THE WORD

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What it takes to save lives

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Some love V Day, some hate it Page 4

Enough water this summer? Crackdown on APSC

VIVANESH PARTHIBAN

Chennai: Metro Water officials are confident that Chennai will not face any water shortage this summer and say they plan to get additional supply

R Neekakandan, Joint Director, Chennai Metro Water Supply and sewerage Board (CMWSSB) said, "Metro Water was efficient in handling things in 2017 when it was much worse, so there will be no problem this summer."

However other officials pointed out that as opposed to the actual requirement of 830 million litres a day (mld), Metro Water supplied only 550 mld now and this might even further down in summer.

Neelakandan said, "We do have some plans like getting additional water from the Kandeleru reservoir which gets the Krishna water." For the last two years, water from the desalination plant at Kattupalli (Minjur) was helping to fill the gap. Of the 550 mld supplied, 330 mld was from the reservoirs and the remaining from desalination plants and quarries on the outskirts of Chennai mainly in Mangadu,

Sikkarayapuram and Erumaiyur. Neelakandan said that with completion of the third desalination plant in Nemmeli, even the worst summers could be tackled.

"Metro Water has plans to dig 174 new bore wells, install 420 hand pumps, build around 1000 storage tanks and purchase 310 tankers with the recent Rs.120 crore grant from the government," he added. M Kothandapani, a Deputy Area Engineer (DAE) in Alwarpet said that the area engineers had been told to submit area wise problems by March 15.

According to a report in The Hindu, Municipal Administration Minister, S.P Velumani on Wednesday said in the Assembly that Chennai would be supplied 550 mld until December. The water level in the four reservoirs has come down because of poor rainfall. According to the Chennai Metro Water website, Poondi reservoir had 163 Million Cubic Feet (mcft) against the total capacity of 3231 mcft; Cholavaram had 48 mcft against the total capacity 1081 mcft; Puzhal had 663



Water tanks in the Erikarai OMR region. | VIVANESH PARTHIBAN

mcft against the total capacity of Management Index that has said 3300 meft; and Chembarambakkam's storage was 42 mcft against the total capacity of 3645 mcft. But officials remain confident that the 916 mcft of water from the four reservoirs combined with the Cauvery water from the Veeranam tank will comfortably provide water to the city. Nirmal Kumar, EXNORA

President, highlighted NITI Composite Water Aayog's

Accommodation, "Safety of the

residents is our prime concern. It is

expensive to arrange emergency

that Chennai will run out of water by 2020."Chennai is not as worse as Bengaluru but when we go on neglecting the importance of water by constructing buildings in marshy lands and manage water improperly, we may end up in a crisis," Kumar said. He pointed that the groundwater level had increased in 7 out of 15 regions but the average water level had gone down by a metre.

SWAPNAJIT KUNDU

Chennai: Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle or APSC, an independent student body in the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) accused the Intelligence Bureau (IB) of trying to frame its members in the Bhima Koregaon case and charge them under the Unlawful (Prevention) Activities Act (UAPA).

Kaushik, a PhD student from IIT Madras and also a member of APSC, said that the Bureau was trying to link civil rights activist Anand Teltumbde with the organisation and accuse him of funding APSC.

Anand Teltumbde had been recently arrested by Maharashtra police in connection with the Bhima Koregaon incident. In 2018, violence broke out at a gathering, largely of Dalits, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Bhima Goregaon battle in which British troops aided by Mahars (leather workers) defeated the Peshwa regime.

The violence sparked protests all over Maharashtra and several people were arrested and allegedly

labelled as Maoists. "We invited Teltumbde to a talk

about the beef controversy on September, 2015. He has no involvements in our activities," Kaushik said.

Immediately after Teltumbde's arrest, the IB allegedly investigated Professor Ramesh who is one of the founding members of APSC and a member of the teaching faculty in Anna University.

According to an APSC press release, the IB 'threatened' Anna University authorities demanding details about Professor Ramesh who was later arrested.

Professor Ramesh said, "It needs to be seen that how the Anna University authorities react to this matter. These kind of investigations are just to suppress our voices against brahminical patriarchy, and curb the views of Ambedkar and Periyar."

Another student from University of Madras and a member of APSC was allegedly interrogated by some officer of IB.

Kaushik said, "Intelligence officials went to her house in her native village to enquire about her. They questioned her there. Her

family is really concerned about her safety. This kind of random interrogation is scary for any family."

UAPA or Unlawful Activities Prevention Law is largely used against Maoist activists throughout the country. Now the Central government is allegedly using them against Dalit activists also.

Kaushik said, "The tags like 'urban naxals' or 'maoists' are just being used to fabricate cases against us, and to alienate us from the masses. This is also linked with the privatisation of education.

The BJP-RSS government is trying to promote neo-liberalisation on the one hand and hindutva on the other. We, student activists across the country have to resist this agenda."

Banojyotsna Lahiri, a student activist from Jawaharlal Nehru University said, "This is a frightening thing that the Modi government is trying to tag us as terrorists whenever we are addressing people's issues."

With Professor Ramesh being given bail by the Chennai High Court, the APSC is now hoping for some relief.

Legal tussle for women PGS, hostels

SRINJOY DEY

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Chennai: On the reception wall of the Kothai Women's Hostel in Indira Nagar, hangs a framed copy of the license from 2007 - when it became operational. It has not been renewed since.

When the Tamil Nadu Hostels and Homes for Women and Children (Regulation) Act was introduced in 2014, it mandated licensing and registration of private paying guests and hostels. In addition, it also charted out quality standards that institutes had to comply with.

Failure to obtain a license,

"It is unfair to expect us to know when there have been no efforts made to make us aware," says Sujatha S., the warden of the accommodation.

lighting - we don't have the funds One of the most important for it. Maybe in the long term we aspects of the rules laid down are can think about it." standards of safety, making The PG will look to install fire functional CCTV cameras, guards

extinguishers soon. and visitor's registers mandatory According to the Act, the manager of the accommodation Manoharan Vandaiyar, the owner must obtain a certificate of fitness of Pleasant Stav Ladies Hostel, on the prescribed form from a Indira Nagar which does not have Medical officer not below the rank a CCTV camera says, "We have of a Civil Surgeon and verify their security guards 24x7 who take care credentials from the local police.

Poornima T., who has been the of the security here. There have never been any break-ins or manager of Olive Castles PG for

for

Tremor trouble over Bay of Bengal

documents

caretaker of Kongu Paying Guest Kothai Women's Hostel says, "We want better living conditions, so we complain to the warden, but actions are rarely taken."

