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TN deficit breaches norm

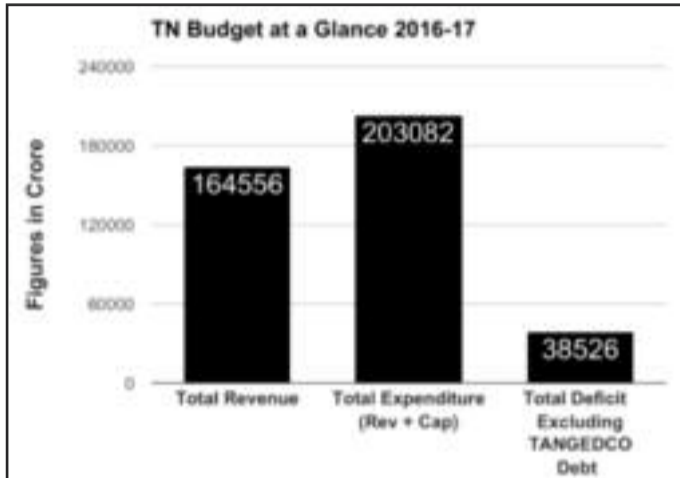
PAVNEET SINGH CHADHA

Despite a huge fiscal deficit, the Tamil Nadu government announced no new taxes in the budget presented by Finance Minister D. Jayakumar in the Assembly here on Thursday.

According to Budget estimates, the fiscal deficit for 2016-17 is estimated at Rs. 61,341 crore, which is about 4.58 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). This breaches the 3 per cent ceiling prescribed by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM).

Jayakumar defended the rise in the deficit saying, "The fiscal deficit breaching the norms in 2016-2017 is only temporary due to Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO's) debt takeover."

"In 2016-17, the State Govern-



ment had taken over State-run power utility TANGEDCO's Rs. 22,815 crore debt, which increased the fiscal deficit beyond the Tamil Nadu Fiscal Responsibility Act norm of 3 per cent to 4.5 per cent

of GSDP," he added.

Acknowledging that the budget estimates had been prepared under severe resource constraints, Jayakumar stated that the Government would 'leave no stone unturned to

bring the State back on the path of fiscal consolidation'.

"The uncertainty in the domestic economy continues. This Government is working hard to overcome this and to reverse the economic downturn," he added.

Rajat Kathuria, Director of Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) said, "High fiscal deficit is an unsustainable position. With rising subsidies, there is a need to increase revenues. The Government should at least target a pathway for fiscal consolidation."

The total revenue receipts for 2017-18 has been pegged at Rs.159,363 crore, while the revenue expenditure has been put higher at Rs. 175,293 crore, leaving a revenue deficit of Rs. 15,930 crore.

The net outstanding debt at the end of March 31, 2018 would be Rs. 314,366 crore.

Revenue growth in the State continues to be poor. Low economic growth, demonetization and lower receipts from stamp duty and registration charges were the reasons for low revenue receipts mentioned by Jayakumar in his speech. Critics have blamed the freebies given to people and the subsidies as other factors contributing to the deficit. For Subsidies and Grants, Rs.72,616 crore has been allocated in the Budget. The allocation includes expenditure for various on-going welfare schemes like food subsidy, power subsidy, scholarships, housing schemes

DMK working President and Opposition Leader M K Stalin called the budget 'old wine in a new bottle'. He said that while no new schemes had been announced, the increasing debt burden was a cause for great concern.

CITY TRANSPORT

Unfair not to up bus fares?

LAVANYA RAMAKRISHNAN

If bus services are to be improved, the ticket fares must be raised, said Mayakumaresan, Public Relations Officer of The Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) here today.

"We have asked the State government to increase the ticket fares. We have been asking them for a long time now. But, they are scared they'll lose people's support if they raise the fares," he said.

The PRO said that the retirees and employees have not been paid their pensions and salaries for the month yet, as MTC was running out of funds.

According to him, people looking at other modes of transport and the State government not increasing the ticket fares are two reasons why MTC was not doing well.

Mayakumaresan said "In Tamil Nadu, the ticket fares are extremely cheap when compared to the other states. We still have the Rs.3, Rs. 5 and Rs. 7 tickets here. The government keeps announcing schemes like the free passes for senior citizens. They don't think about the funding.

"Also, passengers are going to other alternatives. Share autos play a very important role in this," he said.

The rising diesel prices do not matters help either.

"The diesel price has gone up and tyres are expensive too. It is hard to bring in facilities without any revenue. In 2009, we installed GPRS in the CMBT (Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus). But, we could sustain it only for a year. After that

we didn't have the funds to pay for it," he said.

Agreeing with the PRO's opinion, Vishy, a resident of Tambaram, said "Successive governments have always used bus fares as a political tool during election time. They should increase the fares and remove subsidies in ticket fares. It will help in making MTC profitable," said Vishy

Many commuters taking MTC buses felt increasing the fares was not a bad idea.

PK Raman, an employee at Southern Railways said "When compared to the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), the facilities and fare are poor. So, by spelling out the action plan in line with BMTC, the fare can be increased."

Affordability of taxis and, to an extent, false prestige, were the reasons behind people choosing alternative means of transport.

Akash Sriram, a college student said fares could be increased if it'd help MTC become profitable.

Commuters also felt an increase in the number of air-conditioned buses would do the trick.

"I think MTC should move to more air-conditioned Volvo buses. They should phase out the existing vehicles and make it all Volvo. China did that and it is working there. It will also make people use buses more, because Volvo buses look nice and typically we can find a seat," said Vishy.

"The number of Volvo buses need to be increased drastically and fares should go down just a little otherwise no one will take it," said Akash Sriram.

Water crisis hits real estate prices in City

PARTH KHATAU

The water crisis in the city is taking a toll on real estate, pushing up property prices and affecting project schedules. The depleting ground water level is another worry for developers who might find it difficult to sell property where there is not enough water.

Dr. Sekhar Raghavan, Director of Rain Centre in Mandavelipakkam, feels ongoing construction projects should be temporarily suspended or slowed down in order to save the water for the common man.

"In such times the builder should slow down his activity as a lot of water gets used up. Borewells are drying up in the city and tankers are hiking up their rates. The quality of water supplied by these tankers is not good enough

and needs to be tested and purified if need be," he added.

On suspending the use of swimming pools in apartment complexes in the summer to save water, Raghavan added, "People have a misconception about swimming pools. The water used in a swimming pool is circulated continuously and this utilizes power and not water. The amount of water that needs to be replenished due to evaporation is minimal. In fact, swimming pools act as a great back up source of water as many apartments use their swimming pool water when the water supply gets cut off during the summer."

