



Anti-Sanskrit protest at IIT

Page 2



The pressures of looking beautiful

Page 3



Railways facing 'bankruptcy'

Page 4

Karti arrested by CBI, Cong calls it 'persecution'

PRAJANAMA DAS

Chennai: The Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested Karti Chidambaram, son of former Finance Minister P Chidambaram, and presented him at the Patiala House Court in New Delhi.

The court ordered that he be held in CBI custody for five days.

Karti was arrested on Wednesday in Chennai and taken to New Delhi in connection with the INX Media bribery case.

The CBI claimed that Karti travelled too often and that made his interrogations difficult. CBI sources have said they wanted to grill Karti and his chartered accountant at the same time to check for discrepancies in their statements and confront them with the claims made by the others.

Defense attorney Abhishek Manu Singhvi claimed that these arguments were baseless and could not be reason for his arrest.

According to NDTV, Singhvi called the case bizarre and added that the agency was attempting to 'prejudice the court with half-baked facts'.

However, a senior CBI officer told The Times of India. "We have strong evidence to confirm his role in a cheating case."

Karti was taken into custody minutes after his flight from London landed at the Chennai airport on Fe-



Karti Chidambaram arrested by CBI; remanded to five-day custody | THE STATESMAN

bruary 28.

The CBI had registered an FIR against him nine months ago and the then INX Media Director Indrani Mukerjea and then INX News Director Peter Mukerjea. Karti's chartered accountant, S Baskararaman, was arrested from a Delhi hotel on February 16.

The CBI sought Karti's custody based on the statements made by Bhaskararaman and Indrani Mukerjea, who is now in jail in connection with the murder of her daughter Sheena Bora.

The case according to the CBI is that on March 15, 2007 INX Media had applied for clearance from the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) to operate and broadcast a bunch of channels including a Hindi entertainment channel, and

multiple vernacular entertainment channels. The agency alleged that INX Media violated rules and entered into a criminal conspiracy with Karti Chidambaram, whose father was then Union Finance Minister, to avoid any serious disciplinary action.

Strong evidence to confirm cheating - Sr CBI officer

The CBI's FIR says, "INX Media (P) Limited deliberately and in violation of the conditions of the approval (i) made a downstream investment to the extent of 26% in the capital of INX News (P) Limited without the specific approval of FIPB which included indirect foreign investment by the same fo-

reign investors and (ii) generated more than Rs 305 crores Foreign Direct Investment in INX Media (P) Limited against the approved foreign inflow of Rs 4.62 crores....."

A year later, in May 2008, the FIPB issued a letter to INX Media demanding clarification on both issues.

The CBI alleged that owing to Karti's influence, the officers and officials of the Board not only ignored the violations on the part of INX Media but also advised the group to apply for fresh FIPB approvals. The same proposal was later approved by the then Finance Minister.

The CBI alleged that Karti was paid for his "services" by INX Media, with invoices in the name of Advantage Strategic Consulting Pvt Limited (ASCPL) amounting to Rs 10 lakh. The CBI also alleged that invoices for Rs 3.5 crore were also raised by INX Media in the name of other companies, where Karti had sustainable interests.

Describing the Karti's arrest as "political persecution" of his father and his family, the Congress has accused the CBI of being "a captive puppet" of the Modi government carrying out political vendetta against opponents.

P Chidambaram would also be questioned in connection with the case, press reports indicated.

A MAN OF MANY SIDES Kanchi Acharya dies at 82

PURNASNEHA S.

Chennai: The 69th pontiff of the Kanchi Sankara Mutt, Sankaracharya Jayendra Saraswathi, passed away on February 28 at a private hospital in Kanchipuram, following a cardiac arrest.

Although praised by his followers for his social outreach and bringing contemporary ideas into the Mutt, his legacy is seen tainted due to his mediation in the Ayodhya issue and his alleged involvement in the Sankaraman murder case in which he was acquitted subsequently.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his tribute mentioned that the seer was at the forefront of innumerable community service initiatives and he was "deeply anguished by the passing away of the Acharya."

Political analyst Sumanth Raman said on Twitter "Jayendra Saraswathi leaves a mixed legacy. His focus on starting educational institutions for poor students and his outreach programs for connecting with society were path breaking for the mutt. The Sankaraman case though indelibly marred his latter years."

The 82-year-old Acharya is credited with the extension of the Mutt's philanthropic activities beyond the Brahmin community in the areas of education and health, not just within Tamil Nadu



**KANCHI ACHARYA
1935-2018**

but also in other southern states. He also transformed the spirituality-focused mutt into a social service-oriented and all-inclusive one.

But unlike his predecessors who focused only on spirituality and religion, Jayendra Saraswathi, wasn't a low profile Acharya.

His interest in politics and his comments on various issues sparked controversy.

In 2002, the seer who had great political connections, promised that a negotiated settlement could be achieved in the Babri Masjid-Ram temple dispute among both the Hindu and the Muslim communities.

He met members of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) and suggested that they furnish a no-objection statement for the construction of a Ram temple. Though his formula wasn't taken into consideration,

his popularity as a mediator for peace increased among the Muslim community.

After September 2004, Sankaracharya's life took a controversial twist and his image faded among many of the mutt's devotees who were shocked to believe his involvement in the murder of the mutt's functionary Sankaraman, who had turned into a whistleblower.

The Acharya also faced sexual harassment charges filed by writer Anuradha Ramanan and assault charges in the auditor Radhakrishnan case. Public prosecutor K Duraiswamy said that "the seer is the most undeserving criminal deserving no special treatment" and that the court should respect the institution and its seat but not individuals."

Nine years later, he was acquitted but his image remained dented. "The ugliness of the whole episode tarnished his legacy. This also brought to light the politics within the mutt, which followers like me refused to digest initially," said Dhandu, a local priest who was a devotee of Sankaracharya. After the demise, the Kanchi Mutt has turned towards the 70th successor Vijayendra. "The jury is out on whether Vijayendra has the political acumen his predecessor had, to navigate his way through the intersection of religion and dirty politics," wrote T. S. Sudhir in Firstpost.



Protestors outside Tambaram Railway Station | NARAYANAN

Disabled protest at railway station

NARAYANAN V

CHENNAI: Members of the Tamil Nadu Association for the Rights of All Types of Differently Aabled & Caregivers (TARATDAC) staged protests at 32 railway stations across the State on February 27 demanding disabled friendly railway stations and a host of other benefits.

