

# DOWNTOWN

Sunday  
January 4, 2026

THE HINDU

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▼ TNRDC workers dealing with unruly vegetation at the median in Muttukadu on ECR; a trimmed section further down the road; and stray cattle helping themselves to grass stubs at Therakupattu. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK



## Motorists hitting ECR have a **safety wish for 2026**

A TNRDC official observes that the local civic bodies should extend their support in ensuring residents do not let their cattle loose on the road

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**O**n January 2, 2026, workers employed by Tamil Nadu Road Development Company (TNRDC) were hard at work on the median of ECR around MGM

in Muttukadu, subduing unruly vegetation that had received a boost from the monsoonal rains. They were working with de-weeding and pruning implements.

According to a TNRDC official, the same work had been accom-

plished on the median stretching from Mahabalipuram to this point in Muttukadu.

Work on the median extending from this point to Akkarai would

be completed in six days, the official added. From time to time, trimming and de-weeding exercise is being carried out with bush cutter machines, the official said.

One of the purposes of this exercise is to keep stray cattle at bay, but the cattle are drawn to even stubs of grass in the median, as was witnessed at a trimmed section of the median at Therakupattu the same day. The TNRDC official remarked that the residents in

these parts were not responsive to pleas that they do not let their cattle loose on the road. At night, these bovines can be seen parked on the road, raising the risk of accidents. The official said the local civic bodies should extend to TNRDC their support in keeping stray cattle off the roads through strict measures taken and implemented on their side. The stretch of ECR from Akkarai to Mahabalipuram comes under TNRDC's watch.



## Waste on Wheels draws RWAs

An impressive number of Residents Welfare Associations participated in a drive to collect recyclable and reusable items. Ahead of this exercise, residents had been encouraged to declutter their homes

GANGA SRIDHAR

**O**n December 28, 2025 a goods carrier popped in at multiple addresses in Mylapore. The wheels started rolling at RA Puram Murugan Stores with a team from Raja Annamalaipuram Residents Association (RAPRA) waving a flag to symbolise the launch of a waste collection drive. Called "Waste On Wheels", the ex-

ercise collected recyclable and reusable items from various places

Organised by EcoConnectors Trust in partnership with SAAHAS-Chennai, the Waste on Wheels collection drive witnessed the participation of multiple Residents' Welfare Associations in Mylapore and Mandaveli. Ahead of the waste collection, the organisers had encouraged residents to declutter their homes with the objective of giving



away things that can be owned again.

Various RWAs responding to the call with enthusiasm, community participation was the defining feature of the day.

In the week leading up to the

drive, RWA representatives actively engaged residents through door-to-door visits, newspaper notices and social media campaigns. Their efforts ensured widespread awareness and enthusiastic involvement.

Collection points were simulta-

neously set up at R.K. Nagarra, Mandaveli Raja Street, Poonga View, T.P. Scheme Road, Ganeshram Apartment (Srinivasa Avenue), Ragamalika, Jeth Nagar. A separate vehicle was arranged for bulky waste such as mattresses, making it convenient for households to responsibly dispose of items long stored in lofts and wardrobes.

Residents expressed visible satisfaction as they contributed to the collective effort. Usable clothes collected were distributed by the SAAHAS team to orphanages and senior homes, while recyclable materials (Plastics of all grade, Cardboard, Glassware, E-Waste, Thermocol) were sent to the SPRECO recycling unit for processing.

(Ganga Sridhar is a resident of Mandaveli Raja Street and associated with EcoConnectors)



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## READERS WRITE

### 'Greening initiative at Palavakkam beach wilts'

M.B. MADHUSUDANAN

Saplings of native trees were planted along a stretch of the Palavakkam beach three months ago. The saplings were fenced with iron-mesh tree guards. The healthy stems of the plants suggest proper nurture in a nursery for a minimum of three years. It was a pleasant sight then. But today the saplings have

dried up and are likely to perish soon.

Being a resident of Palavakkam VGP Layout for a decade and a half, I have witnessed tree-planting drives quite often in the neighbourhood. But it is disappointing to note that those who organise such drives forget these plants need water to sustain and cannot be left to rely solely on nature.

