THE WORD

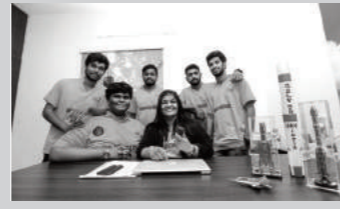## LAB JOURNAL OF THE ASIAN COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM

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Parties line up in TN ahead of LS elections

AIADMK-BJP alliance

SWAPNAJIT KUNDU

Chennai: After days of speculation, the ruling AIADMK finally announced on February 20 Tuesday its decision to join hands with the BJP to contest the Lok Sabha elections in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry expected to be held in April-May this year..

Of the 39 seats and one in Pondicherry, the AIADMK has offered 5 seats to the BJP and 7 seats to another ally, the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK).

Seat sharing talks with the DMDK are still reportedly going on with the DMDK leader Vijayakanth insisting that his party be treated on par with the PMK.

The AIADMK and the BJP announced their alliance at the end of their meeting in Chennai on Tuesday afternoon.

Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, who was the BJP's representative for the meeting instead of BJP President Amit Shah, Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan and BJP State President Tamilisai Soundararajan took part in the talks with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edapaddi K Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam.

Piyush Goyal said, "All parties will work together and strengthen the BJP-ledNational Democratic Alliance. All the 40 seats will be won by the NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Edappadi K Palanaswamy and Panneerselvam."

"Our job together will be to carry forward the legacy that "Amma" left behind and serve the people of Tamil Nadu to the best of our ability," he added, referring to former chief minister Jayalalithaa.

The AIADMK's decision has received mixed reaction. Some are of the opinion that joining hands with the BJP will help in the development of the state.

However, Sam Pradeep, who works as a journalist in SatyamTV said that allowing the BJP to gain a stronghold in Tamil Nadu would only help it preach its Hindutva agenda in the state, something many local people are worried about.

Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) President Thol Thirumavalavan pointed out that the AIADMK's alliance with the BJP would work against the public sentiment and improve the prospects of a DMK alliance with his party.
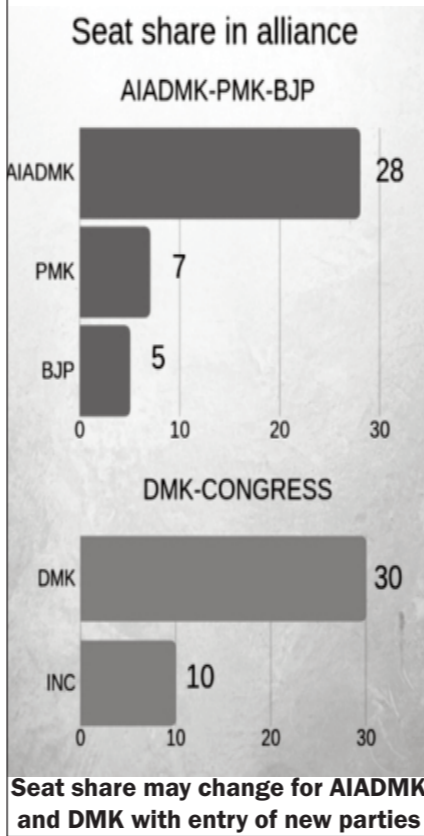
Thirumavalavan said "The anti-incumbency factor will work against them. Moreover, the people of Tamil Nadu will never accept the BJP coming into contention in this region because of their apathy towards the religious jingoism."

"Previously, there was a wave in favour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi but now the party is suffering setbacks. The result can be seen in Karnataka and in recent elections as well. And we all know what kind of activities the RSS carries out so there is very little chance of the BJP gaining ground here." he said.

Vinoj P. Selvam, President of the BJP's Youth wing in Tamil Nadu said, "We are looking for more likeminded parties to join the alliance and bring development in Tamil Nadu."

Taking a dig at DMK, he said, "The alliance was important to fight against the left oriented parties like DMK which are against development."

BJP state chief Tamilisai Soundararajan, Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, Chief Minister E Palaniswami and Union Minister Piyush Goyal after sealing the deal for the alliance | ARIJIT SAHA

> All the 40 seats will be won by the NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Edappadi K Palaniswami and Panneerselvam.
> -Piyush Goyal
> (Union Railway Minister)

Seat share in alliance
AIADMK-PMK-BJP
AIADMK — 28
PMK — 7
BJP — 5

DMK-CONGRESS
DMK — 30
INC — 10

Seat share may change for AIADMK and DMK with entry of new parties

> We do have some differences with Congress but we will push a development agenda with this alliance.
> -Tamilan Prasanna
> (DMK spokesperson)

Allying to fight Modi govt

Congress and DMK party leaders after forging an alliance in Arivalayam | SAM PRADEEP

VIVANESH PARTHIBAN

Chennai: The Opposition DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) and the Congress announced an alliance to fight the upcoming parliamentary election.

DMK leader MK Stalin said in Arivalayam that the DMK would give the Congress nine seats in Tamil Nadu and one seat in Puducherry.

Stalin added that "the alliance is only for the Parliamentary election and party will decide later about alliance in the by-elections to 21 legislative assembly seats. The constituencies to be contested would be decided only after the DMK signed alliance with other like- minded parties.

