

DOWNTOWN

Sunday
January 11, 2026

THE HINDU

ANNA NAGAR

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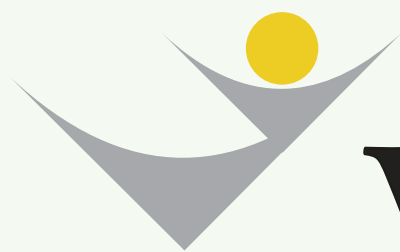
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Directional violation by motorists in school zone

On a section of CTH Road in Ambattur, wrong way driving is rampant; this safety hazard was ironically birthed by a measure taken to address another road risk

T. GUNASEELAN

The decision to close School Road-Cholambedu Main Road junction in Ambattur on CTH Road for vehicular traffic was spurred by safety concerns. The situation stemming from this move has however heightened those safety concerns, not allayed them. With this option having been taken off the table, motorists are now resorting to wrong side driving on CTH Road.

Motorcyclists emerging from Cholambedu Main Road are mostly among the culpable. Ever since the turn at the junction was removed, motorists have to take a U-turn nearly two kilometres away, near the junction of CTH Road and Ambattur-Red Hills Road. Due to this change, this junction is now being "overworked" and during rush hour witnesses sluggish traffic movement. Wrong way driving seems to be a way out of this ordeal for motorists, particularly autorickshaw drivers. Police presence during rush hour acts as a deterrent, but the violation is rife at all other hours.



The fact that the carriageway on the section where wrong way driving happens is not in the best of health aggravates the problem, as these violators cause greater chaos when they try to avoid the battered, earthen parts.

The Ambattur traffic police should consider reopening the School Road-Cholambedu Main Road junction where traffic signals were installed only a year ago. Closed for motorists, this junction is open for pedestrians. However, lack of traffic signals means they are out on a limb. Remember this is a school zone.

T. Gunaseelan is a resident of Ambattur



Wrong way driving near the U-turn spot.
PHOTOS:
UMESH KUMAR V

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Navigating *life tactilely*

On January 4 (World Braille Day), braille literary crisis was a dominant topic. Aminjikarai resident S. Vanaja, a visually impaired car rally navigator, proves the continuing relevance of this reading system in more ways than one

SHARON JESSICA MICHAEL

Associated with the Brailles On Wheels rally in Chennai for decades, S. Vanaja navigates not only roads with a Braille map, but also metaphorical roads in almost every aspect of her life. At a time when educators serving visually impaired youngsters are racking their brains over how to combat the “Braille literary crisis” as they call it, this Aminjikarai resident would be a great ally to them, as she is a textbook example of why Braille works still and has retained its relevance. And that Braille literacy makes a compelling call amidst the clamour of assistive technologies. Here is her Braille worldview in sprinkles of insight.

“Braille is indispensable in mastering language-heavy disciplines.”

“Technology can fail when there is no power or no battery. But Braille will always be with you.”

Learning braille

Vanaja’s introduction to Braille began as early as her first standard at the Palayamkottai Blind School, where Braille was not an aid but the primary language of learning. Tamil Braille was taught first, followed by English Braille in second standard. The Braille textbooks used during her school years were printed and supplied by the Government Regional Braille Press in Poonamallee, which catered to government-aided blind schools across Tamil Nadu. Both Tamil and English books reached her school regularly, ensuring continuity in learning. Up to Eighth Standard, every subject she studied was available in Braille, making tactile reading central to her academic life. “Till eighth standard, everything was in Braille – textbooks, notes and lessons,” says Vanaja. In the blind school, Braille was deeply embedded into everyday classroom practice. Teachers themselves were fluent in Braille, and learning happened at a pace that allowed students to internalise spelling, sentence structure, and comprehension through touch. This environment, Vanaja believes, played a crucial role in building her confidence and literacy, especially in languages such as Tamil and English.