Kishore Bafna, Director, Veepee Housing, said the rise in cost of water used for construction directly affected property prices.

"The first criteria for potential

buyers is the availability of water supply," he said.

"We often have to use salt water and mix chemicals in it to make it fit to use for construction purposes. A smart builder will always look at ground water levels before deciding on the location of a project," he added.

Chandra Mohan Damani, employee of Boond Engineering & Development, stressed the importance of harvesting of grey water in order to help aid the water crisis.

"Grey water is the water that gets wasted after activities like bathing, cooking and cleaning. The government should make sure such type of water is harvested as it is overlooked and untapped," he said, before adding that "every drop counts."

Realtors unhappy with marshland ban

MANASA R

Realtors in Chennai are unhappy with the ban ordered last November by the Madras High Court on registration of documents pertaining to properties on marshlands.

Last week on the court's directions, the government informed the public about the ban, which is a move to prevent construction and other development on the fast disappearing wetlands in the suburbs around Chennai.

"This is a blanket ban. This blanket ruling from the judiciary will definitely have a bearing on the real estate sector, following the political turmoil and demonetization, which

didn't augur well for us. It's not a good move," felt Arun Kumar, MD of real estate company Casa Grande.

Anjan Rangaraj, MD of Cedilla Group asked, "How can we have a blanket ban without properly categorizing lands?"

He said that even drylands were wrongly being taken into consideration under the ban meant only for wetlands being converted to residential layouts and sold, flouting Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) and Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) norms.

It was a major problem of poor classification of lands, whether it

was dryland, wetland, recognized or an unrecognized land, felt Rangaraj.

"It is unfortunate that marshlands are being destroyed but everybody is getting caught in the crossfire," he said.

"Even I am caught. I have developed properties on drylands and I only have a 1951 document as proof," he added

Sanjay Chugh, Founder of Skyline Property Consultants, felt that it was the unauthorized sector which would be affected badly by the ban.

"It is mostly gullible people who will be impacted. The ones who unknowingly invested. They'd



Collecting finger prints for issuing Aadhar WIKICOMMONS

Aadhaar card software goes on the blink

NIDHI CHUGH

The "Aadhaar Service" software has been down for the past 25 days and the employees at the Chennai Corporation Zonal Office at Adyar say that it should start working by Friday 10 a.m.

With the rise in the demand for Aadhaar cards, the software glitch has disrupted the service.

P. Nagraj, an employee at the Adyar Corporation Zonal Office, said, "At least 70 new applicants come here daily and with this software issue, we have around 195 pending applications as of now."

Raja, a junior employee, said, "We have started the Aadhaar card procedure like how it was done earlier. We take the applicant's phone number and give them a call when their turn comes."

"The applicants have to come here and fill up the forms and wait till the Head Office approves their request. After their request has been approved, the applicants have to come again to give their finger prints and for their retina scan," he said.

"After this, the applicant will have to wait till the Aadhaar card is sent to them by post. This is a long procedure and takes around four to five months."

Despite the delay, the employees said the Aadhaar cards continued to be issued.

K. Selvi, another employee, said,

"We do not know what is wrong

with the "Aadhaar Service" software. The screen goes black while we are filling in the applicant's details and all the details are lost."

"It is very difficult for us to explain this to the applicants and when we asked our authorities, they said that they are updating the software and it should be done by Friday."

S. Lakshmi, a resident of Indira Nagar, said, "My husband and I have been coming here for three days now. They have been asking us to call the toll-free number but we aren't getting any response from there either."

"We are stuck because we want to apply for a loan and we need our Aadhaar cards."

Anburasan, a software engineer and a resident of Indira Nagar, said, "My brother got his Aadhaar card in less than a month when the software was working smoothly."

"I think it is because of the sudden overload of the Aadhaar card applications and with the sudden rise in demand, there is a need for the software to be updated," he said.

"Even though it is annoying for us to come every day, the least we can do is cooperate with them."

With around 190 eSeva centers in the city, K. Selvi said that all the eSeva centres were facing this issue and all the employees and applicants were eagerly waiting for the software issue to be sorted out.

Prices of pulses plummet, traders blame it on glut

B.PRADEEP & SAMUEL MERIGALA

Prices for pulses have plummeted to a two-year low with tur and uradh dhal selling at 35-50 per cent less than what they were sold for a year ago.

Four major pulses - tur, moong, channa and uradh dhals which were sold at close to Rs. 200 a kg in retail outlets in November 2015, are now being sold at Rs. 100, Rs. 110, Rs. 125 and Rs. 90 respectively.

S.Rajkumar of K.P. Angalappa Chettiar and Sons, a pulses merchant in Parry's says, "There is very little cash flow since the demonetization move, hence the low sale and price fall."

Rajkumar, who sold tur dhal at Rs. 9000 per 100 kg in the first week of November, sells the same at Rs. 6000 now, a dip of over 30 per cent in the price at the wholesale level.

However, grain processors who procure from commission agents feel there are other reasons.

N.R.Balaji, proprietor of two processing mills in Tondiarpet says, "There is a good supply in the market both through local production and imports from Myanmar, Tanzania, Canada and Australia."

Although India is the largest producer of pulses in the world, it imports range from 8 per cent to over 50 per cent of the pulses it consumes. The Department of Com-



Pulses merchants complaints on low cash flow PRADEEP B

merce, Government of India estimates an import need of about 19 per cent for 2016-17, a consistent figure for the past three years.

In 2016, a Year of Pulses as declared by the UNFAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) India's average yield

of pulses per hectare was 622 kg, where France marked 4,000 kg.

Prof. N Raveendran, Consultant of the National Agricultural Innovation Project at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, says, "Very good rainfall in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and parts of Karnataka from where Tamil Nadu procures more than 50 per cent pulses added to the already imported consignment leading to a glut."

However, the professor rules out demonetization as a determinant of price decline, as alleged by mill owners and dealers.

"Tamil Nadu is an example for the rest of the states for its anti-hoarding laws. I would buy the de-

monetization justification in December, not now. It is negligible," he says.

But proprietors like Balaji allege that the PDS stocks in the fair price shops (FPS) are siphoned off and sold in the black market creating an artificial price reduction.

"Today the tur dhal at the mill level is sold at between Rs. 50 and Rs. 60 a kg; the price was Rs. 120 last year and Rs. 200 in 2015, but any dhal at the FPS is Rs. 30 per kg. Subsidy is for siphoners to enable black market sale," he alleges.