DMK spokesperson Tamilan Prasanna said,"This grand alliance is to fight against the Modi government which has destroyed the secular fabric of the nation." Both the Congress and the DMK have this basic principle of upholding secularism in the country and this had made them join hands for the sixth time in a parliamentary election.

Prasanna recalled the words of the late DMK leader Karunanidhi who would say "self government in State and alliance at the Centre."

"We do have some differences with Congress but we will push a development agenda with this alliance," he added.

Prasanna criticized the alliance between the BJP and the AIADMK as one driven by money and not by ideology as the DMK-Congress alliance was.

CPI (M) spokesperson R.Sindhan said, "The Congress-DMK alliance is better as it at least has an agenda but the AIADMK alliance is just power and money driven to continue the puppet rule of the BJP in Tamil Nadu."

"Alliance politics as such is not bad but it has to push some development like how CPI (M) pushed many social development schemes like MNREGA in UPA-2(2009-2014)," he added.

However BJP Yuva Morcha leader, Vinoj P.Selvam said,"This alliance has no great agenda; it only has an anti development agenda and will instigate people against big projects that are brought by BJP to Tamil Nadu."

Selvam said everyone was criticizing PMK leader R Anbumani for joining the BJP-AIADMK alliance; but for the last six months even Stalin had been saying that the DMK would not forge an alliance with the Congress.

Meanwhile it is said that the Congress had been pushing the DMK to give actor Kamal Hassan's MNM (Makkal Needhi Maiyam) at least one seat and that the DMK was totally opposed to it.

Running out of space for the dead

VIDUSHI SAGAR

Chennai: At the Kilpauk cemetery, 450 burial vaults resembling locker room boxes line the three buildings. The multi-tier vault system was built in 2007 to combat overcrowding in the cemetery, but were filled to capacity within eight years.

"One of my relatives gave a party to her friends when her burial space clearance came through after 20 years," says Michelle Ann James (28). According to her, acquiring space for burials is a chronic problem in Chennai.

Opened in 1903 under the British rule, the Kilpauk cemetery reached its full capacity in 2005, after having 50,000 bodies buried in its 18 acre space. It is owned by the Madras Cemeteries Board Trust, a management body for the burial of Christians of all denominations.

"The board previously owned the Quibble Island cemetery, which is now closed for burials too. The Kasimedu Cemetery under the board is filling up fast and should be closed soon enough too," said a former MCBT member.

"The trust did not plan well enough for the future generations. Now the problem is so big that citizens have to travel 25-30 kilometers to bury the dead in the city's outskirts. There they get into conflicts with village and town chiefs. The last option remains to buy private land," he added.

"The multi tier vault system at Kilpauk filled up faster than expected. The 450 vaults can be reused after 7 to 13 years, but only for other family members. We also recommend ash burial for which only one foot space is needed and can be provided easily by us. We also encourage cremations, but that is usually only done by Indians living abroad," says S. Jayashankar, secretary of the MCBT.

According to Bosco Alangar Raja, treasurer of the MCBT, ash burial and cremation are not popular due to religious implications. "The body is supposed to be intact for resurrection later," he says. But he hopes that awareness will spread, and more people will start looking at more viable options for resting their loved ones after death.

He adds that the Board has been putting pressure on Chennai Corporation to supply Poromboke (wasteland) for more burial space but that there have been no replies.

"Right now the cemeteries in Mandaveli, Poonamallee, and Kasimedu are being used. But these will soon fill up, and the only space left will be for family burials. I understand that it is not so easy to acquire the uninhabited land for burials, but time is running out and there are also issues with the correct and appropriate time for reopening graves, as there is no official figure given," he adds.

When Shanti Corera's mother died, she was buried in her grandmother's grave at St Rock's cemetery in Royapuram. "Due to lack of space, my grandmother's grave was opened, and since only her bones were there, they were shifted to a smaller space within the grave and my mother was buried in the same space," she says.
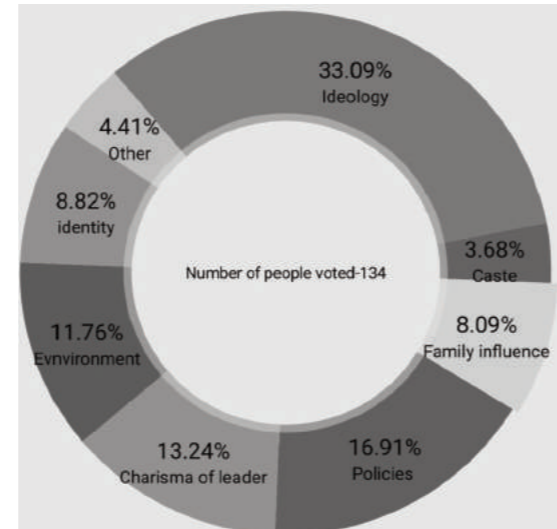
That has become the custom with many cemeteries now open only for family burials. A letter pinned in the Kilpauk cemetery office board lists the documents needed for family burials- a doctor's certificate; church letter; previous list of members buried; no objection letter signed by family members and a request letter.

What decides the vote of youth in Tamil Nadu?