Shared study system

After completing Eighth Standard, Vanaja had to transition to a regular school in Palayamkottai as her blind school did not offer higher

S. Vanaja (in dark goggles) on the sidelines of a Brailles on Wheels event.



classes. This shift marked a major change in how she accessed learning materials. Braille textbooks were no longer readily available, and visually impaired students had to rely on collective effort and ingenuity to keep up with the curriculum. Along with three to four other visually impaired girls, Vanaja developed a shared study system. Each student took responsibility for one subject—Tamil, Science, English, or another—and prepared Braille notes by transcribing content that was read aloud. These notes were then shared among the group, ensuring that everyone had access to essential study material. “We divided subjects among ourselves and wrote everything in Braille,” she explains.

Braille in college

At A.P.C. Mahalaxmi College for Women in Thoothukudi, where she pursued English Literature, Braille continued to be her primary tool for learning. She and her peers relied on libraries, readers, and peer assistance to access texts,

which were then converted into Braille notes. Poetry, prose, and critical material were all studied through tactile reading, reinforcing her belief that Braille was indispensable for language-heavy disciplines.

At work

Vanaja has been living in Chennai for 35 years, work bringing her. Entering the banking sector, she later joined the Central Bank of India, beginning her career as a telephone operator at the Mount Road branch. In this role, Braille became essential for managing phone numbers, extensions, and daily call records. She would note all information in Braille before executing her

Going places

S. Vanaja has been part of the Brailles on Wheels rally, a regular on the Chennai calendar. The rally which teams up a visually impaired navigator with a driver who has normal vision, has rolled through 34 editions. National Association for the Blind (NAB), The Saveria and Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSC) are prominent among the entities holding this initiative aloft over the years.

She first participated in the rally in 1996, at the age of thirty, and has returned to the event again and again—sometimes after pauses, sometimes year after year.

tasks. As she progressed in her career and worked at the Regional Office, Vanaja was responsible for collecting data from nearly ninety branches across the region. She would call each branch, gather the required figures, and record the data meticulously in Braille. After compiling this information, she would type it into the computer and upload it to the bank’s internal systems. This process often took several hours each day.

While preparing for promotion-based exams such as Scale I and Scale II (Assistant Manager), Vanaja learned to use computers alongside Braille. She sees the two not as competing systems but as complementary. “Braille helps us think clearly; the computer helps us work faster,” she says, highlighting how tactile literacy supports digital

efficiency.

Audio-based learning

Vanaja acknowledges that audio tools are convenient and widely available today. However, she believes they cannot replace Braille, especially for language learning. “When you listen, the spelling does not stay. When you read in Braille, the word stays with you,” she explains, stressing that tactile engagement strengthens memory.

Her take on the current educational practices she expresses concern that many visually impaired students today are not taught Braille rigorously. According to her, some schools rely heavily on audio tools and fail to insist on Braille literacy. A shortage of trained Braille teachers worsens the situation. “In our time, Braille was compulsory. Now, it is optional,” she says.

Braille in daily life

Outside work and education, Braille drives Vanaja’s everyday routine. She carries a small Braille slate and stylus in her handbag and uses it to write grocery and provision lists. These lists help her place accurate orders over the phone, allowing her to remain independent in daily decision-making. While some visually impaired individuals label appliances with Braille stickers, Vanaja prefers not to. She relies on the tactile layout of buttons and muscle memory to operate appliances such as washing machines and microwaves. Vanaja maintains a small but meaningful collection of Braille books at home, including Thirukkural, Bhagavad Gita, and Bharathiyar Kavithaigal.

'Strays on the rise at Auto Lac Nagar'



Stray dogs at Auto Lac Nagar
Third Street in Murugambedu.
PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



S. SRINIVASAN

The number of stray dogs is on the increase at Auto Lac Nagar Third Street in Murugambedu. This street falls under Ward 32 in Zone 7- Ambattur.

Numerous complaints to elected representatives of Ward 32 have not been helpful in addressing the issue. Considering the safety of the public, the Greater Corporation is requested to do the needful.

