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Protests over rath yatra rock TN

Stalin and over 300 others arrested as yatra culminates in Rameswaram

ASHWIN MANIKANDAN

Chennai: Several leaders of the Opposition, including DMK's Working President M K Stalin, were arrested on Tuesday for protesting against AIADMK Government's decision to allow the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) backed 'Ram Rajya Rath Yatra' enter Tamil Nadu.

The Opposition, led by Stalin, created a furore in the State Assembly after their calls to ban the Yatra was dismissed by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister E. Palaniswami.

"A government cannot be selective in its approach towards a particular religion and ban its activities," the Chief Minister said. Unhappy with the response, the opposition then staged a walk-out from the Assembly and demonstrated by blocking the road outside the Secretariat, before police intervened and arrested the protesters. According to eye-witness accounts, 100 to 150 people were detained by the police.

The Ram Rajya Rath Yatra was flagged off from Ayodhya on February 13 by Sri Rama Dasa Universal Society, a religious body based in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, and travelled through five states before entering Tamil Nadu on March 20. The procession was

aimed at mobilizing support to build Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

Earlier, Section 144 CrPc – unlawful assembly of people – was imposed in Tirunelveli District and more than 1500 police personnel deployed, in anticipation of possible communal violence or disruption of public order due to the Rath Yatra. According to police reports, over 300 people have been arrested across Tamil Nadu for violating ban orders.

Speaking to The Word, DMK Spokesperson TKS Elangovan said that his party was against the Yatra because they deemed it as an attack on the secular fabric of Tamil Nadu.

"They (BJP) have trouble-makers in all the states. This Yatra is only meant to antagonize the Muslim population in Tamil Nadu. The ruling party should never have allowed it, but instead, they further imposed 144 in parts of Tamil Nadu. I think they are afraid of BJP and are in power only because of the BJP," Elangovan said.

Meanwhile, protests were held in Chennai, Ambur, Vellore, Tirunelveli and some other places in the state by members of parties including DMK, VCK (Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi), and some Muslim outfits to demonstrate their opposition to the Rath-Yatra.



Protestors agitate against the VHP backed rath yatra at Anna Salai on Tuesday

ASHWIN MANIKANDAN

Nambi Narayan, Editor of BJP Tamil Nadu's official magazine 'Orey Naadu,' responded to the protests by saying that "Ram Rajya was the ultimate vision of Gandhi as well."

"The goal of the Yatra is to establish a Ram Rajya and have peace

among the people. Tamil Nadu and Lord Ram have a historical connection," he said.

BJP National Secretary H Raja said, "The DMK will lose on Hindu votes because of its stand against the Yatra." He further lauded the AIADMK government for providing

police support for the peaceful passing of the Yatra through the state.

The procession traversed through Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Madurai districts before culminating at Rameswaram on Wednesday.

Protest against police station

Build community hall: residents

BHAGYASRI CHAUDHURY

Chennai: Residents of Nochikuppam, a fishermen's colony on the Marina, want to build a community hall on land that does not belong to them, according to officials at the D5 Marina Police Station.

The residents have been objecting to the Marina police station coming up on over 9,000 sq ft of land traditionally belonging to their village. The station building had utilized around 1,500 sq ft when it was there earlier. The building has been demolished for reconstruction and the station is currently functioning from a temporary structure on Kamaraj Salai.

The fishermen said they could not part with the additional land since they required it for building a community hall.

"The station is not being built on fishermen's land. The land does not belong to them. It is a housing corporation area, so the land belongs to the government," said Inspector N. Raja from the Marina police station.

"This temporary police station has been here for ten years or so. The government sanctioned this

land to the fishermen."

The government is ready to give the fishermen alternative land to build their community hall.

"However, they don't want to use the land being given to them," said Raja, "They need an alternative space nearby, and the space being given to them is not conveniently close. There is no problem in actuality."

After their hall was taken over by an Amma Unavagam, the then MLA Haridoss D., promised the fishermen a new one, but nothing has been done since. The residents said that the hall was a necessity since they had nowhere else to conduct functions at nominal rates.

"We objected to the police station coming up in our village in the first place. Since it has moved elsewhere now, it might as well be located in that place permanently," pointed out Maran, a resident.

The Nochikuppam residents have planned to submit petitions to the Chief Minister's special cell, the slum clearance board and also to the Mylapore MLA R. Natraj demanding that a community hall, a play area for children and a library, be built for them. They have objected to officials measuring the site.



New Tamil film releases stopped as strike continues.

DEBDUTTA MITRA

Re-releases bring poor crowd

DEBDUTTA MITRA

Chennai: Cinema owners are unhappy with the fall in the ticket sales with the ongoing tussle over the fee charge for digital prints of movies.

The entire South Indian film industry went on a strike against the Virtual Print Free (VPF) charged by Digital Service Providers (DSP) from March 1 and decided not to release new films.

The Telugu and Malayalam film industries called off their strike due to which many new movies such as Poomaram and Kirrak Party were also released in the state along with Hindi and English movies. However only old Tamil films are being screened in the theatres leading to a drop in ticket sales.

"Business was already bad and now it has become much worse. Out of the 300 seats in a screen, there are 40-50 tickets sold totally for a single show," said Ramras, Assistant Manager of Woodland Cinemas in Royapettah which is screening Wonder Woman and the Tamil dub of Telugu movie, No.1.

Owners of theatres showing mainstream Tamil re-releases say they get a small crowd their screening superhit and classical movies.

"New movies enjoy huge crowds if they are good ones. But only 15-20 people on average turn up per show for re-releases," said Mani, Manager of GK Marlen Cinemas in Aynavaram which is screening Thani Oruvan and Aranmani 2. He added that despite having re-releases of movies such as Vedalam and Mersal, which have big stars, the business was down.

Meanwhile, some theatres are playing movies from other languages dubbed in Tamil such as Baahubali and No. 1. The owners explained that they were doing so that their share from distributor's profit was more.

"For movies with big heroes, distributors take away 70 percent of the profit and theatre owners get the remaining 30 percent. However, for other movies with smaller cast, distributors give away a share of 40 percent to us with them taking the remaining 60 percent," said Janakiraman, Assistant Manager of Anna Theatre in Mount Road which is playing Mahesh Babu-starrer No. 1

Film critic Baradwaj Rangan said "The trend of re-releases started when a digitally re-released version of Sivaji Ganesan-starrer Karman (1964) came in 2012 which was a critical and commercial success. After that many movies of MGR and Rajini such as Baasha (1995) and Rickshawkaaran (1971) had their digital versions released and for such hit films, the audience get a tinge of nostalgia while watching."

According to The Hindu, Digital Service Providers agreed to reduce the virtual print fee by 18 to 20 per cent. While producers in the Telugu and Malayalam, film industries agreed to it, the others are still negotiating.

The Hindu quoted Senthil Kumar, one of the digital service providers as saying that the high reliability of tech support was necessary to ensure smooth operation across cities and that the VPF could not be reduced further because "We will go into the red."