V. Karunanidhi, a PDS staff in TUCS Tambaram attributed the lack of pulses and oil stock which come under the Special Public Distribution Scheme, to delay in award-

ing tenders to suppliers of these commodities.

This setback in the Special Public Distribution System which includes commodities such as Uradh dhal, Tur dhal and Palmolein oil has affected ration card holders in the Below Poverty Line and Anna Yojana Scheme category.

Tamil Nadu is a large consumer of pulses due its traditional use in idly, sambar and other foods. Ten of the 32 districts in Tamil Nadu feature in the Top 100 'All Pulses' consuming districts, says NSSO data.

The DMK held a state wide protest on March 13 protesting the non availability of pulses and oil in ration shops.

More juvenile crimes after 2015 Act

PADMASHREE PANDE

The number of juvenile crimes has increased after the Juvenile Justice Act was amended in 2015, says P. Rajan, a child protection consultant with the UNICEF.

In the new Act, a special clause mandates that a child above the age of sixteen committing a heinous offence, will be tried as an adult.

Rajan says that there is a definite increase in such cases because of various factors.

"People are becoming more and more aware of the acts and laws laid down by the Government and the rights and provisions available to them which they exploit to their benefit," he says.

"Also, the work conducted by Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) has been brought to light by media.

The media presence has also led to increased reporting of crimes committed by children."

In December 2015, the juvenile convicted in the Nirbhaya case was released after he served three years in a correctional home.

Two days after that, the amended Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 was passed.

According to the United Nations' Child Rights' Convention (UN CRC), any individual below the age of eighteen is a child. India ratified the convention on December 11, 1992, but made certain changes in it in view of the rate of juvenile crimes in the country.

These changes were triggered after the nature of the Nirbhaya case in Delhi.

In contrast with the previous act,



Juvenile Crimes have increased post 2015 | WALLIN & KLARICH

Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 states that a child should not be treated as a juvenile. There is a change in the terminologies as well. The JJ Act provides guidelines for both kinds

of children, those who are offenders and those who are victims.

"For the purposes of social reintegration and rehabilitation of

children after the legal proceedings are over, and to not treat them like some criminals, the terms to be used now are 'Children in need of care and protection' and 'Children in conflict with law'," said Rajan.

A psychological assessment of the children in conflict with law will take place to determine whether the child was conscious of the nature of the offence that he or she has committed and whether they knew the trouble they would land in if they get caught.

"Once it gets proven that a child was aware that he or she has committed a crime, then they will be tried in a normal court," he added. There is an increasing need for child-friendly courts in the country.

However, the amended Juvenile Justice Act of 2015 is being

exploited by many old-timers. An area where it is misused is with respect to child labour. A child can help in a family business after school hours if he or she is contributing to the family's income or labour.

This leads to many resorting to crimes and exploiting the Act by creating pseudo records about the child's age, school certificates and 'family occupations'.

The fact that the punishment is only three years if the children are caught, is being misused by these gang leaders who know how to get around the system. "Drug peddlers are at the top of misusing this Act as they know that the child would be let off in only three years. For them, three years of a child's life mean nothing when it comes to business," explained Rajan.

New ID cards for policemen

NIDHI CHUGH

The Chennai Police personnel are expected to get their new ID cards by June. The new ID cards will have a hologram – the emblem of Tamil Nadu – which cannot be imitated by any one as it will be created with a special coding design.

M/s Printography Systems"- a Mumbai-based company – signed the contract for Rs. 84 lakhs for the new ID card project.

The ID cards which are being used are authenticated only with the signature from the issuing officer. R. Sushil Kumar, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Intelligence, said, "This is an important initiative as there have been many cases of people misusing this loophole in our ID card."

"Once there was a case where a drug peddler got away scot-free while passing a check-post. We realised this after a week and when we tracked him down, we found out it was because he had a fake ID card which he got made from his neighbourhood shop," he said.

"The shop had forged the issuing officer's signature. Making these fake ID cards seemed more like a regular business."

He said, "For security reasons, it is important for us to have new ID cards."

Calling it a 'smart card' would be wrong as it serves no other purpose. The police officers cannot use the new ID cards for anything else. This initiative is purely taken to strengthen our security and to end the business of bogus police."

Although the procedure is long, Sushil Kumar says that "it is worth the wait."

The procedure involves all personnel filling out a data entry form and since the initiative was proposed a month ago it will take a minimum of three months for the officers to receive their new identification cards.

After the data entry form is filled out, the DGP, K. Ramanujam, will hand over the data to the company.

After the details are handed over, the production will take place and the identification cards will be distributed to the personnel.

High hopes for BJP No relief yet for flat buyers

NAVMI KRISHNA

With less than a month to go for the by-election in Tamil Nadu, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Chennai office in T Nagar is bustling with activity. Buoyed by the victory in Uttar Pradesh, the party office sees a steady stream of volunteers, media persons and local leaders, all of them rather optimistic about the BJP making in-roads into Tamil Nadu.

S.Ravichandran, the BJP spokesperson for Chennai unit, says, "For the past 50 years, the Dravidian parties have reduced Tamil Nadu to a weak State. They are just concentrating on giving free material to consolidate their vote banks."

Accusing All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of wasting Tamil Nadu's industrial strength, Ravichandran says that "the BJP wants to bring back the lost glory [to Tamil Nadu]."

"We have high hopes in RK Nagar this time," he adds.

The Radhakrishnan Nagar (RK Nagar) constituency, which fell vacant when former Chief Minister J.Jayalalitha passed away, is the centre of attention with DMK and both V.K. Sasikala camp and O.Pa-neerselvam camps of AIADMK fielding separate candidates.

However, Aditya Chaturvedi, a political

analyst who has been closely following Tamil Nadu politics says that the chances of BJP making it big in the State are remote.

"From what is observed across the States, BJP's key tactic is to offer a mix of development and religious polarization. In TN, neither of these will work - it does not have a sufficiently divided society nor is it so lacking in development. Also, the people here are inherently suspicious of BJP which is seen as a North Indian party."

However, R.Gajalakshmi, speaking on behalf of the Mahila Morcha Wing of BJP, rubbished this as "baseless opinions."

"BJP does not use religion to get votes – that is a falsehood being perpetrated by the opposition parties and media. Under the guidance of [Narendra] Modiji, BJP emerged victorious even in Manipur which has over 30 per cent Christian population. If BJP is anti-minorities, how do you explain that?" she asks.