VIVANESH PARTHIBAN

Chennai: A majority of the youth in Tamil Nadu surveyed by The Word prefer to vote for a party with a strong ideology rather than other considerations.

The survey was conducted with a sample size of 136 middle class and upper middle class urban and sub-urban youth in the age group 18 to 30. The youth vote on the basis of ideology, charisma of the leader, environmental concerns, identity, policies and schemes, caste and family influence.

The current trend in social media and main stream media also has some influence. The two factors strongly ingrained are Dravidian ideology and Tamil identity. The other thing which the urban youth seek is job creation especially in the private sector. The Caste factor has the least influence.

However, the leaders of the youth wings of some political parties had a different view.

R.Sindhan, CPI(M) youth wing leader, said, "If ideology is the main criterion then even Hindutva is an ideology and the ideology which is deeply ingrained in Tamil Nadu is the Dravidian ideology but that has been now diluted over the years."

However, Sinthan said that since the sample group had more of urban youth, the ideology factor might hold true. "It is not just one factor, but rather multiple factors and the events in the last 6 months before the elections that influence the youth a lot."

One good thing was that the influence of caste was very weak among the Chennai youth but this didn't hold good for the Kongu and Madurai belt, he added.

DMK spokesperson Tamilan Prasanna was dismissive of the role of the youth and their influence."The youth are too superficial about political happening and over react to the things in social media. They are carried away by the fake news and hear only one side of the story. Many youth just plan for a film on the day of election and this is their duty towards state," he said.

Countering the DMK spokesperson's view, BJP Yuva Morcha leader, Vinoj P. Selvam said,"The youth are well aware of things and vote for the party which gives development."

The youth in Tamil Nadu were sometimes misguided against development but now they were slowly realizing it, he said.

Prime Minister Naranedra Modi "won in 2014 election mainly because the youth in the country followed him and even now he has the charisma to pull them," he added.

Edumbavanam Karthikeyan, youth wing member in Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) said,"Ideology and identity played a significant role but only if they were propagated by a strong leader."

However, "the younger generation is devoid of the knowledge of their ancient past and fell prey to distorted facts and speeches by Dravidian parties," he added.

Tamil Nadu Youth Party leader Dr. Raja Sekar said "The youth cast their vote based on the recent trends in the media; so the media has a great role in swinging the votes."

Ilaya Thalaimurai leader, Shankar said, "The present generation of youth is not much different from the last generation because they don't have a bare minimum agenda to present to the politicians."

"For example if you take an unemployed youth he thinks he is the reason behind his unemployment and forgets to question the government which is responsible for the unemployment problem," he added.

Calling for increased political awareness, he said "There are still youth who don't know the difference between election of an MLA and an MP."

Survey results on voting patterns | VIVANESH P

Number of people voted-134
- 33.09% Ideology
- 3.68% Caste
- 8.09% Family influence
- 16.91% Policies
- 13.24% Charisma of leader
- 11.76% Environment
- 8.82% Identity
- 4.41% Other

Local pharmacies against online drug sale

TANYA KHANDELWAL

Chennai: Local pharmacies in the city saw a dip in their sales after a Division Bench of the Madras High Court stayed a ban on the online sale of medicines on January 2 this year.

"Say if a doctor prescribes ten medicines, many patients come to us only to purchase one or two medicines that they can't find online. Even on those, they ask for discounts at par with the online seller which isn't feasible for us," said S Shanmugam (39), a chemist who owns a retail store in Adyar.

Shanmugam added that people purchased medicines online either without a prescription or by uploading a copy of the same, which was risky as there were instances where forged or even old prescriptions were used to get scheduled drugs.

Showing an image of a prescription he had received from a patient on WhatsApp, he explained how the medication prescribed was odd and why no doctor generally gave it to patients. He pointed out the seal on it without any signature and that everything else on it was visible except the date. He said that such things need to be verified and, in this regard, online platforms are a loophole patients use to buy drugs otherwise not sold in the market.

Some drugstore owners blamed the Central Government for delaying the law to regulate online drug trade."The Centre has asked for six months time to formulate rules for online trade of medicines and to make amendments to the existing Drug and Cosmetics Act, 1940, that governs the sale of drugs in India. They probably want to wait till the elections are over since they know that our community (of local pharmacists) won't vote for them if they don't meet our concerns," said G Thiyagarajan, owner of Guna & Co Pharmacy and Secretary, Chennai district unit of the Tamil Nadu Chemists and Druggists Association (TNCDA).

"We have been in the business for almost 60 years now and we have a diverse inventory so we don't fear competition from these online sellers. We have a loyal customer base and their trust in us is high. The threat is to the small chemists who don't have a big inventory and storage space and are unable to sustain their businesses owing to unfair competition from the e-pharma companies," he further added.

According to Thiyagarajan, sale of online medicines is risky as there is little or no accountability.

Cases of malpractices, counterfeit drugs, delayed delivery of drugs needed urgently and absence of regulation is rampant in this online trade which exposes the customers to risks of all sorts. He cited a case wherein a customer had ordered a Pantocid (Sun Pharma) which costs around Rs 9 per tablet but had received Omeprazole (same brand) which costs around Rs 4. Online sellers resort to such profit making mechanisms, he explained.