*M.B. Madhusudan is a resident of Palavakkam*





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The juvenile Red-backed shrike at Broken Bridge Road in December 2025. PHOTOS: SUNDARAVEL PALANIVEL

## Ending it on a chirpy note

Adyar Estuary and Broken Bridge Road are known to spring surprises consistently and they were true to form till the fag end of 2025 when they hosted a juvenile Red-backed shrike, triggering a procession of camera-toting birders to this part of the universe

### PRINCE FREDERICK

**H**ow something ends sticks in the mind faster than how it began, except where the beginning and the middle had been singularly impressive. A batsman fending off genuinely quick deliveries more with the arm than the willow would make a scorn-worthy sight. But charity would be extended towards this player if they had lorded it over the 22 yards until twilight dawned on their career. Memories of past exploits would lighten current reality, recasting it in less gloomy shade.

If Adyar Estuary and Broken Bridge Road had ended 2025 without a curious chirp, birders would not have frowned upon the non-show. Through the year, these two patches, considered first cousins even co-joined twins, had been pulling a rare bird out of their heavily decorated feathered hats frequently. Even a non-show at the tail end would have been described in a celebratory tone much in the manner of the incomparable Don's last-inning duck, stranding him 1/

**The bird that showed up being a juvenile, anatomical feather-splitting was inevitable. Biological sketches are rarely etched until people grow up; so it is with birds. Juveniles of the Brown shrike and the Red-backed shrike can pass off as siblings till they are viewed with knitted brows for diagnostic features**

16th of an inch short of a glorious average of 100 in Test cricket.

Far from having a non-show, these patches ended it with a thumping six off the last ball. They would not have hoped for a better ending to 2025 than the continued sighting of a juvenile Red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*) through December.

Until recently, the bird seemed to have pitched tent around the Broken Bridge Road. On the day this write-up was flapping towards the press (January 3), a party of

hopefuls had headed to the twin patches seeking a glimpse of this bird.

Birder Sundaravel Palanivel remarks that in December, close to 40 birders would have seen this bird and documented it. The sightings of this Red-backed shrike had largely happened on the Broken Bridge Road outside the Theosophical Society compound wall. Sundaravel adds that only for around a week now, the bird

has gone unnoticed; it is probably inside the TS campus.

The bird that showed up being a juvenile, anatomical feather-splitting was inevitable. Biological sketches are rarely etched until people grow up; so it is with birds. Juveniles of the Brown shrike and the Red-backed shrike can pass off as siblings till they are viewed with knitted brows for diagnostic features.

Before going into this question, a word on the unlikelihood of a Red-backed shrike, adult or juvenile. Between its breeding grounds in Europe and northern Asia and wintering grounds in Africa, the Red-backed shrike's points of contact with India lie in the north-west as passage migrant. There are records of the bird from north-west India.

For a bird to veer so far from its course and end up on Broken Bridge Road, it must be a Jonathan Livingstone Seagull to the power of 100.

Now, on the question of ascertaining if it is indeed a juvenile Red-backed shrike and not a youngster from another shrike family, eBird has accepted it as a true-blue Red-backed.

Sundaravel rattles off the features present in the bird that make it a Red-backed shrike: "Squarer tail end (as opposed to the rounded one in a Brown shrike); greyish rump; darker vermiculations on the breast; and darker subterminal bands to tertials."

The adult Red-backed shrike can be identified with eyes closed: striking red on the back and grey on the head making misidentification a statistical impossibility.





# Indira Nagar resident takes to 'ragpicking'

He chose this path to sensitise other park users to the bane of littering

C. NAMCHIVAYAM

**T**here is nothing fancy about this contraption, but the initiative it represents I believe to be significant. It is aimed at provoking people (by the tip of this contraption, literally speaking) to stop littering this neighbourhood park.

I recently made a tong out of a

metal strip with the help of a welding shop to collect plastic waste on the premises of the Indira Nagar park at Indira Nagar Fourth Cross Street. On the very first outing, I collected a bag full of plastic bottles, biscuit wrappers, plastic sheets and covers, glass bottles and others to the surprise of other park users. I told those who had curious questions for me that I had taken



C. Namachivayam "at work" in the park.

up ragpicking as a side business to make some pocket-money.