The protesters gathered at Tambaram railway station accused the Central Government of being insensitive to the disabled persons and the Indian Railways of not providing even the basic infrastructure for the disabled persons.

Tambaram railway station is a major hub that connects the southern suburbs of Chennai to other parts of the city through Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) trains from Chennai Beach to Tambaram, used by lakhs of commuters every day. The railway station also serves as second terminal for boarding long distance trains bound for Southern Tamil Nadu, after Egmore station.

State secretary of TARATDAC, P. Radhakrishnan said that despite being a major connecting station, the Tambaram railway station lacked disabled-friendly ramps and wheelchairs to transport disabled persons to the platforms. He also accused the railway

authorities at Tambaram railway station of demanding money from disabled persons for wanting to use the wheelchair facility.

"Disabled persons are asked to pay Rs. 500 to use the wheelchair service," Radhakrishnan said.

State president of TARATDAC, S Jhansi Rani, said the Southern Railway officials were denying the rights of disabled persons by refusing to accept their unique disability ID cards issued by the Central Government.

The unique disability ID card was introduced to ensure that persons with disabilities do not need separate ID cards for various government schemes and concessions and is meant to work across India. However, the protesters charged that railway staff were demanding separate ID cards for railway concessions. "Although some people have received the universal disability ID card it could not be used for railway concessions since the scheme is not fully implemented", said Jhansi Rani.

According to Jhansi Rani, special coaches for people with disability were cancelled without any announcement and none of the platforms or coaches have disability signage (DDA) to notify that the coaches were meant for disabled persons.

Reserved categories score lowest in Class 10

PURNIMA S DAS

Chennai: Class 10 students' in Tamil Nadu belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) constitute more than 50 per cent of students who need improvement, reveals the National Achievement Survey, 2017.

The survey done by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) showed that the average scores of students from SC and ST categories, was between 230 and 241 out of 300.

They were tested in five subjects - English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science and Modern Indian Language and these students belonging to reserved categories scored even lower than the State average.

The subject where the students need immense improvement is Social Science, irrespective of social categories, according to the survey.

M. Subholakshmi, a mother of Class 10 student said, "After a day-long drudgery, I manage to

Performance of students from different categories

Categories	English	Mathematics	Science	Social Science	MIL
SC	238	240	239	239	239
ST	241	237	235	239	233
OBC	245	250	249	249	249
General	267	260	262	261	263

In the National Achievement Survey, 2017, out of 300 marks, SC and ST Categories scored low compared to General Category. Source: NCERT website

send my girl to a corporation school nearby. She works really hard but still scores poorly in the examinations. I do not know what exactly is wrong."

Andrew Sesuraj, assistant professor, Loyola College said, "The children from disadvantaged groups go to government and corporate schools."

"There is no doubt that the teachers there are more qualified than the teachers in private schools but lack of monitoring is the problem."

The children in the remote areas suffer the most.

Sesuraj added, "Sometimes, the timing of the school depends on the timing of the bus. For e.g. if a bus leaves at 3:10 p.m. the teacher

will also leave even if the class ends at 3:30 p.m."

In this case, teachers spend no time with students beyond class hours.

"The school is the most important institution for the child's over all development," he said.

Above all, the overall performance of Class 10 students in the State was also significantly lower than the national average. Last year, with the recommendations from an expert committee headed by the Education Minister, the State board announced a schedule for rolling out new syllabi for all classes from 2018, starting with higher secondary. 15,121 students from 353 schools across the State were covered in the survey.

'Rainwater harvesting is a necessity'

PRASHASTI SINGH

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu Government had announced a budgetary allocation of Rs 100 crore for the year 2017-2018 to revive the long-forgotten method of water management in rural areas, but political rivalry has rendered it ineffective, said Sekhar Raghavan, director of the city-based Rain Centre.

"Both the parties (the ruling AIADMK and DMK) pretend to care about the people but carry on with their colonial mindset. They undermine each other's work and ignore the well being of the people in the process. The system which should be run by the villagers is

still being supervised by the Public Works Department (PWD)," he said.

Kudimaramathu, a sustainable and cost-effective water harvesting practice prevalent since the late 19th century, was a system in which irrigation tanks were dug, forming a chain.

Excess water would flow from one tank into the next. Water would be saved and floods would be prevented.

The practice died in 1949 when the government transferred the responsibility of maintenance of the tanks from farmers to the PWD. "Systems like Kudimaramathu can be put in place in rural areas, where people depend on water bo-

process is adopted.

"The urban areas, however, require a totally different form of water management since they depend on the groundwater more. In these areas the focus is on rainwater harvesting," he said.

The Rain Centre, which is a bridge to connect the people of Chennai and water harvesting, according to Raghavan, encourages the construction of filter chambers and recharge wells in houses.

Most of the centre's activities are funded by corporate companies' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contribution. According to Raghavan, in order to make rainwater harvesting popular among locals, a three-step

process is adopted.

First, people are made aware of the importance of rainwater harvesting in a place like Chennai, which gets flooded during monsoon and faces severe water scarcity during summer.

Second, charitable institutions, old-age homes, and orphanages are approached and a proposal to fund the construction of rainwater harvesting tanks is submitted to the corporation on their behalf.

Third, a survey across Chennai is conducted monthly in an attempt to understand the groundwater potential through monitoring the water level of 90 wells.

This is done to keep the local people informed of the availability

of groundwater, and how much they can extract at a given time

Revathi M, a resident of one of the apartments where rainwater harvesting system has been constructed, said, "Construction of the filter chamber, sump, and the recharge well was done by the Rain Centre."

"Other than the top perforated slab, everything else is under the ground. We did not have to worry about the cost of construction either."

Gomathi B, another resident, said, "Jayalalitha made rainwater harvesting mandatory in all buildings. We have done it in our society, but others don't pay much heed to it"

CCTV cameras in new local trains

PRIYA LALWANI

Chennai: In an effort to strengthen security for women on trains, the newly inducted three-phase Electric Multiple unit (EMU) train on Chennai Beach – Chengalpattu suburban line has CCTV surveillance cameras in the ladies compartment.

Until now, there was one 9 carriage operating between Chennai-Avadi and Chennai-Gummidiipoondi stretches that had CCTV cameras installed.

