

DOWNTOWN

Sunday
February 1, 2026

THE HINDU

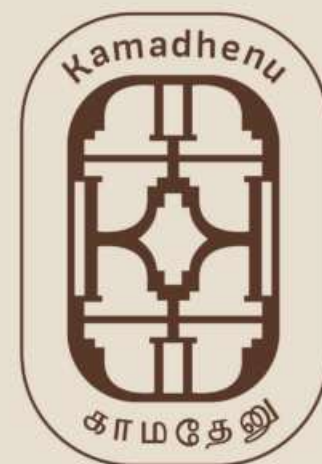
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Between Panaiyur and Mahabalipuram on East Coast Road, inclusive bus shelters really do not help the differently abled. This section of ECR is maintained by TNRDC; three of these bus shelters are found within GCC limits

Ramps for *luge* athletes?



Take a close look at these ramps at the Nainarkuppam and Uthandi bus shelters. PHOTOS: PRINCE FREDERICK

PRINCE FREDERICK

Would anyone in their right mind ask a wheelchair-bound person to perform the manoeuvres of a luge athlete? Two line agencies throw a gauntlet as ridiculous as that to the wheelchair-bound on a section of East Coast Road (ECR), one agency doing the actual throwing and the other in a position to countermand it, doing an Ostrich.

On ECR, between Panaiyur and Mahabalipuram, one would come upon these quaint-looking bus shelters with pitched, corrugated metal roofs and concrete benches. And if the zooming lens is held closer, one would see ramps, actually what passes off for ramps.

Let us narrow down the focus to three bus stops (the wheels moving in the direction of Mahabalipuram) on the section of ECR between Panaiyur and Uthandi alone, just to make sure the two line agencies are found in the same picture.

Enter Tamil Nadu Road Development Company (TNRDC), a special purpose vehicle. TNRDC manages ECR from Akkarai to Mahabalipuram and is the architect of these bus shelters, which hold up against the elements commendably but score poorly on its inclusivity design quotient. Ramps exist, but not all ramps are easy to use. Besides, the overall design of

these “inclusive bus shelters” ignores most facets of accessibility for the wheelchair-bound from the bus stop to the bus and vice versa; and these include sufficient space on the floor of the bus shelter and a mechanism for the commuter to slide their wheelchair from floor of the bus shelter straight on to the floor of the bus.

These bus shelters instead have two components, an ascent ramp and a descent ramp, the latter hard to use by anyone, let alone the

wheelchair-bound.

First stop

The Nainarkuppam bus shelter offers an ascent ramp with a comfortable gradient. It has a long run, and a controlled rise. Ramps in the ratio of 1:10 (the first number denoting the rise and the second, the run) make for a comfortable gradient; when the second number goes up, the comfort factor is upped.

The descent ramp, short and

steep, is what seeks to turn the wheelchair-bound into a luge athlete. Words would not suffice to communicate the inadequacy in the design; the picture would.

The descent ramp at the bus shelter in Uthandi plummets to a new low. It hardly resembles a ramp, and short by birth, it has become shorter still by damage. Broken, the ramp resembles a thread of thought that stopped woefully short of conveying the meaning. Again, only the picture can manage an adequate description.

The ramps and the overall effort at including everyone illustrate tokenism, an act of extending the hand of inclusivity to the differently abled without stretching it

enough for them to take hold of it.

Now, enter the other line agency, Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC). GCC limits extend up to Uthandi on ECR. The question to be asked: though TNRDC manages this road and therefore takes responsibility for the bus shelters, should GCC intervene and take charge of the “inclusive” bus shelters on ECR within its limits?

It probably should because these bus shelters strike a jarring note against the narrative in the central parts of GCC limits where well-designed inclusive bus shelters (example: Ice House bus stop near Vivekanandar Illam bus stop on Kamarajar Salai) are becoming common sight.



The bus shelter at Meeran Nagar on ECR. PHOTO: PRINCE FREDERICK

The ramp that refuses to cover one ‘step’

At this bus shelter on East Coast Road in Meeran Nagar, which comes under Kanathur Reddy Kuppam panchayat, one ramp does not even reach the floor of the bus shelter, demonstrating a huge flaw in the design, not to mention the steep gradient, a challenge to even an able-bodied person trying to walk down its surface, let alone a differently abled person seated in a wheelchair trying to navigate it. The section of East Coast Road from Akkarai to Mahabalipuram comes under management of the special purpose vehicle Tamil Nadu Road Development Company (TNRDC); and the installation and maintenance of bus shelters on this stretch are part of its responsibilities. The image was taken on January 30, 2026. Photo: Prince Frederick

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‘Address sewage issue at Naidu Street’

SATHEESH IYER

Greater Chennai corporation is carrying out work aimed at preventing sewage from getting into stormwater drains at Naidu Street in Kottur Gardens, Kotturpuram, plugging points where illegal sewage connections are found.

There has been overflow of sewage in Naidu street on account of these illegal sewage lines. GCC is now cutting off these lines.

However, at Naidu Street Extension and Kottur Gardens Fourth Main Road Extension where SWD construction is going on, sewage is flowing into the trenches dug up for this work.

Last week, CMWSSB brought in a super sucker vehicle to clear the overflowing sewage. More visits by this vehicle are needed. And the entire operation has to be expedited.

Coordination between GCC and CMWSSB seems to be poor.

