



Should CBSE syllabus be cut?

Page 2



What is Women's day?

Page 3



No new films to be released

Page 4

Vandalism sparks protests

TN enraged after Periyar statue is defaced in Tirupattur

MEGHA KAVERI

Chennai: Protests erupted all over Tamil Nadu after social reformer Periyar's statue was vandalized in Tirupattur on March 6. This followed Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National Secretary H.Raja's post on Facebook that Periyar's statues would be demolished.

Raja's post on Facebook came after Lenin's statue was attacked in Tripura where the BJP defeated the CPI (M) in State Assembly elections. Several statues were vandalized across the country after the election results were announced.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the incidents and added that "stern action" would be taken against those guilty. The Centre has told the state governments that they "must take all necessary measures" to prevent such incidents. In Tamil Nadu, Raja's comment was condemned, with the BJP distancing itself from it.

"The BJP does not subscribe to the disrespectful statements and acts of



Police guard the Periyar statue at Chintadripet THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

vandalism towards leaders like Periyar. We condemn people who are indulging in such actions," tweeted P.Muralidhar Rao, the National General Secretary of the party. The Facebook post was later deleted and Raja apologised for hurting the sentiments of the people. Two persons were arrested in Tirupattur for vandalizing Periyar's statue.

Early on March 7, petrol bombs were hurled at the BJP's office in

Coimbatore. Three members of the Thanthai Periyar Dravida Kazhagam (TPDK) later surrendered to the police.

In Chennai, a group of men reportedly snapped the holy 'poonool' (sacred thread) of an elderly man. The New Indian Express said no complaint was lodged but four members of the Dravidar Viduthalai Kazhagam surrendered at the Royapettah police station.

Around 150 protesters led by Suba Veerapandian, General Secretary, Dravidar Iyakkam Tamil Peravai, were arrested in front of the Periyar Statue outside the Government Multipurpose Hospital in Omandur Estate on Anna Salai.

Members of pro-Periyar groups like Thanthai Periyar Dravida Kazhagam, Dravidar Iyakkam Tamil Peravai, Students Federation of India (SFI), Communist Party of India (Marxist), Thamizhaga Vazhvirimai Katchi, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) assembled in front of the Periyar Statue and raised slogans against H.Raja.

When they tried to burn an effigy of H.Raja, police personnel intervened and doused the flames, which led to a scuffle between the police and the protesters.

"This protest happened without our permission and the group turned unruly. Hence we had to arrest them. This affected traffic for about 20 minutes on this stretch," said a policeman.

Is 'safest city' still safe?

Crimes against women fall, yet activists cry foul

KATHELENE REENA

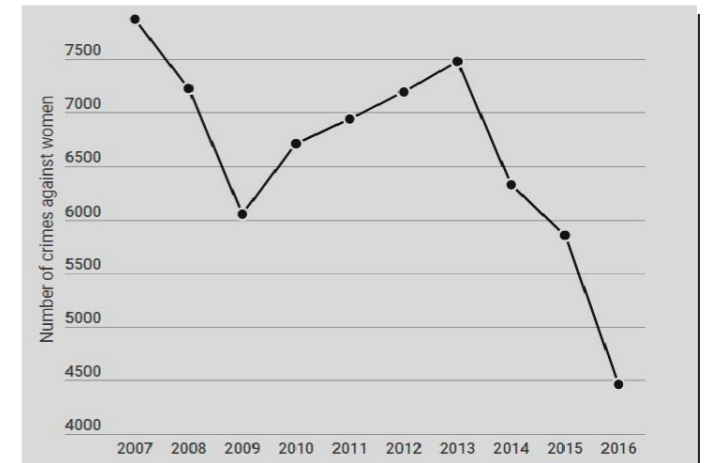
Chennai: Chennai was named the 'safest city' by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) but DMK working president M.K. Stalin in an event this week claimed that crimes against women had increased in the AIADMK regime.

Data from the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB) shows a dip in crimes including rape and harassment.

The number of cases in 2014 was 5,479 and 4,922 in 2015. In 2016 the total was 3,551. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data corroborated with the SCRB. Until June 2017, 1,735 cases were reported.

North and south zones of Chennai are the problem areas for crimes against women, but have a marked reduction in cases. A. Sounderrajan, inspector, Anna Nagar police station attributes it to better policing.

"We have doubled patrolling around educational institutions and residential areas. The all-women's police stations help in maintaining order," he said. Activists claim that



Source: National Crime Records Bureau

the data does not reflect reality.

"Cases of assault in the last few months have been the worst," says Deepa J., a gender rights activist.

"Areas around tech parks and the outskirts of the city don't have adequate patrolling," says Anandhi Shanmugham, a research scholar. Reluctance to register cases and

resorting to moral policing could also be a reason, she says. She also pointed out that since these data do not include Community Service Register (CSR) cases, where records of non-cognizable offences are recorded and court orders are necessary, a true picture could emerge only if the CSR entries are also included.



The Supreme Court had ordered the government to set up a management board in February MEGHA KAVERI

Farmers demand setting up of CMB

MEGHA KAVERI

Chennai: Tamil Nadu farmers took to the streets on Tuesday demanding the formation of the Cauvery Management Board by the Centre.

Around 20 people from the All Tamil Nadu Farmers Association, led by P.R.Pandian, President of its Coordination Committee staged a protest in front of Panagal Maligai in Saidapet. They demanded that the Central Government immediately follow the Supreme Court order and set up the Cauvery Management Board. The Court apart from fixing the share of the Cauvery water for Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry had ordered the Government to set up the board.

"The Cauvery delta has turned into a desert and more than 400 farmers have committed suicide. We urge the government to press for the setting up of the Cauvery Management Board before the deadline of six weeks. We will sue the Central Government if it failed to form the Board within the deadline," Pandian said.

"They don't give us water; they don't give us agricultural support. Then why do they keep us in India? When we ask them for more, they take away the existing support from us," he added.

The Court had reduced Tamil Nadu's share of water from the Cauvery to 177.25 tmcft from its earlier share of 192 tmcft.

Pandian said "We accept the Supreme Court order and are asking the government to enforce that. The Governor is the State's representative and hence we will meet him and present our demands. We believe that he will take this up with the Prime Minister."

The protest was initially planned as a march from Saidapet to Raj Bhavan. But the police restricted it to Saidapet.

Will the Lotus bloom in Tamil Nadu next?

JAGDISHOR PANDAY

Chennai: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s election victories in the Northeast have raised questions over whether the party would be able to overcome the Dravidian parties in the southern state Tamil Nadu.

The BJP unseated a 25-year long Communist Party of India (Marxist) regime in Tripura winning 35 out of 59 state assembly seats. In Nagaland, the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) and the BJP alliance is forming the Government.