According to C.Selvam, Senior Divisional Officer at the Chennai Beach railway station, security cameras played an important role

in getting hold of the accused in the Infosys techie Swathi murder case who was killed at the Nungambakkam railway station.

"After that incident, we approached ICF (Integral Coach Factory) to manufacture coaches with CCTV cameras installed in the compartments.

Right now, it is just limited to ladies compartments, but we hope to see it in the general compartments as well," said Selvam.

Selvam said these cameras on the Avadi stretch just helped in the post incident investigation and the Railways did not have live transmission of the feed to a

control room.

However, monitoring of the live feed in the three phase EMU can prevent untoward incidents in real-time.

Women passengers travelling in the new train seemed relieved and considered this as a proactive and an additional step towards their safety. "It is not uncommon for men to enter the ladies compartments in the trains running after 8 pm. Chain snatching incidents and sexual harassment cases rise from the increasing unsafe environment in the trains," said Revathi, a commuter.

Lakshmi, another commuter, said "The police constable

stationed inside the compartments should be throughout the day and not just after 7pm. I hope these cameras will do a full time job of the constable."

However, the passengers also questioned the functioning and monitoring of these cameras.

"Most of the times, these cameras go defunct and little is done to revive their operations.

Loads of money is spent for installation but nothing is happening in terms of keeping a check on their operation and monitoring," said Lavina, a commuter from Tambaram.

Ashok Agarwal, Deputy General Manager of the Integral Coach Factory, said the initial response would be monitored and this was aimed at deterring anti-social elements.

But before rolling out the facility to all trains, there was need for a detailed evaluation.

"We take responsibility for the effective functioning of the surveillance cameras that are fit in the ladies compartment of the trains."

"But there is a need for more than a hundred cameras that are placed at the train stations but are not working," he added.

The initiative is currently in the evaluation stage, where the footages are assessed for quality and officials are trained.



The newly introduced EMU train in Chennai

MEGHA SREERAM



The Thiruvanniyur bus depot

NIKITA PRASAD

Bus terminal lacks upkeep

NIKITA PRASAD

Chennai: Chaos reigns at the bus terminal at Thiruvanniyur with commuters finding it difficult to board buses because there are no queues and the vehicles are parked in bays with a different route number.

As many as 160 buses operate out of the terminal with one bus leaving every two minutes.

After complaints by commuters about the lack of seats where they could wait for the bus, the Metropolitan Transport Corporation installed a few seats in one of the bus bays. This is inadequate, as huge crowds waiting for the bus.

"There are no proper queues for us to stand here and when the bus arrives, people start jumping in, leaving many others behind. I have missed my bus many times due to the crowd and the boards are wrongly marked at the platforms," said Thyahu Sravan, a young student who travels to college from the terminal everyday.

The boards installed at each bus bay are supposed

to indicate the bus number arriving there, but there have been instances when some other bus has arrived. It creates confusion for many passengers.

Another passenger Shyam said, "When it rains the water stagnates in terminus. So, we have to stand and wait on the roads, which hinders free movement of vehicles."

Suresh, another commuter, said he suffered injuries on his leg.

"A few days back, I was waiting at the platform for the bus to arrive when I got pushed by the crowd and fell over a broken railing," he added.

Commenting on the issues faced by the commuters, K S Shanugham, Assistant Public Information Officer, MTC said, "We installed e-toilets immediately after complaints about lack of toilets were registered.

Before the next monsoons, we will make sure that the roads are leveled so that there is no water stagnating at the depot."

Protest against Sanskrit song

CFI members held demonstration in front of IIT Madras

NEHAL CHALIAWALA

Chennai: The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Banwarilal Purohit, insisted that the Tamizh Thai Vazhthu, the invocation song of mother Tamil, be sung at the eighty first convocation ceremony of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha (DBHPS), Chennai, on February 28.

The function began with eight students singing Vande Mataram.

The Governor, who was the chief guest at the function, requested that the students be called back to the stage to recite the Tamil invocation song before the function proceeded further.

The Chairperson of the DBHPS, former Supreme Court Justice Shivraj Patil, said, "If you don't learn Hindi, you will face difficulties once you move out of Tamil Nadu. When the language is imposed there is objection. However, when it is proposed, there should be no objection."

The Governor's action in asking that the Tamizh Thai Vazhthu be sung comes against the backdrop of protests on February 27 against the recitation of a Sanskrit song at the start of a function at the IIT Madras that was attended by Union Minis-



Police arresting CFI youth protesting in front of IIT on Tuesday

NEHAL CHALIAWALA

ters Nitin Gadkari and Pon Radhakrishnan.

Members of the Campus Front of India (CFI) protested at the gates of the institute around noon.

They shouted slogans of "Inqalab Zindabad (long live the revolu-

tion)" and "Campus Front zindabad (Long live Campus Front)".

Earlier in the day, members of the Tamil Maanila Congress had protested here.

Both the protests were dispersed within minutes, the protestors being

detained for unlawful assembly.

"It is customary to begin any function at IIT with Tamizh Thai Vazhthu but this year they sang Sanskrit bhajans on the campus. This is clearly the BJP's agenda to communalise the institution and

impose Sanskrit on Tamils," said Mustafa, one of the demonstrators.

The city police had secured the gates of the institute throughout the day, restricting entry.

People were allowed in only after proper verification of documents.

On February 26, at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways and Coasts, that is to be established on the IIT-M campus, students from the college sang Maha Ganapathim Manasa Smarami, a Sanskrit song.

The protestors took offence, seeing this as snubbing of Tamizh Thai Vazhthu, the invocation song of mother Tamil, and a forceful imposition of Sanskrit.

IIT-M director Bhaskar Ramamoorthy told Hindustan Times that there was no scope for a controversy since it was the students who came up with the song and there was no involvement of the institute.

"You must appreciate this is an engineering college and when we go out to ask who will sing the invocation song, a few hands go up", he said.

"So, these people came forward and sang what they know," he added.



Autos fleece people at Central Station

NEHAL CHALIAWALA

parking.

Passengers who alight at Chennai Central and head to various places in the city are fleeced by autorickshaw drivers and the police and the Railway authorities do nothing. These drivers quote exorbitant prices even for short trips and travellers often end up paying more than they should.

Auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers are mandated to make only pre-paid trips from the premises of this station. However, many drivers jump the queue of waiting pre-paid autos, park their vehicles at the bus stop here, and try to recruit passengers as soon as they exit the station-building. If caught, they are liable to a fine of Rs. 200 for illegal

When asked for the fare to Marina beach from the Central station, one such auto-driver said that it would cost Rs. 185 for the five kilometre trip. When asked for a receipt for the journey, he pointed towards an empty white booth and said that pre-paid service was closed for lunch. That booth actually belonged to Railway Police.

Meanwhile, online cab services will charge anywhere between Rs. 80 and Rs.105 to drop you at the Labour Statue at Marina beach. A shared cab ride could cost as low as Rs. 38.

The unruly auto-drivers have driven more passengers to opt for online cab services.

E-bikes soon at metro train stations

NARAYANAN V

Chennai: The Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL)'s proposal to introduce E-bikes and bike taxis at metro stations is seen as a positive move towards better connectivity and traffic decongestion.

According to a recent news report in The Hindu, CMRL officials are currently in talks with two firms to provide motorbikes and e-bikes that would be rented out to commuters at Meenambakkam and Thirumangalam stations on a trial basis and later expanded to other stations depending upon the patronage.

CMRL officials are also in talks with cab aggregators Ola and Uber and transport officials to check the feasibility of introducing bike taxis in the city.

"It will be very useful for people like me who reside in interior residential areas where public transport is not available," said G Gulam Maideen (21), from Pallavaram, who is working as a customer care executive at Chennai airport.

However, Meenambakkam and Airport metro stations attract



Bicycles at the St. Thomas Mount station

NARAYANAN V

fewer footfalls in comparison to the local electric train stations. Only employees from the airport and the neighbouring cargo offices and few local residents use the Meenambakkam Metro station. Most people in the suburbs commute through local trains that ply from Chennai Beach to Tambaram railway station.

"This station is used only by some employees of airport authority, why do they chose this station for this initiative?" asked M Rajkumar (31), an auto driver at Meenambakkam Metro station.

Rajkumar added that most passengers who got down at Meenambakkam or Airport metro stations carried with luggage. So, hiring a bike might not be helpful for them to travel comfortably with their luggage. G.Vignesh

(32), a resident of Anakaputhur said, "During peak hours, it is easier to manoeuvre through traffic on a bike than getting stuck inside the cab"

According to him, everything depended on the way it is implemented. He felt commuters might not use the bikes if the authorities insisted that they return the bikes to the same station from where they were taken.

"Bike taxi service by Ola and Uber will be useful for single passengers who can avoid cabs and also travel at lower rates," Vignesh added.

Currently CMRL has a tie-up with ZOOM's PEDL cycles and Athi's Bicycle's cycle-on-hire facility at select metro stations which will be expanded to all 20 metro stations in the city.

How to remove 'Kuppai' responsibly

PRIYA LALWANI

Chennai: Addressing larger issues surrounding solid waste management and the acute need for disposing of waste responsibly, Kuppai Matters, a city-based initiative, organized a 'Kuppai Thiruvizha' (garbage festival) at the Nageswara Rao Park on February 25.

The vizha promoted eco-friendly alternatives to plastics, segregation of garbage and composting, up-cycling glass, plastics and paper, collection of neatly maintained old clothes, repair and spot-fixing of damaged shoes and bags and a participatory action planning session for a sustainable waste management solution in the neighbourhoods of Alwarpet, Mylapore and Santhome.

Kuppai Matters is a collective of the Civic Action Group (CAG), Citizen Consumer and various other non profits in the city.

Kripa Ramachandran, one of the group members and the brain behind this initiative said, "Every time the Chennai Corporation comes up with any waste management scheme, citizens turn a deaf ear to it and it ultimately ends up in blame games."

She also explained how the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules which were laid down in 2016 were aimed at providing a sustainable solution through the recovery, reuse and recycling of waste.

"The Corporation of Chennai also mandated door-to-door collection and segregation of household waste in October. Despite these best efforts, the city remains one of the few least compliant cities with SWM persisting as one of the most pressing issues facing the

city," she added.

Most workshops at the thiruvizha revolved around recycled paper and decors, degradable accessories, eco friendly fashion accessories and cutlery. Others focused on sustainable practices – such as how to create your own composting system at home to upcycle art.

"It's great to have a live demo to get a better understanding of how this works. Otherwise, the rules that we keep talking about are all in abstract," said Shonali,

who attended the event.

Ramnath, a resident of T.Nagar, "I didn't know that there existed the concepts of green and red dustbins. It's interesting to learn and I want it to try in my household as well."

Kripa said that studies had shown that effective and honest public participation was the key to achieving the goals laid out under the SWM Rules.

An effective way to bring these issues to the fore was by creating inclusive and participatory spaces such as this one.



Bins for segregated waste

KNOWYOUAREARTH.COM

“Bring old scheme back”

NISCHAI VATS

Chennai: Pensioners are unhappy that the panel appointed to go into their grievances has not yet submitted its report.

On February 19, 2016, the then Chief Minister Jayalalithaa had announced that an Expert Committee would be set-up to see if the new Contributory Pension Scheme could be scrapped and the old one restored.

Anbarasu Muthuvijayan, General Secretary of Tamil Nadu Government Employees Association (TNGEA) says, “Two years have passed and the panel has still not submitted the report, we will keep protesting till the old pension scheme comes back.”

“We cannot have a pension scheme which is dependent on everyday trading as pension shouldn’t be a subject to market risk,” he added.

Under the Contributory Pension Scheme, the employee makes a contribution of 10 per cent of the basic pay, grade pay and dearness allowance and the government makes a matching contribution. But the amount the employee gets



Government employees staging a demonstration in Palayamkottai | THE HINDU

would depend on the market returns on the investments made by the Government.

There was no such restriction in the old pension scheme. The Government contribution was made on the last pay drawn by the employee and it would be around 50 per cent.

S. Ramnarayan, Assistant Director, All India Federation for Pensioners Association (AIFPA)

said that the new pension scheme was introduced by the Government of India in 2004, and the drawback was that it didn’t cover the family. “So if the pensioner dies his family won’t be eligible for the pension thereafter,” he added.

Venkatesh, a member of Joint Action Council of Teachers Association (JACTO) says, “Due to market risk, the amount of pension

is getting reduced and there is no guarantee that the new pensioners will get a pension.”

The Government’s inaction has led to the protest and the discontent among the government employees.