(Satheesh Iyer is a member of Kottur Gardens Residents Association)



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In the Mission of Human Resource Development...

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

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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



Enthusiastic participation at golden jubilee run

The event was organised by Sri Kapaleeswarar Nagar Residents Welfare Association in Neelankarai

Close to 400 people including children, senior citizens, students and professional runners took part in the Golden Jubilee walkathon and run organised by Sri Kapaleeswarar Nagar Residents Welfare Association (SKNRWA) on January 25. With a focus on



promoting fitness, creating awareness on dengue and public health education, the event brought together residents and their families in the spirit of wellness, responsibility and togetherness.

Conducted under two categories –2 km and 5 km – the participants took the colony's streets and a connecting stretch of the East Coast Road. To ensure smooth execution, several pre-event arrangements were made, including bib and t-shirt distribution camps and a comprehensive health screening conducted by ProMed Hospital.

The programme was further enriched by a lively Zumba session led by ZIN E. Sridharan, creating a joyful atmosphere.

Earlier, SKNRWA, in collaboration with GCC staff, organised a dengue awareness programme, followed by a door-to-door campaign to educate residents on preventive measures and public health practices.

The walkathon was flagged off by V. P. Senthil Kumar, a prominent member of Chennai Runners and former Race Director of the Chennai Marathon. With the

support of committee members, volunteers, and professional event managers, the run was conducted as a non-competitive and inclusive event, celebrating every participant as a winner, said a release.

SKNRWA has expressed gratitude to the Greater Chennai Police for granting timely permission and en-

suring safety through effective traffic management and vigilant monitoring. Special appreciation was extended to Ashwin Balasubramanian and Aashika Balasubramanian for conceptualising and executing the end-to-end design framework. The event concluded with a community breakfast sponsored by C. L. Narayana Pillai.

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Remembering the teachers

Old students of St. Bede's Anglo-Indian Higher Secondary School celebrate their 40th year reunion

The 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.Ramamurthi, N.Devdoss, T.Amalraj, J.Tharcus 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 we enrolling 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.

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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

Thambi, 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 imbibitor 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.



Enthusiastic response to futsal tournament

KC High and St. Michael's Academy win top places at the second edition of Catamount Trophy

The turf at Akshar Arbol International School in T. Nagar witnessed high-voltage action from January 28 to 30 as the Catamount Trophy successfully concluded its highly anticipated second edition. The inter-school futsal tournament returned with expanded scale and intensity, bringing together 270 students from top schools across the city for three days of spirited competition.

A new format, a higher standard organisers raised the stakes this year by introducing a 'league-



cum-knockout' system, replacing the previous knockout-only format, said a release. This strategic shift ensured that every team received ample game time, allowing

the young athletes to truly test their mettle on the court. The roster featured a powerful lineup of schools, including returning champions Campus K, KC High,

and DAV Mogappair, alongside stiff competition from the host school Akshar Arbol International School and other prominent institutions like Vidya Mandir in Myla-

pore and PSBB in KK Nagar.

In a display of agility and teamwork KC High lifted the trophy. The girls' category saw St. Michael's Academy clinch the title with a dominant performance. The senior boys' category provided a thrilling conclusion to the tournament, with Chaitanya Techno emerging as the champions.

The competition was inaugurated by Nivedha Sreenivasan, a B. Tech Biotechnology student who is World Ranked No. 8 Kickboxer and the first player from Tamil Nadu to win both silver and bronze at the Kickboxing World Cup, who inspired the 270 athletes with her "start young, aim high" philosophy, added the release.

The tournament concluded with a valedictory ceremony presided over by Dr. J.S. Rajkumar, chairman of Lifeline Hospitals.

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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, Bhemanra 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.

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, Additional Chief Secretary, Govern-



ment 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.

New diagnostic centre in Besant Nagar offers services at subsidised cost



Real estate developer Casa-grand has opened the Casa-grand 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 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 Ellaiyammam 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.

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An honour for mothers

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



Sri 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, Gandhigram University; Hamsa Kalyanasundaram, Meera Nagarajan, managing director of Kalyana Malai; Kalyani, Venkatesh, a spiritual speaker; Parvathi Subramaniam, Sundar Subramaniam, a social activist, Sathiyabama Chan-

dran, Saini Surendran, a sports and nutrition consultant; V. Vijayalakshmi, V. Uma, founder of Suyam Foundation; Dhana-lakshmi 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 play a crucial role in shaping successful individuals.

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



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NILGIRI MOUNTAIN TRAIN-OOTY-COONOOR-MUDUMALAI 4 Nights/5 days Every Thursday Rs. 13,150/-	SHIRDI 3Nights/4days Every Wednesday Rs.3,650/-	KANYAKUMARI-TIRUCHENDUR-RAMESWARAM-MADURAI 4Nights/5days Every Thursday Rs.13,950/-
KODAIKANAL - MADURAI 4 Nights/5days Every Thursday Rs.13,550/-		
WEEKEND DIVINE RETREAT MADURAI-RAMESWARAM-DHANUSHKODI 2Nights/3days Every Friday Rs.15,700/- <small>- by vande bhara</small>	MYSORE-COORG 4Nights/5days Every Thursday Rs.12,800/-	COONOOR-OOTY-MUDUMALAI 4Nights/5days Every Thursday Rs.11,750/-

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