The Act makes provisions for cancelling hostel licenses in case the Collector is informed that 'the management is being persistently carried on in an unsatisfactory manner or in a manner highly prejudicial to the moral and physical well being of the inmates'. An affordable alternative to

private PGs are the government working women's hostels. There are eight such hostels in Chennai, two of which are located in Adyar, housing about 75 inmates earning

New Metro line unveiled

Two routes connect Central, Airport, Koyambedu

VIDUSHI SAGAR

Chennai: Commuters were offered free rides on the Chennai Metro line starting from the AG DMS station in Teynampet to Washermenpet in North Chennai for three days after it was inaugurated on February 10.

underground stations. With the inauguration of this line, people can travel from the Central Railway be able to use it every day because Station to the Airport on two

trains will be operated every seven minutes. More than seven lakh people were reported to have used the Chennai Metro Rail system since the launch. The special class coach is equipped with an emergency panel for stopping the train, with the manual printed in Braille as well. Travellers were seen taking selfies and photos on

rides, but it's bound to reduce when the tickets have to be bought. The fare is a bit high to compensate for the construction costs. However, we have schemes for the travel cards; for a clubbing of 10, 30 or 60 rides, a discount of 20 per cent is provided." According to him, the traffic on the stretch from Anna Salai to Washermanpet is very congested and the metro line will minimize travel time significantly.

at AG DMS station, said "We got a

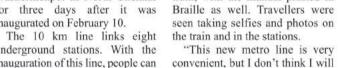
huge crowd because of the free

The metro takes 20 minutes from Central to Saidapet for Rs. 40 while

the 18-b bus ride does the same in

45 minutes for Rs. 17 during the

"The work for the Phase II of the



register or adhere to the rules can cost the business owneres up to two years of imprisonment and a Rs. 50,000 fine. A subsequent offence could further lead to three to five years in jail and a fine of Rs. 1 lac.

burglaries.

for the establishment.

The hostels and paying guests are also required to keep emergency lighting and fire extinguishers in case of emergencies

According to Ganga V. the

Women in Adyar since its inception up to Rs. 25,000.

The Tamil Nadu Government in 2010 says that although most of had invested Rs 121.71 lakhs last the criteria have been met, the registration office did not ask her year. A sum of Rs. 131.90 lakhs the medical verification had also been provided in the 2018-2019 budget estimates for the Sivasri K. (25), an inmate of initiative.

the first one via routes: Poonamallee High Road which will touch the Koyambedu bus terminus and the second via Anna Salai touching Saidapet and Guindy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the section on Sunday through video-conferencing from Tirupu

The fares are Rs. 40 for Normal Class and Rs. 80 for Special Class. The travel time is 21 minutes and

of the price. Rs 40 rupees for one trip is too much," said Raghav K. (19), a 12th class student travelling from Central to Saidapet. Romani S. (29), IT Professional

peak hours from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.. and a resident of Anna Nagar, said "The traffic has been bad lately, metro starting from Madhavaram to and I plan to travel regularly by Kovambedu has begun with soil metro. Although I hope it is not as testing being done and a detailed crowded as this every day. There are men inside the ladies' coach as

well.' Prem Kumar, Station Controller

project report under way," said Mr. Prem. Vijayakumar, JE and Station Controller at Thousand Lights station, said "The metro should attract more people now because of better connectivity and also the various facilities it provides - AC, fixed timings, and more safety." However there were some

drawbacks. The new stations did not have segregated dustbins and no women frisking staff were present. Construction soot was still visible on the Platform Screen doors of the underground stations; these doors are a feature unique to Chennai Metro Rail system.

Another exclusive feature is the emergency stop lunges provided on the middle of the tracks in case of accidents. The lunges will stop a metro travelling on automatic mode. However in case of manual driving, the signal will be conveyed to the operating room first.

below the sea level. Mild tremors were felt by

Chennai: Earthquakes on two successive days, with epicentres in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Islands Region, were reported by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

TANYA KHANDELWAL

While the one on Tuesday morning was felt by people across the city, the quake on Wednesday was not.

According to the IMD, the earthquake on Tuesday was a moderate one with a magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale. The United States Geological Survey put it at 4.9 on the Richter scale. The epicentre was around 600 km people at around 7 a.m. on Tuesday and many took to the social media to report them. Some drew comparisons to the

2004 earthquake (magnitude 9.1 on the Richter scale) off northern Sumatra in the Indian Ocean which unleashed a tsunami.

Huge waves crashed into the southeastern coast of India, claiming over 8,000 lives in Tamil Nadu alone. As many as 131 people, mostly fishermen and their children and a few early morning walkers on the Marina, were swept away to their death.

Talking about Tuesday's quake, S Balachandran, a resident of off the Chennai coast and 10 km Kotturpuram, said "I woke up to

the slight tremors this morning at around 7. My bed was shaking lightly. R K Sangeetha, a resident of Adyar, said, "I didn't know there

was an earthquake this morning till I read posts on Facebook." "I felt a light tremor as I was setting up for work," said Prakash

(21), a migrant labourer from Bihar who works at a juice shop in Adyar. He said he has never experienced an earthquake before so he couldn't really say for sure. R Shravanti, an IT professional from Hyderabad, mentioned that she had felt an earthquake a few years back while she was in New Delhi for a seminar and the tremor on Tuesday morning reminded her of that day.

The quake on Wednesday, with a magnitude of 4.5 on the Richter scale, took place at around 1.50 a.m. The epicentre was around 1,200 km off the coast of Chennai and at a depth of 10 km, according to a report by The Hindu. The earthquakes posed no threat to Tamil Nadu, IMD officials and geology experts were quoted as saying by The Hindu.

According to the IMD, an earthquake of such magnitude is common in the Andaman region and such low-intensity quakes occur frequently. On the list of seismic zones put up by the Ministry of Earth Science, Chennai is categorised under Zone III which is a moderate risk zone.



Over 7.3 lakh passengers travelled for free in the newly inaugurated metro. | CHENNAI METRO RAIL OFFICIAL

Open defecation still the norm in unSwachh Urur-Olcott Kuppam



The community toilets of Urur-Olcott Kuppam lack sanitation and proper drainage facilities. | SNEHA KANCHAN

SNEHA KANCHAN

Chennai: Selvi's thatched-roof house in Besant Nagar's Urur-Olcott Kuppam is barely 50 metres from the community toilet but she rarely uses it. She often goes to the empty space right behind the toilet. So do most of the people in the Kuppam. "What's the point of having

toilets when there is no proper water supply or sanitation? They rarely come to clean it. It's shameful but what else can we do?" rued Selvi. While the men went to the

beach, the women avoided straying too far from their homes and stick to their spots, she added.

Urur- Olcott Kuppam, a fishing hamlet with about 3000 residents located in the southern part of Chennai, has two sets of 10 toilets each on the eastern and western end.

The third one was demolished last year, said K. Saravanan, Treasurer, Urur-Olcott Kuppam Fisher Co-operative Society.

While the western part of the village has an underground drainage network, the eastern part, home to about 2,000 residents, lacks adequate drainage facilities.

"The toilets don't have proper drainage connection, just septic tanks that are cleared once a year.

They haven't been regular even with that," said Saravanan. He added that Metrowater had only recently started laying down drainage pipes in the region.

With taps running dry, the dilapidated toilets with broken garbage-strewn doors and surroundings looked like they have seen better days.

Saravanan wrote an official letter to the Corporation in May 2018 bringing up the maintenance issues. The Corporation wasn't involved and the directly contractors were difficult to catch hold of, he added.

According to a survey conducted by the Urban Design Collective,

Madras Office of Architects and Designers, Coastal Resource Centre and Urur-Olcott Kuppam Fisher Co-operative Society, 47 per cent of the households in the eastern part lack individual toilets but only 20 per cent of them use the community toilet. About 30 per cent of the population in this part still practisced open defecation.