S. Srinivasan is a resident of Ambattur

'Scant regard for GCC directive'

AMREEN. C

Greater Chennai Corporation put up a banner last week at the electricity transformer at 81st Street in Fourth Block, Muthamizh Nagar in Kodungaiyur instructing the public to refrain from dumping of waste.

The banner also states imposition of penalty in the event of a violation. However, the public pay scant respect to the GCC's direction, for the spot continues to witness waste dumping.

It may be noted GCC put up this notice in response to complaints from teachers and parents of a nearby school. While we thank GCC for its prompt response we request that it enforce the rule. The street is an approach road to a school but is unhygienic.

Amreen. C is a resident of Kodungaiyur



Bombay Halwa House opens outlet in Anna Nagar East

Bombay Halwa House has opened an outlet in Anna Nagar East. According to a press release, the restaurant is known for north Indian vegetarian cuisine. A special is Punjabi Thali (limited), served for lunch from 11.30 a.m. to 3.15 p.m., Monday to Friday. The outlet has car parking facility, adds the release.

The restaurant is at F 71/13, Plot No. 273, Second Main Road, (adjacent to Valliammal College for Women, Anna Nagar East) It is open daily for dining and pick up orders from 11.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. and from 6.30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Home delivery orders can be placed through Swiggy and Zomato.

The other outlets are at NSC Bose Road and Kellys. Phone: 63846 22622 / 63844 88488.

A family store

Shoba Textiles is a family store, built for every age, every stage.

The store has clothes for the just-born babies to adults. For newborns and kids, the focus is on soft fabrics, everyday essentials and festive wear that's comfortable enough to be lived in, says a press release. For teens and adults, the range moves effortlessly between daily wear, occasion wear, and classic staples you keep coming back for, said a release. Saris meant for daily use and for special occasions are available.

Visit its stores in T. Nagar, OMR, Karapkaam, Thiruvannamiyur and Mogappair West.



'View cutters marred by posters'

Greater Chennai Corporation's exercise of fencing the electricity transformer with aesthetic view-cutters is appreciated. However, posters advertising obituaries, to-lets, and all other kinds undo the aesthetic exercise. Stringent measures should be taken against such advertisers.

T. B. Ranganathan, Agaram.

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Sun shines 'dim' over Chennai

For the metro to have a significant slice of the solar energy pie, it needs to have greater skill training imparted to entrepreneurs and technicians in the field

LIFFY THOMAS

Geeyam Kalyan Residents Association at Thiruvengadam Street in RA Puram had invested in a solar rooftop unit, but were not benefitting optimally from it until last year. A workshop conducted by Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group last year opened their eyes to where they were going wrong. The solar panels in their apartment provided by the developer/ vendor had been connected to 'net feed-in' instead of 'net metering'. Only when they made the switch did their decision to go solar stand fully vindicated. The electricity bill "slimmed".

Knowledge gap among vendors of solar units can leave adopters of solar energy disillusioned as members of this RWA were till they attended that workshop. Those in the industry say Tamil Nadu needs more skilled solar entrepreneurs and technicians. There is an urgency to this need as Tamil Nadu Combined Development and Building Rules 2019 mandates that one third of the total terrace area in multi-storeyed buildings be reserved for erecting solar photovoltaic panels.

Suryamitra Skill Development Programme, initiated in 2015 by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and implemented by the National Institute of Solar Energy to meet skilling demand and employment in the solar sector, does not paint a rosy picture.

According to suryamitra.nise.res.in, since 2015 Tamil Nadu has placed 1946 candidates from the 3911 trained under the programme. There are 14 institutes listed under Tamil Nadu as empanelled training centres for Suryamitra Skill Development Programme for financial year 2023-24; the list includes none from Chennai.

Sundaresan Ranganathan, director, Tamilnadu Advanced Technical Training Institute (TATTI), a registered organisation with the Tamil Nadu government conducting rooftop solar systems-related training, says the number of centres offering training in Chennai to enter the sector for various roles are so low that they can be counted on the fingers.