S Manikandan, owner of Sippy Medical and Surgicals, added that e-pharmacies offered discounts as high as 25 per cent while the regular drugstores' profit margin was only around 18 per cent. "Hence, we can't compete on that front with these online traders," he added.

Thiyagarajan said that the members of the TNCDA knew that there was no stopping these online players from entering the pharmaceutical market. Hence, what the local pharmacists were now seeking was a strict statutory framework to regulate the online sale and distribution of medicines.

Premium burden for auto

Autorickshaw drivers protest against hike in insurance costs

SRINJOY DEY

CHENNAI: The increased insurance premium has emerged as a cause for concern for many auto drivers in Chennai.

"As it is the insurance premium was quite high before. Now it has skyrocketed to a point where it is become impossible to pay," says

V. Dinesh Kumar (33), an auto driver based in Taramani. The recent hike has seen insurance premium rise up to Rs. 9,000 per month.

According to Murugan Mani (37), who does regular trips to Besant Nagar – "I read the news about the Coimbatore auto-rickshaw drivers' protest. Although I've taken a private insurance for my vehicle, I think it is unfair for the government insurance agencies to force people to cough up so much money." According to a recent article in The Hindu, several members of the auto rickshaw

Covering the premium has become impossible   SRINJOY DEY

drivers' trade unionsstaged a protest condemning the increase in vehicle insurance premium.

"We are yet to sit together and have a discussion about it. Before we take any action, we want to make sure that we can gather a large number of people who feel the same burden as us." says Murugavel K., a member of the auto-rickshaw workers' union in

Taramani which is affiliated to CITU.

Section 147 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 makes the requirement of an insurance policy mandatory for all vehicles including auto-rickshaws. Currently, the United India Insurance Company offers a 'Package policy' which covers – 'loss or damage to the

vehicleand/or accessories due to accidents, fire, burglary and theft, terrorist activity, riot, strike and malicious damage, earthquakes, floods, cyclones and landslides.' The company also offers a 'Liability Only policy' whereby the insured's legal liability for death/disability and a loss of life of the third party or damage to their property is paid for. Auto rickshaw drivers also rely on the other benefits like compensation up to Rs. 1 lakh for accidental death or disability assured to them as a part of Unorganised Workers Welfare Boards.

According to the data from Tamil Nadu Manual Worker's Welfare Board, there are currently 2,14,521 registered workers of which only 55.2% (1,18,450 are beneficiaries.

The sanctioned board, as of December 31, 2018, has sanctioned Rs. 3.45 crore towards the welfare schemes.

The number of Metro commuters have started dwindling   SOHEIB AHSAN

Few takers for Metro now

SRUTHI

Chennai: Almost a week after the commencement of new metro line from AG-DMS in Teynampet to Washermenpet in North Chennai, only a few commuters are making make use of the facility due to increased fares and lack of network connectivity throughout the journey.

Thousands boarded the trains when they were offered free rides for three days after the line was inaugurated on Sunday (February 10).

"I travelled on the first day of inauguration. The train was almost crowded. I use the metro rarely, when I am running short of time. I cannot afford it daily," said Bhanuprasanth, a software engineer from Saidapet.

The fares are Rs. 40 for Normal Class and Rs. 80 for Special Class. Travel cards are provided based on the number of trips as 10, 30 or 60 rides at a discount of 20 percent.

Bala Amudhanadhan, President , Advocate Association , said "Lack of networks is the major issue in the underground metro rail route. When there is an emergency, especially for women, they cannot contact anyone.

There are police patrols at bus stops and the railway police can be contacted in the other trains, it would be great if similar service is

started in metro as well.,"

For some language is a problem. S. Harikrishnan, an automobile marketing executive, said "Most of the staff do not speak English. Chennai has people from different

> "

I use the metro rarely, when I am running short of time. I cannot afford it daily - Bhanuprasanth, software engineer

regions of the country as well as people from abroad; hence it is necessary to hire staff who speak multiple languages mainly at the ticket counter and the boarding points to guide the passengers appropriately.,"

JayanthiP, Advocate, Practising in the Chennai high court said,"I use metro when I am in short of time. I can't afford to use it daily. Monthly pass service with a discount can be provided"

G. Gopinath, Income Tax inspector, said "On Sundays the train services commence only by 8 in the morning while it starts by

5:30 AM the rest of the week.

Most of the flights and trains reach at night. If metro was functional throughout the night with necessary security measures, then it would be useful.,"

"There are only a few feeder services. If adequate feeder services are provided then it would attract few more people to use the metro," he added.

According to The Hindu the officials at the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) have claimed that the crowd was coming back to the metro.

CMRL wanted to improve connectivity for commuters in a few months to help office-goers.

An NRI passenger said "Metro helps in taking the congestion off the road. I can reach the airport quicker and compared to an auto from Guindy to the Airport, metro costs less. If the tickets are provided at cheaper rates then extra care must be taken on maintaining cleanliness. Digital maps can be put up in the train."

According to the CMRL officials, dynamic maps are to be introduced in the metro.

The new map will show the route through which the commuters travel and also the subsequent stations.

It will also have advertisements through which the Chennai Metro Rail can earn some revenue.