“Jayalalithaa appointed a committee to look into the matter but the committee has been sitting and sitting and nothing is coming,” said Venkatesh.

Beauty comes with ‘cost’

PURNASNEHA S

Chennai: The recent demise of Bollywood actor Sridevi Kapoor, although unrelated to the cosmetic surgeries that she underwent in her time, has raised questions about the unrealistic beauty standards set by an industry that is often known as the ‘dream factory’ for many young women and men.

The burden to defy age and look ‘perfect’ has increased cosmetic and aesthetic surgeries, despite their exorbitant costs. There was wild speculation that Sridevi died due to the after effects of cosmetic surgery.

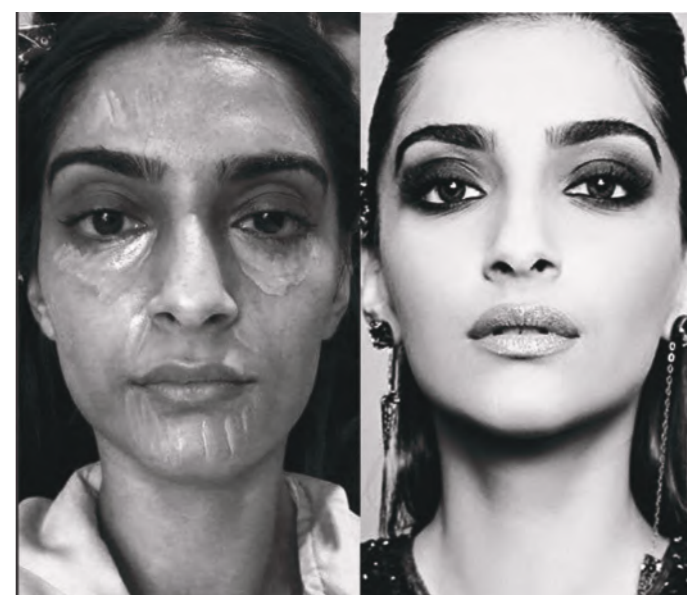
While the choice of actors to go under the knife is personal, Dr. Krithika S Ravindran, a plastic surgeon said that impossible beauty standards like the “size zero” affected most patients mentally and made women under confident.

“Such pressures force my patients to seek cosmetic procedures, which are usually not necessary for their bodies. Women also gain confidence after their first surgery and indulge in repetitive sessions. This causes an addiction to fit themselves into the mainstream idea of a beautiful person,” she pointed.

While body contouring, the most sought after procedure among youngsters today, can range from Rs.70,000 to Rs.2.5 lakhs, hair transplant surgeries range between Rs.80,000 and Rs. 2 lakhs and breast reduction or implantation costs between Rs.80,000 and Rs. 1.2 lakhs. The least expensive procedures are the scar revision surgeries that range between Rs.10,000 and Rs.50,000 that women starting from age 16 undertake across hospitals in the city.

Patients are given a form of anesthesia in order to relieve pain during the surgery, an overdose of which can lead to complications that could result in death.

Contrary to popular opinion about the immediate skin effects of such surgeries, Dr. Swetha Rahul, aesthetic dermatologist at the Kavery Hospital said that the cosmetic procedures were similar to other everyday beautification processes, for example, hair-cuts.



Sonam Kapoor too needs colour adjustment | TWITTER

“Cosmetic surgeries are a not a health compromise if done by trained experts,” she added.

Cases like morbid obesity, wherein a patient undergoes bariatric surgery and sheds weight, but later experiences folds of hanging skin around the tummy are indicators for surgeons to prescribe a tummy tuck procedure (Rs.1.5 lakhs to Rs. 3 lakhs), which will give the actual

Impossible beauty standards affect patients mentally and make women under - confident.

results expected by the patient.

According to Dr Krithika, this pressure has forced many patients to spend more than their ability in order to beautify themselves temporarily. From Anushka Sharma’s lifted lips to Kareena Kapoor’s size-zero body, many actors have admitted to getting under the knife for their films.

Is the trend changing? The sudden death of Sridevi has stirred a question about the cost one is willing to pay for going under the

knife to achieve transient beauty. In her recent Buzzfeed article, actor Sonam Kapoor wrote that flawlessness is a dangerous, high-budgeted affair that needs to be shattered.

“So, for every teen girl wondering why she doesn’t look like a celebrity: Please know that nobody wakes up like this. Not me. Not any other actress, (Not even Beyonce. I swear.) It takes an army, a lot of money and an incredible amount of time to make a female celebrity look the way she does when you see her. It isn’t realistic, and it isn’t anything to aspire to,” she said.

Every flawless celebrity staring out of a billboard, endorsing a cosmetic product is contributing to the Rs.4,000 crore beauty industry in India. Mona Bedre, a Kollywood actor said that celebrities who believe that these standards should be shattered must stop modeling for such products.

“Actors are seen as role models for the youth in our country. Given that, if they acknowledge body weight and skin colour as ‘eternal flaws’ it creates a psychological pressure on their fans to undergo cosmetic changes. It is important for actors to get sensitized towards the campaigns that they endorse,” explained the actress.

‘Attacks on women are crimes of passion’

PRAJANMA DAS

Chennai: Women being stalked and attacked by ex-lovers who think persuasion is the key to win her back is a crime of passion committed generally by someone with a low self-esteem, psychologists say.

The recent incident in Anna Nagar was one of many attacks on women by ex-lovers. N Rajesh, a 23-year-old electrical engineer, stabbed his girlfriend and childhood schoolmate when she said she did not want to continue the relationship. He then went on to harm himself as well. Both were admitted to nearby private hospitals.

On April 1, last year, John Mathew (22) bludgeoned to death a girl, who had decided to end the relationship, and then committed suicide by hanging himself at Mamallapuram.

Swathi (24), an IT employee, was hacked to death at the Nungambakkam railway station by a man who stalked her.

“When people like this get into a relationship they see it as a refuge and they want to hang on to it no matter what. The moment the other person drifts away they cannot bear it and spin out of control,” said Dr. Sunil Kumar, Mind Zone psychiatric facility.

“Murder happens in a momentary fit. They are angry because their lover has left them that they forget everything else. These are crimes of passion, committed at a moment when the only thought they have is revenge.”

N. Perumal, Sub-Inspector of Police, MKB Nagar police station, said, “We get complaints from women almost every other day. But very few women actually come and report about their ex-lovers.”