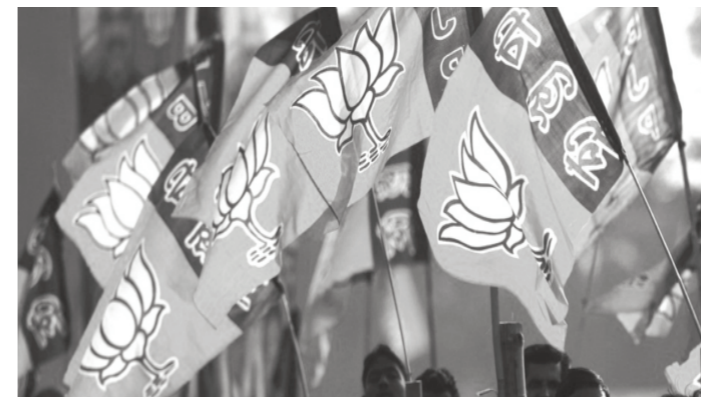
But in Tamil Nadu Dravidian parties have been ruling the state since 1967 when the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) defeated the Congress. The DMK and the

All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) have been ruling the state one after the other.

Asked about the BJP's prospects in Tamil Nadu, CPI (M) member Arunga Nainar said "We cannot compare the Northeast with Tamil Nadu. It is a totally different situation. I don't say they will never come here. But it will take more time than they did in Tripura."

However Narayanan Thirupathy, BJP spokesperson, was more hopeful. "In the coming National elections in 2019 we are looking for a positive result," he said.

The BJP, he said, was working hard to beat the Dravidian parties here. "We have already built up the party's organization. For last six months we have been working hard."



Prashant Jha, Political analyst and writer of the book "How the BJP Wins", said that it was not that easy for the BJP to win elections in Tamil Nadu. "The BJP is still considered as a Hindi speaking party and Tamil Nadu is a totally different state."

"It is not easy to overcome the Dravidian parties which have been ruling for a long time," he said adding that there was no popular leader with the BJP in Tamil Nadu to gear-up the party.

The DMK spokesperson T.K.S ELangoven said that the state was far ahead than what the BJP thought.

"Yes, our people are religious but they will not follow the BJP's ideology. Tamil Nadu is different place," he said. "Our people will not support religion politics which the BJP follows."

Political analyst Jha said that the only way the BJP could succeed was to ally itself with the regional parties.

"If we look at the BJP strategy, we can see that they want to ally with the DMK or AIADMK. Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to meet the DMK President and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M. Karunanidhi and others. It tells a lot," Jha added.

Madras Law college protests stall academics



Law College students on the warpath DTNEXT

MD EYAMIN

Chennai: Students of the Madras Law College have been protesting against the State Government's move to shift the 126-year-old campus outside the city. On March 7, the protest entered its tenth day.

All classes have been suspended since the protests started on February 26. Students said they wouldn't go to class before getting a positive response. In 2008, after a clash between two student groups, the government formed a committee headed by Justice P. Shanmugan. The committee suggested relocation of the campus. Later in 2015, the government decided to relocate the Madras Law

College to two different campuses in Pudupakkam in Kanchipuram district and Pattaraipudur in Tiruvallur district. In response to the protest, the government had postponed the decision. But later, the State revived the plan.

"Our college is a heritage building and has made a glorious contribution to the country's judiciary. We don't want and we won't tolerate the relocation of this campus," said Prabin Kumar, a third year L.L.B. student.

The college is currently located behind the Madras High Court, giving students unrestricted entrance into the courtroom which they say is beneficial. But the proposed new campus is about 80 km away.

"The kind of exposure we get because of our college's location is unparalleled. After classes we can go to the court to practise. But it will be quite impossible to come to the High Court from Kanchipuram," said S. Krithika, a second year L.L.B. student.

S. Selvam, another student said "The location is not safe for women and dropout rates especially among women will increase."

The students have met with different politicians including M.K. Stalin, DMK working president, Kamal Haasan, actor turned politician, and V. Nalini, Head of Women's Law Association. They have all expressed their support for the students' protest.

Saidapet Court complex in need of restoration soon

Magistrate Court is one of the busiest, but dirtiest

KATHELENE REENA

Chennai: The District Magistrate court complex, a 200-year-old Victorian Era building at Saidapet which houses six courts and one fast track court is unkempt and appears to be on the verge of collapse.

After cracks started appearing on its walls, the Public Works Department (PWD) officials erected poles to strengthen it and tied ropes around to avoid any mishaps.

"These poles have been here for at least two years. If nothing is done, the building may fall one day," says M.Kala, a junior lawyer who practises here.

The Justice Padmanabhan committee report in 2010 which listed heritage sites in Chennai declared this court a heritage building and ordered no demolition be carried out without the per-

mission of the Heritage Conservation Committee. Multiple plans to shift the courts to a different location, such as Guindy have failed.

The lack of a seating area means that the people have to wait on the stairs or on the ground for their cases to be heard. This poses a serious problem for the old aged like Nithya Shree.

"I pack lunch and adequate water so I do not have to move till my name is called. I have had multiple knee surgeries and cannot get up and sit down over and over," she says. The steep climb of the stairs is another problem for her.

This old building does not even have basic facilities such as washrooms or canteens.

"It is very difficult for people like us who wait for hours for our cases to be heard. There is not even a tea shop or water dispenser," says Nithya Shree.

The lack of washrooms is a bigger problem

for women. Even more so for the many police-women on duty at the court who spend the whole day there.

"The nearest washroom is in the opposite building, which is a bar. We ourselves feel unsafe; imagine the general public," says R. Sumathi, a police constable.

Court officials however disagreed. "There are several washrooms for use inside the court. We have people who come and clean them often as well," said O. Rangadass, an advocate.

The lawyers have washrooms within their chambers which aren't open for public use.

In 2015, a plan for a new multi-storeyed building was approved by the Registrar-General, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate. "Now, a new building is being constructed behind this one. It will be inaugurated soon. That one will have everything," said Rangadass.



A number of problems plague the court -- it lacks basic sanitary facilities, things are strewn across and the structure is in need of rehabilitation KATHELENE REENA



NCERT school syllabus halved

LAHOMA BHATTACHARYA

CHENNAI: Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar's announcement reducing the Central Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) syllabus by half and lowering the minimum marks for passing the exams has stirred up a debate.

While students breathed a sigh of relief, school teachers have expressed concern.

The consensus is that the move might hinder students from doing well in competitive examinations like IIT-JEE and NEET in comparison to students from the ISC or State board.

Teachers are worried that the reduction in the pass mark may be unfair to students who work hard and study on a regular basis.

V. Nandana, Class IX class-teacher at the Bala Vidya Mandir said, "It is too early to comment on the issue as one can only judge whether it is good or bad after the first batch under this system passes out. I am worried that some students might misuse or take advantage of this and the results in that case, will be very poor."

Karan.P, a Class 9 student at Kendriya Vidyalaya said, "I don't



Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

see how this rule can be misused because this means that the students will be at ease and more students will pass their examinations. Student friendly does not mean it will hamper their studies."