Students unwilling to take NEET

Schools say difficulty in the syllabus is a primary reason for this

SHRAVANI NELLORE

Chennai: A. Sneha, studying XII, is the only student from her class of 54 students in Government Higher Secondary School, Thoraipakkam, to go for training classes in Jai Gopal Goradia Girls High School in Nanganallur. With the board exams now approaching, she has shifted her focus from National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) to the former. Though the school authorities say there are 12 students who were inclined towards taking the medical entrance exam, only four of them, one from XII and three from XI, actually attend the coaching classes offered by the State government.

Sneha, whose practical exams are starting on Saturday, said, "Last year, there was a screening test for us, at the beginning of the classes. Based on our performance,

students were selected for NEET coaching classes."

The classes are usually held on the weekends (Saturday and Sunday), from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm in selected schools, like one each in Nanganallur, Mylapore and Alwarpet. "But, the classes have been suspended for quite some time now. After the teachers' strike last month, we haven't had any classes," she added.

The Principal of the School, who is also a coordinator at Sathyabhama Institute of Science and Technology (Sholinganallur), which has been made into a training institute of NEET for government school kids, said, "We chose only bright ones from those who applied for NEET from our school. Those who passed the test have been going for classes."

Speaking about the training institute, she said, "At this institute,

there are students coming from 32 districts. Of them, only one boy from Cuddalore got admission into one of the State medical colleges last year. The classes ran for nearly a month after the board exams. There is no compromise in the quality of education. Moreover, these are smart classes. The job of the teachers, holding a PG degree, is only to clear their doubts."

According to the Principal of Velachery Government Higher Secondary School, which too has only few students, the reason behind a poor representation of students from government schools in NEET classes is because they are not hard working like their counterparts in private schools, where a strict regimen is followed in studies. "All of them choose an easy way out and end up taking paramedical courses," she said.

All four schools that were

surveyed had improvement in terms of the number of students going for classes when compared to last year; Velachery school saw an increase from 6 to 14, Perungudi school-from 2 to 4, Arignar Anna Government School(Taramani)- from 0 to 2 students and Thoraipakkam school-from 3 to 4 students.

All these schools also concurred on one point that there is a lack of interest among students. In all of these five schools, even when there was no NEET, there was not one that got into medical colleges, but they also agree that getting into one of these was a lot easier through the marks based on XII, , than taking an exam which is not even based on their syllabus.

As per Times of India report, there is a 17% increase in the number of applicants from 1.2 lakh in 2017-18 to 1.4 lakh in 2018-19.

Using colour to cure mental health patients

ANUSHKA DEEPAK

CHENNAI: The Institute of Mental Health has changed its age old green uniforms for the inmates, to ones with colourful floral prints.

According to the Mental Healthcare Act 2017, patients have the right to wear their personal clothes and should not be forced to wear uniforms applied by the organisation.

IMH's Director P. Poorna Chandrika said, "We are trying to apply what the act mandates about not forcing inmates to wear uniforms.We are trying to break the stigma about colours such as green, blue and violet that they indicate mental illness."

"On a steady pace we'll be enforcing the practice of letting the inmates wear their own clothes and for those who don't have their personal clothes we'll get floral print materials and give them stitched dresses."

An article in Scientific American describes the theory of "colour

cure," which was first used in a mental asylum in Wards Island to cure mental illnesses like depression or melancholy (in bright, red rooms), violent behaviour (with calming blue or green), insanity (using purple rooms), or mania (with black rooms).

"Colours do have an impact on the mental health of a person but it differs with changing perspectives. Colour theory is used to create environments that feel safe, healing and inspiring."

"Similarly, it is believed that different colours can induce specific emotional or mental states that can change mood, the level of anxiety, or the individual's perception," added Dr. Chandrika.

Earlier, in 2009, nearly 2000 sets of new uniforms were distributed to the inmates as a part of the social initiative of the Rajasthan Cosmo Club Foundation.

After that this is the first time when the culture of wearing green uniforms is being broken.

The institute has been trying to sensitise its employees for this change and looks like they are being positive about it.

"How will you feel if you have to wear the same clothes everyday? It becomes very monotonous and can have a negative affect of these patients."

" We made sure to let them wear their personal clothes during their recreational activities and they were very happy about it. So, we want to follow that tradition on regular days as well and bring a splash of colour and prints to their life," said Arunachalam Shanti, a staff nurse at IMH.

As the act is progressing, the institute is trying to adapt to seeing colourful printed clothes on the campus.

"It is okay for the inmates to wear them as it'll only help in making their conditions better," said Dr. Chandrika.

The State's 'Differently Abled Pension Scheme' does not provide for the mentally ill.

Resettled in a pile of problems

VIDUSHI SAGAR

Muthulakshmi (35) cannot leave her house after 8 p.m. for fear of being robbed or harassed. This was not the case at her previous home in Surya Nagar, Kotturpuram.

Two years ago, she moved to Perumbakkam's resettlement colony with the promise of a permanent home with better amenities.

But now, she, like many others, faces a plethora of problems from unemployment issues to poorly built houses, largely unaddressed by the authorities.

"There is only one police booth in the colony, and no police officer takes regular rounds around the area despite constant incidents. The problem has increased due to lack of streetlights in our block, and despite making requests to the local administration they have not been installed. Men out of work do nothing but drink alcohol everyday and cause trouble," said Muthulakshmi, resident of Block C and former member of Saadhani Pengal (women of achievement), a local body formed to address civic

issues.