Teachers to boycott paper evaluation

They want Plus One evaluation postponed to first week of July

EISHA NAIR

The Tamil Nadu Post Graduate Teachers Association (TNPETA) will boycott the evaluation of Plus-One exam papers, according to the association's state president, KPO Suresh.

The Plus-One public exam which began on March 7 this year, with around nine lakh students appearing for it, is being conducted for the first time ever in Tamil Nadu.

"March is full of exams. Totally, 18 lakh students are writing 11th and 12th. The language teachers have to correct two sets of papers per student...so that's 36 lakh papers. We have to start checking from April 4 and finish by May 20, in the peak summer, leaving us with only two weeks of vacation," says Suresh.

TNPETA has submitted a petition to the School Education Department to postpone the evaluation of Plus-One papers to the first week of July, saying that no student will be adversely affected.

"We are ready to complete the Plus-Two papers by April end because we know they have to apply for higher studies and entrance exams. It's our responsibility to give them their mark sheets on time. But Plus-One students are going to be with us," says Suresh.

SK Gulam Thasthahir, TNPETA headquarters secretary, said "The government introduced a no-detention policy for higher secondary classes this year. So every Plus-One student will go to the higher class. If they fail, they can re-write that exam the next year."

The other demands by the TNPETA include increasing the student-teacher ratio which it says is skewed in government schools across the state. "The Teacher's Recruitment Board (TRB) has started recruiting more teachers in the past three-four years but vacancies still remain. There has been no appointments of clerical staff either so many teachers are doing clerical work too," says Thasthahir.

One of the long-standing demands of the association is the establishment of permanent evaluation centers. "We might have

to bear summer in a school with no desk, fan, toilet, and no separate facility for ladies," says Thasthahir.

Also, the payment per paper has stayed at Rs. 15 for seven years now, which is supposed to increase every two years, according to Suresh.

The association welcomed the government's decision to hold public examinations for 11th standard.

"Many matriculation schools (schools following their own curriculum until 10th and then State Board syllabus for 11th and 12th standards) and private schools, especially in the Namakkal, Salem and Erode districts believe in harvesting students. They don't teach the 11th standard syllabus. Now it will force them to give students equal opportunities," says Thasthahir.

However, the shift to public exams for Plus One has been abrupt. "No new books have been given...They have just passed the order without doing any work," says Suresh.

Thasthahir says "It's not a one-day process. Before, we had to test



TNPETA Secy SK Gulam Thasthahir says that Class 11 exams will give fair chances to all students.

EISHA NAIR

the students for 600 marks in 11th standard and 1,200 marks only in 12th standard. Now they are tested for 1,200 marks in 11th and have to write the same answer for double marks since the paper pattern has not changed," says Thasthahir.

Students seem to be unhappy with their new order. "Public exam marks matter more, so there's more

pressure. At least earlier we had a break between 10th and 12th," says R Indumathi, studying Commerce at Chennai Girls Higher Secondary School. "It's difficult to manage everything, and coaching classes for IIT. My friends are also studying for NTSE. Now we have to study hard for 11th standard also," says Shaffiya Begum, a Science student.

'Ask nature, it will give you medicine!'

Lecture at Guindy Snake Park highlights cures available in nature

DEBANGANA GHOSH

Chennai: Elephants, which are the least likely to get cancer in the animal kingdom, may offer hope to human beings, according to an animal activist.

S. Paulraj, Trustee of the Chennai Snake Park Trust (CSPT) and a retired Indian Foreign Services (IFS) officer, said this was because compared to human beings, the elephants have more P53 genes which were responsible for killing cancer cells.

"Elephants have 20 pairs of this gene as compared to humans who have one or two. Now scientists are looking for ways to extract and use the gene," he added.

Paulraj spoke about numerous such ways of nature to cure different diseases which are at research stages, reiterating the importance of forests and animals.



A Sea Cucumber

"Ask nature, it will give you medicine," he said on the occasion of World Forest Day on March 21 at Guindy National Park.

"Sea Cucumber, a marine animal is often removed from seas despite its cleansing properties. It has certain components which are effective against cancer. People have

started smuggling it these days. Chinese regularly use it in their soups."

"Chinese have been using this for ages claiming it to be a major factor for fewer instances of cancer among them," he said adding that however, there is very little scientific evidence to prove this.

Paulraj said that at present, allopathic medicines used 30-40 per cent of plant products in its preparation which would only increase with time. These medicines were symptom-oriented and not cause-oriented.

Another major problem, he pointed out, with today's lifestyle was the food habit, mainly the trend of using refined and preserved food. Fifty years ago, refined oil was never used and oil was extracted naturally from oil seeds. Refining oil includes changing the fat composition of the natural oil which would not be readily accepted by the human body. This in turn creates a pro-

blem during cell division as cell formation also require fat and what it gets is a modified and artificial form of fat.

But he later added that the body will adapt with that kind of fat over the time.

Not just humans, plants too are facing problems of unwanted gene mutation due to excessive use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Paulraj said that to create a disease resistant variety of paddy, the scientists needed to take the gene from the original plant, which was not sprayed with any chemicals. That was something difficult for them to find under normal conditions.

Over the years, the percentage of oxygen in the air had remained constant at 21 per cent, but a slight increase of even 0.01 per cent in the otherwise 0.03 per cent of atmospheric carbon dioxide can cause adverse ecological issues.



The Besantnagar crematorium

GARIMA BORA

Eco-friendly pyre

GARIMA BORA

CHENNAI: LPG powered gasifier units have now replaced the old furnaces fuelled by firewood and electricity to burn the bodies in the cremation grounds of Besant Nagar, Vyasarpadi, Mylapore, and Velankadu.

According to Aruljyothi, a burial ground assistant, switching to LPG cylinders as an alternative to heat the furnace had turned out to be cost-effective and less-polluting.

The existing gasifiers at the crematoria convert firewood into a mixture of combustible gases termed as 'producer gas,' causing pollution and also leading to problems in maintenance in the long run, according to a report in The Hindu.

Also it takes less time to cremate a body using LPG. The time taken to completely turn the body to ashes depended upon the physical dimensions of the body, Aruljyothi said.

"It takes an average of 45 minutes using LPG and would take more than an hour and half using firewood," he added. The ash produced using the firewood would not be purely human remains as it would have some traces of firewood, whereas using LPG people get human remains.

An average of five bodies are cremated in the Besant Nagar crematorium. The renovated crematorium is now being managed by Isha Foundation since the Greater Chennai Corporation turned over the maintenance to private contractors.

The Corporation manages 211 burial grounds in Chennai city. A total of 25 gasifier crematoria are being operated in various parts of the city, replacing electric facilities and the use of firewood.

"The senior citizen needs to get 2 photographs, and copies of Aadhar card, and ration card for address proof to submit with the form at any bus depot. Someone else can get their pass for them by submitting their documents," said the cashier.