The board has proposed to make several changes in the NCERT school syllabus, aiming to reduce it by half from 2019 onwards.

In an interview to Rajya Sabha TV, the HRD Minister said, "At the

stage of development of cognitive skills, students need to be given full freedom."

Deepa.S, a teacher of social sciences at Bharath Senior Secondary School said, "There is no need to reduce the syllabus as we are already facing challenges to train our students for competitive exams. The positive aspect is that we will be in no hurry to complete the syllabus." Under the new system the

pass mark for individual subjects has been reduced to 33 per cent for both the external and internal examinations.

Now the students have to score a minimum of 40 per cent separately in the internal and external exams. The changes have been put into effect for students from classes 1 to X.

Nandini Rao, a physics teacher at Birla High School said, "This has

been done to ensure that all children need to pass, especially those who are not good in academics. However, there needs to be some parity across all the boards."

"I am happy with this decision because the children can relax a little and take some time to play. This generation hardly has time for outdoor activities because they are always running from one tuition to another," said Ramalingam S, a parent of a student studying in Bala Vidya Mandir.

Ambika Gupta, a student at Kendriya Vidyalaya, said "The CBSE has made some landmark changes this year and I am glad that the education sector in India is modifying the current system that pressures students and leaves no room for extra-curricular activities."

The reduction in the syllabus was welcomed by Bratati Mukherji, a teacher at Birla High School Kolkata who said, "Not only will the burden be reduced for weaker students but rote learning can also be avoided as the syllabus can be made more concise and relevant and important topics can be dealt with in detail."

It should be kept in mind that by making the syllabus concise, the important chapters should not be deleted."

'Govt Apps are not very helpful'

MIRAH ZAMIN

CHENNAI: "Make a complaint by dialing 100 or visit the TN police website," said R. Natarajan, an inspector at Taramani police station. Natarajan like many officers in his station has no clue about the existence of Tamil Nadu Police (citizen service) app where complaints can be registered and the status of the online complaint, FIR, CSR and vehicle status could be checked.

People, who know about the app, hesitate to use since they find it more convenient to approach a police personnel.

"I have heard about the app from relatives but it is useless, always shows 'server down'. Also if I ever need help I will approach the personnel directly rather than waiting for an app to open," said R. S. Lakshmi, primary school teacher at Taramani corporation school.

Talking about how unorganized the government is, Bhadri an Adyar based contractor said "The TN Government launched two apps for the same thing. Through one app named 'TNSand' we can book 'sand' while to check the status we need to install another app called 'TN sand Investigator'."

"Even the TN e sevai app, is more like a portal directing us to other websites with bugs and pop ups", he added.

N Shanmugavel, a resident of Adyar, said "The TNSand app is of no public use, only lorry owners

can book from here what is the use."

Another problem is that most of these apps work only on an android phone.

P. Selvan, who commutes from Chennai to Delhi once a month said, "Since I use an iPhone every time to book a ticket I either have to use a friend's android app or wait to reach home and access my desktop and book ticket online."

IRCTC only has an android based app, said a senior railway officer from Lucknow. There are talks to develop an ios based app but till then people need to wait.

Likewise the mAadhaar app creates problem for the ios users in verification process. "My Aadhaar is linked to my principal mobile number which is in the iPhone. The verification process for mAadhaar is instrument specific. So there are a lot of problems," said Suresh Das, a resident of Mylapore.

When contacted S.P. Balasubramaniam, an official at the Adyar Zone office of Greater Chennai Corporation, said the ios app of Namma Chennai might be available next week.

"We are trying to make the app more users friendly," he added.

The Namma Chennai app was released last year for citizens to register their grievances. "The app is slow and every time the page reloads after the complaint form is filled", said Asif Jowhar, an advocate.

College campus cordoned off for safety

LAKSHMIKANTH KA

CHENNAI: The walls built at various points around the Central Polytechnic College (CPT) campus in Tharamani, for providing a safe and traffic-free environment for students of various colleges situated inside the campus, have helped bring down traffic and crime substantially, according to people who work in the area.

The area inside the wall contains: CPT, CPT grounds, CPT hostels, Institute of Printing Technology, Roja Muthiah Research Library, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, International Institute of Tamil Studies (IITS), Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering & Research (SAMEER), Asian College of Journalism, and Press Institute of India.

"Locals used to come inside the CPT campus and for illegal activities like drinking, destruction of public property, and also use drugs, because it used to be easy to get in and out without anybody seeing them. There were also many cases of eve-teasing and groping reporting by girls of the colleges on the campus," said R. Raja, a policeman.

"With walls built closing most of the entry/exit points, there are only two ways now to enter the campus: one, through any of two gates opening on the OMR road, and the entry right in front of our police chowk on the Pallipattu road," Raja added.

Speaking about the effect of cordoning this area on the traffic, P Ramamurthy, Head of Administration SAMEER, said, "Between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at least 1000 vehicles used to go through this campus every day to Ramanujan IT Park. The main problem is for the students. They sit on the roads and have their lunch and we used to see many accidents back then. After the walls were built covering the exits, the traffic has come down drastically."

K Murali, a PHD scholar studying in International Institute of Tamil Studies said there used to be many bikers from colleges around, driving at risky speeds through the campus. He was happy that after the area was cordoned off there was no such problem.

Raja said "We are also closing the entry in front of the police chowk. There will be only two entry and exit points. The cameras we have installed at the gate on the road in front of our police chowk would be retained and more cameras would be installed at various points on the campus."

The diversion in traffic caused by the walls built had no huge impact in the traffic on the roads leading to Palipattu and Kanagam.

"When the traffic to this side of the city decreased, as people can no longer reach Ramanujan IT park from here, the overall traffic decreased," said Muhammad, a resident on the Palipattu.

KALYANI S.

CHENNAI: "We women use this side of the maidanam [ground] and the men use that other side," says A. Hamsa, 54, showing where the residents of Chitra Nagar on the Adyar banks in Kotturpuram have been defecating for over the past twenty years.

Beyond the multi-storied government tenements of Kotturpuram, at least 100 families have been living in shanties for over 20 years with no basic facilities of sanitation, waiting to be resettled by the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB).

At times, inebriated young men stand on top of the dilapidated building next to the maidanam and throw glass bottles at the defecating women, says Hamsa. The dilapidated building is that of a public toilet that was destroyed when the river was in spate.

"I do not care about myself anymore. But my granddaughter who is studying in class XII too has to use this open field as a toilet. And so do a lot of young women like her. We adults wait beside our children until they are done," adds Hamsa.

While the government tenements that were built to resettle the slum dwellers of Kotturpuram have well provided services, it is these settlements that lack the basic amenities. With just a single bulb inside these one-room houses, the lack of streetlights on the narrow streets only adds on to their problems.

Most of the women here are employed as domestic workers at the adjacent Nandanam residential area, while the men, take up painting, tile working or other daily

Chitra Nagar's woes continue



The public toilet that was destroyed a few years ago when the river flooded, has now become an avenue for drunk men to harass women. These men stand atop the building and throw glass bottles at women defecating in the open.