Nagarajan(40) has been unemployed since a year of moving here from Anna Nagar where he had been a Tandoori cook. He had to quit his job after moving since it cost him too much to travel back and forth from work every day.

"That's the case with a lot of people here. The government does not realise that they are moving us away from our jobs," he said. To make ends meet, his wife now works as a housekeeper near Teynampet.

"The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board provides training to people for jobs nearby.

However, even that has a problem as only those who have studied till 8th standard are eligible for it," said Ramai (28) a resident and member of Uravugal, an NGO working in the colony.

According to Vettivel (33), a resident advocate, people moved readily to the area after the 2015 November floods.

However, within just a few years of living, the poor quality of construction began to plague the inhabitants. "In the building where

Block C in the Perumbakkam colony   NIKITASINGH

I live there is a lift, so the residents have to pay Rs. 750 for the maintenance cost, versus the normal amount of Rs. 250. And yet, the lift malfunctions every other week, often leaving a person trapped inside for hours before the

electrician comes for repair," he said. He added that the water pipes were of substandard quality and resulted in damp walls.dotted with green algae, attracting 'kosus' (mosquitoes) in big amounts and causing dengue.

Radio Frequency Identification Tags for the newborns protection

SONAM CHOKI

Chennai: The Government Kilpauk Medical College (GKMC) Hospital has introduced Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Tags to prevent the "theft" of babies in the hospital.

These systems are widely used by leading hospitals to maintain a systematic record of patients, doctors and equipment. This application can provide significant benefits to the healthcare industry by ensuring patient's safety by tagging them and updating their data. It also helps manage distribution of medications, and prevent theft.

The RFID in the GKMC hospital alerts the security staff with an

alarm, if the baby is carried by anyone else other than the mother and the patient attendant. The security system has a display and scanners attached to computer software to give the information with photographs of the baby, mother and the attendant.

The photographs of the newborn, mother and the respective attendant will be taken and stored in the system for the process and tags will be issued to all three.

Dr.K. Vasanthamani, Dean of KMC, said, "The mother will receive green tag and the attendant will wear orange on their necks. While the RFID tag for the baby will be on the ankle."

"When the mother moves the baby, the screen will show pictures

of the baby and mother with a green background. And if the patient attendant holds baby the background color will be orange. Whereas if a stranger is carrying the baby the system will not recognize it and the back ground will be red, indicating danger," she added.

The siren alaram has been installed a little away from the entrance of the ward.So that it will be eaiser to alert security. In a month more than 500 deliveries take place at Government Kilpauk Medical Hospital, said Dr. Vasanthamani.

A report in The Times of India said that at least five children go missing in the state each day. The move came after repeated incidents

of baby thefts were reported to the hospital administration.

The RFID system was first started in the goverment General Hospital In Madurai three years ago and was expanded toGovermeny hospital for women and children, Egmore and Kasturba Gandhi Hospital last year.

R. Mahadur, who recently gave birth at the Kilpauk Medical Hospital said, "I am now feeling comfortable with this new security system. And I think people would feel secure and confident to deliver in government hospitals."

"It's good to see that the government is taking adequate steps and measures to stop baby theft. Hope this system gets implemented in all hospitals."

Baby with RFID tag in GKMC Hospital   HINDU

Organic farming gains traction

Sans chemicals and middlemen, it is providing impetus to both farmers and buyers

TANYA KHANDELWAL

Chennai: More and more people are buying organic fruits, vegetables and food grains and an increasing number of farmers are switching to chemical-free cultivation to cater to the demand.

In Chennai alone, there are currently over 400 stores that procure, distribute or directly sell organic cereals and pulses, other fresh produce and even processed products, according to the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development.

"Initially it was very difficult for us to even explain what organic meant or what millets are, but things have changed over time. Earlier we had to call up and ask farmers who undertook organic farming and wanted a market for their produce, but now they approach us on their own, owing to the increased demand for their produce," said Gopi Devarajan, Coordinator, Organic Farmers Market (OFM).

OFM works like a cooperative (although not formally registered as one) and serves as a market for organic farmers to sell their produce without any middlemen taking up their share of profits. This eliminates the farmer's hassle of having to

travel long distances to sell small quantities (say 15 kg to 20 kg) to individual traders, making the process viable.

"About 80 per cent of the items are procured from farmers within the state while the remaining 20 per cent comes from across India; we get it from Rajasthan, Karnataka and all the way from Kashmir," Gopi added.

"This is done with the help of like-minded groups in different states, who help us check products there for authenticity and visit farms on our behalf as part of a monthly exercise we undertake at OFM for quality control."

Selling organic items ranging from traditional varieties of white and brown rice, millets, whole and ground spices, oils, country and hill varieties of vegetables and a few processed beauty products, OFM has a varied customer base.

Pradeep Kuttuva, volunteer at OFM, added that the prices of vegetables was generally kept fixed here, with country vegetables (gourd, tomato, lady's finger) being sold at around Rs 45 a kg and hill vegetables (capsicums, potatoes, beans, cauliflowers) at around Rs 60 a kg, which is only 10 per cent to 15 per cent different from regu-

lar, chemically nurtured produce.