As we speak, volunteers gear up with stacks of pamphlets featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP National President Amit Shah and TN BJP President Tamilisai Soundararajan. "We are working non-stop to recruit new members to the party," says a Shrawan Kumar, a 23-year-old volunteer. "For the last 20 years AIADMK and DMK have held power – nothing good came out of it. So why not give BJP a chance now?"

MANASA R

Over 75 flat buyers who had invested in the 11-storey Prime Sristi Housing Llimited project at Mouliavakkam here, which collapsed on July 28, 2014, have still not got any relief.

"We've received no help from the State government or the banks," said Manikandan, one of the affected buyers.

Even consumer forums haven't provided any hope for the buyers.

Ratna Misra, who is the President of the Mouliavakkam Trust Heights Affected Flat Buyers' Association explained, "We filed a case in the Consumer Court in December 2014. The last hearing was in August last year. But there has been no change."

The Madras High Court has called for a status report on the investigation into the collapse of one of the two eleven-floored buildings, which killed around 61 migrant construction workers.

The second was razed to the ground on November 1, 2016. Manikandan said, "The High Court status report has nothing for us [buyers]. I understand that the workers were most



Flat buyers' hopes in a heap of rubble |

YOUTUBE, PPTV

vulnerable, but not a single voice was raised for us." "They [the HC] are only talking about who was at fault and who wasn't," added Misra.

"At the end of the day," said Manikandan, "there was no ownership of the disaster."

The buyers still receive messages from the Debt Recovery Tribunal which has filed cases against them for defaulting on payment of EMIs on the loans they had

taken for buying the flats.

Misra asked, "How do you make financial decisions? After a lot of planning, right? We had also done that. We thought we would move to the flat, share the rent and pay the EMI together."

"For what do we pay the EMI?" continued Misra. "And from where?" she added. Financially, the investors are in a bind as they remain ineligible for loans as their credit ratings have dropped. Misra felt that the banks were also responsible as,

"they had checked everything before granting loans."

Manikandan added, "We had bought it [the flats] only after all the approvals were sanctioned, and with due diligence." He said, "We're being made to move back and forth, for no mistake of ours."

Three years after the collapse, the buyers are still hopeful of a positive outcome at the next hearing, which is going to be in July, this year.

Schools stop bus service

LAVANYA R

The decision of some schools to withdraw their bus service and let private operators run the service has raised safety concerns among parents.

Bala Vidya Mandir, Adyar recently announced that it will not be offering bus service from the upcoming academic year.

The school, according to The Times of India, said that rules "stipulated by the government and CBSE are not only stringent but also involve a lot of practical difficulties with regard to implementation."

While practical difficulties might exist, parents of school students generally find school buses safer than the private vans and buses.

Rekha Sriram, whose son is in class three in Jawahar Vidyalaya said "From parents point of view it's always the school transport,

which is the safest means to commute their children to school.

Drivers will be recruited by the school management and hence he will have a good "Code of Conduct". We don't have to ensure the driver's verification every day."She said there were other advantages as well when it came to school buses.

"School bus kids will be the first ones to leave the class before the private transport or those waiting for their parents to pick them up."

Another parent felt school bus was the best option for working parents.

"For working parents, the child's safety has to be ensured. With all the modern technological facilities, school transportation can provide information to the parents about their pick up time and drop time at school and home.

GPS enabled messages are

helpful," said Anitha whose son is in class two in Chettinad Vidhyashram.

"School buses will be prompt in their timings.

And there will be no sudden surprises of driver not turning up, as there is always a back-up driver," she added.

However, Gayatri Sriram, parent of a Pon Vidyashram school student said private vans were doing a good job.

"You can control the private guys with a tap on the shoulder and dump a four folded 100 rupees note into their pockets and get things done.As for changes in pick-up and drop points, you can do your own map. But, with the school guys it is such a headache," she said.

She added that her daughter had been taking the school bus until recently and that they were not happy with the service.

Jay walkers endangering lives

SAMUEL MERIGALA

Much to the woes of motorists, herds of pedestrians cross the Old Mahabalipuram Road at several points by scaling a two foot high central median and abruptly stopping traffic.

In spite of having four over-bridges between Thoraipakkam and Tidel Park and constant warnings from traffic policemen, the pedestrians continue to endanger their lives and also the lives of the motorists by cutting across the highway.

"We don't have a law to charge pedestrians cutting across highways," says V. Loganathan, a traffic policeman who has been on the force for thirty years.

"They do so at their own risk"

Loganathan says that pedestrians had requested for the over-bridges but most of them don't use it.

For the traffic police who try to stop them, it further slows the traffic instead of facilitating smoothly.

Most of the pedestrians are IT



Pedestrians do not use overbridges or subways | SAMUEL

professionals who commute by bus and cross over between Tidel Park and Madhya Kailash.

"I see some of my officemates crossing the OMR.

They expect me to stop," says Godwin, an employee of Sify, Tidel

Park who commutes to work on a motorcycle. He says that he is terrified of knocking someone down.

"Motorists are always blamed. How can we abruptly stop while travelling at 70 km per hour?" asks

Jambulingam, who works at Cognisant.

Police say that their advice and warnings to jaywalkers fall on deaf ears and in most accidents, it is the motorists who get lynched.

Police say the only way to curb this menace is through self awareness and making Jaywalking a punishable offence.

"We have asked the Tamil Nadu Road (and) Development Company (TNDC) to construct a more strategic over-bridge

from Thiruvanniyur MRTS station to the other side of the road which connects OMR to Thiruvanniyur," says V.Hari, a Traffic policeman.

Till date, jaywalking is not a punishable offence in India.

Eliminating TB by 2025 will be 'hard'

MEDI CHAITANYA

The number of tuberculosis cases are coming down but not enough under the target set by the Government, according to Dr Jaya Sridhar, who was a health consultant to the WHO.

In his budget speech Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had said that the Government had targeted to eliminate TB by 2025.

According to WHO's END-TB strategy, complete elimination or near end of TB is defined as the reduction in the number of new cases in a year to less than one in a million.

To reach the target, India should reduce new cases by 95 per cent over the next decade whereas it has

just reduced them by 22 per cent between 2005 and 2015 according to the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP) data.

Nearly three in every 10 new TB cases in the world are from India, says the WHO report on TB-2016. With 2.8 million new cases out of 10.4 million globally,

India is one of the six countries, which accounted for the 60 per cent of the total TB cases.