KALYANI S.

wage works. "We were promised resettlement by the government officers multiple times, but while the others have been resettled either to Perumbakkam or here itself, we are left here with nothing. The last batch was resettled some two years ago," says K. Selvi, 52.

"During monsoon, the river gets flooded and water enters our houses. We have to pour out the water then with buckets. This is what we have been doing for years," says Selvi.

Vanessa Peter, Policy Researcher, says "There are two issues here: firstly, the housing board tenements were never far sighted and secondly, the land needs to be regulated."

"What happens when the children of these tenement dwellers get married? Where do they shift to with their new families? For this and a lot of other reasons, settlements crop up around these tenements, and this lack of good planning has been the biggest failure of multi-storied resettlement plans everywhere," says Vanessa.

In this respect, schemes like the Sites and Services scheme were better as they gave 'undivided land' to the under privileged, she adds. Soon, the question of evicting these encroachers will come up due to the Adyar river restoration programs, but then buildings like that of the Adyar Boat Club will never be called an encroachment, she says.

They are not 'encroachers', but 'settlers', she adds.

"The Government has to provide services despite the illegality of the settlement," Vanessa says, talking about the lack of toilet facilities for the residents of Chitra Nagar. "We need to look beyond," she adds.

MEHNAZ YASMIN

CHENNAI: Architects in the city are "sceptical" about the benefits of the reduction in minimum plot size from 1500 sq. feet to 800 sq. feet for building a house.

Urban town planner A. Srivathsan said that the main aim of this policy should be to change the market by trying to increase the supply of small plots, which could be made accessible to "middle to lower income groups."

Time and again, the government reduced plot sizes due to a surge in land prices, he added, calling it an "incremental" change.

Raja Shyam Sundar, an architect from Threshold Architects, said the principle of "inclusive growth" was responsible for the Directorate of Town Country and Planning's (DTCP) decision to reduce plot sizes.

The Government was expected to spend more on infrastructure for the "smaller plots", Sundar said, adding that these plots should be sold only to the "down-trodden" people.

Architect firms were for the elite and catered only to the top 5 per cent of the population, Sundar said, on being questioned about how this

incentive would affect the architect firms in Chennai.

This policy should look at the "real people of the country" by holding prices. "When you instantaneously reduce the size, the prices go up. The prices will hold only if the government mandates that those who earn beyond Rs 10 lakhs a year cannot buy such property," he suggested.

To this, Srivathsan added that the price also depended on the location, and not just the plot size.

G Narasimhan, who works for Murali Architects, is positive about this plan.

"It is a good step for people who are looking for smaller houses".

However according to Chinmay Roy, a final year student pursuing B. Arch from Birla Institute of Technological Sciences, Mesra, while it is cost effective and a resource efficient strategy which also solves the issue of scarcity of land, smaller plots can lead to congestion.

"The decision to reduce the minimum plot size for construction is mainly aimed to promote vertical developments and settlements," he explained, adding that since the benefits are more, many architects suggest this strategy.

Koyambedu wholesale traders on the warpath

S. KANIMOZHI

CHENNAI: Wholesale traders in Koyambedu have threatened to resume their strike if their demands for the removal of retail vendors from the market complex are not met.

"The entire Wholesale Market Complex will roll down shutters in a couple of days. We will resume our strike until our demands are met," said M.Nagarajan, a wholesale fruit vendor in Koyambedu Market Complex.

The wholesale traders complain of encroachment by the retail vendors around the walls of their 20 square feet shops.

Nagarajan claimed that members of the ruling AIADMK were helping these retail vendors.

"We have 6000 AIADMK votes. For just 60 votes, the Government has allowed the vendors to occupy our place by falsely stating that the vendors have been living here for 35 years. Now we don't have security for our goods," added Nagarajan.

CMDA Officials allotted space



Wholesale traders at the Koyambedu market

S. KANIMOZHI

to the street vendors despite the orders of the High Court, the wholesale traders alleged.

"This action goes against the court order. However the officials challenged us saying 'File a contempt of court against us if you

want'. Therefore we are demanding this mistake be rectified. This problem has been plaguing us for a while," said Ettaiyapan Murugan, a wholesale fruit trader.

Rajamani a wholesale trader has been selling vegetables for 20 years

since the establishment of the market. She pays a rent of Rs.500 per day. However the retail vendors outside the complex don't.

She said, "The roadside vendors hand-pick and sell vegetables that accidentally fall while we unload our

cargo. My shop is at the entrance of the complex and there are a lot of hawkers near my shop. So my business is dull."

Selvarajan, a wholesale trader who sells grapes, said "The intrusion of hawkers will adversely affect the business of wholesale traders in A-block, B-block and C-block."

P.Suresh, a wholesale flower vendor, said "The retail vendors and the two wheelers that transport goods inside the market are a hindrance to us. The retail fruit and vegetable vendors have been here for nearly eight years. A few purchase flowers from us on a daily basis. However they are not allowed to sell inside the wholesale market."

"Five days ago the CMDA officials surprised the street vendors with a raid. A band of 100 policemen confiscated the products of 50 retail shops irrespective of who the vendor was. The police warned the vendors not to set up shops in the streets yet again."

However, the retail vendors have a different story to tell. They accuse the CMDA and the Government of not helping their cause.

"Yesterday when Collector sir came to the market, he asked us to set up our shops in the corners," said Ambiga, who travels from Elphinstone Gate to Koyambedu to sell vegetables for a living.

She said, "The CMDA officials have chased us many times. Despite that we still come here to sell because if not here where will we go and what will we do?" Pointing at the cabbages she said, "I bought 5 sacks of cabbages. Now I will earn Rs.350 if I sell them for Rs.70 each. Now I'm thinking of how to profitably sell them."

Thilaga, a 64 year old retail vendor, says she was the first to set up shop when the Koyambedu Market was established in 1996.

She added, "Whenever the CMDA comes for a raid, I grab my belongings and run for my life. We come to the market to earn a living but they complain that we dirty the place. So how can they expect us to vote for them?"

He added, "The Government agreed to accommodate 54 street shops in the market complex. However, nothing has been done about it."

How women see their day Mother, not just a worker

KANISHKA SARKAR

Chennai: A special day marked to applaud the success, progress and achievement of women all over the world, International Women's Day, celebrated every year on March 8, holds different meanings for women across the society.

"How is one day enough to appreciate women for who they are, for simply being themselves? My college is hosting a special event to promote women entrepreneurship, but again, it's a matter of just one 'special day', next day it will all be gone. Respect and recognition on all 365 days of the year are what every individual deserves. Every day is Women's Day," said Niveditha Dinesh, an engineering student at the Anna University.

"If I were to do something, I would rather spread awareness about menstruation. This would be my small step walking away from associated taboos."