Going by the community toilet specifications under the Swachh Bharat Mission, there should be one community toilet seat per 25 women and per 35 men respectively. Currently the village has five functional toilet seats each for men and women as against the ideal number - 16 for men and 19 for women going by the village's population, said the survey. Even in the western end of the village, a slightly better-off section near Bajanai Kovil Street, the community toilet is rarely used.

"Very less few people use it here as most of us have toilets inside the house. Even the ones who don't have it can't use it because of lack of water," said Jayapriya, a resident.

Right next to this community toilet, the Corporation has put up four bio-toilets which, again, are rarely used. "It is a waste of government and public funds because the toilets re not serving their purpose," said Saravanan.

CHENNAI February 15, 2019

CITYSCAPE

THE WORD

Stray cattle crowd shelter Long hours, less pay

30 cattle have been sent to the Blue Cross' shelter so far this year

SNEHA KANCHAN

Chennai: The Greater Chennai Corporation has inadequate space to house the strav cattle that have been rounded up and were yet to be released because the owners have failed to pay the penalty.

"The unclaimed cattle, which is about 10 per cent of the impounded cows, are sent to Blue Cross because of the lack of space and the number of cattle impounded every day," said Dr. J Kamal Hussain, Chief Veterinary Officer, Greater Chennai Corporation

The Corporation currently has two cattle depots to accommodate the impounded stray cattle, one in Perambur and the other one in Pudupet.

These facilities can hold up to 50 heads of cattle each. The Corporation has no immediate plans of setting up another depot.

The Corporation has sent about 30 heads of stray cattle to the Blue Cross of India shed so far this year, said S. Vinod Kumaar, general manager-administration, Blue Cross of India, here on February 12

The 'Corporation cattle' are identified with a yellow mark on their ears, are sent to the animal welfare charity's shelter.

"They just get them here and leave. No money is provided for the upkeep. Neither the Corporation, not the owner comes back for them," said Kumaar.

About 90 per cent of such stray cows have plastic in their stomach after feeding on the trash in the bins

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What it takes to

save lives

A closer look at the activities of

the city's blood banks



With nowhere to go, stray 'Corporation' cows flood Blue Cross' sheds

along the roads. Unless a rumenotomy surgery is performed, it accumulates over time and ends up forming a ball in their stomach, weighing up to 45 kg in some cases

"Once our doctors are done performing the surgery here, we send them to gowshalas in Sirkazhi and Mayavaram because of space constraints here. They (Corporation) keep sending more cattle," said Kumaar.

Over the past five years, the Corporation has stepped up its efforts to crack down on the stray cattle menace. It has deployed 15 cattle-catching vehicles for the 15 zones.

Fodder, basic emergency medical care and water are provided at the depots till the Hussain

Hussain

said that the Corporation had an official list of cattle owners and Zonal Health officers, Sanitary inspectors and Sanitary officers conducted meetings with them once in three months to spread awareness.

Hinting at the loopholes in the implementation of the measures, Kumar said, "It's a good thing that the fine is in place but the lack of effectiveness is evident on the streets."

The owner's failure to provide food, shelter and protection is a punishable offence under Section 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. Negligence and lack of responsibility on the part of the owners needed to be looked into in addition to the fine, he added.

SRAVANI NELLORE

Chennai: Standing near the stairs to the four platforms, A. Vatsala, a housekeeping staff at Alandur Metro station, guides every passenger to the platform without getting irritated by the constant flow of questions from clueless passengers

"I am given the extra load to guide the passengers on these three days, as there were not enough staff to manage the larger crowd," she says.

A swarm of passengers took the rides on Wednesday as free rides were being offered by the Chennai Metro Rail Limited on the occasion of the inauguration of the new line linking AG-DMS station on Anna Salai to Washermanpet station.

"Usually, I work for eight hours, from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. It gets 11 when I reach home in Medavakkam," says Vatsala, a mother of two.

"Sometimes, I have to stay longer hours. I don't demand more money, but respect is what I ask for," complains 49-year-old Vatsala who is constantly taunted by the authorities and disrespected by the public

This is the everyday picture here, says Sharmita, a ticket seller here. "All employees here complain of low salaries, but the female housekeeping staff have to put up with insults too," she adds.

Talking about her problems, she says, "As per new timings, all the female ticket sellers work in the morning shifts, from 6 a.m. to 2.p.m. The changes were made after some concerns were raised over their safety, when they were



First all-women run metro, Shenoy Nagar | METRO RAIL NEWS

working in the second shifts from 2 p.m. to 12 a.m.'

"But, as one problem ended, the other started. Ticket sellers working on the first shift are burdened with double the work that we are supposed to do, as employees on second shift don't often show up. Our shift gets extended on those days, but our salaries remain at Rs.9500.

The stipulated salary for the ticket sellers is Rs.11,000, but for the past few months, they are being given only Rs.9500.

Another female ticket seller at Shenoy Nagar starts at around 5 a.m. from Valasaravakkam, which is 10 km away, to reach the station on time. She thinks working in the morning shift now, despite the extra work, is better than staying late nights

"Our colleagues, both men and women, have faced harassments at nights, especially near the Kovambedu market, by transgenders."

While the ticket sellers complain of longer work hours, the female a response from them.'

Station Controllers complain of odd timings. Their first shift starts at 4.a.m. Despite the odd timings, there is no cab facility for them.

A male Station Controller says that the new timings were a form of revenge taken by the Chennai Metro Rail Limited authorities. "Earlier, all the station controllers had protested against CMRL for giving away our jobs to contractors, who were being directly recruited without appearing for any exams. There is no need to report at 4 a.m. All the work starts at 6 am."

According to him, some women employees had earlier approached the State Women's Commission complaining about unsafe work culture.

When asked about this, an official from State Women's Commission said, "A group of 23 women employees had signed a petition three weeks back, but it is not us who will oversee matters concerning the work. The petition was sent to the Labour Commissioner and we are awaiting

Water woes begin ahead of summer

VIVANESH PARTHIBAN

Chennai: Many areas like T.Nagar, West Mambalam, Thousand Lights, Alwarpet and Sholinganallur are already facing water shortage which could get worse when the summer peaks

Balaiya (63), a resident of T.Nagar (Crescent Park Street) said, "Metro Water supply is only on alternate days and the quantity is decreasing day by day. Many borewells in the area especially near Natesan Park

number of tankers from Metro Water." Ravi also said, "There are 320 houses in the apartment complex and only half have been sold because many fear that Chennai would go dry in coming years.'

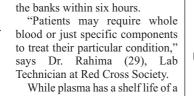
In contrast, Vignesh Kumar who stays in Erikarai in Sholinganallur said, "This whole street in Gandhi Nagar has only one hand pump and that too malfunctions once a month."

Jaya Rani, also a resident of



Chennai: The need and benefits of blood donation should be included in the curriculum of primary schools, according to V. Chandrasekaran, Public Relations Officer at the Lions Blood Bank, an year, red cells last 42 days, whole

24 hours.



owner claims the animal. A fine is levied on the cattle owners and the cattle are released only after they sign an affidavit.

