.



### Bhavan's Tamizh Isai Vizha

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is conducting 'Bhavan's Tamizh Isai Vizha' from February 1 to 6 at its main auditorium in East Mada Street, Mylapore. Vocal concerts: 1st Feb: 6.00 pm: K.Gayathri, 2nd Feb: 6.30pm: Amritha Murali, 3rd Feb: 6.30 pm: Anahitha & Apoorva, 4th Feb: 6.30 pm: Sirkazhi Sivachidambaram, 5th Feb: 6.30pm: Gayathri Girish and 6th Feb: 6.30pm: Brindha Manickavasagan. The programmes are open to all.

### Donate hair for cancer patients

The Candles, a voluntary organisation, is organising a hair donation drive from February 5 to 28 to mark World Cancer Day. Donors must have a minimum of 10 inches of hair. Coloured and grey hair will not be accepted, says a press release.

Donations can be made at Studio Vogue Luxury Salon, No. 17, Laxmi Street, New Avadi Road, Kilpauk, from 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on all days except Saturdays and Sundays, says the release.

The donated hair will be given to the Adyar Cancer Institute to make free wigs for cancer survivors, according to the press release. To register, WhatsApp 8248364496.

### Workshop inspired by Shivaratri

Culture Caravan, a group dedicated to making heritage learning fun and meaningful for children, is organising a fun and engaging workshop titled "The God with the Third Eye" for children aged 5-10 years, inspired by the spirit of Maha Shivaratri that falls on February 15, 2026. The workshop is happening on February 7; 10.30 a.m. at Kartwheel - Kids' Play Zone, Balaraman Road, Baktavatsalm Nagar, Adyar.

# ENVIRONMENT

LIFFY THOMAS

The city is back on the examination table as another edition of Swachh Survekshan 2026, the annual survey conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to rank cities on cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation, is under way.

Those working on the ground with Greater Chennai Corporation say the outcome will depend as much on citizen's civic sense as on the civic infrastructure, reminding residents that cleanliness starts at home.

The city's performance has not been promising in the last few editions. From fifth position in 2023, the city slipped to a dismal 104 in 2024. Last year, Chennai's ranking improved, but still did not prevent it from being a laggard in the area of cleanliness: it was placed in the 38th position.

Before a team from the Central Government visits the city between mid-February and March, a lot of work is intended to be done. The 'New Swachh Survekshan' indicators emphasises parameters such as visible cleanliness, waste segregation, collection and transportation, waste processing, dumpsite remediation, waste water treatment, reuse and faecal sludge management.

For the last few months, GCC has been getting ready with a number of activities and initiatives. Saturday's weekly collection of old sofas, mattresses and clothes from residents' doorsteps was followed by the launch of



## Countdown for cleanliness audit begins

As Chennai gears up for the 10th edition of Swachh Survekshan, a reminder that participation of its residents will go a long way in improving its ranking

Kuppai Thiruvizha.

Although the waste collection drive ended on January 23, officials point out this drive will be extended, and every Saturday dedicated for residents to drop their recyclable waste at different collection points in the city.

Recently, 1,250 metallic com-

pactor bins were ordered for Zones IV, VII and VIII. On its social media handles, GCC is posting details of a flurry of cleanliness drives in different localities.

GCC has already privatised construction, operation and maintenance of public toilets to improve hygiene and for better

**Distribution of Marks**  
**ODF/ODF+/ ODF++/Water+ 1,000 Marks**  
**Garbage Free Cities – 1,000 Marks**  
**On-ground assessment including citizens' feedback 10,500 Marks**

accountability. Waste segregation at source is another important factor, so the role played by every individual in lessening the burden on conservancy workers counts. Every single sustainability initiative taken by a resident welfare association or individual, featured in the media, is being documented by GCC waste management partners.

**Citizens' feedback**  
Citizen participation remains a

### What's new

- Round-the-year citizen feedback through digital platforms
- Increased weightage for citizen feedback
- Separate matrix for coastal areas
- New indicator for prevention of open defecation and open urination
- Special focus on tourists/heritage/religious and high footfall places
- New indicator on behaviour change programme in schools

Source: Toolkit of 10th edition of Swachh Survekshan 2025-26

cornerstone of the initiative, but what pulls down Chennai is the poor participation of residents.

"People do not take the effort to fill the feedback form, and we lose out on account of that. Whatever be the feedback, filling it shows the level of engagement among citizens," says the superintendent engineer, Solid Waste Management, GCC.