Apart from this, the passengers were also required to bring their old ID cards, according to regular commuter S. Perumalsamy. Many passengers said they faced problems after the hiking of the bus fares on January 20 and then its subsequent partial roll back January 29, according to an article in

Seniors pass up free bus passes

The passes allow senior citizens a limited number of trips

EISHA NAIR

CHENNAI: Despite the availability of free bus passes for passengers aged 60-years-old and above, many are opting to pay for a monthly pass instead.

This is because the free pass allows only a limited number of trips, among other things.

The next renewal of the free pass will take place in the first week of April, according to a cashier at the Metro Transport Corporation office at Shastri Nagar in Adyar.

"The pass is issued four times in one year. A total of 30 tickets are given for three months," he says.

When the scheme was launched in February 2016, the commuter needed only to submit a proof of age and two passport-sized photographs, but during the renewal of passes in January, this year, passengers were asked to bring extra identity proofs.

"My mother used to travel from Tiruvanniyur to T Nagar, and once in February, she was not allowed to travel on the free ticket," says 46-year-old K. Savita, standing in a queue at the pass issuing and renewal counter in the Tiruvanniyur bus depot.

Other passengers believe that the number of coupons issued a month are inadequate.

"They give just 10 tickets monthly and that they are calling it a pass. If you use it to get to the next stop, you've lost one entire ticket," says D Johnson. "I took a



Commuters waiting at the Perumbur bus stop

EISHA NAIR

the New Indian Express.

"I am buying a monthly pass because I have to take care of so many things, being a widow—I have to go meet my family and help them out. They might ask me to go to my grandchild's school for a

train pass to test if it's cheaper, and it was, but the bus stop is nearer to my house than the train station," he says.

R. Laskhmi, who has taken a monthly pass for Rs. 1000 instead of availing herself of the scheme, says "I'm always busy. I practice acupuncture, so I have to go from Tambaram to Chengalpet every day."

"Being a retired person, I don't have much cash with me. But asking children for money is a sensitive topic. Even if they say Mummy you take...I feel bad asking. Whatever pension I get, I will manage in that much," she says.

Maggi resurrected, claims Nestle

AYESHA ROY

CHENNAI: Nestle, makers of Maggi, claims to have regained the trust of the people some three years after the "two-minute noodles" was banned. But doubts linger in the minds of some consumers even though the ban relaxed on March 14, 2016. The ban was imposed after Nestle failed the food compliance tests under Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in Tamil Nadu.

High quantities of lead were allegedly found and a five month ban was imposed on Nestle's Maggi products on June 4, 2015. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) lead has cumulative effects as it gets distributed to brain, liver, kidney and accumulates in teeth and bones over time. It is particularly harmful for young children and pregnant mothers as fetus is exposed to the lead present in maternal bones which is released into her blood during pregnancy.

Although Nestle denied every allegation, it withdrew the popular instant noodles from the market and destroyed 35,000 tonnes of the product. It then sent a fresh batch to the market.

"The new products were tested on November 9, 2015 and December 17, 2015," said a food security officer of the Food and drug safety department of Tamil Nadu.

The District Administration of Shahjahanpur, UP, had slapped a fine of Rs. 45 lakh on Nestle India in 2015. It was the first lab to find ash content, high levels of lead (17.2 ppm) and monosodium glutamate (MSG) that was not fit for human consumption.

According to the Food Safety and Standard (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011, the permitted level of lead in

grounds that the lead content came through the fertilizers used for the cultivation of onions that was part of the Maggi masala and that therefore it was not direct contamination.

After the court battle Maggi hit the shelves through extensive market campaigns. On March 18, Nestle claims to have regained the consumer trust.

At the Nilgiris supermarket, Dr.

Ramya of Jerusalem College of Engineering said, "As hostellers we binged on Maggi even after the speculation."

A Masters in Climate Science, K Kalaiarasai said, "I never ate instant noodles. My parents feel it's unhealthy. However my brother used to eat while he worked on different shifts in office as they were easy to make but now he has stopped. Due to his stomach problems, doctors suggested that he stop eating any kind of junk food."

Ravi Shankar, a junior project manager at Hyundai, Chennai said, "yes, instant noodles are harmful but we can eat it for its taste." Sudharsana, Sports Nutritionist (MSc), Sano Holistic Nutrition Clinic, in Chennai said, "Nestle has always been transparent with its products. They clearly mention all the ingredients and their quantities. After the ban was lifted, it is completely safe to have it. However, it is entirely in the hands of consumers to choose, especially parents who have to decide what to give to their children. Anything consumed in excess is bad for health."

Anita Rao, a professor of Architecture said, "I think of other noodles before picking up Maggi. Although they got themselves cleared, the thought of adulteration always comes into my mind."

She now prefers other brands like Yippee, Patanjali atta noodles. But her son, Aditya, a sixth standard student does not like their



A shopkeeper lays out his new wares

SOURCE: IRISHTIMES.COM

Full grooming, not just cut and dry

HRIDKAMAL ROY

CHENNAI: The first thing which is seen right after anyone steps into Naturals Lounge, Adyar is the list of services they provide along with the price list—it includes hair cut to hair dyeing and pedicure to facials all provided under one roof.

Until a couple of years ago barber shops in Chennai just offered a hair cut and a shave. These shops were mostly patronised by the local crowd and manned by the owner and two or three assistants. Earlier there used be barbers sitting with a mirror under a big tree.

Now the trend has changed with the business being taken over by companies like Lakme, VLCC and Lo'ral Paris which own several salons across the city.

Chandan, one of the stylists at Naturals Lounge said, "When I first came to Chennai three years ago, I started working as a stylist at a parlour which had specialised fashion treatments but only to a limited extent and the quality of material used by the proprietor wasn't good too. Many customers used to get angry over the quality and quantity of the treatment. After some of those incidents I left the job and got appointed here."

This salon in Adyar is one of the examples of the multispecialty fashion treatment. It has a ladies section and a gents section. It also has a section where only high end hair styling is done. As many as 12 beauty and style professionals are

presently employed there. Chandan said, "Nowadays boys generally don't visit small barber shops because of the few facilities there. They come to places like this



Adyar Naturals lounge

SOURCE:JDMAGICBOX.COM

because they want all round treatment. They want proper hair or fa-

cial styling done when they step out of the place. A simple hair cut won't do. They want to take care of their hair and their body, they want to become up-to-date with fashion

trends and which only multispecialty salons can provide.

Physicians and their moral obligation

HRIDKAMAL ROY

CHENNAI: Family physicians making house visits are a disappearing breed. These doctors knew all their patients starting from their medical history, lifestyle, dietary habits, educational standards and, social status Senior doctors blame it on the attitude of some patients and the urge to run to specialists.

Dr. Sandip Panicker of SRM General Hospital said, "A doctor can work anywhere provided he is given respect and his fair share of money. The problem is that when people have a headache and they google it, they run to the neurologist before even knowing what it is. They even consider visiting the general physician. Everything is so much consumer based now. People look at their doctors with suspicion."

People nowadays want all their treatment to be conducted under one roof and they visit multispecialty hospitals. Now they have different specialist doctors and all the medical tests under one roof and due to the benefit of health insurance, money is also not a major factor.