Last year, the fine amount was hiked from Rs. 1,550 to Rs. 10,750 in a bid to deter the cattle owners. The amount goes up by Rs. 250 for each day after three days of the cattle being impounded.

"We've definitely seen a dip in the number of cattle being impounded of late. We'll get a clear picture next month," said Dr.

According to the Corporation data, the number of cattle impounded from April 2018 to January 2019 stood at 558 as against 1,667 from April 2017 to March 2018. The fine collected last year touched Rs. 26,99,200.

| SHARMITA KAR

organization credited with aiding over 30,000 patients annually.

TULIKA CHATURVEDI

"It can take up to two weeks to organize a blood donation drive of hundred donors," says Chandrasekaran. "In addition to our mobile bus, we need at least two doctors, two lab technicians, and six cots on the site," he adds.

Such drives are usually hosted

adds. The hospitals not finding a

The TN branch of the Red Cross Society started in 1920 | TULIKA CHATURVEDI

educational institutions. bv churches, and corporate offices, and it is necessary to ensure that the area is hygienic and wellventilated, he adds.

S. Namachivayam, Admissions Officer at the Red Cross Society, says, "We conduct as many blood drives as possible to source 100 per cent voluntary donors."

Replacement donation, the restoration of blood by a relative or friend of the patient requiring the transfusion, is frowned upon in the community. "It adds emotional distress to a family that is already facing difficult times," he adds.

Once the voluntary donors' blood is screened for the five basic infections of Hepatitis B, HIV, HCV, Syphilis, and Malaria, they are asked the number of bags they are willing to donate. Each bag has a capacity of 350 ml.

The collected blood is moved to

purpose for the components either. hand it over to the biomedical waste department, resulting in the units ultimately being wasted.

Switching to a need-based donation mechanism helps manage the wastage, but creates trouble other times.

"We have an extensive network of beneficiary hospitals who notify us a week before the scheduled surgeries of the patients requiring blood, and only then do we reach out to our donors," says Chandrasekeran.

"But the summer months are a period of drought. A huge percentage of the donors are students and corporate workers from other cities who leave during the vacations.

It is tougher to manage open camps during the monsoon as the chances of contracting seasonal infections are higher," he adds.

blood for 35 days, platelets for five days, and white blood cells for only SONAM CHOKI

"As per the organization's Chennai: A Chennai-based waste policy, we are required to donate all management company called excess usable components to Kabadiwalla Connect has launched government hospitals at the end of mobile app-based smart trash cans individual expiration periods," she (urbin) to motivate residents to come forward and dispose of plastic bottles for recycling.

> Kabadiwalla Connect helps leverage a city's existing waste infrastructure in the collection and processing of post-consumer waste. This team came up with the sensor based dustbin mainly to overcome the waste issue in the city. Siddharth Hande, Managing

> Director of Kabadiwalla Connect said, "Our aim is to ensure that no plastic ends up in oceans and landfills by making recycling fun, simple and effortless for the residents of the city. Our target is to ensure all households in Chennai recycle their plastic waste by the year 2020."

The urbin has an ultrasonic sensor which checks the level of garbage filled in the dustbin and sends an alert to the municipal web

server once the bin is filled. Ashok Kumar, a resident of Nugambakkam, said, "The idea is fantastic and the small Urbin is playing a huge role in waste management with its smartness and uniqueness.'

Pramjit, one of the team members said, "With the use of Urbin we have collected 335 kg of plastic waste in January alone.'

So far 30 Urbins have been deployed in Kilpauk, Mylapore, Besant Nagar and Nugambakkam areas

Dr. Sherrie Devile, who is with the Centre for Environmental Studies, said, "We have two urbins in our campus placed by the company and we are very much glad to work together as it is a solution to waste management.'

There is a mobile application called Recykle, which can keep track of the plastic waste dumped by each individual by scanning the code on the Urbin and award credits. This made the students on the campus contribute more plastic bottles, she added.

Ann Anra, a student at Women's Christian College here, said, "I got a credit of Rs 200 from the company for collecting maximum number of plastic cans in the bin."



are drying up". Ramani (56), a resident of West Mambalam (Reddy Kuppam Road) said, "Normally people start buying water from private tankers only in month of March but this year the residents have started booking in mid-February itself." Some residents are even thinking of moving out for the summer.

A. Raja, a shop owner in Thousand Lights, said, "We are used to this. In May, I go and stay with my son in Hyderabad which is better in water management than Chennai". Thaheera Banu, a resident of Ghulam Abbas Ali Khan Street in the same area, said, "Around the vear we are suffering from water shortage; but with the bore wells drying up, it will be a bad summer." The situation in the southern parts

of the city is no different. Ravi Prasanth (35), a resident of Sholinganallur said, "We are not facing any dip in water supply till now and we are booking the same

"Last year Erikarai, said, CMWSSB made arrangements properly by placing two additional water tanks which were filled up once a week so we don't go dry". P.Raghavan, a resident of Alwarpet said, "there is a huge fuss in apartment associations after drying up of bore wells because no one here wants to share the cost in deepening the well as many are tenants who stay in rented apartments and owners are in

foreign countries.' Residents of North Madras have a different complaint. Saravana Kumar, a resident of Tiruvottiyur, said, "We don't face water shortage right now but the water supplied has a filthy smell here."

Saraswathi who owns a tea stall near the Housing Board colony in New Washermenpet said,"2017 was the worst summer when we faced shortage in mid January itself but now we are supplied sufficient water on alternate days."

Adoption preferences form patterns in Chennai

SOHEIB AHSAN

Chennai: Adoption rates for girls have increased in comparison to that of boys throughout the country, but the same cannot be said for Chennai, according to a recent report released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

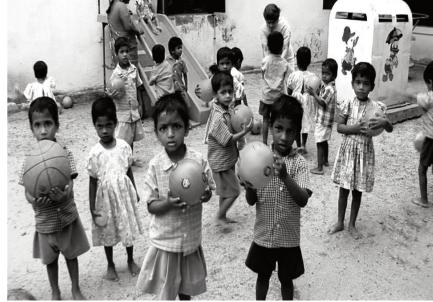
Orphanages here say there are certain preferences of parents from different backgrounds that they have learned to expect. The Christ Faith Home for Children is an orphanage which is visited by couples every few months looking for a child to adopt. Jeyasingh Methusola runs a background check on all the couples coming here. She says that couples from well off backgrounds as well as middle classes usually prefer a daughter. In most cases they come to the orphanage because of problems in conceiving. On the other hand couples who are less well off usually come looking for a

Kalpakam Narayanan of the Bala Mandir Kamaraj trust says that parents who have a

son come looking for a girl child to adopt and vice versa. In rare cases, the orphanage is visited by parents with two children looking to adopt a child.

In most orphanages, couples prefer a child who is between 4 and 10 years old. Children of these age groups are often reluctant to leave at first as they feel nervous about shifting into a completely new lifestyle. Orphanages in most cases also run a school for the orphans as well as children from economically backward families in the region. Children, even after being adopted, are still sent to the orphanage's school to make the transition from the orphanage to being adopted easier.