"Eliminating TB by 2025 is a laudable goal but the infrastructure provided makes it hard to achieve," says Dr Shridhar Narayana, Director of the Foundation for Neglected Disease Research.

Narayana says that the limited investment in the drug research has resulted in the industry taking over

30 years to discover a new drug which will cure the existing drug-resistant TB cases.

According to National Strategic Policy for Tuberculosis Elimination 2017-2025 released on February 20, "India has more than a million 'missing' cases every year that are not notified and most remain either undiagnosed or unaccountably and inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector."

An NSSO survey says 72 per cent of rural and 79 per cent of the urban population rely on the private hospitals for treatment.

Dr Radha, a doctor with REACH which is working towards a TB-free India" in Chennai said: "Notification by the private sectors is abysmally low despite the government making

TB notification mandatory from 2012 onwards."

RNTCP developed a case-based online reporting mechanism called NIKSHAY where private and government practitioners should notify tuberculosis cases.

"We will get 100 cases daily and last year we had treated 350 MDR-TB and 50 XTR-TB cases," says Jeeva, a junior doctor at the Government TB Sanatorium Hospital, Tambaram.

MDR-TB (multi-drug resistant TB) and XTR-TB (extensively drug-resistant TB) are a form of TB infections caused by bacteria that are resistant to treatment with at least two of the most powerful first-line anti-tuberculosis drugs- isoniazid and rifampicin.



With the lack of new drugs, eliminating TB seems impossible

'PIL helps only a few'

MEDI CHAITANYA

Public interest litigation, which seeks to advance the cause of disadvantaged sections or raise issues of broad public concern, had become corrupted and served the interests of only a few, according to says Anuj Bhuwania, an assistant professor of South Asian University, New Delhi.

Delivering a lecture "Politics of public interest litigation in post-emergency India" organised by Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Bhuwania said, "Though PIL began as a democratic exercise seeking to make justice accessible to the poorest and most marginalised groups, it was eventually corrupted during the course of time."

"Our analytical understanding of PIL (Public interest litigation) is inadequate because we focus only on the unjust outcomes of PIL cases but not on the profound injustice of the judicial process adopted," he said.

"Just like every other institution, the judiciary was also affected by the neo-liberalism in our country," said the professor.

In the late 1990s, influenced by a changed political economy and an increasingly corrupt political executive, the Supreme Court (SC) moved away from the original objectives of the PIL and began to cater to an outraged urban middle



Anuj Bhuwania

|MEDI CHAITANYA

"Though PIL began as a democratic exercise seeking to make justice accessible to the poorest it was eventually corrupted during the course of time."

class, taking on issues like polluted cities, slum clearance and so on.

"The abuse of a noble legal endeavor started with the corrupt courts itself," he said.

Pointing to the core principle of PIL that interested parties should be the part of the proceedings, he said this principle had been ignored by the courts. He gave the example of

slum clearance order by the Delhi High Court in which the slum dwellers were not part of the judicial process. Acting on a PIL in mid-2000, the court ordered the eviction of the slum dwellers without consulting them.

Pushing the petitioner to the periphery was also "gross violation" of the objective of the PIL, said Bhuwania. According to him, the PIL become a mechanism for securing justice to people who were unable to approach courts and removing the petitioners, who are the only link between the court and the people, betrayed the very purpose of the PIL.

Bhuwania gave the example of Sheela Barse case in the mid 80s, which was about prison reforms. When Sheela Barse herself wanted to withdraw the PIL, the court refused to do so, and went on with the case anyway.

Bhuwania said, "The PIL emerged out of the Supreme Court's determination to make up for its constitutional abdication during Indira Gandhi's emergency."

Tracking the trajectories of PIL in the country, the professor said that what was introduced as dilution of locus standi, the right or capacity to bring an action in court, turned out to be diluting the legal process itself. He called this phenomenon the "informalisation of the court procedure."



P. Chidambaram speaking at The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy |B PRADEEP

Is India really growing?

B PRADEEP

Former union minister P Chidambaram has questioned the Central Government's efficiency in ensuring economic growth and said politics had derailed the economy.

Delivering a lecture organized by the Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy here, he said that the BJP had not capitalized on the opportunities created by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance Government that registered 'a modest crawl' of the economy towards growth. "All conditions for recovery of the economy were there," he said.

Criticising the BJP's two-year

rule, he said that the much needed reforms were replaced by events such as Swachh Bharat, Stand Up India and Make in India programmes that did not contribute any way to the economy.

However, the economic growth in 2013 was interrupted by several outside factors. The home-made interruption, he agreed was the corruption in the allocation of 2G spectrum and coalmines. "The fallout could have been contained," he admitted.

Social fault lines multiplied and distracted the government's agenda for the day. Every issue was broken into a binary of, "Are you with me or without me," and debates ended in a row over anti-nationalism.

Speaking of the victory of the BJP in the recently concluded U.P. Elections, he asked, "How can the government be sabka-saath when no Muslim is fielded in any of the 403 seats, in a state that has 19.3 per cent Muslims?"

Later, in a question-answer session, moderated by N. Ram, Chairman, Kasturi and Sons Limited, the minister replying to whether it was possible for India to achieve an uninterrupted growth, said that the probabilities were high for interruptions in a diverse country where debate and plurality made governing a complex task.

"Despite all, we have achieved a decadal growth rate of 7.5 per cent, the highest ever for any decade",



TNGEA employees participating in the protest rally

|PAVNEET CHADHA

Protest for Pension

PAVNEET CHADHA

The Tamil Nadu Government Employees Association (TNGEA) staged a protest in Chepauk demanding that the new pension scheme be scrapped and that the Government stop outsourcing jobs.

TNGEA has called for an indefinite hunger strike from April 25 if the demands are not met.

TNGEA General Secretary Anbarasu said, "We want the New Pension Scheme to be scrapped and Old Pension Scheme to be restored.

In the new scheme, there is no guarantee of certain benefits that existed under Pension Fund Regulatory Authority Bill."

"The employees who joined

after April 1, 2003 will not get those benefits. We oppose this tooth and nail," he added.

TNGEA members said that before implementation of 7th Pay Commission, there must be a consultation process with the stakeholders.

"The Government has formed a Committee headed by the Finance Secretary to revise pay structures, but we have not been consulted," said Daniel Jayasingh, member of TNGEA.

P. Pugazhendhi, District Treasurer, TNGEA said, "We want the Pay Revision Committee to consult the Association before announcing the new pay scales. In the last pay revision, there were

many anomalies.