All the doctors who used to be family physicians wee general physicians. They continued their practice only with a bachelor's degree in medicine and surgery, and with that knowledge only, they treated the wide range of problems in their locality. Dr. Mrityunjay Mukherjee of the Sagaradutta Medical College and Hospital, Kolkatta, said, "It can definitely be inferred that perhaps they didn't have specialized knowledge about anything, but were in a position to diagnose a varied range of problems and suggest treatment. Almost all the sectors of medicine at a basic level could be covered by a family physician with ease."

Being a family physician was a lot of work. He had to be 'Johnny on the spot' for any kind of medical emergency."

Dr. Rathnaswami, Professor of surgical gastroenterology from Chennai said, "Surely it is happening to a certain extent in the corporate sector, now more than ever because people are more and more getting inclined towards speciality treatment but there is also a substantial amount of physicians who are acting like before."

"They have a specific client set may be in a specific geographical area but they have it and they perform everything possible in their power to maintain the well being of their client set."



Lakshmi, with her team

BHAGYASRI CHAUDHURY

Empowering and feeding the poor

AVANISH C.

CHENNAI: The ECO (Enhancing Community Opportunities) Kitchen at Injambakkam has been providing food kiosks to be operated by women all over Chennai. The initiative, known as the KATHIR project, was launched in 2010, with a view to serving a dual purpose—to feed the less privileged masses of the society and, while providing employment to women from troubled homes as cooks.

"Through this project, we want to help women escape their daily woes and troubles, and help them stand on their own two feet," said Sethu Lakshmi, manager of ECO Kitchen.

As part of the KATHIR initiative, 100 women are trained in matters of food preparation, social skills, matters of finance and social skills for a period of six weeks each year. They are then allotted kiosks to vend food, with the costs undertaken by the Kitchen and by generous donors.

The initiative previously served food to affected people at inundated areas during the 2015 Chennai floods. While other kitchens were running out of fuel, ECO Kitchen gained an edge over them, as they used renewable sources of energy like solar power and steam. According to a report from

The Hindu, donors from Ooty came to the rescue, as they provided fresh vegetables and rice to the kitchen, enabling them to serve 5000 fresh meals per day.

Ever expanding, more than 500 KATHIR entrepreneurs are now spread across the city, and the food from their kiosks reaches the orphanages and the underprivileged. As per a source from the kitchen, the women work 5-6 hours a day from Monday to Saturday, and serve a minimum of two meals. The arrangement serves to distract these women from the troubles of their households, with most of them being victims of domestic violence and abuse at the hands of their family members. It serves the added purpose of making them financially independent of their spouses and families.

Apart from training underprivileged women, the kitchen also conducts awareness programs.

These programs are designed to understand the depth of issues affecting the target group of women the kitchen seeks to train. Recently during Pongal, an event called "Dine and Dialogue" was organized, wherein corporate heads, KATHIR entrepreneurs and orphaned children discussed their hardships and successes.

Scrapped cars are public nuisance

GARIMA BORA

CHENNAI: Abandoned vehicles are becoming a nuisance to the city even after being impounded by the police, as they turn into garbage bins and take up public spaces.

A bunch of deserted vehicles has been lying opposite the Tamil Nadu Electric Board Office in Besant Nagar for the past two to three years, according to residents and workers at the office. A security guard at the Besant Nagar crematorium, which lies next to the electricity board office, said "These are vehicles impounded by the police as they were abandoned after an accident or when nobody claimed them for more than a month." The Central Motor Vehicles

Act, 1988 holds the police responsible for the removal of motor vehicles that have been abandoned or left unattended in public places. As the police stations lack space to keep these vehicles, they move them to places where they do not cause obstruction to traffic flow or cause any health hazard. Such vehicles including autorickshaws, a Tata Indica and Maruti Swift were found in around four streets of Besant Nagar.

The issue of abandoned vehicles is not new to the city. A media report in September 2016 discussed the problem of police stations not having adequate space for impounded vehicles. This report cites an RTI query by Chennai-based NGO Arappor Iyakkam on the number of



Scrapped vehicles lie abandoned at 1st Main Road in Besant Nagar
GARIMA BORA

vehicles being held by the police stations in various parts of the city.

In 2013, the Chennai Traffic Police impounded several abandoned vehicles due to security concerns in Chennai following a bomb blast in Bengaluru. In July

2015, the Madras High Court allowed the railways to identify the vehicles that had been abandoned in their premises, verify if they were in any crime and if not, to dispose them in five months. A survey regarding the abandoned

vehicles in the city was conducted by Satyarupa Shekhar, who heads the Government Outreach and Advisory team at the Citizen consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG). In her survey, she mentions that rather than leaving the abandoned or seized vehicles on the streets, the city could create a vehicle impoundment yard where they would be stored. However, the impoundment yard should only be treated as a temporary space for the vehicles to be housed while the police go through the legal and administrative processes. This pro-

blem cannot be addressed by creating a city impoundment yard on 'vacant' open spaces in cities that are already grappling with the lack of land for social housing, landfills and dump yards in water bodies and other precious lands.

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) recently issued an order asking the owners of disused vehicles to clear them within a 15-day window period and warning them that they would be towed away by police to designated spots and auctioned.

GCC Commissioner D Karthikeyan said parking vehicles at the roadsides and street corners posed a hindrance to the public, and also lead to health hazards as these become a breeding spot for mosquitoes.

March for Secularism

DEBANGANA GHOSH

CHENNAI: Taking inspiration from the success of the Kisan Long March of Maharashtra, the People's Platform Against Fascism (PPAF), a citizens' group with its members coming from different corners of the country will soon set on a 10-day voyage across 21 districts and 49 cities of Tamil Nadu to protest against what they call "saffron terrorism."

Apart from students, farmers and fishermen, this group will see an active participation of individuals affiliated to various political ideologies like Ambedkarites, Dravidians, Communists and Tamil linguistic outfits.

The 'March for Secularism,' which was supposed to begin on March 21, was postponed after the Tamil Nadu Police decided to ban the march. The Tamil Nadu State Government too did not support it. The members then approached the Madras High Court on March 20 seeking cooperation and protection of the police. However, the judgement is still pending.

Sathish Kumar, a member of the PPAF and a leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPIML) said, "The Tamil Nadu government has become a tail of the BJP. Our movement is not related to any political party. It is individuals' initiative. At present we have over 40 core members in the group. We are expecting more participants joining us on our way during the march."

Once they get a clearance from the High Court, the participants will begin their travel in vans from Chennai, then go to Kanchipuram, Vellore and other districts. It will conclude in Kanyakumari covering around 2300 km.

He added, "We will have public meetings and distribute pamphlets every evening along with cultural programmes at the places we visit. We have decorated a canter van to promote our ideas of secularism and pluralism."

Their demands include stopping violence against women and oppressed castes and end to exploitation of natural resources which destroys the livelihood of fishing communities, tribal and peasants. The major focus will remain on stopping the saffronisation of education and judiciary and the violence unleashed on the religious minorities.