The gender of children being adopted therefore depends on the background of the parents. Out of ten couples, only one couple has preferences that go against the expected preferences on the basis of their background or existing child. The orphanages claim that none of their adoptions have faced issues due to any chronic diseases that the child is suffering from.



Set up in 1949, the Bala Mandir Kamaraj trust houses 300 orphans ranging from infants to 18-year-olds

| BALA MANDIR KAMARAJ TRUST

CHENNAI February 15, 2019

THE WORD

Skill-based education is the pathway forward

CITYSCAPE

The panel discussion on education infrastructure and research investment brings skill acquisition on the forefront

SRINJOY DEY

CHENNAI: Students need to pick up more skills than just acquire knowledge and practical. skill-based learning was the future of the education industry, according to academics and officials.

"In the current scenario, there is more emphasis given on knowledge acquisition, while what is really required are students to be skilled," said Prof. E. Suresh Kumar, Vice Chancellor, English and Foreign Languages University at a panel discussion on 'Are we investing enough in education infrastructure and research?'

The discussion was part Think

New Indian Express here.

The industries are moving towards 'Industry 4.0' - an A.I. driven sector which heavily relies on the workers being technically adept

Shekhar C. Mande, Director General, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said "Lack of investment in research and development on the part of the government, and especially the industries, have slowed down growth.

According to Dinesh Singh, former Vice Chancellor of the Delhi University, infrastructural development was only an "aid" that enhan-

EduConclave organized by The ced the quality of education.

"Skill and knowledge are two sides of the same coin. We must seek to achieve a balance between them," he said. To achieve this, he emphasized the need for a "transdiciplinary" curriculum which enabled the students to explore divergent branches of knowledge and put them to practical use. Quoting examples of Newton,

Einstein, C.V. Raman and Mendel, Singh highlighted the commonality of "ordinary lives" that the inventors led - reinstating that skills don't necessarily need to be acquired within a formal setup.

Prabhat Jain, Director of the Pathways World Schools, said



"Most learning takes place in the informal, not the formal spaces. The individual is connected with the (universal) reality around him therefore, it is futile for us to learn

in silos. One must give importance to community learning.

The current form of learning is a colonial hangover according to Thirumurugan Gandhi, Activist and campaigner. "Where education is supposed to liberate people, the present set up is like Manu Shastra (Scriptures of Manu), where only those who are from higher classes and castes are able to access it," he said.

The 1964 Kothari commission's recommendation of spending at least 6% of the country's GDP on education seems a distant possibility, owing to the current spending of about 2.4 % according to the 2017-18 Economic Survey report.

"It has been 60 years since Right to Education was introduced, but it has failed to serve its purpose," Gandhi said. Initiatives like the National Policy of Education and Sarva Shiksha Abhyan have also not fulfilled their potential.

Gandhi said the influx of private companies in education had made the sector a "non-inclusive, profitcentric industry."

Kumar, however, claimed that educational schemes were just "temporary solutions" which overlooked the larger issues. He also said that coaching had replaced teaching, owing to the lack of commitment on the part of teachers. In December 2016, Prakash Javadekar, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, said in Lok Sabha that 17.51% and 14.78% posts for government teachers were vacant in the elementary and secondary level respectively.

The interim budget presented this month stated that Rs. 93,848 crore - 3.3 % of the total budget expenditure was to be spent on education. However, the allocation for Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has had a Rs. 650 crore reduction this year. The actual spend by HEFA last year was just Rs 250 crore.

The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Debashis Chatterjee, Director of IIM Kozhikode.

Swamy sings Hindutva praises amidst applause

SWAPNAJIT KUNDU

CHENNAI: All Indians have the same DNA and there is only one race in the country, BJP leader Subramanian Swamy at the ThinkEdu conclave 2019, organised by The New Indian Express Group on February 13 and 14.

Subramanian Swamy who spoke at the session titled 'Are we producing hyper nationalists or pseudo- secularists' made several controversial statements, drawing a loud response from the audience.

Known for his staunch Hindutva leanings, Swamy said former President Pranab Mukherjee, who spoke the previous day, was wrong when he said that India was a country of different races.

According to Swamy, there is only one race in this country and everyone in this country have the same DNA. He challenged every doubter to prove him wrong, much to the amusement of the audience.

Swamy endorsed the "superior status" of Sanskrit among all the Indian languages. Recalling an interaction with the late DMK leader M Karunanidhi, He said, "Karunanidhi used to say that Tamil is a separate language. I once asked him then why he had a Sanskrit name instead of a Tamil name.'

"The term 'Dravidian' was coined by Adi Shankara. Sanskrit is much older than the Tamil language, and should be considered the source of all Indian languages," he added.

On the Babri Masjid issue, Swamy said "People have said that a hospital can be built instead of a Mandir or Masjid. Yes, build the hospital, but elsewhere. That place belongs to Lord Ram. The Archaeological Survey of India found evidence that there was a Vishnu temple in that place before the Mughal emperor Babur destroyed it. The Hindus need to get what is rightfully theirs

Swamy said he was proud to state that the Hindu community was seeking help from the law and not using arms, unlike as in a country like Turkey where churches were destroyed in order to create mosques.

Referring to Swami's call that India should be called Hindustan, Prabhu Chawla, Editorial Director of The New Indian Express questioned how a country could have two names, a practice not found elsewhere.

Swamy responded by giving the example of China. According to Wikipedia, the word "China" has been used in English since the 16th century. It is not a word used by the Chinese themselves. The official name is the People's Republic of China which in Chinese is Zhōnghuá Rénmín Gònghéguó. The shorter form is China or Zhongguó

Swamy said that the increasing number of pseudosecularists was a threat to the country. For the development of India, the number of Nationalists should increase and only the Ramjanmabhoomi would be able to produce more real 'Bharatiya', a term he used as an alternative for 'Indian'.



The ThinkEDU Conclave was held on 13 and 14 February in Rajendra Hall, ITC Grand Chola, Chennai

Focus on improving education The panel weighs in on public-private partnership in the sector

TANYA KHANDELWAL

CHENNAI: The State offers scale, putting in the hardware while the private sector puts in the knowhow that is the software, both of which are essential to have a winning model in the education system, according to Ashok Kamath, Chairman, Akshara Foundation.

from investing money where returns are not guaranteed. He suggested development of an app that ranked and rated skill training institutes, thereby functioning like a feedback instrument.

T. V. Mohandas Pai, Chairman, Manipal Global Education, pointed out that the number of children entering schools was much higher

education, citing the example of Tamil Nadu's progress in the field owing to its policies in favour of the underprivileged classes as opposed to West Bengal which had been losing out on its student population over the years.

"There is a foundational learning issue," said Kamath who was very much in favour of the idea of a pu-

schools improve their management.

FICCI, asked how many students in

the hall had joined college without

the aim of getting a job and only

five or six students raised their

Dilip Chenoy, Secretary Genaral,

hands. He believed that imparting skills to students was as important as educating them since the skills were good employable traits necessary to grab employment opportunities.

However, Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director, IIT Madras, had a slightly different opinion on the subject. "I don't think there's a simple link between quality and public or priblic private partnership model. He used the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan vate education," he said. "There are public schools which scheme as an example, to explain how it had provided better access are as good as private ones and private schools which are as bad as to schools but hadn't been equally successful in ensuring quality public ones," he added. However, schooling. The private sector was he did agree that imparting skills to good at management of schools, he students was an important factor. said, and should help public



Proposed site for Indian-based Neutrino Obervatory at Theni district

INO OFFICIAL WEB

INO hopes for SC approval

SRUTHI V.

CHENNAI: The Neutrino Observatory (INO), to be set up in Theni district, continues to wait for approval after an appeal was filed against the project by an environmental activist G. Sundarrajan in the Supreme Court. "If we had started the construction by 2011 which would take five years for completion, then, we would have been the first in the world to do this research but now there are three other similar projects around the world which are being built already," said Dr. D. Indumathi, a particle physicist at the Indian Institute of Mathematical Sciences (IMSc) in Chennai and the out-reach co-ordinator of the proposed INO.

"There is still a narrow window to start the project, even though we won't be the first to do it. The main issue is to get through all these clearances," she added. MDMK (Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) General Secretary, Vaiko first filed a case in the Madurai branch of the Madras High Court against the INO.

The High Court said the Tamil **Nadu Pollution Control Board** (TNPCB) nod was enough to start the project. G. Sundarrajan of Poovulagin Nanbargal, an NGO filed a case in the southern branch of the National Green Tribunal (NGT). It stayed the project until clearance was obtained from the National Board for Wildlife. Sundarrajan filed a case against NGT decision in the Supreme Court insisting that the project should be scrapped. A financial support of Rs.1500 crores was provided by the Central Government in 2015. After the financial sanction, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) was approached with the surface facility drawings to obtain its clearance. At that time, there was no TNPCB office in Theni and the case was dealt with by the one in Madurai. Within a week of getting the finan-

cial sanction, Vaiko filed a petition alleging that the INO was a 'secret project'. "There was a lot of discontinuity

when a TNPCB office came up in Theni which didn't have any previous account of the project. This

adversely affected the case," said

Dr. Indu. Sundarrajan, filed a case against the project in the National Green Tribunal on March 2015. The state asked for clearance from the Wildlife Board as the proposed site is near the Mathiketta national park. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was done by the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatti, but the absence of accreditation of the institute led to the rejection of the assessment Dr. Indu said, "Many assume it to be vertical tunnel but it is a horizontal. Last year in July one round of outreach was done in which school students participated. A Research & Development centre of INO, IICHEP (Inter Institutional Centre for High Energy Physics) is set up at Madurai which has 85 tonne prototype equipment and an exact replica of the project." "People say that this magnetic field produced can affect the brain and heart but this prototype proves that there is no such thing as the magnetic field is completely confined in the instrument," said Dr. Indu.

This was the general sentiment that ran throughout the panel discussion on the topic- 'Is the Public-Private Relationship Actually Skilling India or Killing Education' as part of the ThinkEdu Conclave 2019 organised by The New Indian Express Group here on February 13.

Parth Shah, Founder and President of the Centre for Civil Society, said there was lack of quality assurance in training institutes which posed a huge challenge in the field of skilling, discouraging trainees

than the students who made it through to colleges and universities

"The quality of education needs to be improved and school children need to be taught how to become problem solvers," he added. His emphasis was on the need to bridge the gap between the skill set taught as part of the school and college curriculum and the ones considered employable skills at the industry level.

Pai added that the political system played an important role in

Spotlight on unsung women scientists

SRUTHI V.

CHENNAI: The work done by the unsung women of science in India was acknowledged on the UN International Day for Girls and Women in Science on February 11 at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences here.

Journalist Nanditha Jayaraj and her colleague Aashima went around laboratories all over India looking for women who had done pioneering work in the field of science.

Jayaraj and Aashima then brought out the interesting research work of these women in their online magazine, The Life of Science.

"We always imagine a male scientist when asked about scientific research. Women are hardly of heard in this field," said Jayaraj.

"The ones who are recognized are often from the elite groups. So we went in search of the unheard scientists," Jayaraj added.

Among the women scientists mentioned at the event was Rosy Mandal, a biologist whose work is focussed on DNA analysis for the early detection of head and neck cancer.

This cancer is primarily caused due to tobacco use especially in paan. She comes from Assam where paan is offered to guests.

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The incidence of cancer in this region is 33 percent.

Sanju Nanda, Kavita Vemura and Surva Harikrishnan were the others.

Sanju Nanda sets the guidelines to be checked before cosmetic products are imported. She studies how these products penetrate the skin.

Kavita Vemura is a Cognitive Neuroscientist who works on alternative serious gaming for people recovering from accidents and stroke instead of physiotherapy. Vemura's lab focusses on creating new

video games which indirectly makes the patients move the specific body part which is in need of physiotherapy.

She also makes people watch emotional movies and studies the changes that happen in their brain at that time using fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging).

Surya Harikrishnan is an Archaeophotonicist who uses archaeological techniques to check whether a painting or any art work is fake or genuine.

Laser technology is used in this process.

To make the session interactive, Javaraj gave a picture presentation of these research works and asked volunteers from the crowd to make a choice.

The works that were chosen by the most number of people were described in detail.

Ramamurthy suggested that a strong apprenticeship based model of skilling programme, with proper accreditation and certification needed to be in place. Something like this would especially help in the field of engineering, he added.

Panelists debate history and mythology, point to lack of readership today

SOHEIB AHSAN

CHENNAI: The term 'Indian Epics' was wrong as it suggested that the Ramayana and Mahabharata were mythical stories, author Bibek Debroy told a panel discussion at the ThinkEdu Conclave.

Such stories should be referred to as 'Itihaasa' (history) to make children aware that all this had happened in the past, he added.

Debroy and Amish Tripathi were the key speakers at the discussion on the Indian epics and whether they should be a part of education system.

Debroy is reputed for being only one of three people to have translated the unabridged version of the Mahabharata.

Debroy is also known for translating the Gita, Vedas and the Valmiki Ramayana. Amish Tripathi is renowned for his novels based on characters from the Ramayana and the Vedas.

Debroy talked about the lack of knowledge of such stories among the vounger generation.

Debroy said, "There is a vacuum as the younger generation does not read these stories and if they do, they only read the English translations."

Tripathi said there were multiple accounts of ancient India as it was a decentralized culture.

Tripathi added that because of this the emphasis should be on learning morals from the stories instead of fighting over which version was true.

He also claimed that the ancient culture was an unrecognized ally for fighting all kinds of contemporary issues and could prove to be useful in the fight for the rights of women or the LGBT community.

"The education system disconnects us from the roots and reality of our country and tries to turn us into Europeans," he said

THE WORD

CITYSCAPE

CHENNAI February 15, 2019

Minting cash this V-day

Cupid's not the only one busy in this season of romance and love

ANUSHKA DEEPAK

CHENNAI: Florists, bakeries, jewellers, restaurants and other businesses had a busy week meeting orders for Valentine's Day

"Two to three weeks before, we started getting hit with phone calls for orders," said the owner of Kreative Chocolates, T Nagar. "The closer we got to the day; the phone was ringing off the hook.' Chocolates aren't the only ones that are timeless favourites. Flowers, especially red roses, are sought after. "Though, sales of other flowers such as carnations and orchids were on the rise, red roses remained much in demand,' said Mintu Maity, the owner of Laxmi Florist, T Nagar.