This time, feedback is being sought through the year, including through digital platforms. The effectiveness of the grievance redressal mechanism is also counted, accounting for 10% of the total marks.

Citizens can share feedback through multiple platforms, including the Vote For My City App and Portal, MyGov App, Swachhata App and QR codes.

An independent agency verifies the data and validates the progress of each city through on-call/ on-field interaction with citizens and randomly assesses areas in cities, while movement of assessors are geo-tagged.



On the sands of the Marina Beach and (above) a group of residents engaged in a clean-up exercise. PHOTOS: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

By the side of ECR at Therkupattu. The images were taken on a morning before the weekend set in. During weekends, this patch is plagued by massive littering.  
PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



# The bins are still the best bet

PRINCE FREDERICK

For Chennai residents given to long drives on ECR, the beachside expanse at Therkupattu is a familiar bivouacking spot. The patch is plagued by littering, particularly during weekends. The garbage bins are largely ignored by visitors but the solution ironically lies in having more of these bins

**T**hambi, the respectful, palms-folded, horse-faced, dhoti-clad mascot of the 44th chess Olympiad at Mamallapuram in 2022, has found the cleanest spots in Therkupattu on East Coast Road: the garbage bins. There is no dearth of litter on the beachside of Therupattu hugging ECR like a legging. It is found everywhere only rarely in the garbage bins. In effect, Thambi has been given the pride of place. No left-handed

**Efforts to arrest the waste-flinging hands of bivouackers mid-throw have been made by the Therkupattu panchayat and even NGOs**



compliment here, not even a faint whiff of it.

Inveterate day-trippers from Chennai with the addiction of a caffeine fiend to long drives on ECR cannot but be familiar with Therupattu, drawn as much to its lazy sands by the side of the arterial road as to its sequestered beach. It is the closest bivouacking spot on ECR from Chennai. And as with any unregulated bivouacking spot, visitors leave traces of the good times behind on the soft beach sands of Therkupattu. It is largely plastic waste; and the wisps of garbage are found mostly by the side of ECR and the shoreline is largely clean. Efforts to arrest the waste-flinging hands of bivouackers mid-throw have been made by the Therkupattu panchayat and even NGOs such as Hand In Hand. By the side of the road, garbage bins and boards blaring exhortations against littering are the visible signs of these efforts.

The most striking demonstration of this effort is a drum "weld-

ed" into an alternative role as a garbage bin. A neat slot, enclosed by a swinging metal flap has been created for garbage to be slipped in; and an opening has been carved on the rear side for the garbage to be cleared.

Human beings imitate the majoritarian action more than they initiate original action thinking for themselves. So, rather than keeping the discards with them till they reach any of the garbage bins, they would take the cue from those around them and fling those plastics and cardboards in the sands. The learning and the action happen subliminally, the imbiber and the initiator unaware they are following cues.

The garbage bins might be ignored, but strangely, the solution lies in having more bins across the vast bivouacking terrain. That is the only way to increase the visibility of the better and socially responsible cue of people taking the trouble to use the bins.

## EVENTS



### 'Cultivate discipline, perseverance through sports'

Sri Kanyaka Parameswari Arts and Science College for Women celebrated its annual sports day



### New diagnostic centre in Besant Nagar offers services at subsidised cost

Real estate developer Casagrand has opened the Casagrand Foundation's Diagnostic Center in Besant Nagar. Launched as a not-for-profit initiative, the state-of-the-art facility aims to make diagnostics and preventive care affordable and accessible, offering more than 100 essential services and advanced screenings at affordable costs, starting from just ₹50, said a release. The centre focuses on offering diagnostic care targeted at one-third price. It offers a comprehensive range of services, including

digital X-rays, ECGs, CT scans, thyroid and diabetes profiles, troponin tests and blood tests. Creatinine screenings, along with a master health check-up and specialised women's health packages, are also available, the release added. Located on First Avenue (opposite Ellaiyamman Temple), Shastri Nagar, Besant Nagar, the centre is open Monday to Saturday, 7 am to 7 pm, and on Sunday until 1.30 p.m.

For appointments, contact 9790 566 566.

### Milestone meeting for Madras Toastmasters Club

Madras Toastmasters Club, a community-based chapter of Toastmasters International, will celebrate its 802nd milestone meeting on February 1 at 9.30 a.m.