When they learnt that I had got the tong fashioned by a welder according to desired specifications, some advised me that my tong was not efficient enough and I could buy a better one off the shelves of a hardware shop.

A couple of them went into the specifics of how the tong design could be improved. And some others showed me the places in the park where the tong would be effective and manage a rich haul of discarded things.

During my first cleaning expedition, I got acquainted with the names of many liquor brands as many empty liquor bottles were strewn around the park.

(C. Namachivayam is a resident of Indira Nagar who frequents this park and is among groups of residents that have undertaken initiatives to improve it)



## You can be our volunteer-writer

Dear readers, you can be our volunteer-writer by writing to us about issues and events in your neighbourhood. You should send the write-ups to [downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in](mailto:downtownfeedback@thehindu.co.in). Letters must carry the contact number.

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### In the company of books

At DLF Garden City in Semmencherry, we currently have a room with a pile of books. A factor that is conspicuous by its absence is a keeper of books. There are also no volunteers to maintain a catalogue of books that come in and arrange them on the shelves neatly and systematically according to subjects. I would like to take a leaf out of the library at Tata Sherwood, a gated community in Bangalore for the space's ability to drive knowledge seeking in a lively community spirit.

There are also lessons to be taken from the Palakkam District Library, once my go-to place for knowledge. I would want the library at DLF Garden City to reflect the qualities these two libraries represent, enabling residents to connect over shared interests.

**Dr. Vinatha Chettoor**, resident, DLF Garden City, Semmencherry



## Residents'

# wish list for 2026

The Hindu Downtown spoke to a cross-section of residents welfare associations across Chennai on the initiatives they want to kickstart, sustain or extend in the New Year

LIFFY THOMAS



### Powering a green transition

Last year, we launched an initiative to switch to clean energy source for our power needs. We are a community with more than 160 villa-type houses; and 20-25 of us have installed rooftop solar units in a case of shared inspiration. I got motivated to go in for this system after seeing it in a neighbouring community where my friend resides. The 5.4 kW solar unit has made a huge difference to how my power bills read. From ₹25,000 billed every cycle, the bill now ranges between ₹5,000 and ₹10,000. The Association has been supporting this drive by bringing on board vendors who help clarify nagging doubts residents harbour. We hope to add to the count of solar rooftop installations this year.

**Logendrakumar M.K.**, president, Chettinad Enclave Village Owners Association, Pallikaranai

### Replicating a social project

Jagannatha Nagar and SIDCO Nagar are neighbouring colonies in Villivakkam known for exchanging notes on their best practices. South Jagannatha Nagar Residents Association's blackboard project is worthy of emulation. Residents have given jaded, lack-lustre blackboards at the Government Boys School in the neighbourhood a fresh coat of black paint. These boards had lost their defining colour over the years and children found it a challenge to read what had been written on it. Residents pooled in money and many of them also rolled up their sleeve to paint these boards to restore its lost colour. The RWA has painted close to 25 blackboards at the school. There is a government school near us and I am hoping to get my Association to launch a similar project this year.

**S.V. Kumar**, treasurer, SIDCO Nagar Welfare Association, Villivakkam

### Saving trees

We have started the groundwork for the redevelopment of Jeevan Bima Nagar, an apartment community that came up in 1995. Spread across 15.5 acres in Anna Nagar, we have one condition for the probable developer - ensure none of the trees in the society is cut down. Over the decades, residents have nurtured more than 1000 trees in the society and we want this green treasure to be intact.

**TV Radhakrishnan**, president, Jeevan Bima Nagar Flat Owner's Welfare Association, Anna Nagar West Extension



### No plastics, please!

This year, we are focusing on shoring up a campaign to make our gated community, Ceebros Garden in Virugambakkam, and its immediate surroundings environment-friendly. Towards this, we have formed a green team 'Swacch Ceebros'. Posters reminding residents that plastic carrybags are banned are placed at prominent spots. The team has also been campaigning with vendors outside the community to not sell items in single-use plastics, so this drive will continue covering more ground.

As we are more than a 20-year-old community with over 350 flats, we have been studying waste management models adopted by other communities. Our objective is to minimise the amount of waste that has to be collected by conservancy staff. As part of this goal, we have started studying composting models. Space is the main challenge to this initiative but we hope to resolve this issue in 2026.