Reusable pads last years

MOHINI CHANDOLA

Chennai: The “Cup and Cloth” campaign by Sustainable Menstruation Tamil Nadu Project was launched at Chennai Press Club to create awareness on product choices, their environmental impact and socio-political factors on menstruation.

Kavya Menon, co-founder of Sustainable Menstruation who has been conducting awareness drives over five years said, “The objective of the meeting is not only to discuss the free aspect of the government providing sanitary pads but its impact on health and environment.”

“Several NGOs provide free, low-cost disposable napkins but are completely ignorant of the fact that disposable pads contain plastics and other non-disclosed chemicals which are not only harmful, but takes 500-800 years to decompose,” she said.

The discussion turned towards the disposal methods and environmental hazards caused by the disposable pads.

According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-2016, only 57 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 24 have access to hygienic products during periods, including disposable sanitary pads.

Gopi Vijaya Kumar, a social worker said, “Most women opt for the disposable pads because they are soft, bulky and cost-effective. But most manufacturers use polymers in the napkins which sucks moisture out of the skin.”

“Hygiene is compromised due to infrastructural deficiencies in schools and offices. The disposed pads are treated as a normal waste and incinerated with other waste, making environment hazardous for children. Some are dumped in the drain which results in clogging or in the soil which takes hundreds of years to decompose,” he said.

Several alternatives like menstrual cups and cloth-based eco-



These eco-friendly cloth pads can be re-used for years if used with care. | MOHINI CHANDOLA

friendly pads were presented by Sonal Jain, Co-founder of Boondh.

Menstrual cups are silicon-based insertable devices that collect menstrual fluid. Sonal Jain said, “The device attaches itself to the opening of the cervix and creates a vacuum so it stays in place. After usage, the blood collected in the cup is drained and the device can be rinsed and used again. This would help in waste management as well.”

She continued, “The micro-crystals in a disposable pad result in rashes and itching, which leads to a lot of health issues. The menstrual cup does not react to the body and does not restrict any women from water-based sports.”

There are cloth pads made with organic cotton and banana fibers which are leakage-protective, have buttons for securing and are reusable after washing. If properly maintained, these pads can last for several years.

Dr. Meenakshi Bharat, a gynaecologist said, “Most women think that it is unhygienic to use the same pad for every cycle but that is not true. The best way to conserve the cloth-based pad is to let it dry in the sun.”

She also said that the unlike the disposable sanitary napkins, the cloth-based napkins produced no heat so they did not irritate the skin.

With regard to the Class 7 girl who committed suicide after she was shamed by her teacher for staining her dress, Dr. Bharat said, “In our country, 70 per cent of women think that menstruation is ‘impure’, and we should work to eliminate the shame around periods.”

Sustainable Menstruation Tamil Nadu has requested aid from the Government to evaluate the alternatives and include them in menstrual hygiene schemes, which may prove to be financially more sustainable with regard to waste disposal and create a safer alternative for women during periods.

Old mother abandoned, senior citizen laws in vain

NISCHAI VATS

Chennai: An 82-year old woman was left behind in a school by her disabled son in Vadakarai when she was unable to pay the rent for her old age home.

Muniammal was asked by the management of the old age home to leave after which she went to her son’s house. Her son, Dilli Babu, who is disabled, abandoned his mother at the school since the owner of the house he had rented did not permit him to take in his mother.

“This is brutal treatment,” said Kaveri who works as a helper at the AnnaiIllam Old Age home.

“Any person with at least some sense of humanity wouldn’t do something like this. Forcing old people out because she cannot afford the rent like this is inhumane,” she continued.

Saddama, another helper, said it

was wrong to comment on the particular incident because “we don’t know the full circumstances yet.” But she said she felt sad because Muniammal’s son had abandoned her.

“Whatever may be the case, a son abandoning his mother is sad,” Saddama says.

Suhrit Parthasarthy, a lawyer in the Madras High Court, said “The police have not registered a case against the son, but the police can under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.”

The act prescribes punishment for the abandonment of parents or senior citizens by a person who is liable to take care of them.

In cases where a senior citizen is childless, they can claim maintenance from any relative who possesses his property or who will inherit it.

“In this case, it is the former, but

the police must have seen this as a special case,” said Parthasarthy, referring to Dilli Babu’s disability.

However, activists are of the opinion that action should have been taken against the owner of the house where Babu was staying.

“It is extremely unfortunate that such an incident has occurred,” said Rajashekharan of the Tamil Nadu Senior Citizen’s Association (TNSCA). “The owner of the place which declined to house Muniammal should be booked,” he continued.

HelpAge India, a voluntary organization working for abandoned and needy elderly people, reveals that one in every three senior citizens is a victim of abuse in India. The report highlights that in more than 50 per cent of the cases perpetrators are family members; even more shocking is the fact that in over 56 per cent of these cases, the primary abuser is the son.

Differently abled get jobs at fair

PRATIBHA SHARMA

Chennai: A job fair for the differently-abled people was conducted at the Loyola College by ‘We Are Your Voice’ on February 25 here.

Almost 5000 candidates registered online for the jobs offered by 300 companies that actively collaborated with the organisation to offer jobs.

The main organiser of the event, Basit said that this was the second time that they were organising this job fair here in Loyola College.

“Last year 500 out of the 848 shortlisted candidates were hired. We have made a lot of progress since then and we may have a better result this year,” he said.

Only the candidates who had a diploma or were graduates were eligible for partici-

pation in the fair. The fair was organised for visually impaired, speech and hearing impaired and orthopaedically impaired people.

Madan (22), an electronics engineer, looking for a job in core company said that he has first time participated in a job fair like this. “There is no limit to the number of companies you can apply to. This is the best thing about this. If you fail in one, you can sit for another company”, he said.

Selvi (27), a visually impaired candidate, said that she was here to look for computer-based jobs or tele calling. “I have registered for six companies and I am coming here for the second time. It is a good opportunity”, she said.

Start-up companies joined, big companies like Wipro, Apollo Hospitals, Caterpillar and IBM also participated in the fair. Companies like Wipro which came for the recruitment

were also the sponsors for the event.

Sukanya, a recruiter for her start-up company ‘I 2 I’, said that she here looking for visually challenged people who are confident of their communication skills and also hearing and speech impaired candidates with content writing skills. “We are here to recruit our first batch. These people have amazing will power. There is a lot to learn from them too. That’s why we are here to hire them”, she said.