The price of the flowers and chocolates soared for the last minute planners.

"On regular days, we sell a red rose for Rs 10. However, in this season we sold one flower for Rs 20 and on the day we charged Rs



Roses are lovers favourite on V-day | JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

season

40 for each flower," he added. Maity said that the business was always difficult to gauge as some suitors waited until the last minute to order flowers. "We cannot keep flowers in stocks unlike chocolates or other gift items. These last minute buyers give us a hard time when they come with demands for rare flowers. This season is the busiest time of the year for us."

The trends seem to have changed this year with people

"People are eyeing the do-ityourself and customised gifts than going for the regular photo frames or diaries," he added. The food business too got a

boost this year. The online food delivery app Swiggy offered special coupons and 50 per cent discount on food and desserts for the entire Valentine's week. There were queues outside some restaurants, cafes and bakeries.

"Teddy bears were out of fashion, We sold more glitter pens

ribbons and stickers this year than

cards or other gifts and soft toys."

"We had to make people wait for more than two hours this week as a lot of couples came on dinner dates. We had thrice the number of walk-ins that we usually see in an entire year. Thanks to Valentine's day at least this way we are able to get money out of people's wallets," said Infantro John, Manager of Mamagoto, a pan-asian restaurant at Phoenix Market City, Velachery, where special offer was on for couples.

Some love it, some hate it

(60), residents of Kodambakkam

said, "We eloped and got married.

Even now we celebrate Valentine's

Day. Even if it is a western concept

adapting to new things is not wrong

Some young couples seemed the

"We love each other but we

when it comes to showing love."

least interested in the celebration.

don't feel that there is a need to ce-

lebrate a day dedicated to love. We

find Valentine's day to be over

"Western concept detrimental to Indian heritage"

ANUSHKA DEEPAK

CHENNAI: The possibility of being harassed by moral police and right wing groups have not deterred couples from displaying their affection for their partner.

Last year, an organisation called the Bharat Hindu Front conducted the "marriage" of a dog and a donkey in protest against Valentine's Day.

"We celebrate Valentine's week as a way to express our love. We don't intend to break any societal norms. We just expect the society to understand our emotions," said Rohini S and Shanto Das, a couple working at an IT park in Chennai.

Chennai being the land of rich cultural heritage has mixed opinion about Valentine's Day.

"Though both my children had love marriage, I still don't approve of this concept of celebrating a day of love. Seeing couples doing indecent acts in public places doesn't defined love," said Geetha Rajan, a 65-year-old retired bank manager.



Activists burn valentine's day greeting cards | NEWS 18.COM

However there are some elderly rated," said Alfred (27) and couples still celebrating the day. Divya(25). G Anand (70) and G Sujatha,

The activists of Bajrang Dal have claimed that they were not against love; they were against the commercialization of love by companies for profit making.

According to a report by The News Minute, Subash Chandra, the State Convener for Bajrang Dal in Telangana said, "Pubs and malls give offers to attract couples. They spoil our culture. In the name of selling goods, they created this day to mint money," he added.

mafia causes a lot of destruction to

Crocodile Bank runs the 'Gharial

Ecology project' where Gharials are

tagged with radio telemetry devices

and observed. Fishermen are edu-

cated on wildlife tourism and are

even encouraged to help with the

these Gharials before now help us tag them. There is a huge change in

perception and now they are aware

of the importance of these crocodi-

les in the ecological system they

Another threatened species that

is safe at the Crocodile Bank is the

Siamese Crocodile. These are often

mated with Saltwater crocodiles

and the hybrid breed is grown for

their skin. "Saltwater crocodiles

grow to huge sizes in a short

amount of time and the Siamese

have great skin," says Arul.

"The fishermen that used to kill

Thus, Arul explains, the Madras

their natural habitat.'

project.

fish in," he says.



Students performing a play on domestic violence | TULIKA

Youth endorses social change

TULIKA CHATURVEDI

CHENNAI: Child marriages continue to be rampant in Tamil Nadu despite a law fixing 18 years as the minimum age for girls getting married.

"About 85,000 child marriages Program, said "Besides the take place every year in Tamil Nadu alone, and yet not more than familial issues that arise due to 55 cases are reported," said Job child marriages, the improper Zachariah, Chief of the Tamil Nadu and Kerala branch offices of causes problems." added that UNICEF India. underage boys involved in

Despite being a primary reason

A night out with muggers, dragons Daily night safari for over 2000 animals at the Madras Crocodile Bank

VIDUSHI SAGAR

opting for jewellery a lot.

Jewellers said that they earned

twice the amount this Valentine's

Thangam Raju, Manager at

saw a lot of male customers

walking in to buy jewellery as

gifts for their lovers. Earrings,

the new favourites."

bracelets, pendants and rings are

Sahil Rohan, a salesman at

Market City mall, Velachery said,

Archies gift shop in Phoenix

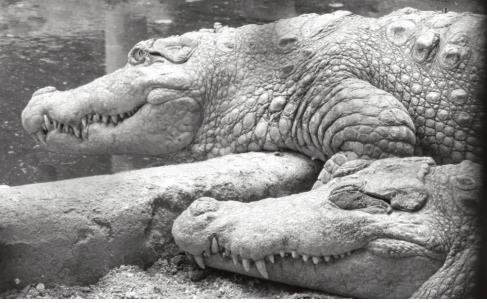
GRT jewellers, T Nagar said, "We

CHENNAI: "Keep your torch at eye level, and when you turn the beam it into the compound, you'll see red eyes shining at you," says Arul CV, zoo educator and guide for the Night Safari conducted at Madras Crocodile Bank, Mahabalipuram. A hundred pairs of eyes stare light up in the dark

as the first leg of the Safari begins at 8 p.m. The Madras Crocodile Bank was started in 1976 by an American couple called Romulus and Zai Whittaker to conserve and breed three species of crocodiles in India - Muggers, Gharials, and Saltwater crocodiles. This was because of their dwindling numbers in the 1970's due to illegal hunting activities

"We've bred and reintroduced about 1500 crocs in the wild till

now," says Arul. Arul warns visitors to keep an eye on the trees, for any 'creepy crawlies' around. These include unique frogs, lizards, and even tree



Nile crocodiles waiting to be fed at Madras Crocodile Bank | VIDUSHI SAGAR

snout to us.

codile inappropriately called Jumbo. He stays hidden in the water, and only displays his small

all clarity, from the tip of its narrow snout to its tail. Small fish and turtles also accompany it within the tank.

This is followed by the Yacari Talking about the importance of conservation of the species, Arul says "Gharials are pretty endangered in the wild, and it's important to protect them because they're only found in India. Many fishermen kill them, or chop their jaws off. These creatures even drown after getting tangled in fish nets, and the sand

Pablo, a tiny dwarf caiman, lives inside a small tank, but is a feistv fellow. Captured illegally and kept in small spaces by sellers, the res-

for death due to malnutrition, underage pregnancies, high school dropout rates, and significantly lowering girls' productivity and thereby the GDP of the country, the issue of child marriage remains invisible as it isn't included in public discourse, he told a youth symposium on ending child marriages at the Stella Maris College on February 12.