Sasikala's spouse Natarajan dies

HARIPRASAD RADHAKRISHNAN

CHENNAI: M. Natarajan, husband of sidelined AIADMK leader V.K. Sasikala and a powerful backroom player during the Jayalalitha era, passed away here on March 20. He was 74.

He died of multiple organ failure early Tuesday at the Gleneagles Global Hospital. "Every possible clinical attempt was made to sustain his revival. However, despite our best efforts he was unable to recover," a hospital press release said.

He was admitted to the hospital following a severe chest infection on Sunday. He was put on ventilator support after undergoing a tracheotomy.

Last October, he had undergone a kidney and liver transplant. This



Natarajan was hospitalized on Saturday after he complained of chest pain
THE HINDU

was the last time he had seen his wife, who was out on an emergency parole.

Sasikala, who is serving her four-year sentence after being convicted in a disproportionate assets case at the Parappana

Agrahara prison in Bengaluru, was granted a 15-day parole to perform the last rites. Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam chief and nephew of Sasikala, TTV Dhinakaran, accompanied Sasikala from Tiruchi to Thanjavur.

Natarajan's mortal remains were then taken to his residence at Besant Nagar, where a number of political leaders paid homage to the former AIADMK leader. Later in the afternoon, his body was taken to in Thanjavur.

A bevy of political leaders and acquaintances arrived at Besant Nagar to pay homage to the deceased leader. "As a student, Natarajan joined the anti-Hindi agitations. He had great interest in the Dravidian ideology, and Kalaingar (DMK chief Karunanidhi) had a special

affection towards him. His loss is irreparable." The Hindu quoted DMK working president M.K. Stalin as saying.

VCK leader T. Thirumavalavan said he was a political strategist who "played his cards carefully." He added that Natarajan, during private conversations, used to express his unhappiness with the inequalities in society and the oppression of dalits.

Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader Vaiko said, "At a time when the nation is becoming saffronised, his presence will be missed."

Puducherry Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy also came to Chennai to pay his condolences. "I have met him several times when we our parties were in alliance. However, political allies or not, he was a friendly person," he said.



Nallore Vattam emphasizes on 'Makkal Shakthi' (People Power) to bring in social change.
DEBDUTTA MITRA

NGO calls for social change

DEBDUTTA MITRA

CHENNAI: Social group Nallore Vattam announced on Wednesday that it would be creating public awareness among the citizens of the state in order to bring changes in society. Around 1000 social workers including youth members from all districts of Tamil Nadu would be volunteering for the group.

Addressing a press conference, MA Balasubramaniam, who founded the organisation, emphasised the role of 'Makkal Shakthi' (People Power) in social responsibility.

"People are ignorant about their responsibility towards society and they should realize the importance of maintaining a good society," said Balasubramaniam adding that the group's aim was much similar to that of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's India: Vision 2020.

Saravanan S, a member of the organisation, said "We are planning to co-ordinate with 30 government departments where there will be a field expert representing our organisation who will make necessary suggestions for the betterment of the state."

Declaring that their first priority

was to eradicate corruption, he said "We will be also looking at improving the education system of the state not only in terms of syllabus and learning but also in terms of campus infrastructure and behaviour within it."

The group had also tied up with various other NGOs. "There is a huge need for not only cleanliness but also the proper utilisation of water especially in the city. There are three mega sewage-water treatment plants which send the treated water back to the Cooum River. Though the plants have their own parameters for working, they can use the water for many purposes such as toilet cleaning," said Annu Rajeshwari from Greenwish

Foundation adding that they would also look into the inadequate number of public toilets in the state.

The group also announced that it will be holding a meeting on March 25 at SRM University in Potheri where 100 volunteers from all 32 districts of Tamil Nadu would be meeting to formulate policies for the betterment of the state.

The group's aim was much similar to that of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's India: Vision 2020

Dinakaran's new party, AMMK, flagged off with controversy

Ruling party AIADMK objects to use of red, white and black in AMMK's new flag

ASHWIN MANIKANDAN

CHENNAI: Within a week of its launch, TTV Dinakaran's party Amma Makkal Munetra Kazhagam (AMMK) finds itself caught in controversy. The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed Dinakaran to file a response to the AIADMK's objection to letting him use the red, white and black colours in his party flag, as it was similar to the ruling party's flag.

The date of hearing of the case has been set by Justice C V Karthikeyan on March 27.

AMMK, which was launched on March 15 by Dinakaran at a public meeting in Madurai, has a sketch of the former Chief Minister of

Tamil Nadu, J Jayalalitha (Amma) imposed over the red, white and black strips. The symbol of the party is a pressure cooker.

Speaking at his party launch Dinakaran, who was ousted from the AIADMK, said "We will win all upcoming elections from now by using our latest name and party flag. We will also try to retrieve the two leaves symbol (of AIADMK), till then we will use the cooker symbol."

Dinakaran won the R K Nagar bye-election which was necessitated by Jayalalitha's death in December 2016. As an independent candidate, he defeated AIADMK's E Madhusudanan by 40707 votes.

"He won the R K Nagar election

because people deem him as the heir to Jayalalitha's throne. I think he is trying to hit the same chord with the people of Tamil Nadu by using Amma again in his flag and the party name. His party however lacks any kolgai (motive)," Srika Selvam, a third year LLB student from Madras Law College said.

The RK Nagar election campaign, however, was embroiled in controversy. Dinakaran was alleged to have bribed voters in order to secure the seat, with some reports suggesting Dinakaran paid up to Rs. 6000 for a single vote.

A 30 year-old software professional, V P Navaneeth said "I think he is popular because he is controversial. You can always

find him in the news."

With actor Kamal Haasan launching his party Makkal Needhi Maiam recently, Rajnikanth also announcing his imminent entry into politics, and the BJP trying to make inroads in the state, Tamil Nadu politics seems to be entering a new era.

"It's great for Tamil Nadu and the democracy in general. AMMK might just have been floated by Dinakaran to win back his position in the AIADMK, but the bigger the competition for power, the more will be the pressure on the ruling party to deliver. It's the early days of the aptly, let's see how much it would impact." T M Murthy, a retired government officer said.

NIWE promotes green energy

AYESHA ROY

CHENNAI: On the road to the 175 GW (gigawatt) renewable energy target (installed capacity) set during the Paris Agreement in October 2016 (till 2022), India achieved 62 GW of installations by November 2017 latest. And the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) is contributing its bit to this target.

NIWE organised an 'Open for all' event to visit the available facilities here on March 21 (from 9.30 a.m. -12.30 p.m.) so as to create public awareness about the renewable energy systems available in the State.

The facilities that were open for public visit were wind solar hybrid system, wind monitoring station, biogas plant and solar PV panels (20, each 80 W) [used to run an AC motor installed in the campus].

Students from different colleges and schools visited the event along with some professionals. Maheswari, a final year Civil Engineering student from SRM Institute of Science and Technology said, "I came here to collect wind assessment data for my project in college."