For instance, the new formula gives meagre benefits to senior employees. The revisions have to be uniform and take experience into account."

"We demand interim relief of 20 per cent from January 1, 2016 to the date of implementation of the revised pay structures," he added.

The Association said that it wants the Government to put an end to outsourcing and fill vacant posts.

"We expect the Government to recruit employees on contractual and consolidated pay basis and fill all the vacant posts," Venkatesan, District Secretary said demanding for the change.

NAVMI KRISHNA

Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM) is installing 2 MW solar panels on the campus is the latest in the many attempts to bring in sustainable energy into the mainstream.

Funded by the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, the Rs 1450 crore project intends to reduce dependency on conventional sources of energy.

This is one of the many attempts by the State Government and others to shift to renewable energy sources.

According to officials at Tamil Nadu Energy Development Agency (TEDA), currently over 41 per cent of Tamil Nadu's energy is derived from thermal sources and about 12 per cent from hydropower.

Faced with immense power shortage in the past five years, particularly in the summer, the Tami Nadu Government has been giving priority to renewable energy programs, including wind, biomass and solar power.

According to TEDA, solar power systems of up to 1,061.82 MW have been set up by the system till February 2017. The all-time high demand in the State was 15,191 MW on April 20, 2016.

Bevita K.C., a PhD scholar working on solar cell research in Singapore says that though the difference in production and



The Tamil Nadu government has been trying to produce solar power for the past few years now as a move to shift to renewable energy sources

|NAVMI KRISHNA

consumption is huge right now, there are positives signs of the gap shrinking rapidly.

"One of the issues with renewable energy sources is that it needs a high initial investment.

But, the technology [in solar cell research] is changing rapidly - this translates to lower prices. Four-five

years back, the costs for 1kW solar power system was over Rs.3 lakh.

Now it has come down to Rs. 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh," she says

In the current market, without subsidy, a 1.5kW rooftop solar power system (generating around 6 units a day) costs Rs. 80,000 to Rs. 1,20,000 based on the quality of the solar panels.

Under the Tamil Nadu government's Solar Net Metering Scheme, the first 10,000 consumers

in the State to set up 1kW systems were given a subsidy of Rs. 20,000 from the State government in addition to a Central government subsidy of Rs. 30,000.

Besides this, the system of passing on excess electricity generated to the grid instead of storing them in batteries too help reduce the cost since batteries are expensive.

Young Techie helps farmers in distress

MANIKUNTALA DAS

The two-month-old Vivasayanadu Trust, brainchild of a 24-year-old engineer P. Vetrivel, has extended relief to more than 15 families of the farmers who lost their lives in the last few months in Tamil Nadu.

More than 500 volunteers have already joined the cause in less than 60 days.

The previous year was a tough one for all the farmers here as both their 'kuruva' and 'samba' crops failed due to poor weather conditions.

2016 is also considered to be the driest year in the state after 1876. This resulted in the increase in the number of farmer suicides.

"It is sad to see that the farmers who provide us with food have no food for themselves and are dying," said Vetrivel.

This thought led him to form the Trust that would support the farmers affected by drought and work for their benefits in the long run.

Recollecting how he started the venture, Vetrivel said, "During the Jallikattu protest on Marina Beach,



P. Vetrivel has helped 15 families till now

MANIKUNTALA DAS

I saw immense unity in people, especially from our IT sector.

I thought of directing this attitude towards something that is of utmost importance now, our farmer's situations. I printed pamphlets and distributed all over the Marina Beach.

Being the sole member, I was not paid any heed at first, but later after

I delivered a speech, I got the support of around 150 volunteers in less than five days."

The main aim of the Trust is to provide immediate relief to the families of the affected farmers.

Sathya K, one of the senior members of the Trust, said, "In most of the villages that we visited, the families did not even have

enough for a single proper meal every day.

Till now, we have provided 15 families with relief assistance and proper amenities to survive for at least three months from now."

"There is a special women's team that looks after the provisions required by these farmers' widows. We also provide them with alternative earning options like cattle and country chicken, as their lands are not suitable for agriculture at least for the next one year."

The trust also promotes organic farming by educating farmers on various processes. They stress the importance of selling organic produce through their Trust and giving the entire earning to the farmers in order to avoid the concept of a middleman who generally grabs the profit.

The volunteers also removed Karuvelum trees from many areas in the state as the tree requires a lot of water which adds to the woes of the drought-struck farmers. They planted numerous other saplings to counter that.

The members have travelled

across districts like Nagercoil, Thiruvavur, Kancheepuram, Thanjavur and Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu looking for the bereaved families.

"Reaching the farmer's family is a huge task for us, as we have just a name and a village and we have to go all around searching for them.

We go to numerous villages during the weekends to investigate," Vetrivel explained.

With time, the number of volunteers and they plan to do a district-wise division to make their task easier.

Zoho Corporation, the company where both the members Vetrivel and Sathya, are wroto provide support for the education of the children from the families who lost their sole breadwinner. The next major step the Trust will work on will be restoring water resources, cleaning lakes and planting trees which will eventually benefit the farmers.

"This week our Trust, along with Maram Chennai, will be planting 100 saplings and cleaning the areas near Ayyangarkulam lake," said Vetrivel.

'Live naturally'

MANIKUNTALA DAS

Human activities have dismantled the 'steady state' of the planet and the best way to deal with it is by natural replenishment and non-invasive solutions, says Professor Vikram Soni here today.

During his lecture on "From the dialect of nature to a new scheme of living" at MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, Physicist Vikram Soni directed the audience towards the "New Scheme of Living" and stressed on using natural cycle technology in order to generate less waste.

Discussing his new book, 'Naturally: Tread Softly on the Planet', Soni demonstrated the idea of river floodplains that could solve the water issues in Tamil Nadu and other states.

"The floodplains have huge natural storage and no evaporation loss, making it the only new source of water," said Soni.

"Non-floodplain aquifer tube wells running at 0.3 million gallons per day run dry in an hour, whereas the floodplain aquifers can run nonstop for 72 hours," he added.

Soni explained the importance of

floodplains by citing the example of Delhi where the Yamuna river floodplain spread over an area of 100sq km and stored around one-and-a-half billion cubic metres of water. "The quality of water here is also good as it is directly recharged from rain."

Soni also highlighted the example of Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh which was growing as a natural city.

Soni also elaborated on the negative aspects of the planet and the change it had undergone in the last few years.