However, according to Sushila, a cleaning staff member at an IT company here, celebrating womanhood means having the strength to handle dominating men at any cost. "I expect my family and colleagues to treat me at par with men because I am just as brave and bold."

When asked about her idea of

celebrating women's day, she said she would like to present roses to all women she comes across and spend a day entirely with her friends.

On the other hand, Binuja Shres-



While many celebrate progress, some women still remain trapped in family farms working- without wages

htha, an executive in the same IT firm thinks differently. According to her, over the years women have left no stone unturned to achieve heights. Now, that both men and women are on an equal footing, she believes that they also must celebrate Men's Day, in order to appre-

ciate those gentlemen who have managed to keep themselves miles away from patriarchy and have encouraged and been supportive of women, in all aspects be it social, economic, or political.

morning, I open the newspaper, oh! It's Women's Day, well, thanks but it didn't make any difference in my life, it's just like any other day. All we need is recognition for the effort we put in every day, being treated special on one day and going back to being nothing on other days does no good."

Expressing her idea of celebrating womanhood, she said "I was brought up with many restrictions, while my brother wasn't expected to follow such rules. So I make sure I do not let this happen with my daughters, and they become proud and independent women. And for me, celebrating my womanhood is taking care of myself, dressing to my own fashion, and experiencing my freedom."

Sagayam, a volunteer of the Eco-kitchen initiative here, said "Come what may, women never give up. My family tries to pull me back to a life of staying back home, cooking and being within four walls all day, but I refuse to stop. On special days like these, my daughter gives me her artistic handmade cards, she is my source of inspiration."

Sagayam fought against domestic violence and moved out of her husband's place in Mumbai two years ago. She now lives with her daughter here.

MIRAH ZAMIN

Chennai: Sharmila Vijay, a newly joined Anganwadi worker wakes up every morning at 5, makes breakfast, prepares lunch, cleans her house and by 7 am leaves for work.

"I usually drop my daughter at school first and then come to the centre with my 2 year-old daughter," she said.

Sharmila works at an Anganwadi in Taramani which provides day care and meal to 35 children from the area.

"Children are god's precious gift. Taking care of them makes me happy, especially when I know how

important care at this stage is," she added while plaiting three year-old Papati's hair.

Wearing a blue saree with yellow border, the uniform of an Anganwadi worker, Sharmila also visits houses in the area to provide supplements to the pregnant, lactating mothers and children below 3 years of age.

"I go for the visits when the children sleep after eating the mid day meal, and return before its time for them to go home. I like saying goodbye to each of my children."

When asked about how she comes to know if a woman is pregnant or not, she says, "I share a great bond with all mothers who

come here, we often sit and chit-chat. It is usually during these conversations that I come to know about them."

"It is easier for me connect with young mothers here since we all face the same parental issues," she added. Sharmila is a B.Com graduate and teaches different topics to the children every month.

"This month I am teaching them seasons, last month we did 'our helpers'. The children really loved my drawings", she said point to the blackboard.

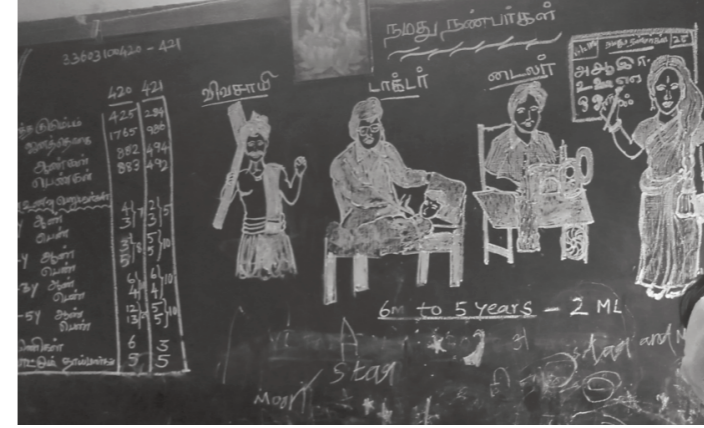
Talking about how nutritional food the children are provided here she said, "I didn't understand the importance of an Anganwadi until my training started. It is there that I learnt the warmth one needs to carry specially if the child is not your own."

"The worrisome element is when there is no improvement in the child's weight or height", she said.

Every month Sharmila takes the measurements and carefully notes them on a note book for each child.

"In case the child shows no growth, we provide him with more meal or supplements," she added.

"In this one year of working I haven't faced any problem with children, it is just that they take time to adjust with new surroundings."



Drawings by Sharmila on the black board MIRAH ZAMIN

The never-ending wait for a bare minimum

KALYANI S.

Chennai: K.Selvi's monthly salary of Rs.2000 hardly suffices for a family of three. Her son earns only on the days when he can find painting work and her husband stays home due to bad health. Medicines for her wheezing eat up a major proportion of her income. What is left is never enough.

Things would not have been so bad for Selvi, had she been a resident of the neighboring states of Kerala or Karnataka. These two are among the few States in the country to have notified a minimum wage for paid domestic work.

Interestingly, Tamil Nadu, despite having included paid domestic work in the list of scheduled employment under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 is yet to fix a minimum wage.

"We want two things for the over 18 lakh domestic workers in the State- one, dignity of labor, and two, an identity as a worker," says Sujatha Modi, who is part of WEIGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), a global research-policy network, that organised the Pungal Thozhilalar Sangam, a union for paid domestic workers in Tamil Nadu.

After domestic work was added to the list of scheduled employment in 2009, an advisory committee was formed to look into the rate at which the minimum wage was to be fixed. It was fixed at Rs.30 per hour, and a report was submitted to the Government, says Sujatha. However, the Government did not notify the recommendations.

"Domestic work has always been at the fringe of all labour laws and it has become a cat and mouse game with this State Government. Again last December, yet another committee report was filed, and there has been no further steps," Sujatha adds.

In 2011, the International Labour Organisation Convention on Domestic Work (C.189) took up the issue of regularizing and improving the working conditions in domestic work around the world. However, India did not ratify the convention.

"I've been a domestic servant for eight years now and I earn Rs.2000 today. I started off then at just Rs.800," says S.Priya, 38, a resident of Kotturpuram.

Priya says her income is hardly enough with her husband, who is a tile-worker rarely finding work these days. "Most men don't earn here don't earn every day since they all do daily wage work. It is the women here who earn for the house," she adds.

S.Anandhi, professor at the Madras School of Development Studies, says "Around 85 per cent of domestic workers in the country are women and that is due to a baggage of the 'feminine' values like caring, patience or serving that the society associates with womanhood. It is also choice most women make, as men don't mind

women working outside if it still are 'household chores' at some other house. There is then no conflict within the family of the woman too."

With no fixed wages, and dismal working conditions, there is a need for unions for these workers to exist as it opens up opportunities for negotiations, says Anandhi. Sumathi.D, Joint Secretary of the Pungal Thozhilalar Sangam said, "With a lot of difficulties, it was in 2001, that we started organizing women from the unorganized sector, majority of who are domestic workers.