In addition, the institute is the nodal agency running wind turbine research stations across country. It comprises a metrological mast that collects yearly data and provides it to third parties who want to install wind turbines in an area. Through wind resource assessment "we collate four years of ground data and 15 years of satellite data (with a 3 km resolution - good for large scale projects) measuring wind speed, direction, ambient temperature, atmospheric pressure and humidity," said Shekhar, Project Assistant. The institute currently has a wind turbine producing 2 kW

(kilo watt) of wind energy.

The Solar radiation and Research Assessment station has mapped the solar potential of the country through Phase I (51 stations) and Phase II (60 stations) and created a solar atlas. The station consists of solar trackers with three radiation sensors.

"We do not have battery backup here, whatever is saved after on-campus consumption (5kw out of 45 kW produced) is sent into the grid," said Pradeep, technician.

Operations are on to integrate electricity produced from both fossil fuel and renewable sources so as to cut down of fossil fuel usage. The Institute uses

its "kitchen waste, plant waste, sewage (10,000 litres per week) and cow dung to produce 3 kg of biogas each day that in turn runs kitchen and is converted into electricity for laboratory operations," said M. Nandakumar, technician, Engineering Service Division. This 50 KLD biogas plant has been in operation since February 14, 2014. The plant was set up by a third party, Grace Line Bio Energy at a cost of Rs. 5 lakh. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) provides subsidies Rs. 4000 - Rs. 8000 for states other than in Northeast zone (Rs. 14,700 except plain areas in Assam).

Shekhar added that according to the new data collected, "Ennore has the potential to tap wind energy more than the other existing centres in Tamil Nadu."

MNRE has approved NIWE as testing and type certification body in India for all wind related issues.



The station consists of solar trackers with three radiation sensors.
AYESHA ROY

Is money more precious than skin?

DEBOLINA BISWAS

CHENNAI: Despite having risks of getting rashes and skin allergies, Indian women prefer buying lead and nickel mixed brass bangles due to their low pricing, said Jyoti, Manager at Kovhar India, during a jewellery exhibition organised by Chennai-based Shanmathi Creations at CP Art Gallery here on Tuesday, March 20.

Kovhar India, based in Brass City of India - Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, manufactures two varieties of bangles - the lead free ones priced at Rs. 275 each are exported to the United States and United Nations while the ones mixed with lead and nickel are sold in India at Rs.100 each. "Lead is banned in the UK and US. India, however, has no such rules," said Jyoti. The designs of these bangles are inspired from the ancient Egyptian civilization.

"I get to buy two different designs at the price of one and anyway I only use them occasionally," said home-maker Anitha who bought the cheaper bangles.

Independent artists and jewellers from all across the country came down to showcase their state's speciality. Despite the unique collection, not many seem to visit the exhibition. "I have been to Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi as well but the sale has always been maximum in Chennai," said Khaled Majeed who had come down all the way from Kashmir to sell his silver jewellery. "This year however, there hasn't been much sale yet. We are expecting more customers in the next two days," he said.

"For a jewellery costing Rs.500, we charge Rs.



Soumya Sundar sells Ganesha and lingams carved from precious stones
DEBOLINA BISWAS

900 from the seller, they have good re-sale value," said Khaled. "Our profit range has gone down after GST, now we are only trying to get a turnover," said Khaled.

Andhra Pradesh's speciality kalamkari jewellery sets were sold by Suprabha who priced them at Rs. 1500 each. "Artists hand paint scenes from mythological classics on cotton cloth pieces," she said.

"With the online availability of these jewellery, not many want to buy them from exhibitions," Suprabha added.

Once a government officer, Soumya Sundar,

since the last 20 years has been selling lingam and Lord Ganesha idols crafted from precious stones. "Stones like rubies, rose quartz and hessonites are sent to Jaipur where the artisans are available. They craft out figures and send them back to us for sale," he said. The artists receive only five percent of the sale amount. The most expensive Ganesha priced at Rs. 20 lakhs was carved out of a huge ruby.

Besides these, he also sold rudraksha costing Rs.1.2 lakhs. Fossils from Nepal's Gandaki River and natural shiva lingams from River Narmada were showcased for sale as well.

For the closet performers

GOWRIS

Chennai, March 22: "Tintinnabulation," said Abhishek Kumar, a budding stand-up comic, carefully pronouncing the word with a distinct American accent. As the significantly small crowd of six people in Convo café, Adyar strained their ears to decipher the word, he said, "You know what that means? It means the 'ringing of bells'! Imagine going to a temple and hearing the pujari say 'naan tintinnabulation paneendirukken'." He had the small crowd in splits.

For stand-up comics, open mic events are testing grounds. The few odd people who happen to be in the café at the time are their guinea pigs. Most of the content written for bigger shows is performed in open mic events and refined based on the responses.

"Open mics are where it all begins. There would not be a native comedy scene, if there were no open mics. In an open mic, it is okay to fail. This encourages anyone to come and test their material," said Sudharshan Ramamoorthy, popularly known as Soda, who is currently at the helm of Chennai Comedy, a platform founded by a group of comics from Chennai.

In a week, six open mics are hosted in the city, exclusively for comedy. Four are hosted by Chennai Comedy and the



Abhishek Kumar at an open mic in Convo Cafe, Adyar

[GOWRIS

rest are hosted by The Pundits and Evam (Entertainment groups).

"In the beginning, those who come to the café at that particular time, end up being the audience. In four to five months, the venue will start getting known for the open-mics and the comics are likely to get a 'break'," continued Ramamoorthy.

However, first-timers with redundant content, based on their qualms regarding 'engineering' and 'bad sex-lives', are disappointing.

On the other hand, Red Bindu Project (RBP) hosts open mic performances meant exclusively for women on a monthly basis. Their aim is to create a collaborative environment for women to speak or perform without inhibitions.

"A lot of closet singers, poets and performers like the fact that they have a platform to perform. In fact, poets and writers have started writing more in order to come and perform," said Deepthi Vinod, the co-founder of Red Bindu Project.

According to Deepthi, the freedom experienced by performers when they are amongst women, is what makes all-women open mic events special.

"When we initially started out, our intention was not just to host open mics. We wanted to create community for women across Tamil Nadu. Through the interaction that happens in these events, we chance upon women who need help. So, as a community we start working towards it," continued Vinod.

Apart from hosting open mic events, RBP also organizes 'unstage' - performances by renowned artists in intimate spaces where the audience are allowed to freely interact with the artists, thereby eliminating the distance between an artist and his/her audience.

Musical events like the secret gigs by Sofar are also gaining pace in the city. Though they are much more stringent than open mic performances in terms of selection, the comfortable atmosphere they provide attracts large crowds.

"We used to have 50 to 70 applicants per shows two years back. Now, we usually have more than 200 applicants each month, which I think speaks for itself," said Anu Bhaskaram, one of the organizers of Sofar Chennai. "We do try to bring in different types of music - which are unheard of. But we have also had Carnatic and Hindustani musicians performing," said Bhaskaram.