"In the last decade, wild species going extinct has risen from 29 per cent in 2006 to 52 per cent in 2015. Also, we have downloaded over 50kg per square metre of waste on the surface of the earth," Soni remarked.

The last 50 years were dreadful as human activities paved way to dangers like ozone depletion, Arctic melting, global warming, climate change, loss of biodiversity and ecosystems being threatened.

Comparing the scale of human technology to the scale of the planet, he said, "Human history is in collision with natural history."

Safe Contraception?

PADMASHREE PANDE

Women, particularly those from the rural areas, should be educated on all aspects of their reproductive health and rights, said Professor Sundari Ravindran while taking part in an informal discussion on 'Experiences with Reproductive Health and Rights in India' organized by the Chennai Medico Friends' Circle (MFC) at SPACES on March 14.

Sundari Ravindran said she decided to work for women's welfare when a woman asked her how they could change the world when they had no control over their lives.

So with thirteen other women, she started the Rural Women's Social Education Centre (RUWSEC), a dalit women's organization, and started educating the women on their reproductive health and rights.

But the real change came when these dalit and tribal women collectively suggested that men should also be given similar education.

"Working with men evolved as a result when women workers said that we know about all this but



Sundari Ravindran addressing the audience |PADMASHREE

educate the men as they control our bodies. They need to know about how their actions affect us," said Sundari Ravindran.

"There is also a high rate of infidelity in these men. In some communities, a man using contraception is looked down upon.

To avoid unwanted pregnancy, the women had no choice but to refuse sex or get Intrauterine Devices (IUDs) for themselves. However,

these women would suffer because their husbands would pass on infections that they contracted from their other relationships," she said.

Even if these IUDs would cause them discomfort, these women would continue wearing them. "Unlike us, who can take a course of antibiotics if we contract an infection, these women would have to travel more than 60 km to reach the nearest clinic. So, day in day out, they wear these IUDs with or without an infection," she added.

Pills reduce libido and IUDs could cause blood loss and irritation. A tribal woman from Jharkhand who removed the IUD and asked Sundari: "Aren't there any safe contraceptives?"

Sundari said she understood that her job was to educate these women about their options and the side effects that they could live with.

Sundari Ravindran said "I have studied in Chennai, lived in Bombay and now I work in Trivandrum. In all these places, people practised their individual caste, but never 'talked' caste. When I started working with the tribal women, it was a stark departure for me from my regular life."

She recounted an incident when she was working in a village some 7-8 km out of Kanchipuram, a young woman with whom she was working, said, "Don't touch me."

"Incidents like these have stayed with me after a long time since they happened. I just couldn't believe what society could make humans do to others," she recollected.

Mr Rakaal Gaitonde, a member of Chennai MFC said that contraception was for controlling the population, but for a woman it was a reproductive right.

"Health means differently to everyone. It means dignity, it means freedom, it means having a right to survive."

Coders celebrate International Pi Day

KRITVI PALIWAL

A workshop on Raspberry Pi was conducted at ThoughtWorks Technologies on the account of International Pi Day. But this was not a demonstration involving dough and butter but an IoT-based minicomputer.

Around 60 people from the company and students participated in this interactive session organized by IoT Geeks, an independent association of developers and technology enthusiasts.

Santosh, a final-year student at RKM Engineering College, talked about his own startup inspired by the development of Raspberry Pi.

"Six to seven students started on this idea through a meet-up like this and founded 'Catcher'. We have students from all streams of engineering who come together to design and innovate," he said.

Raspberry Pi is a series of small single-board computers developed in the United Kingdom by the Raspberry Pi Foundation to promote the teaching of basic

computer science in schools and in developing countries. In India, it is promoted through the concept of Internet of Things (IoT) which is seen as the future web device. IoT is a centralized system that interconnects multiple devices such as smart televisions and mobile phones through internet.

It is promoted through the concept of Internet of Things which is seen as the future web device.

Bhuvna, an engineer who runs an afterschool learning school called Think Diff S'kool said, "If you give a kid a computer for just Rs. 2000, imagine the potential."

Through her school 6 to 16-year olds are taught complex codings with the help of easy online tutorials.

"We managed to create the

'Pi-cam' for just Rs. 1000 by watching tutorials on 'how to create a CCTV with Raspberry Pi'. It can be streamed on a local web host and can easily be reproduced by 12 to 13-year olds," she said.

Another young entrepreneur Satish Ramachandran said, "We are looking for a time when we wouldn't have to depend on foreign technology. So, we thought why not have a system which is indigenously integrated and cheap as well have."

His company is the first to come up with an underwater camera for Raspberry Pi which functions through a small robot costing Rs. 1000. It can go 24 metres inside water and was made over a period of 50 days.

Such innovations only reinstate the power of numbers and technology combined which is what is celebrated through the Pi Day every year when mathematicians and coders come together to innovate and design such powerful yet compact devices.

'Tiki-Taka' Football in City



Tiki Taka turf at T. Nagar

|MAHBUBUL

MAHBUBUL ALAM SHOURAV

Artificial green fields are providing football lovers with the space to kick around in city where most of the open spaces have been gobbled by real estate projects.

Five Alive, an indoor football field at Adyar, has caught attention of the city football lovers. The field is open every day from 5 am to 11pm. Since its launch, the field most often remained booked.

Lokeshwar, in charge of Five Alive, said mostly students from different schools, colleges and universities come to play here. Furthermore, the working class people who remain busy during day also come in the evening to play.

He said, "We have all sorts of facilities for the football lovers. We manage everything in a very systematic way providing a gallery, flood lights, snacks and washrooms. People love to play here because of the location and facilities we provide."

Tiki Taka is another attractive

artificial football turf located in T Nagar that started in February this year. It is the only football field situated on the roof top in the city.

Gary Gerard, manager Tiki Taka, said, "We realised the importance of indoor football fields in the city as people mostly remain busy during day time and cannot play at evening. We have flood light facilities that football lovers can play even at night."

He said, "Those who want to play have to book two or three days in advance over phone. 12 people can play at a time in the field. The cost varies from time to time. From 5 am to 9 am it costs Rs. 1500 per hour while the cost is Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3500 per hour in other time slots."

Solemin, a master's student of Anna University, who came to play football at Tiki Taka, said "In Chennai, most places are taken over by different structures. We do not have enough places to play football. This is such a nice place and good opportunity to play football."