Today our union has 20,000 members in the three districts of Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram. We have decided on a rate card for domestic work wherein a rate of pay is fixed against each kind of work."

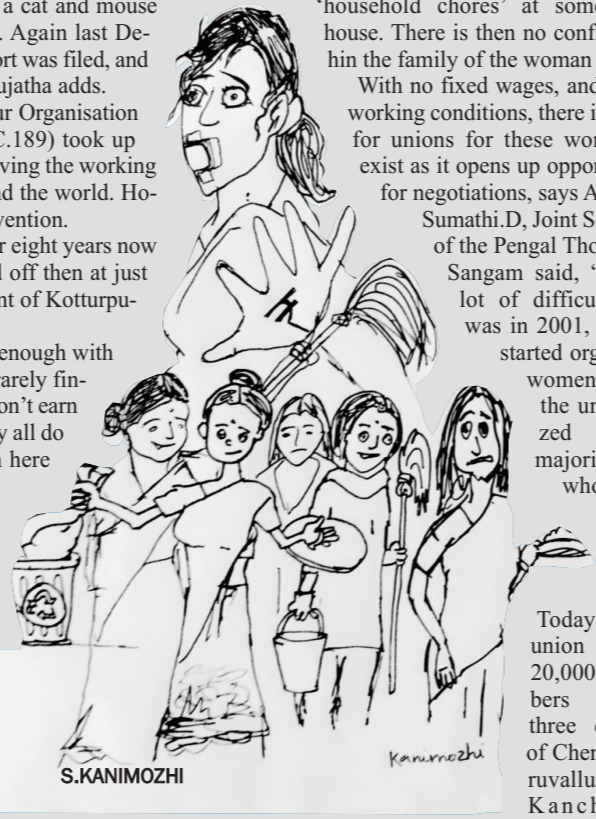
Our current demand is for the minimum wage to be fixed at Rs.75 per hour, she says.

"One major improvement after the start of the union is that women have started demanding bonus from their employers who usually do away with bonuses by giving away old saris and other 'gifts' to these workers," says Sumathi.

Balakrishnan, part of the Centre for Women's Development and Research (CWDR) that has been involved in the organization of another domestic workers' union under their programme 'Manushi' says, "We want to negotiate not with the employers, but the Government. And more than being a workers' issue, the problem of these women not being recognized as a worker is more of a gender issue."

Around 85 per cent of domestic workers in the country are women and that is due to a baggage of the 'feminine' values like caring, patience or serving that the society associates with womanhood.

S.Anandhi, professor at the Madras School of Development Studies



S.KANIMOZHI

Breaking into what was once a man's world

MEHNAZ YASMIN

Chennai: Gone are the days when women were taking care of home while men ventured out to earn for the entire family. Today, women inspire both women and men alike with their eye for creative detail, business sense and leadership skills.

While women have always prided themselves on being masters of multi-tasking, women entrepreneurs like Aswini Srinivasan are taking it a step ahead by simultaneously running two separate businesses.

Chief Strategist of Studio 31 and

co-founder of café 80 Degrees East, Srinivasan jointly started her first restaurant with Praneesh Padmanabhan in Nanganallur.

She was invariably mistaken for a Marketing Manager because "people were not ready to accept that a 22-year-old Indian woman is capable of co-founding or owning a café".

Overcoming problems like "gender inequality", she is

now the owner of the restaurant's second branch at Teynampet and has been featured in more than a dozen online platforms for entrepreneurs and magazine articles like 'Humans of Madras', 'yourstory' and 'Indian women blog'.

Women also no longer mull over taking risks or venturing into arenas explored by few.

Proprietress of V2 Innovations, Anitha is also the owner of the first-of-its-kind organic restaurant in Chennai, Green

Café and Kares-

restaurant.

A social entrepreneur with multiple businesses, she said, "When I was in my college, I had an interest towards entrepreneurship, but nutrition was my passion. I wanted my venture to support the society and not be something merely commercial. I wanted it to be good entrepreneurship".

She and her team recently launched F5Green.org, an NGO and are also planning to construct a bio-village at Tiruvannamalai.

Trendsetters like Akriti Sachdev, founder of Mesmereyes Makeup have re-written rules and changed the way make-up is perceived.

"Seven years ago people thought of makeup as heavy and flaky. I tried to come up with unconventional ways to doll up my brides without looking made-up," she said. She added that it took a lot of practice to make people see that make-up could look natural.

She started off when make-up artistry was looked down upon and not conventional for a woman. However, "people are now very inspired by women becoming an entrepreneur on her own feet", she said. To encourage budding women entrepreneurs and support their endeavours, platforms like Women Entrepreneurs India (WEI)

have gained prominence. They not only train and mentor, but also extend financial aid.

With women inspiring other women, WEI has now created thousands of success stories.

WEI was founded by another woman entrepreneur and winner of SSM Educational Institutions' 'Best Woman Entrepreneur' Mahalakshmi Saravanan. She has won several other accolades, and was featured in The Economic Times newspaper. Moreover, she went on to become a panelist during the International Women's Day Celebration at World Trade Centre, Mumbai.



Exclusive offers, discounts to make women feel special

S.KANIMOZHI

Chennai: International Women's Day was marked by discounts and other offers exclusively for women.

At the Phoenix Marketcity mall in Velachery, Promod - Boutique Française has a collection of fabrics such as cotton, knits, denim, crêpe and lace. The vision of Promod is to create a fashion that matches the personality of the customers, according to an employee.

"You have to provide your database by scanning the QR code. A cash voucher of Rs.1000 will be sent to your e-mail.

The offer is available only on March 8. Redeem the amount on purchase of anything above

Rs.1000", said R.Shafi, an employee of Promod-Boutique

is 20% discount on the purchase of Indian wear for Rs.5000."

They also have special combo offers on accessories. Buy any necklace and ring at Rs.599 and buy any earring and bracelet for Rs.599 only.

N.Jaishree, employee of Zivame, a lingerie store, said "We have 30% discount on bras, 50% on active wear and regular padded bras, 60% discount on super support bras, and 70% on apparels."

At the Metro shoe shop women were offered a pair of shoes or sandals at 5% discount, two pairs at 10% and three pairs at 20%.

"This offer is only on women's day," said Joseph Joji, the owner

of the shop.

In early September, Carat Lane set up its second store at Phoenix Mall.

James, an employee at Carat Lane- a Tanishq Partnership said "There is 20% cashback on all diamond jewels. Also a gift voucher of Rs.5000 is available which is valid from May 1 to May 31." Customers can also buy jewellery online.

Toni & Guy provided 15% offer on pedicure and manicure. They provided a combined spa-package of body massage and body wraps which usually cost Rs.2200 and Rs.2300 respectively for just Rs.1299.

"This 90 minute package is valid only on woman's day," said Shaili, the marketing manager of Toni & Guy.