Many seek entrepreneurial



The city to host Solar Premier League

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The sixth edition of Solar Premier League will unspool from April 22 to 24, 2026 at Chennai Trade Centre. The event's title might resonate with cricket, but has nothing to do with it. It brings together professionals from the solar sector to showcase their expertise as solar photovoltaic installers. Best practices and safety standards promoted by them would also be on display.

Organised by Solar is My Passion and powered by RenewX, the contest is supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India and will see at least 16 teams showcasing their installation skills.

The contest requires participating teams (companies in the solar sector) to install a 2 kW grid connected rooftop system in a given time. This is followed by a written and oral test to gauge their knowledge. The best installation will be selected on the basis of various criteria including time in commissioning, tools used, dress, the way knowledge is shared and viewers' choice. The system and its components will be provided by the organiser.

Ajit Bahadur, founder, Solar is My Passion, says the event is an opportunity to showcase talent and encourage more professionals to follow best practices participating companies have put in place. "Last year, we had 16 teams in the fray and each had something new to offer, so SPL is a win-win for all, especially helping create a new breed of technicians and entrepreneurs," says Ajit, who has been in the industry for over two decades.

This year, we have a new addition, a workshop on micro inverter or hybrid inverter, these are new technologies in the field of solar power generation, says Ajit.

The first edition of Solar Premier League was held in Pune; three teams participated in it. Since then the number of companies has increased and the event has been conducted in cities such as Hyderabad, Noida and Chennai.

The event is open for all installation teams, Suryamitra training institute and solar training institute.

For details, visit <https://solaripl.com/>

From a previous edition of Solar Premier League. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

stallation, which many vendors are not able to analyse resulting in a negative impact," says Sundaresan who conducts solar rooftop classes for Entrepreneurship Development and Innovation Institute.

Industry collaboration

Rajaganesan G, founder and director, VATIO Energy India, says to create the right skill force more advanced training should be offered at training centres in keeping with industry requirements. The renewable energy industry must be able to draw people from various professional backgrounds including those skilled in AI, he says.

"We need course modules that will cater to EPC (engineering, procurement and construction)," says Rajaganesan. Once a training partner with Suryamitra Skill Development Programme, today the company has opted out of it as it found the partnership being regulated in a manner that was stifling. "Skills in solar are technical and best offered hands-on, so the Skill Council must have greater collaboration with the industry to study the exact problem and find solutions," he says.

Certified technicians

A word of caution to those engaging with solar entrepreneurs. Only certified persons should install a solar rooftop system. "Right now there is no such mandate from the Government including when a certificate has to be renewed or a mechanism to check if the certificate is valid," says Rajaganesan.

'Footpath near Shenoy Nagar park needs mending'



The footpath around Thiru Vi Ka Park in Pulla Avenue, Shenoy Nagar. PHOTOS: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CHINNI KRISHNAN

The footpath around Thiru Vi Ka Park at Pulla Avenue in Shenoy Nagar has come apart in many places. With slabs out of place, this foot-



path can be treacherous for pedestrians. Complaints were made to the Greater Chennai Corporation from time to time last year; they were ignored.

GCC closed each complaint – raised in May, November and December – stating that estimates have been prepared and the footpath would be repaired once the approvals were obtained. But there has been no change in the footpath's status.

Further, the footpath is misused for parking of vehicles. Vendors have encroached upon some stretches of the footpath; a few others are plagued by open urination.

There are schools in the vicinity and MTC buses are operated around the park. Proper maintenance of the footpaths is therefore imperative.

The park was renovated at a cost of ₹18 crore in 2023. Shenoy Nagar metro rail station is located within the park. It is among the parks in city that command a massive patronage.

Chinni Krishnan is a resident of Shenoy Nagar

A safety blanket



During a distribution drive.