Gauging the city-dwellers' response to such events over the last couple of years, Prashant Oliver, musician and theatre-practitioner, said, "People show a lot of interest in evenings that are entirely dedicated to such events. They want to be surprised. Also, performers need that kind of an audience who are open as well as positively-critical of the performances."

Poetry celebrated at the Akademi

HARIPRASAD RADHAKRISHNAN

Chennai, March 21: On Wednesday evening, Tamil poet Mu. Metha read out a couplet titled 'Anitha'. It goes like this:

"Than madhipenn thooki vidum endru ninaithiruppal, thoongi vidum endru ninaithiruppal! (She'd have hoped that her marks would help in her uplift, but would she have thought it'd lay her to rest?)"

The poem is clearly about the dalit girl Anitha, who killed herself over the NEET exam results.

This and many other currently relevant poems were recited at the Sahitya Akademi on the occasion of 'World Poetry Day.' The event also took stock of trends in poetry in various languages especially Tamil and English.

"Prose reaches your mind through our ears, but poetry has the ability to directly touch people's hearts," said Metha.

He also quipped about the occasion. "Today's World Poetry Day. When poets start writing, they cry. When the poems are read, they also make the readers cry."

Eventually, water flows down all our eyes. And finally enough, the next day is World Water Day!"

Dr. A.S. Ilango, Officer in-charge of Sahitya Akademi, Chennai, said that the Tamil literature has been enriched by translations from other languages.

"The poems of Shakespeare, Keats, Schelling and Milton have brought immense joy to Tamil

readers," he said.

Poet and former professor Dr. M. Boopathy also read a number of his English poems at the event.

He recalled the time when Indian writing in English was taking shape. He said: "In the 18th and 19th centuries, Indian writers imitated the styles of English writers from Britain and other parts of the world."

Then, they started building a rich style of their own that was shaped by local culture." From then, India went on to embrace the language.

"English is a non-Indian national language of India," he quoted Rajaji as saying.

A young poet Kavimigul, who also writes haikus, recited a number of death-themed poems including Kallarai, Moongikuthu and Elavu kada.

City painted in vibrant strokes

BHAGYASRI CHAUDHARY

Chennai, March 20: Chennai, March 20: On the shores of the Thiruvanniyur beach, an ordinary eight-year-old boy saw the world through extraordinary eyes. So when Bhavya Desai failed after he pencilled big heads and wicker-thin bodies during a drawing test that year, he did not take it as defeat. He picked up his colours and designs, and followed his father's footsteps to becoming an illustrator.

It is no surprise that Desai, at twenty six, has quit his job at an architecture firm, to pursue his beloved career as a 3D cartoonist.

"I love silently watching people. I draw my inspiration from the roots of Chennai life. My characters are relatable and they portray the everyday scenarios which you and I undergo," he said. "Good sense prevailed in me and I left my job. It was eating up a good eight hours of my creative time each day. This move gave me an opportunity to take up my art seriously," said Desai.

Street hawkers arguing with hagglers, lungi-clad vegetable vendors, and women with plaits garlanded in jasmine were his subjects.

A Gujarati by birth, Desai was born and raised in Chennai. "So I call myself a Chennai paizyan," he quipped.

A cartoonist can in many ways, function as a journalist and a clown, caricaturing constantly the life and times of the pre-



Desai's Mylapore Box is a favourite among customers

[BHAGYASRI C

sent. Desai draws inspiration from the everyday goings-on of Chennaites. Every weekend, he cycles his way through rural pockets near Chennai, noting every strand of information down on his pocket sized yellow notebook, to be illustrated later. As he prefers highlighting the character more than the background, the characters are outlined in bold whereas the rest of the elements are sketched with a finer pen.

Auto-rickshaws honked their way forward. The gold hoops on the ears of the women dangled as they drew rice flour kolums with kaavi borders. Dangerously nailed-in wooden stools in tea stalls sat in front of blackened pots that smoked beneath the moon. This is the microcosm of the city that his art makes larger than life.

His father, Kuntal Desai, an abstract painter for 35 years, was the one to ex-

pose Bhavya to the possibilities of colors and designs.

Although Desai is venturing out to experiment with more subjects and places, the signature characters most popular among his social media followers are those of a lungi-clad yogi with a paunch effortlessly acing different poses, and a black cat with bright yellow eyes almost as big as its head.

The yogi series is sold as a set of six coasters inside a cardboard box with illustrations on all sides called the 'Mylapore Box', along with a 3D fridge magnet and a mug with similar artwork, for Rs 1200. The Mylapore box concept was born out of his admiration towards Indian cartoonist Mario Miranda. "Miranda made me want to feel my art. A painting or sketch is two dimensional; I wanted my creation to be more than that," Desai said.

He also sells postcards, stickers, posters and notebooks with his illustrations. Following requests from Instagram followers, the artist turned his work into physical objects that they could own rather than limiting the art to a digital platform. "Thus I began merchandising my illustrations two months back."

However, he wishes to stack-up on his repository of artwork before taking it further.

"I refrain deliberately from meeting any investors now. For now, I am happy making sketches and telling people's stories through my cartoons," the artist, cuddling his golden-eyed black cat, said.

A medley of arts

Kaushik Sridhar makes films on weekends

AVANISH CHANDRASHEKHARAN

Chennai, March 22: Kaushik Sridhar leads a multi-faceted life. By the weekdays, he is a software engineer at Fidelity Investments. By the weekends, he transforms into an auteur of film - writing, editing, directing and acting in short films. His latest short film, "Medley" has won critical praise, and has been selected for screenings at national and international film festivals like the Cefalu Film Festival.

Sridhar was drawn to the world of film from a young age. "I loved watching films in the theatre as a child. I noticed the response a good film receives from its audience - both I the theatre and through word of mouth. Films must be very powerful to generate such an impact," said the 25-year-old. On his influences he said, "They vary, from Christopher Nolan to Shankar. But in the end, all the good films I have watched influenced me. All the people I've interacted with on films inspired me."

Sridhar first started out by editing the short films of his friends. "I realized that a complete film structured by piecing together small bits of shots and scenes on the editing table." After editing three short films, he felt ready to take on the major task of filming his own stories. "I wanted to tell stories, and by becoming a director, I started gaining control over

several aspects of filmmaking, like the story, the music, the performances etc," he said.

On YouTube, Sridhar started a channel called Experimental Films. With actor Balaji Rajshakar (known for his role in the



Kaushik Sridhar AVANISH

Vijay TV serial 'Dharmayutham' and a bit-part in the Vijay-starrer 'Vettaikaran'), he has made three short films, ranging from thrillers to tributes. In making these films, Sridhar puts in his own money, and shoots during weekends.

"The weekends are the only time I have available for making films. But I manage to make one every quarter of the year."

Inspirations are plenty for the travel-loving Sridhar.

"Music and travel are primary sources of inspiration for my films. If I listen to a song that has profoundly moved me, I am determined to capture the mood created by that song," he said.

His latest film, "Medley" is a marked departure from his previous thrillers. It is a romantic piece set in a café that captures the bits of random people through bits of conversations.