A hope for the homeless in Chennai

KRITVI PALIWAL

Ajay will be going to his home in Uttar Pradesh after two years of being separated from his family and staying with 27 others like him in Chennai. He is mentally retarded but determined to reunite with his brothers. Manasu (Mana Nala Sugalayam) is a transit home for wandering men with mental illness. The organisation located at Vaithiyar Street in Tirusulam is a licensed psychiatric rehabilitation centre and a unit of the Claretian Life Animation Project Trust which is run by the Claretian Missionary Fathers.

Like Ajay there are 'inmates' from different parts of the country. Inder, a young inmate from Bihar, has been here for seven months. He has two friends here, Raju and Shakib. All of them do some form of manual labour in the fruit garden at the centre to keep themselves occupied throughout the day.

The organisation which calls itself 'a heart for the homeless Jesus' is committed to helping men on the streets who have no one to look after them. "Most of them are from north India; U.P., Bihar, Orissa, Maharashtra, and belong to different religions. But our only aim is to 'Rescue, Recover, Rehabilitate, Reunite and Reach



Founder of Manasu Father Anthony in front of his fruit garden

|KRITVI

Out' to all such men who are suffering alone on the streets of this city", said Father Soosai Anthony, founder of the organisation.

Anthony along with his friend carried a study on homeless and mentally-ill men in Chennai in 2010 and found out that there were many such people who needed

immediate help to survive. And thus, with the help of his religious congregation, he founded Manasu on December 11, 2011.

At present the building has two floors and 42 beds to accommodate the patients. There is also a fruit garden in the compound maintained by Anthony and the

inmates.

Anthony is assisted by Father Anil who is the Director of the organisation and together they look out for such men roaming around at railway stations or bus stops in the city every Tuesday. Once they spot a man in need, a memo from the police is taken to allow them to be

rescued by the organisation. And after they are brought to the centre for a full-body check-up to make sure they are not suffering from any communicable disease, in which case they are given separate shelter and care. Further, they are treated at the Institute of Mental Health for full or partial recovery.

According to Father Anthony, 90 per cent of the inmates here are Hindus, 8 per cent Muslims and only 2 per cent are Christians. The oldest inmate is 52 years old while the youngest is 22, but they all live in peace and harmony.

Though the priests do complain that the inmates frequently try to run away from the centre but they are mostly found and rehabilitated. The inmates stay for 3-4 years on an average before arrangements are made to send them back to their hometown. But not all of them are lucky enough to be accepted by their families. For the ones who find no acceptance, the organisation becomes their permanent home.

Manasu has helped reunite 42 such men with their families as of yet and continues to work further for this cause. The organisation also holds seminars at schools and colleges to raise awareness about mental illness and the phobia surrounding it.

Chennai's new love affair with gyms

MAHBUBUL ALAM SHOURAV

A good number of quality gymnasiums with skilled trainers have come up for the health conscious people in Chennai.

Raj Kumar, chief trainer of RAPSE unisex gym at Taramani, said, "RAPSE gym was launched on February 6 this year. Taramani area has many colleges and universities and we felt the demand for a new gym in the area."

Talking about the facilities of the gym, Raj Kumar, who has seven years of experience as trainer, said, "The gym mainly provides strength-training. Moreover, we have cardio

care, sports, personal muscle endurance, weight loss and weight gain options."

He said there were three trainers available in different time slots. The gym is open from 5.30 am to 9.30pm. The members have to pay Rs 1200 per month but if anyone wants to join for a year, they have to pay only Rs 7500 for one year.

There are many other gyms that have come up in last five years like Fitness one, Maestro, Talwalkers, Hercules, Flux Fitness, Ateliers and Ever Fit. The membership fee varies according to the gym from Rs. 800 to Rs. 2500 a month.

Mohanakrishnan, trainer at Gold's Gym,

one of the largest in Chennai, said, "The gym was launched in May 2012 and we have been getting very good response from the members. Mainly college and university students are highly interested which is really a good sign."

Mentioning about the benefit of exercise in gym, he said, "Those who do exercise in gym usually do not smoke, drink or are addicted to any drug. Gym is their main addiction".

He said, "Our gym follows different fitness training modules with modern infrastructure and delivery methodology and continuous upgradation through training

programs. The gym has certified trainers and nutritional counselling."

"Mainly people join this gym as the atmosphere inside is really comfortable and cool. The annual membership fee is Rs. 12000," he added.

Sathyamoorthy, a student of Anna University, said, "I have been exercising in the O2 gym in Nungambakkam since four years. The gym provides a comprehensive approach to the health of its members. To burn fat, tone or add muscle, build strength, increase flexibility or improve cardiovascular health, it provides a really good atmosphere for working out."

ALTERNATE CAREER OPTIONS: AN OFF-BEAT JOURNEY



SOURCE : IIT

PARTH KHATAU

Do you know how to pour a large one? Or mix a cocktail with the right proportion of the ingredients? If you don't, the Indian Institute of Bartending is one of the two places in the city where aspiring bartenders can learn their trade.

Located in Arumbakkam, it offers three certification courses in this field. "We have three, six and twelve month courses costing Rs. 17,500, Rs. 31,000 and Rs. 45,000 respectively," said Utpal Laha, HOD, Indian Institute of Bartending.

Laha said the institute did not take more than 20 students per batch, as it liked to focus on providing individual attention to students.

"We make sure to get all our students placed in some of the best

luxury hotels, nightclubs, lounges and restaurants. We also have many students who opt to travel overseas and some who work on cruise liners as the money is good," Laha added.

The minimum qualification for all the courses is 10th standard pass from a recognized education board.

Rohit Kumar, who is currently on the verge of completing his twelve month diploma course, aspires to travel overseas for a job.

"Countries such as the Maldives recruit a lot of graduates from this academy and I am hoping to find a job there too," he said.

"The academy offers decent equipment and training and especially helps hotel management students add to their skill sets," he added.

Another offbeat course is offered by the Bounce Style Academy, Santhome. This hairstyling

academy offers two courses, a three-month course with a month-long internship for hands on experience and a one week refresher course for those looking to re-enter the industry.

"We look into the science of hair cutting, colouring and styling and students are taught by veterans from the industry," said Simone, a junior instructor at the academy. The courses are certified by Schwarzkopf, the leaders in hair cosmetics, thus integrating their techniques and know-how into the curriculum.

"We use the best hair products from leading global brands to make sure our students are best prepared for the industry," he added.

Students with the best promise are directly placed in the Bounce hair salons across the city and other major hair salons and parlors in Chennai and India.



SOURCE: GOLD COAST BULLETIN