Harish, an Assistant Manager for Recruitment at IBM was also here to hire 30-40 candidates for the finance and IT sector in the company.

The fair also saw participation of more than 1000 volunteers for the event. There was also on spot registration for volunteering. Some of these volunteers were also trained in sign language and acted as an in-

terface between the candidates and the recruiters.

Vincent, a volunteer said that he the company (Covenant) that he works for is also here for recruitment. “It feels good to help people here. How often do you get to see a fair like this”, he said.

More than 100 wheelchairs were made available for the candidates along with the ambulances. The volunteers helped the candidates in availing wheel chairs and driving them to desired recruiters.

“We are Your Voice’ is a social organisation formed by a small group of young volunteers who are either students or working. The organisation is also active in taking up other causes for social welfare. The Loyola College has offered the venue free of cost to hold the fair for the second time consecutively.



Candidates at the job fair at Loyola College | PRATIBHA SHARMA

'Back to Nature' expo a big hit for sellers



Handicrafts displayed at the Kalakshetra Foundation | PRASHASTI SINGH

PRASHASTI SINGH

Chennai: Stall keepers were jubilant over the high turnout at the last day of crafts fair 'Santhe - Back to Nature', organized from February 15 to February 25 at the Kalakshetra Foundation here.

Kritika Narayan, a customer who was visiting the fair for the second time in a week, said that it attracted a large crowd this year due to the variety of products offered through more than 90 stalls to the customers.

"They have a great collection of clothes, paintings, show pieces, and crockery from states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Kashmir, and Andhra Pradesh this year," she said.

RitwikJha, another customer, said, "This year the good things did not get sold out in the first few days. The collection was good throughout."

Ajay Kumar Sharma, a stall keeper who had come from Bihar with a collection of Madhubani paintings from his village, said, "Making large, medium and small sized Madhubani paintings has been the family business of most people in our village Jitwarpur for as long as I can remember. I have come here as a representative of my village's talent."

Another Madhubani artist from Bihar, Mahesh Kumar, had sold almost all the kurtis and sarees that he and his family had painted by the afternoon of Santhe's last day.

"This is my first time in South India. When I was notified by

Kalakshetra about this fair, I was hesitant about coming all the way to Chennai for it. But the money I spent on my train ticket was worth the profit that I earned here," he said. The foundation did not take any share of the money the craftspeople earned.

"We just have to pay Rs. 3000 per day to Santhe for booking one stall," he said.

K Geetha from Andhra Pradesh, who had a kalamkari clothes' stall, said that she was facing a lot of competition since there were two more stalls selling similar kalamkari clothes.

"I have bought only kalamkari kurtis with me, whereas the other two stalls also have skirts and even full length dresses. This is the reason why this year I did not earn as much as I had last year," she said.

The stall that had kani shawls and kurtis from Kashmir was the most popular one at the fair after Rajasthan's chat stall, whereas the one set up by women of Tiruchirappalli selling seed jewellery did not attract much crowd.

J Rekha, who makes the seed earrings and neck pieces herself, said, "I find seed jewellery quite fascinating, but people are more interested in the things that glitter. But all that glitters is not gold!"

She added, "If you handle them carefully, seed jewellery is much more durable than the artificial jewellery that most people get attracted to."



From left to right: R. Srinivasan, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, Suresh Jacob, Mathangi Krishnamurthy, Thomas Verghese, Abraham Jacob | PURNIMA S DAS

Rlys face "bankruptcy"

PURNIMA S DAS

Chennai: "The dangerous truth is that soon the Indian Railways will become bankrupt," said Abraham Jacob during the launch of his book "The Story of Indian Railways" at Spaces in Besant Nagar on March 3 evening.

The book is a gripping narrative of a young and idealistic officer who enters into the labyrinth system of the railways and experiences, over forty years, a loss of innocence.

Speaking at the launch, Jacob said, "The British left 47,000 km of railway track in India when China had 12,000 km. After independence, India's rail track increased to a mere 63,000 km stretch whereas China's increased to 121,000 km."

"This is the rate of development we have been talking about," he sighed.

Narrating an incident, Jacob said, "When the stamper on the foot overbridge at Elphinstone Road railway station killed 23 people, the Railways should have rebuilt the bridge. Instead, the Indian Army built it. They are generally considered as the last resort."

Thomas Verghese, a retired General Manager of Southern Railways said, "When I joined in 1959, almost 80 per cent of all goods were transported via railways but now it has come down to 12 per cent. The majority of it constitutes coal."

India had stopped conceiving new coal-fired power projects to address global warming concerns

over burning of fossil fuels, so there was no long term future in carrying coal, Verghese added.

On the current status of the Railways, Jacob said "During my tenure since 1973, I tried to pursue every single thing I wrote in this book. Sadly, I could not even make a dent. Either we pull up our socks or we perish."

R. Srinivasan, Editor of BusinessLine said, "Almost all the chapters deserve a book in itself. If you are a fan of railways, this story could be depressing because in a caustic way, it unveils the truth."

Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former Governor of West Bengal, said, "These days, 'calling a spade a spade' is difficult but his faithful documentation of what actually happens is an eye-opener."

"The ocean is my religion"

NIKITA PRASAD

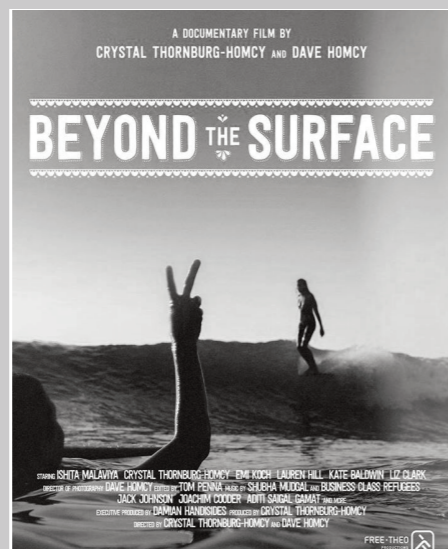
Chennai: Ishita Malviya, who is said to be India's first professional female surfer, was featured in a documentary 'Beyond The Surface' screened at the DAMned Art exhibition at Lalit Kala Akademi on February 24.