Students from colleges of Chennai, Coimbatore, and Madurai attended the event organized by Unnathi Students' Forum, a student committee of the college's department of social work, and human rights organization Thozhamai, in association with UNICEF and Youth Advocate for Children (YA4C). The campus was plastered with posters depicting various forms of child exploitation and buzzed with activity. Scores of students lined up at the registration desk, receiving cloth tote bags bearing information kits for the programme.

Seema Agarwal, ADGP of State Crime Records Bureau, Chennai argued that although child marriages are prevalent in poverty-stricken areas and could be linked to illiteracy and poor health, they could be overcome if

incidental victims when they were criminalized under the Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, while little was done to put involved adults behind the bars. In her keynote address Justice Dr.S. Vimala, former Judge at the Madras High Court, said that education remains the most powerful tool to combat the violation of child rights, and that raising awareness is the first step towards ensuring a gainful future for children from underprivileged communities.

the nation developed a strong

formulation of better policies.

advocacy strategies for

political will and got involved in

Dr. K. Manivasan, an ex-IAS

officer currently with the Social

Welfare and Nutritious Meal

psychological, biological, and

handling of sensitive cases also

consensual relationships became

Students took part in panel discussions on the social context and civil issues of child marriage. The sessions were chaired by media anchor, Karu Pazhaniappan and Dr. Revathy Robert, assistant professor from Loyola College, Chennai, respectively.

S. Albert Fernando, Advisor at Tamil World Trust, Wisconsin, the US, said "Social media platforms play a huge role in making advocacy more inclusive and getting people to believe that every action counts."

G. Kumaresan, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF India, said The violation of human rights is an appalling state of affairs, but we must create an empowering environment for children.'

snakes such as the green vine snake and the bronze back. The park houses the appropriate habitat for such creatures, who even gather from urban areas.

If one had imagined meeting a dragon in real life, this would be the opportunity. Smog, a 4-year old

on earth, and can grow to a size of about 10 feet. They're found in five Indonesian islands where they are the top predators, with their venomous glands and saliva. They are dangerous enough to take down a few men on their own," says Arul. Next, is the African Dwarf Cro-

and 6 feet big Comodo dragon pro-

cured from the Bronx zoo in Lon-

don lies huddled up in his

"Comodos are the largest lizards

enclosure.

Caiman, which is also as shy as its predecessor in the Safari. The 14 feet long Gharial looks majestic in its dark green abode; suspended eerily inside the water.

An underground room displays the tank from inside through a glass wall, and the Gharial can be seen in

cued South American cannot grow to its full size. However, the workers have finally begun to befriend the previously hostile creature.

"We have plans to expand the park and our conservation efforts, these reptiles are really worth cherishing," says Arul.

Kindness wall for the poor

SONAM CHOKI

CHENNAI: A wall of kindness was set up by Non-Government Organization Called Candle outside the Revenue Divisional Office (RDO), on Ambattur Estate Road in Mogapair, to help the poor.

The wall, apparently has its origin in Iran, where a large number of people gathered together to help the homeless and the destitute. The initiative, which has been replicated in other countries, has found space in India in places like Chennai, Hyderabad and Kashmir. In Tamil Nadu it was first initiated in Tirunelveli.

Anyone can donate clothes, books, toys, foot wear and blankets to the needy people by keeping them in a place reserved

for this purpose. A wooden rack has been installed on the wall of Revenue Divisional office (RDO), where anyone can just leave the material they wish to donate.

Navroz Mahudawala, Joint Director of Candle Foundation said, "Since our wall of kindness is in a government building a lot of people will be able to access it without any hesitation.'

A lot of economically well settled people in Anna Nagar and Mogapair are coming forward to help the underprivileged people living in and around the area.

"If people wish to donate and they are busy, they can call the organization so, that volunteers can come and collect the materials from their doorsteps," he added. Krishna a member of the

organization said, "Initially, we

"A decade back, the water from

the pond was used for drinking by

-

the village. But slowly, people

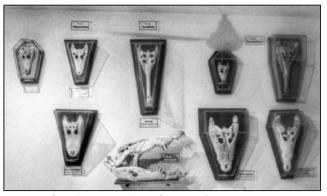
were not expecting much response but we are extremely happy that people are responding spontaneously.

M. Prabu (38), a donor said, "It will help more people if such walls are spread across the city."

The concept has not only brought happiness among slum dwellers but also to homeless people living in the city street, he added.

T. Payal a resident said, "Many of us might not be able to take out time and donate to orphanages, even if we want to. The idea of a kindness wall comes as a great option.

K. Sharmila a student said. "I like the idea of bringing happiness. I donated a shirt, I'm happy that it will be useful to someone.



Skulls of various species of crocodiles | VIDUSHI SAGAR

These skulls of various crocodiliians have been acquired from around the world and kept on display at the Madras

Crocodile Bank, Mahabalipuram. They are polished with calcium from time to time. One can observe the teeth of these species closely through these skeletal structures, which have unique feature of double capping. If a crocodile loses a teeth during hunting, they already have a capped replacement sitting right underneath it, provided by nature.

More plastic than lotus: Moovarsampet pond lies in a pitiful state

It will take another four to five months to start the restoration process, says Moovarasampet Panchayat Secretary

SRAVANI NELLORE

The pungent smell of urine fills the air as one walks along the broken compound wall of the Lotus Pond. Plastic covers and broken alcohol bottles lie scattered along the wall of the pond, also known as Periyar Thamarai Kulam, at Moovarsampet near Madipakkam.

The 60 year-old pond that comes under the Moovarasampet Panchayat has been lying in a

neglected state for over five years now

"Two months ago, it seemed as if there was more plastic than the lotus flowers," says Nanda Kumar, head of the Makkal Pathai NGO, which has been involved in restoring the pond for the past two months

"Every weekend, a group of 25-30 volunteers and residents from all walks of life gather here to clean the pond," he continues. The one-acre pond located at



Lotus pond waiting for restoration | SRAVANI NELLORE

the confluence of Nanganallur and Moovarasampet, has a bus stop and a few food stalls around it.

started throwing in the garbage here. People waiting at the bus stop or eating at the food stalls here toss the trash into pond." says Senthil Kumar, a shopkeeper here. There are three dustbins on the

right side of the pond, which comes under the Greater Chennai Corporation, but not one in the area that falls under the Panchayat.

S. Narayan, Secretary of the Moovarasampet Panchayat, says they did away with installing dustbins five years ago as they thought it would only add to the mess. "People never threw the garbage in the dustbins. Moreover, the street dogs would litter all the waste on the roads." he explains. The garbage collectors, numbering 15, collect waste from

every door without missing a day, he adds. The waste is then collected in a lorry and dumped at Kolathur dump yard, which is 50

km away from here. According to G.P. Babu, Secretary at the Federation of Moovarasanpet Welfare Association, an allocation of Rs 32 crores was made last year to clean up the pond, but the implementation was stalled due to incessant rain from July to September.

"This time, if there is no delay, the restoration of both the pond and the lake will start by August," he said