

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 stray 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.



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

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

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 Kumar, 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, nor the owner comes back for them," said Kumar.

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

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 Kumar.

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

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. Hussain.

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

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 Koyambedu market, by transgressors."

While the ticket sellers complain of longer work hours, the female

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 a.m."

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 a response from them."

What it takes to save lives

A closer look at the activities of the city's blood banks

TULIKA CHATURVEDI

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 organization credited with aiding over 30,000 patients annually.

"It can take up to two weeks to organize a blood donation drive of a 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

the banks within six hours.

"Patients may require whole blood or just specific components to treat their particular condition," says Dr. Rahima (29), Lab Technician at Red Cross Society.

While plasma has a shelf life of a year, red cells last 42 days, whole blood for 35 days, platelets for five days, and white blood cells for only 24 hours.

"As per the organization's policy, we are required to donate all excess usable components to government hospitals at the end of individual expiration periods," she adds.

The hospitals not finding a



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

by educational institutions, churches, and corporate offices, and it is necessary to ensure that the area is hygienic and well-ventilated, 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 Chandrasekaran.

"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.



Urbin by Kabadiwalla Connect to tackle the issue of waste management | THE HINDU

Smart bins to tackle garbage

SONAM CHOKI

Chennai: A Chennai-based waste management company called Kabadiwalla Connect has launched mobile app-based smart trash cans (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."

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Our target is to ensure all households in Chennai recycle their plastic waste by the year 2020.

-Siddharth Hande
(MD, Kabadiwalla Connect)

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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 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 year 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

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 Erikarai, said, "Last year 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 Washermanpet 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 son.

Kalpakaam 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

Skill-based education is the pathway forward

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

EduConclave organized by The 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 enhanced

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 "transdisciplinary" 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, profit-centric 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 Javade-

kar, 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 Zhōngguó.

Swamy said that the increasing number of pseudo-secularists was a threat to the country. For the development of India, the number of Nationalists should increase and only the Ramjanmabhooni 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 | SRINJOY DEY

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 know-how 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.

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

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 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

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 public private partnership model. He used the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme as an example, to explain how it had provided better access to schools but hadn't been equally successful in ensuring quality schooling. The private sector was good at management of schools, he said, and should help public schools improve their management.

Dilip Chenoy, Secretary General, 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

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 private education," he said.

"There are public schools which are as good as private ones and private schools which are as bad as public ones," he added. However, he did agree that imparting skills to students was an important factor.

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.



Proposed site for Indian-based Neutrino Observatory 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. Sundararajan 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 (IISc) 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. Sundararajan of Poovalagin 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. Sundararajan 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 financial 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.

Sundararajan, 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.

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.

The incidence of cancer in this region is 33 percent.

Sanju Nanda, Kavita Vemura and Surya Hari Krishnan 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 Hari Krishnan 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, Jayaraj 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.

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 younger 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.