Phoenix Market City celebrates women's day in style with exciting deals and offers S.KANIMOZHI

K.Priyanka, Visual Merchandiser of Project Eve, said, "We celebrate women's day in a grand manner. All our women employees come together to cut cake."

She added, "We have buy 1 get 1, buy 2 get 1 and 50% discount on accessories. There is also 25% discount on perfumes."

"There is 30% discount on foundation cream in particular shades and 30% on moisturizer day cream," said Sree Kamala, employee at Kryolan.

S.Hepsi Bai, an employee at Calonge, said "For women's day we have a discount of 25% on all the non-discount items. There is also 50% discount on bags and 60% discount on wallets."

'No protection for LGBTQ'

Gender neutral laws are necessary to help transgenders, others

LAHOMA BHATTACHARYA

Chennai: The Supreme Court's recent dismissal of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) that aimed to make laws concerning rape, sexual harassment, stalking, voyeurism, outraging of modesty, gender-neutral is being widely debated by gender experts and activists throughout the country.

The petition filed by an SC lawyer Rishi Malhotra was termed as an 'imaginative' petition by a bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra.

While feminists welcomed the rejection of the PIL, most lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) activists argue that gender-neutral rape laws remain a legislative necessity in our country.

Malini Jeevarathnam, 28-year-old queer filmmaker and activist, said, "The Indian Penal Code legalizes marital rape but our country does not have laws that protect the LGBTQ community from sexual violence. This is not surprising as our government is yet to take crimes against the transgender community seriously."

On the contrary, Kolkata based women's rights activist Teesta Dutta argues that gender neutral adultery laws may be misused by men to further harass and subjugate women.

The 22-year-old said, "Our constitution does not discriminate against men, rather it is us women who are not taken seriously. The



Gender-neutral laws have always been a topic of debate with conflicting views coming in from different sides. WWW.COVERTVIEW.ORG

"The transgender community has been marginalized ... it is time the government recognizes our right to safety."

transgender community needs its own set of laws to protect their interests but gender neutrality for adultery will be misused by some men who will drag a woman to court for no reason."

Manasi, a transgender woman was sexually abused when she was 15 years old and she continues to face harassment on a daily basis.

"I am mocked, laughed and sneered at and often when I am travelling alone, groups of boys have tried to touch me and make sexual

advances. Perhaps, I am not a human to them," she said.

Shayan Ghosh, a transgender rights activist said, "It is time we did away with such draconian and unconstitutional statutes. The transgender community has been marginalized and oppressed but it is time that our government recognizes our right to safety."

Rishi Malhotra's argument that crime has no gender and that Article 15 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination against any citizen

on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them was rejected by the bench on February 2, 2018.

Anisha Chanda, a student of Gender Studies said, "Heterosexual and gay men are raped and abused too. The law needs to introduce legislative changes for all categories and safeguard every citizen; a woman's right to file a complaint against her perpetrator cannot be challenged on any ground."

The bench argued that Article 15 particularly catered to discrimination against women and children and that it was up to Parliament to change laws.

The case is scheduled to come up again in court during the last week of March.

Mind your language

LAVANYA NARAYANAN

Chennai: When multifaceted entrepreneur Anusha Swamy agreed to share her story of working with the differently-abled community with a friend and reporter, she expected to wake up to an article that would finally bring awareness to the cause.

Yet, the article published on Sunday, March 4th, carried the headline, 'City Youtuber Empowers the Disabled' and left Swamy fuming. "They empower me, I do nothing," Swamy retaliated, adding that the incident shook her faith in print media all across India. She said the issue worsened when another newspaper carried an article using the same terminology multiple times, after assuring Swamy that they would never use the word 'disabled' in this context.

For many, the issue raised is a minor one, with most people considering 'disabled' to mean the more politically correct 'differently-abled.' However for Swamy, it's a distinction she's been battling ever since she got involved with differently-abled people and individuals with Down Syndrome almost seven years ago.

"These are people like you and me. They are not machines that you can label as 'disabled,'" she stated. She called it an issue of inclusivity, blaming the media for the lack of a cohesive community in India today.

Reporters, however, are torn. Some ally with Swamy, saying that focusing on the vernacular is the best way to bring attention to the



As we progress as a society, it has become imperative to watch our words so they do not hurt the sentiments of people around us. BLOGTALKRADIO.COM

issue at hand. "Of course, it is important to be sensitive to terminology used, especially when it considers an often undervalued community," said Parshathy Nath, a reporter for The Hindu Metro-Plus, Chennai.

The sentiment was echoed, with journalists commenting that they should err on the side of caution and seek reconfirmation when unsure about the use of certain terms. "We are often asked to write about topics that we ourselves don't have a lot of prior knowledge about or are unfamiliar with. It never hurts to clarify with your source of how they would like a certain thing to be stated," commented Susana Lazarus, reporter for The Hindu's Weekend supplement.

However, there is a fine line between clarification and press loyal-

ties. Abinaya Kalyanasundaram, a reporter for The New Indian Express, said, "It is essential to clarify. Yet, as reporters, we still have an ethical obligation to being honest which should override any temptation to 'promote' a certain cause, company, or issue."

Others, however, feel that the terminology only scratches the surface and more attention should be paid to the underlying cause that is being addressed - in this case, differently-abled individuals.

"In the USA, where I work, we are extremely sensitive about terminology. But the dialogue that is more important to initiate is that of the rights of these individuals, rather than what they are or are not called," commented Brooklyn Eagle reporter Dimana Tzvetkova.

Old films back on screen

MD EYAMIN

Chennai: A decision is yet to be taken regarding the release of Tamil and Telugu films at theatres in Tamil Nadu and Andhra. While Kannada and Malayalam film producers agreed to release their films from March 9, there is no end in sight to the ongoing conflict between Tamil Nadu Film Producer Council and Digital Service Providers.

Members of councils from all four film industries in the south have been protesting from March 1 against a high 'Virtual Print Fee' (VPF) charged by Digital Service Providers (DSPs). They had decided to stop releasing new films.

Shiva, a spokesperson at the TFPC said, "We are on strike and they have to come forward and resolve this issue because they cannot survive without us."

Protesters said that currently more than 85 per cent of the films were failing to recover their investment and every cost had to be brought down. At the same time, the digital distribution cost had risen over the years.

They said that the cost of digital distribution was on an average 10% of the total budget of the film

for a small to medium budget film. Around 5% for a big budget film, which they said was not affordable. Qube Cinemas Technologies and UFO Movies are the two main digital distribution companies in South India.

"We are essentially protesting against Qube Cinemas. We demanded 20% reduction of costs but they agreed to only 8%. They charge us Rs 7,000 per show and we wanted it reduced to Rs 3,000, however, they only reduced it by Rs 500," said Producer Dhananjayan Govind.

On the other hand, Senthil Kumar, co-founder, Qube Cinemas Technologies Pvt. Ltd. said, "There is no progress. Though their argument does not hold water because investment in digital cinema equipment directly benefits the producer we are working on it for a decision."