Members of Rotary Club of Chennai Coastal recently took a walk through the city's streets. They were not preparing for a walkathon, but to help those who would need help in dealing with the prevailing chilly nights. They distributed blankets and bedspreads to people sleeping on the roadsides and others in and around Kilpauk, Purasawalkam, Kellys, Anna Nagar, Ambattur, around Chennai Egmore and Chennai Central railway stations, and on Poonamalle High Road.

Navin Gupta, the club president, says the members provided blankets to those sleeping rough and shivering

in the cold, while those in deep sleep were covered.

"The children, women, and elderly people were shivering and fighting mosquitoes. The initiative is part of our 19th year celebrations, and as of January 9 close to 700 blankets and bed sheets have been distributed. In the coming days, we will give it to more people. We have been distributing blankets and bedsheets every winter for the past 15 years. This initiative aims to provide safety and warmth to prevent serious health issues such as hypothermia and frostbite," says Navin. For details, contact Navin Gupta at 9841018111.

A display of kickboxing talent



The HammerPro Kickboxing recently organised the Tamilnadu Kickboxing Championship 2025 for amateur and pro kickboxers in the city.

In the 55 kilogram weight category, Alam Azad and Abhijith from Kerala emerged as the winner and the runner-up respectively.

In the 60 kg, Dhaya (Tamil Nadu) and Rahees (Kerala); in the 70 kg, Hayagriv (Tamil Nadu) and Ziyen (Kerala); and in the 75 kg categories, Kavin and Karthik from Tamil Nadu, the press release stated.

The winners were awarded a cash prize and a title belt.

A milestone event for Chennai Poets' Circle

The Chennai Poets' Circle, a non-registered literary group, has been launching an anthology of poems, *Efflorescence*, every year.

The group originated in 1997 and their 25th anniversary issue is being launched on January 18, 2026, at the TAG Auditorium in Ramakrishna Mission Matriculation Higher Secondary School (South), Burkit Road, Chennai, says a press release.

Former Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, Madras Christian College, K. Ganesh will be the chief guest.

The release notes that every year, the launch of the anthology will be accompanied by a seminar. The seminar to go with this year's launch is on the topic: 'Current Trends in English Poetry in India'.

The special part of the event is that on the day, the poets get to read their poems that have been compiled in the anthology.

The poets include doctors, engineers, auditors, professors, journalists and home-makers, apart from children who have become part of the circle with the introduction of a section called 'Young Poets Corner'.

Contributions to the anthology are strictly through invitation from the organisation.

The founding fathers of CPC are still actively engaged with it. They include M. Thirumeni (chairman) and S. Kannan (president), and office-bearers Hema Ravi (secretary) and Ravi Ranganathan (treasurer).

Telugu classes from Feb 7

World Telugu Federation is conducting Telugu language classes from February 7. Time: From 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

According to a press release, no fee will be charged. Classes will be held at the federation's premises at Ankur Plaza, Second Floor, South Wing, No. 113, G. N. Road, T. Nagar.

For details, call 730557322 / 9566288325.

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Free counselling in Anna Nagar

Sugam Psychological Counselling and Research centre is conducting a free camp for individuals planning to get married.

The objective of this camp is to help individuals explore and understand compatibility, communication patterns, expectations and emotional readiness for

marriage, helping them make informed and mindful choices before their marriage, said a press release.

The camp will take place on January 25 at I block, 35th street, Anna Nagar West.

For registration, contact Asha Dinesh at 9444084946

Anna Nagar Humour Club meets today

The monthly meeting of Anna Nagar Humour Club will be held on January 11 at Shri Krishnaswamy Vidhyashram, Vaigai Colony, Anna Nagar West at 4 p.m.

Rangadurai Ramanujan, retired DGM of BSNL, will be the guest of honour. Dr.

A. Anantharamakrishnan, chairman, will joke on 'Jolly January' and 'New Year Nuances'. Audience are welcome to tell jokes.

For further information, contact Arjuna Chetty at 98402 69123/ Karthikeyan at 98400 76022



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