**Shankar Raman G**, president, Ceebros Garden Owners' Association, Virugambakkam

### A decentralised waste management system

On January 4, Residents of Kasturba Nagar Association will be visiting us to explain the waste management model they have adopted. The initiative is being piloted by Mrs. Indu Jagannathan. We hope to take lessons from them as well as discuss ways to overcome challenges in waste management faced by residents welfare associations.

Earlier, we studied the model followed by Casurina Drive on East Coast Road and a community in Nungambakkam. An effective decentralised waste management model, which is also affordable and sustainable, is our goal for 2026.

**Priya Rajashekhar**, member, Kalakshetra Colony Welfare Association, Besant Nagar

Photos used for representational purpose





## Mini flyover sought at busy junction on key road

Vel's Road junction is a three-ring circus during rush hour and the chaos that prevails during this time has a domino effect on the rest of Pallavaram Thoraipakkam 200-foot Radial Road

T. ARVIND

**T**he Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Radial Road, once a relatively quiet corridor, has emerged as a major traffic artery over the past decade, driven by rapid commercial and residential development. With hordes of vehicles hitting this road, a major link between GST Road and Rajiv Gandhi Salai (also known as OMR), commuters say mounting congestion and deteriorating road conditions now demand urgent intervention from civic and traffic authorities.

The arterial road, which begins at the GST Road-Thiruneralmai junction at 'Ponds' near Pallavaram and connects Thoraipakkam on Old Mahabalipuram Road (Rajiv Gandhi Salai), passes several key landmarks, including Keelkattalai lake, S. Kolathur lake, corporate hospitals and major educational institutions.

### A choke point

The Taluk Office Road-Vel's College junction has become one of the most congested points on radial road, particularly during morning peak hours. Despite the presence of a traffic signal, commuters say frequent violations go unchecked.

Traffic personnel, largely drawn from the Reserve Police Force and Chitlapakkam police, are posted at the junction, but activists allege enforcement remains lax. "Most of the time, the personnel remain near the booth instead of actively regulating traffic, leading to chaos at the intersection," a road safety activist said.

With traffic volumes rising steadily due to the presence of IT parks, global schools,



Traffic congestion at Vel's College-Taluk Office Road junction on the Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Radial Road; and potholes at the Kamakshi Memorial Hospital junction. PHOTOS: T. ARVIND

colleges, marriage halls, malls and corporate hospitals, commuters say the junction requires long-term traffic engineering solutions.

### Renewing a demand

Regular road users and activists have renewed a demand for a mini-flyover at the Vel's College-Taluk Office road junction to ensure uninterrupted movement along the radial road. They point out that the flyover at nearby Madipakkam-Keelkattalai intersection have significantly eased congestion.

"A similar flyover here will decongest the junction and improve travel time for vehicles heading towards OMR," says senior social activist Santhanam, urging authorities to factor in future traffic growth while planning infrastructure.

### Potholes add to risks

Adding to commuters' woes is the poor condition of the Vel's College Road junction, which is riddled with potholes and uneven patchwork repairs. Several commuters say the patchwork itself is more hazardous than unfilled potholes. "When we ride over the uneven surface, the vehicle tends to sway sideways. It is nerve-racking

largely attributed to vehicles transporting construction materials. Mud deposits now occupy nearly a quarter of the carriageway at several points, especially opposite the Chaitanya educational institution. As a result, motorcyclists are forced to avoid

the left lane and move towards the centre of the road, exposing them to fast-moving heavy vehicles. "The stretch has become extremely dangerous, especially during peak hours," says, Ashwin.

Compounding commuters' difficulties is the condition of the service road, where work has remained unattended for several months. Residents say the stretch becomes nearly unmotorable, especially during the monsoon. "It was extremely difficult to navigate the road during the rains. The stretch was dug up and left without any visible progress," says Ashwin.

While the Madipakkam-Keelkattalai flyover has improved traffic flow in that section, commuters say the ongoing culvert work by the Water Resources Department at the Kamakshi Memorial Hospital-Tambaram-Velachery junction has slowed traffic considerably.