Directed by Crystal Thornburg Homcy and David Homcy, the 46-minute documentary touched upon eco-tourism, youth and women's empowerment and the pursuit of surfing in the Indian waters and was followed by an hour-long interaction between the audience and Helmut Schippert, Director of Goethe Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan..

The documentary started with Ishita Malviya being joined by other women surfers-Crystal Thornburg-Homcy, Lauren Hill, Emi Koch, Kate Baldwin and Liz Clark. Calling themselves as 'Sea Sisters', they travel through Southern India documenting the ways in which surfing, yoga and ecological creativity are bringing hope and fueling change for local people and the planet.

Visually appealing stills of the ocean, compelling background score and the girls surfing across the waves brought the audience closer to the narrative.

The documentary presented the popular stereotype of how girls do not surf in India and that the ocean is a place meant only for men. Surfing is an adventure sport which often



Documentary featuring Ishita Malviya at DAMned Art Festival | NIKITA PRASAD

Everything about the ocean draws me there- I feel balanced, supported and safe. It takes me in and washes the troubles of the world away", she said.

Lauren Hill, her co-surfer claimed that the energy of the sea gets her in sync and makes her more connected with the planet. "I find a greater spiritual connection when I'm surfing and the ocean is my religion. I learnt how to work with my body, rather than fight against my body", she said.

The group visited yoga centers across South India and practised chanting, meditation and voice culture exercises.

They also visited Manapad Women's Self-Help Group, in a coastal village 60 km from Tuticorin and interacted with the women workers who volunteered to surf with them, wearing sarees.

It was their first time in water and they overcame their inhibitions by taking their leap of faith into the ocean.

Ishita began surfing in 2007 after meeting a German exchange student. She currently runs a surf club named the Shaka Surf Club and Camp Namaloha in Coastal Karnataka in India.

In the interaction with the audience Schippert said "We were supposed to organize this event near Coum river where a lot of people could have come, but we didn't get permission. Here it is more of an installation thing and slightly difficult to get a lot of people for attending our events."

results in tanned skin and hence, not many women choose to surf as black skin is looked down upon in India.

Ishita explained that by creating more awareness about surfing, she was not trying to break any barriers, but just pursuing her passion. "When I first started surfing, I knew I would be doing this for the rest of my life.

A cafe to talk about death

MOHINI CHANDOLA

Chennai: While most people shy away from discussing death and its effect on the living, Sneha Rooh, a palliative physician, has created a platform for people who have lost family and friends but do not have an emotional outlet.

Calling the platform Death Café, Sneha Rooh said, "We intend to bring the topic of death on the surface without any pressure. Most people who attend Death Café feel lighter because they were not able to share their trauma with their families."

Events are created on Facebook and on the website and anybody can attend the event for a conversation for free. Death Café meetings take place usually in restaurants, on beaches or in a volunteer's home. The venue is changed for every event.

Students, counselors, doctors, housewives and anyone from the age of six to 70 years are welcome to discuss death and grieve over their loved ones.

Rooh said, "We are not a therapy

group. But society has made death a disease- which reveals what we lack as a society. Grieving is important. I wouldn't want an expert to tell me why my family member has died and what is wrong with me to grieve over them."

She continued, "It is only when the grieving process is prolonged or is a danger to themselves that we recommend them to psycho-therapy."

The idea was inspired by the Buddhist thought that death is not the end of life. Since then, Rooh has conducted Death Cafes in schools, colleges and restaurants in Hyderabad, Delhi and Chennai.

Death Café began in 2011 in Hyderabad and was first conducted in a cemetery with nine other friends. Rooh, who had lost her mother two weeks earlier, was already pondering over the idea until a friend suggested spontaneously they do it that night.

The idea was inspired by the Buddhist thought that death is not the end of life.

Since then, Rooh has conducted Death Cafes in schools, colleges and restaurants in Hyderabad, Delhi and Chennai.

"People are so inspired by the idea that they have opened up their own Death Cafés. To open one, people are required to attend at least one Death Café and follow guidelines on the website."

The idea of Death Café was inspired by Jon Underwood and Sue Barksy Reid, who initiated this social movement in several European countries.

The idea of death and reincarnation, which rings deep within the Indian cultural system runs parallel with Mexico's Day of the Dead, where death is seen as a symbol of a new life.

New luxury shopping mall opens

NITHIN KUMAR

Chennai: Luxury shopping in the city has been taken to a whole new level with the launch of Palladium at Velachery last week.

The new mall is inside the

Phoenix Market City but is not an extension of it. It is spread across 2 lakh sq ft and it is entirely inspired by the shape of a handbag.

"This is a luxury shopping destination that goes beyond high end brands. It is an experience that



Glossy architecture inside Palladium | NITHIN KUMAR

touches all the senses", said Rashmi Sen, Group Director - Retail of the Phoenix Mills Ltd. This is the second Palladium mall opened by Phoenix Mills, with the first one opened in Mumbai.

The new mall consists of 75 stores on three floors, with most of them yet to open their doors. High end fashion brands such as the Hugo Boss, Cadini Suits, Michael Kors, Canali and even Ralph Lauren are set to open their outlets for the first time in the city.

Papparoti, a high end Malaysian café, is set to open here. According to the construction manager, Palladium's architecture was inspired by landmarks and artists across the world. The interiors were designed by well renowned architects from the Urban Studio in Mumbai.

Palladium's ceilings were inspired by the minimalistic design of Apple products, like the iPhone or the iPad. In some parts of the mall, the ceilings consisted of numerous mirror claddings, inspired by Sheesh Mahal in Lahore Fort.

"Numerous design elements have used for inspiration to

construct Palladium", said Rahul Bhatiya, the operating manager of Palladium.

The mall offers 'VIP' valet parking for its customers, concierge and porter services on request, wheel chairs, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and even a child care station.

"Top level customer experience is our priority here at Palladium", said Bhatiya.

Hasna Jaffar, a shopper, said "It was always a luxurious experience to go to Luxe Cinemas inside Phoenix Market City, but to design an entire mall extravagantly and open top brand's outlets is amazing."

Most of the visitors to the new mall come in to experience the design and mostly window shop. "The luxury brands here will cater to the high end buyers in the city, but the experience of the mall is for every customer and visitor", said Bhatiya.

Even as Phoenix Market City receives more visitors, Palladium is set to expect more customers. With new brands opening in the mall, shopping is set to take a luxurious turn.