"However, the Kannada and Malayalam film industries have permitted the release of new films from March 9," he added.

Owing to this stalemate, movie theatres are screening older movies like Vedhala and Vikram Vedha. This is aimed at generating revenue and also to keep the show running.



Chennai, through the camera lens

9 photographers shed light on the lesser-known aspects

LAVANYA NARAYANAN

Chennai: The Chintadripet MRTS Station is playing host to a photography exhibition organised by ueberall photography in conjunction with the Chennai Photo Biennale (CPB) Foundation and the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Chennai.

The exhibition, titled Hometown, features the work of nine young photographers who have independently uncovered different aspects of Chennai's culture.

"We wanted to do something to bring art into public, non-elitist spaces," say ueberall founders Jonas Fiege and Yana Wernicke. Having moved to Chennai from Germany a year ago, they discovered the city through a smattering of visual and performing arts.

Yet, they often had to search intently to find local events that showed more of Chennai than what they had already seen.

"We tried to be exposed to the day-to-day events that people here engage with," Fiege explains. However, unlike their hometown, pu-

blic transportation stations in Chennai played host only to commuters.

"We thought an initiative like this would help people from other places participate in this city," Wernicke adds.

"It's a great use of space, especially with such large walls in the Station. We also hope that it generates conversation amongst commuters and brings them together," says Gayatri Nair, Founding Trustee of the CPB Foundation.

The photos have

been taken by photographers Sridhar Balasubramaniam, Saravana Bharathi S B, Swasti Bharti, Sujanya Das, Vivek Mariappan, Malika Rajkumar, Sharan Devkar Shankar, Varsha Narayanan and Johny Vinoth.

Each photographer brings a unique perspective.

While Narayanan attempts to capture the warmth of the Chennai sunshine, Rajkumar hones in on Chennai's rich cultural history with photographs of recently-graduated Bharatanatyam dancers.

"I have captured people's kitchens, hoping to unveil

their lives through the way they cook their food," Mariappan says about his collection.

Others concentrate on their regions of residence outside of the main city.

Das, for instance, has lived in Navalur for the past year, prompting the creation of his collection, 'Confined.'

"I tried to interpret the rapid urbanisation of my area over the last year, showing how the two worlds clash," Das says.

The projects, Nair adds, speak of a range of topics, from tradition and progress to each photographer's personal memories of their homes.

Photographer Johnny Vinoth hopes the photos achieve more than just entertaining the passers-by in the city.

"Issues not concerning us are never taken seriously and we always end up realising this too late. My photos focus on the way 'encroachment' is threatening city residents.



The mudhras, or hand gestures, are some of the signature aspects of Bharatanatyam.

LAVANYA NARAYANAN

Last-minute doubts? WhatsApp your teacher

KANISHKA SARKAR

Chennai: School students and teachers nowadays see social media as a boon and consider it a new way of learning and an ideal medium to share ideas and information.

"I need not wait until next morning to ask doubts about an important question; my teacher answers it on the class Whatsapp group itself, which helps the entire class. She also shares essential school notices. However, she has strictly instructed us to not pass any personal comments or share any forwards, as it

disturbs the entire group," said Chaaya Girimona, a class X student of The PSBB Millennium School, Guduvanchery.

Jemi Sudhakar, Vice Principal at Velammal Educational Trust here, finds social media useful for teachers to communicate with students outside of class. Highlighting the advantages of using such platforms she said, "It is a great place to post homework, send homework reminders, establish study groups, and even set up a calendar of class events."

Many schools these days encourage the

use of social media for sharing sample papers, study materials, or anything new that one might come across.

"Our school guides us to judiciously use social media platforms for educational purposes. Learning via social media in addition to classroom teaching is an ideal combination," said Aparajitha, a class XI student of the Maharishi Vidya Mandir, Chetpet.

However, some students tend to misuse such platforms. They make memes and post it on Facebook, and also make so-called confession pages, which eventually only are used to post funny comments about teachers and fellow students, said Aparajitha.

According to Priyanka Tripathi, a school counselor, it is the responsibility of schools to organise workshops and familiarise both students and teachers with the pros and cons of using social networking sites and also with various privacy settings, and security filters available in order to maintain a decent distance.

Though it is a good way to reach out to people, social media lacks individualised atmosphere, because of which people sometimes intrude too much into other people's personal lives.

Niranjana Dinesh, a class VIII student, said that if a student shared something personal with a teacher on social media, teachers sometimes shared it among themselves and

It is a great place to post homework, send homework reminders, establish study groups, and even set up a calendar of class events.

-Jemi Sudhakar

also such incidents led to biased behavior.

Jemi Sudhakar said "Social media websites provoke a more informal atmosphere and more informal commu-

nication than a typical work environment. Everyone speaks without social constraints, and both parties tend to share personal content."

According to her when teachers know pupils personally, they subconsciously tend to be biased towards them. "However, essentially the only fair way to test children is through externally set and externally marked exams. Bias has no role to play in this regard."

Listing the unrealised benefits of using social networking platforms, Sudhakar said students who used social media sites, like Facebook, felt more confident in their writing than those who did not. They were more likely to write better short stories, poetry, or a journal using online tools.

According to Tripathi, unless done wisely excessive use of social media could lead to addition, aggression, and at times it was a risk to a teenager's safety. "Therefore, it is very important for teachers, students and parents to be aware of cyber cells, and cyber crimes. Also, parental consent and guidance to use such platforms is a must."



Virtual classrooms and 24*7 availability of teachers are of great help for students. WWW.NEWINDIANEXPRESS.COM

Bites from Tibet to Tamil Nadu

JAGDISHOR PANDEY

Chennai: A 26-seat North East Kitchen in Egmore was filled with customers, most of them eating momos, the Himalayan belt dish, which originated in Tibet and were made popular by Nepalese.

The restaurant is run by Chonchon, a middle aged woman from Mizoram.

"Many people come here to eat momo every day," says Chonchon with a smile. She added, "People are happy to get the north-eastern taste. There are other restaurants where you can get momo in Chennai."

Some say momo originated in Nepal. Others say Nepali people went to Tibet for trade and picked it up. They learnt how to cook momo in rice flour paste and either steamed or fried.

Momo has been a traditional delicacy in Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. It has become one of the most popular fast foods all over the world.

Hidden Chhetrai, a boy from Biratnagar, eastern part of Nepal, is a regular customer at the momo shop. "It is hard to get the same

taste that I used to get at home," he said. He has been working in a juice shop in Adyar

In Spiizze Madras, initially a Nepali started making momo. Soon others in the restaurant learnt to make it.

"These days many people are learning here to make momo," said Chhetrai

Chonchon has been running her restaurant for four and half years.

"Now 60 per cent customers are southern people and the rest are from the north," she said.



Lending a North-eastern taste to Chennai WWW.VEGRECIPESOFINDIA.COM