"Comparing organic produce with 'poison' (crops grown with chemical fertilisers and pesticides) is a little unfair, considering the health benefits that come with eating healthy," Kuttuva added.

Dharani (28), an organic farmer from Arani in Tiruvannamalai district said "The Government hasn't reached us and our customers are our main source of help."

"Consumers, especially in Chennai, understand and recognise our efforts and are willing to pay a slightly higher price than what they

Increasing demand of organic eatables has empowered the farmers | THE HINDU, JUSTDIAL

pay for regular produce, and that is my biggest satisfaction," he added.

Dharani said he hoped the government would repair rainwater storage tanks since rainwater has enough micro nutrients to nurture the organically grown crops. He added that the price wasn't very different and he pegged his produce at only around Rs 5 to Rs 7 above the regular market price for chemically grown crops.

Dharani said he didn't have to invest much in his farm as he started out with organic crops itself. But usually for farmers who swit-

ched from the regular farming methods to an organic one, the process was a little difficult since the soil took a little over a year to adjust to the changed conditions. Hence such farmers might require assistance in the early stages of their switch, he added.

Venkataraman Srinivasan, a regular customer at OFM, said, "This place sells long forgotten traditional varieties of rice. The best part is that the prices are not different from regular items, which makes it possible for us to buy organic items without much extra expenditure."

Cops-students join hands

SRAVANI NELLORE

Chennai: In what is termed to be the first-of-a-kind student-police interaction organised at Police Headquarters here on Saturday, Director General of Police TK Rajendran, IPS emphasised the need for participation of students in ensuring a safe society.

"Students play a centric role in amplifying the good work done by the police by dispelling false rumours. Nowadays, there is a greater concern over the menace spread on the social media sites," said Rajendran.

Exhorting students to be ambassadors of police, Additional Director General of Police C. Sylendra Babu, IPS, added, "A misconception of police is prevalent in the minds of the people. A policeman is not a God. We cannot bring about a just society without help from public. Students should build the gap between us and the people."

The three-hour-long interaction included a panel discussion on the image of the police in society, the importance of community policing, leveraging technology for people's

needs and finally, on the various apps and websites that are designed to make hassle-free complaint-registering process.

"In a first, the Tamil Nadu police have made themselves accessible to everyone more easily. We can have a direct conversation on our social media sites, which is always active," said Dr. M. Ravi IPS ADGP (Headquarters).

B Shridevi, Additional Deputy Superintendent of Police, Police Computer Wing, said, "There is Digicop, an app, where one can report thefts of phones online. While purchasing a new mobile, one can also find out if the phone is a stolen one, by entering the IMEI."

"For women's safety, we have launched Kavalan SOS app last year, which can be used to register complaints of sexual assault, harassments and chain snatching. Then there is GRP (Government Railways Police) app for railway passengers. Help from GRP would come in a matter of five minutes."

She listed out the various online services offered, including the police verification service and lost document report. The Conclave was attended by over 120 students from 55 colleges.

Student-fuelled dreams make it to outer space

TULIKA CHATURVEDI

Chennai: It was during an office lunch that the team of Space Kids India (SKI) decided it wanted to make a satellite which was as small and weighed as much as a gulab jamun.

Named after India's Missile Man, Kalamsat was a cube-shaped, 64-grams satellite launched in 2017. It couldn't make the world record of being the smallest satellite as it was only sub-orbital, but it paved the way for a more ambitious project that would bring widespread recognition to the city-based aerospace research start-up.

Weighing 1,200 grams and with a life expectancy of two months, Kalamsat-V2 was launched from Sriharikota on January 24, becoming the lightest satellite in the world and the first one to be made by students and launched by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

"A team of 14 members-8 students between the ages of 19 and 21 and 6 backing staff - made it in a record time of 6 days," said Chief Innovation Officer Vijaya Lakshmi Narayan, who was also the Lead Satellite Architect for the project.

"Every single person brought their core strength to their department, whether it was coding, architecture, or electronics."

"As of January this year, SKI has launched nine satellites- six Near

The team that built a 62 g satellite, Kalamsat FORBES INDIA

Space Launch Vehicle (NSLV) stellites, two sub-orbital satellites, and a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) satellite," he added.

The start-up which is one of South Asia's most prominent ambassadors for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), is known for organizing camps to promote the development of scientific temper in students. Their most recent project focuses on training students of government schools in and around Karaikal.

When asked about the recruitment process, founder Dr. Srimathy Kesavan said, "We annually host a 'Young Indian Scientist' programme and also attend several competitions that have students from across India exhibiting their inventions. These students don't necessarily have to be winners; we just look for the right balance of talent and potential."

She pointed out that just last

month they roped in Prateek, a class-IV student from Chennai, who has been assigned the task of building a balloon satellite. With a life expectancy of two hours, the satellite would be attached to a helium balloon and parked at a height of 1.5 lakh feet, touching the earth's curvature.

Besides the production of satellites, the organization also encourages innovations in technology to make information accessible to people from all communities.

"We are in talks to develop Mango PC, a palm-sized computer that will be affordable for people from low-income backgrounds," said Kunnal Vasanth, Chief Communications Officer.