The sluggish pace of work, combined with pothole-

ridden approach roads, has worsened congestion. Vehicles turning left from Tambaram-Velachery Road onto the radial road are forced to move cautiously due to uneven surfaces. Recently, an autorickshaw was left stranded after getting stuck in a pothole at the junction, a witness said.

### Joint action needed

Activists and commuters have urged authorities to prioritise the Vel's College-Taluk Office junction for immediate intervention. Apart from planning a flyover, they want potholes repaired, service road laid on priority, accumulated mud and sand cleared regularly, and stricter traffic policing enforced.

"A coordinated approach involving highways, civic bodies and traffic police is essential to address the multiple issues along this corridor," activists said, stressing that delays could lead to more accidents and longer commute times.

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## 'Our country will be the third largest economy'

The 108th annual conference of the Indian Economic Association (IEA) was recently held in the city.

Hosted by Vels University, the three-day conference on the theme 'Indian Economy - Navigating Domestic Realities and Global Shifts' saw more than 1,500 academicians from India and over 140 economists across the world taking part in it.

The conference was inaugurated by Professor S. Mahendra Dev, Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

R. N. Ravi, Governor of Tamil Nadu, delivered the valedictory address. "India is the fastest-growing major economy since 2021, and is poised to become the third-largest economy in the world in the near future. The contributions of

microenterprises must be acknowledged, as they play a crucial role in strengthening the economy."

Professor A. D. N. Bajpai, president of the Indian Economic Association, noted that despite facing both domestic and external pressures, India has become the world's fourth largest economy, reflecting its resilience and growth momentum.

Ishari K. Ganesh, chairman of Vels Group of Institutions, was honoured with the 'Kautilya' award for his contributions to education and nation building.

An endowment lecture in honour of the chairman's name will be established starting from the next edition of the IEA annual conference, added the release.

## Revision in timings of suburban trains



The Chennai Division of Southern Railway has adjusted the schedule of approximately nine suburban trains. The revised timings came into effect from January 1.

In the Chennai Central - Arakkonam section, train numbers 43504, Thiruttani - Moore Market Complex, will leave at 05.55 a.m., 66008, Arakkonam - Moore Market Complex at 09.50 a.m., 43514, Thiruttani - Moore Market Complex at 2.55 p.m.

Chennai Central - Sullurpetta section, 42611, Chennai Beach - Gummidipoondi, at 20.05, 66032, Sullurpetta - Moore Market Complex, 21.05, and 42040, Gummidipoondi - Moore Market Complex at 21.40.

Chennai Beach - Chengalpattu section, 40552, Chengalpattu - Chennai Beach at 18.05, 40556, at 18.30, and 40570, at 22.20, says a release issued by the Southern Railway.

## Humour club meet today

Besant Nagar Humour Club is conducting its monthly meet on January 4 at G3 Building, First Floor, Bharathi Nagar Main Road, Thiruvanniyur (next to Post Office and Telephone Exchange). The theme for the session is "Humour in Medicine" According to a press release, the guest is G.S. Kailash, physician at Sukra Hospital, Pallikaranai. Time: At 4 p.m. For details, call 9444755430.

## Bhavan's Natya Utsav

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is conducting Bhavan's Natya Utsav till January 15 at its Main Hall, East Mada Street in Mylapore. The series consist of 63 performances in Bharathanatyam, Kuchupudi, Kathak, Odissi and Mohiniattam by various groups and individuals. The programme is non-ticketed and open to all.

## Workshop on chocolate making

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information & Training Centre is conducting a culinary workshop on making chocolates on January 8. Another session on making soaps from extracts of fruits, leaves, flowers will be held on January 9. Prior registration is required. Both the sessions will be held at Agro Tech Green Park, First Floor, Thiru. Vi. Ka. Industrial Estate, Guindy. For details, call 044 - 29530048

## An Ayurvedic approach to pain management



Back pain, knee pain and stress-related health issues have become more common in recent years, impacting people of all ages. Cauvery Gramam at Besant Nagar offers an integrated Ayurvedic approach for pain management and rejuvenation.

For over two decades, Cauvery Gramam has been providing care focusing on managing back and knee pain, as well as stress-related conditions through traditional treatment, said a press release.

The treatment begins with a detailed clinical assessment by qualified physicians and depending on individual requirements, therapies are administered to support joint function, reduce inflammation and improve mobility.

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