Toastmasters International is a global non-profit educational organisation that provides individuals with a structured platform to develop public speaking, listen-

ing, and leadership abilities through regular meetings, peer evaluations, and experiential learning. Operating from the Andhra Chamber of Commerce, CIT Nagar, Nandanam, Madras Toastmasters Club meets every Sunday from 10.15 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

The club comprises students and working professionals from across Chennai and focuses on

improving communication and leadership skills through structured meetings and constructive feedback.

The milestone meeting will be held at KS Café Auditorium, CIT 1st Main Road, CIT Nagar West.

Spot registration will also be available at the venue.

Any details, call TM Shibhani at 79046 74023

**S**ri Kanyaka Parameswari Arts and Science College for Women celebrated its 27th Annual Sports Day on January 28, with great enthusiasm and vibrant participation. The event was graced by the presence of Kobudo A. S. Krishnamurthy, who presided as the chief guest. He motivated the students to cultivate discipline, perseverance, and excellence through sports.

The sports achievements of the academic year were proudly highlighted during the celebration. The college students showcased remarkable talent and dedication across various disciplines, including athletics, relay, kabaddi, cricket, badminton, and wushu, earning accolades at inter-collegiate, inter-zone, district, state, and national levels.

The sports students presented vibrant cultural performances, with a special highlight being the impressive Mallakhamb performance.

Correspondent Chinni Balaji Garu; principal in-charge P. B. Vaneetha, vice principal M. V. Nappinnai; and IQAC coordinator P. Barani Kumari congratulated the students on their achievements.

### City college holds conference on 'Vikshit Bharat'

Guru Nanak College, Velachery, recently organised a two-day national conference, 'Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems and Innovation: Roadmap to Viksit Bharat 2047'. The conference aimed to provide a common platform for academicians, researchers, industry professionals, policymakers, scholars, and students to discuss the relevance of Indian knowledge systems in addressing contemporary societal and developmental challenges, a release said.

Bhalchandra Vidyasagar, former vice-chancellor of Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Maharashtra, inaugurated the conference. J. Radhakrishnan, Ad-

ditional Chief Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu, was the guest of honour. In his keynote address, professor Vidyasagar focused on the next steps for integrating IKS into contemporary education, particularly in the context of the National Educational Policy 2020. He emphasised the importance of shifting from memory-based education to analytical, experiential, and interdisciplinary learning.

Divided into six themes: science, commerce and management, law, engineering and technology, social sciences and languages, and multidisciplinary studies, the conference had an overwhelming, the release added.



### Workshop on how to make value-added products from coconut

**E**ntrepreneurship Development & Innovation Institute, a Department of MSME - Tamil Nadu, is conducting a training programme on making value-added products from coconut. The session will be held from February 10 to 12 at the institute's premises at EDII Office Road, SIDCO Industrial Estate, Guindy. Time: From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

According to a press release, participants will learn to make the following products from coconut: different types oil meant for various purposes such as cooking, hair care, and rheumatism - related ailments. Next, the use of coconuts in making moisturizers for body care and over-the-counter balms for pain relief from headaches and cold.

Further, the session will focus on use of coconuts in food items such as cookies, syrup, flavour powders, and desiccated coconut.

Those above 18 years of age with a minimum educational qualification of class 10 may apply. Hostel facility is available on first come, first serve basis.

Prior registration is mandatory. To register, visit website [www.edit.in](http://www.edit.in)

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# Lit for Life Mobile Library takes reading to classrooms across Chennai



SRIMATHI SRIDHARAN

The Hindu's Lit for Life (LFL) Mobile Library continued its outreach across Chennai in January, bringing the joy of reading directly to students in schools and colleges across the city. The initiative, which is part of The Hindu Group's larger commitment to inclusive learning and access to books, reached a diverse mix

of government-aided, private, and higher education institutions.

Between January 8 and 20, the Mobile Library visited Kaligi Ranganathan Montfort School, Perambur; St. Joseph Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Poonamallee; Vidyodaya Girls Higher Secondary School, Thyagaraya Nagar; Orchids-The International School, Manapakkam; Alpha Techno School, Puzhal; and Sri Balaji Vidyalayam, Perambur. In

addition, Stella Maris College, Gopalapuram.

At each campus, students were introduced to a curated collection of books spanning fiction, non-fiction, biographies, children's literature, and inspirational writing. The Mobile Library served not only as a lending space but also as an interactive reading zone, encouraging students to browse, explore, and engage with books beyond their

prescribed curriculum.

Teachers and school administrators noted the value of the initiative in fostering reading habits at an early age, particularly at a time when digital distractions often compete for students' attention.