"I want each film of mine to contrast from the other. I want to try different genres, and focus more on making the screenplay good." Sridhar said, adding, "I always improvise with each new film, with a view of improving my current skill set." Ever since its debut on YouTube, it has received favourable notices. "The response from the audience has been fabulous, and the fact that international film festivals want to screen it is very motivating," Sridhar remarked.

At present, Sridhar has three shorts lined up for release - two of them as actor-director, and one as an editor. He has also filmed an appearance for a full-length feature film. However, he has no plans to quit his job. "I plan to go with the flow and see where it takes me," he said. On what drives him to continue his passion, he said, "Audience response, and my desire to learn something new about film."

"Medley" has been selected for screening at the Cefalu film festival

Brew awards city women

DEBOLINA BISWAS

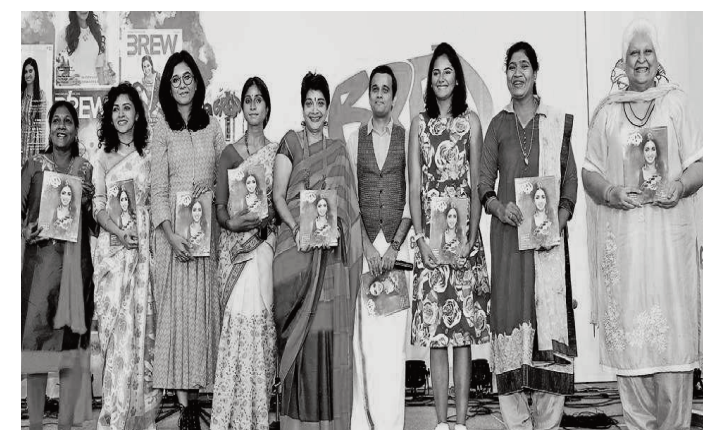
Chennai, March 22: "You pass by these homeless people near the traffic signals, I don't stop until I reunite them with their families," said Inspector A.S Thahira while receiving an award wearing the khaki uniform at the Brew Women's Awards 2018 at Crowne Plaza here on Tuesday.

Chennai-based lifestyle magazine, Brew, conducted the fourth edition of its Women's Awards honouring women across different fields for their achievements and services towards the society. A.S Thahira of the State Crime Records Bureau received an award for her commendable job of reuniting 180 mentally challenged people with their families.

"Sponsors always ask me about the glam quotient of the award function. They ask me which film person is being awarded but I choose women who work without expecting any awards and recognition," said Sameer Bharat Ram, CEO and publisher of the magazine who selects the women to be awarded.

Awards were given to Neerja Mallik, a teacher, social worker and two-time cancer survivor. "I was first detected with breast cancer at the age of 30, I have cycled from Chennai to Pondicherry after that and have also ran up a hill in two hours and twenty minutes. If I can conquer it, so can you," said the 60-year-old awardee who now works with the Apollo Cancer Support Group.

S.Esther Shanthi, first woman to work in a burial ground was awarded for breaking the social norms. "Initially I was questioned for my



Recipients of the awards

work," said Shanthi who is now breaking stereotypes to work in an otherwise male dominated space.

Other awardees were singer Maalavika Sundar; actress and Indian Educational Promoter Y. G. Madhuvanthi; Sherin Bosk, social activist and co-founder of Nakshatra, an NGO that assists rape victims, of red light areas all across India.

She dedicated the award to her children and their parents.

National level cricket player, National Frisbee champion and now an actress, Lakshmi Priyaa Chandramouli said it was her second award as an actress.

Architect by day and vocalist and songwriter in her free time, Shaktisree Gopalan, received an award for her exceptional impact in the independent music scene. She has previously collaborated with composer A. R. Rahman. "Women are more than just mothers, sisters and daughters. We have to all come together and chase our dreams," she said.

The magazine also released their latest issue during the function honouring actress Sridevi. Brew writer Aarti wrote a cover story on Sridevi. Indian band Staccato, who previously played at the London Olympics, performed a tribute to India's first 'female superstar'. "She was the first heroine to become a hero," said Sameer.

"This is a great initiative to celebrate the spirit of women. The highlight is getting to listen to their stories and achievements. It is very motivating," said Robert Waller, U.S. Consulate General who presented one of the awards.

Special guests including Consul Generals from Britain, Belgium and Angola, and art director Thota Dharani, tennis player Vijay Amirthraj, cinematographer PC Sriram, fashion photographer Venkat Ram, presented the various awards.

The magazine conducts two awards every year, one around the International Women's Week and a 'Person of the year' award, conducted at the end of the year.

Pushing boundaries through movement: March Dance 2018

GOWRIS

Chennai, March 22: People should not be bound by the rules and technicalities of dance forms and should instead allow their body to express itself in different ways, according to Antonio Carallo, a choreographer and performer based in Berlin.

"We are not blank pages. We are full of colours which are capable of surprising us," said Carallo, a choreographer and performer based in Berlin, while talking about the possibilities of the human body, to a group of 15 artistes in his movement-based workshop.

The workshop was part of March

Dance, a week-long contemporary dance festival organized by Basement 21, a collective of creative artists, in partnership with Goethe Institut Max Mueller Bhavan, at the Russian Cultural Center on Monday.

"There is no 'one-direction' in dance. There are multiple ways in which your body can express itself," continued Carallo as he guided his students to leave their comfort zones and explore new forms of movement.

The workshop has two components - a movement-based warm-up session and a freestyle session. In the freestyle session, the participants experiment different styles of dance which need not



Krishna, during her performance in the workshop

[GOWRIS

stick to the rhythm or pace of the music.

"I think that the contemporary form

of dance has less to do with movements and technicalities. It is more about

saying things with your body," said the veteran performer who was an integral part of the Pina Bausch Company for 15 years.

According to Carallo, a week-long workshop does not provide enough time to look at specific genres of performance in detail.

"It's more like a collection of experiences. A lot of participants have a background in traditional art forms. So, it's interesting to see what each one of them can contribute on the basis of what they already know," said Carallo who intend to give the participants a glimpse of the possibilities of contemporary dance.

Vikas Rao, a physical theatre practitioner who is one among the participants, said "I felt that this workshop gives a lot of attention to expressions and not just physical movements, which is quite interesting and unique. Other dance workshops concentrate a lot on technicalities and forms."

This festival aims at bringing artists who predominantly concentrate on body-centric performances.

"Dance-theatre is a term which is often mistaken in our city. Our aim, through the festival, is to focus on the theatrical aspect of dance and help the artists explore more on the same front," said Preethi Athreya, a contemporary

dance practitioner and one of the founders of Basement 21.

According to Athreya, the contemporary form has always been an integral part of the city's dance movement from the '60s with the advent of dancer-choreographer Chandralekha and her student Padmini Chettur.

"It has a strong history of development but has been fairly underground. There is a need to revive this art form," said Athreya.

The festival which is scheduled till March 29, includes live performances, workshops and conversations by movement artists across the country like Navtej Singh Johar and Meghna Bharadwaj.