At Stella Maris College, the Mobile Library sparked conversations around reading as a tool for critical thinking, empathy, and lifelong learning, aligning closely with Lit for Life's emphasis on inclusive literature and diverse voices. Students shared reflections on how access to books can shape perspectives, improve language skills, and provide emotional refuge.

The Lit for Life Mobile Library is an extension of The Hindu Group's flagship Lit for Life festival, which champions literature, inclusion, and social awareness. By taking books directly to schools and colleges, the initiative bridges gaps in access and reinforces the belief that reading should be available to everyone, regardless of age or background.

The response from students and educators underscores a simple truth: when books meet readers where they are, stories find new life – and learning travels far beyond the page.

**Dr. Ramakrishnan receives 'For The Sake of Honour' award**

N. Ramakrishnan was conferred "For the sake of Honour Award" by Rotary Club of Chennai City. The award is considered as the highest recognition bestowed by Rotary Clubs to individuals who have performed exceptional service within their profession.

The citation mentioned the trailblazing contributions of Dr. N. Ramakrishnan, a luminary in the realm of Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, said a release. His commitment to healing, unshakeable dedication and profound impact on medical fraternity and scholarly pursuits and thought leadership have shaped critical care globally, added the release.

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From the event

wide range of instruments including the common piano, guitar, drums, violin and the unusual instruments such as ukulele, recorder and the cello. Madras Music Garage was founded in 2009 by Hari Krishnan, with a simple yet powerful vision – to create a space where music education is joyful, disciplined, and accessible to all, the release says.

Later, Gopinath P. joined him and is now the co-founder, teaching keys and string instruments alongside Hari Krishnan.

What began as home-based classes slowly grew into a full-fledged institution. In 2023, the first proper school was established in Choolaimedu. In 2024, the second branch opened in Nungambakkam.

Madras Music Garage trains students in piano, guitar, violin, cello, ukulele, drums and saxophone and also prepares them for international music exams such as Trinity, ABRSM, RSL, and LCM, the release adds.

## Music fest on a high note

Madras Music Garage celebrated its annual event at The Music Academy

Echoes - Music Fest 2026, the annual music programme of Madras Music Garage happened at The Music Academy, TTK Road on January 26.

According to a press release, Ezhilan, MLA, Thousand Lights Constituency and Pandiarajan, Tamil cinema actor, director and comedian were the special dignitaries.

The press release notes that Echoes Music recital has been done successfully for the last seven years and



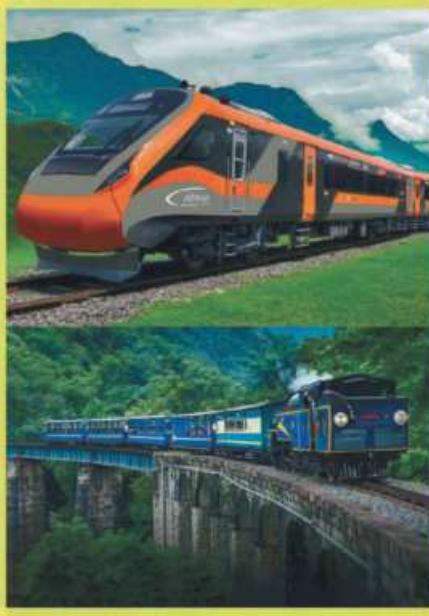
2026 was their sixth recital. In the first edition, only 20 students participated; and now, it has grown to 100 participants, presenting 86 different performances on a



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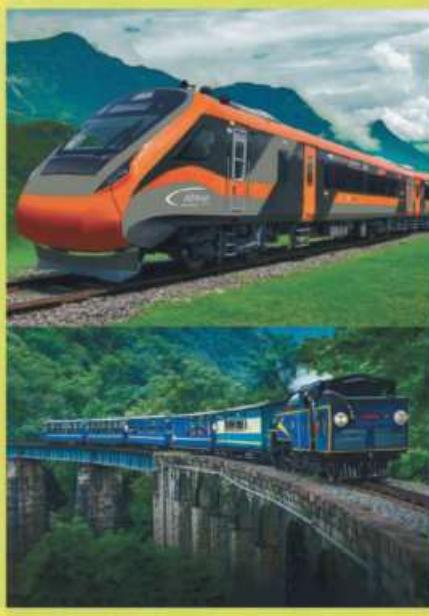


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**COONOOR-OOTY-MUDUMALAI**  
4 Nights/5 days Every Thursday  
Rs. 11,750/-

Contact : 8287931974/9363488231

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