The team is presently involved in building another satellite, Vikramsat, to conduct biological experiments in space in an effort to aid farmers. It is a tribute to Vikram Sarabhai, the founder of ISRO.

A splash of colour over ordinary homes

Two city artists break the barriers of conventional forms of art

TULIKA CHATURVEDI

Chennai: Thirty-four year old entrepreneur Aarthi Sivaramakrishnan knew she was always inclined towards art, but never pictured the possibility of her being sought after for creating quirky, customized pieces.

"Even when I was working as HR, I dabbled in painting as a hobby but over time people started approaching me saying they'd pay for a product like that," she says.

Inspired, she started The Colour Company in 2016, and specialized in personalizing everyday household objects like bottles, coasters, trays, tin cookie boxes, pen-holders, photo-frames, and vintage trunks.

"Indians are quite sentimental about their belongings, but the personalized-gift market is unexplored in the country. Once I saw it could be a viable business opportunity, I thought I'd take the plunge; so far so good!" she adds with a laugh.

The bottles at her studio bearing intricate, colorful designs are completely recyclable, and would otherwise be in the trash.

"Once people get conscious of their usage, responsible disposal isn't that hard to implement. At this point, I get several calls every week with people volunteering to drop their stock to my office."

When asked about her most fun project till date, she says "I had a client who had two sons sharing a

Left: A recycled decoupage bottle; right: anonymous artist Lotuzhead poses with his graffiti; he has kept his identity under wraps since 2015 | THE COLOUR COMPANY, THE HINDU

bunk-bed. The younger one wanted to have something to look at when he slept below, and I was able to paint a solar system on the wooden divider."

About half of her income comes from organizing workshops on alternate weekends in Adyar, Anna Nagar, Alwarpet, and ECR, which see a lot of participation from working professionals.

"My longest-running workshop has been on decoupage bottles, the youngest participant, a ten-year old boy and the oldest one, an 88-year old woman," she says.

"Most participants are interested in taking charge of beautifying their homes - I try to actively stay in touch and conduct follow-up meetings to help them brush up their

skills."

Another anonymous city-based street artist who goes by the name of Lotuzhead can be approached for abstract, domestic wall-art for as less as Rs.400. Although he has gained prominence through art direction and commercial gigs across the city, he enjoys dabbling in interior work.

"It is important to meet the client in person and understand what they want, to visit the space beforehand and assess what can be done with it," he says about the creative process.

"They can be extremely specific with their requirements which take down the creativity by a notch, but I experiment with different mediums of expression and try to

build a story to make it more engaging."

"The income is highly erratic and seasonal, and you could make anywhere between Rs.5,000 and Rs.5 lakh for a single project," he pauses. "When it comes to art, not a lot of people are willing to experiment because of the slow progress of work."

Lotuzhead says that aspiring artists are limited by what they know and shouldn't hesitate to spend time on polishing their skills if they wish to pursue it professionally.

"When it comes to any form of creativity, there is an inner inertia that drives you to learn more. An institution would help you focus your energies a lot more productively," he quips.
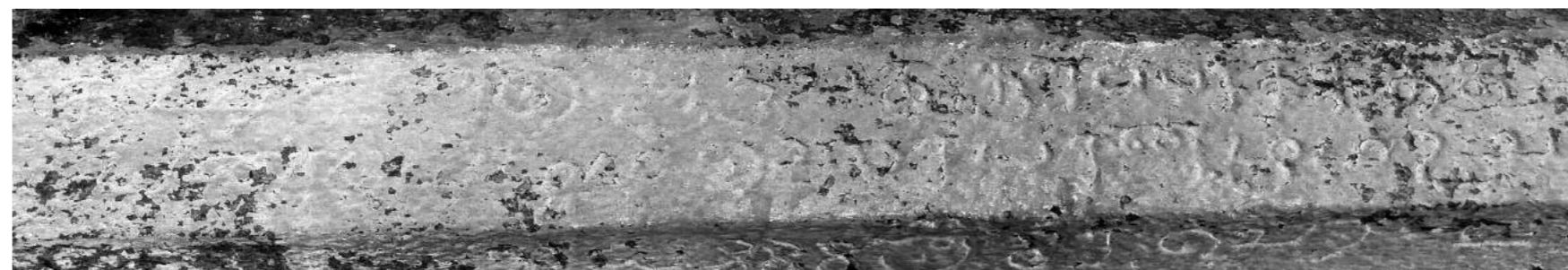
Inscriptions on the walls of an 8th century Pallava temple in Kolapakkam defaced by layers of oil-paint | SNEHA KANCHAN

Heritage dying slowly under paint, obscurity

SNEHA KANCHAN

Chennai: The walls of the Agatheeswarar Temple in Kolapakkam look ordinary at first glance. Up close, the inscriptions on the 8th century Pallava shrine, coated with layers of blue oil paint, have a different tale to tell.

The temple, believed to be over 1200 years old, has Tamil inscriptions all along the outer walls of the sanctum sanctorum.

"The problem is that we don't have value education on heritage. If you look at these old temples, the walls are full of inscriptions that tell stories. But people painted the walls," said historian Sivagnanam Balasubramani.

In bigger temples like the Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur, painting is restricted because of the strict rules in place, he added.

The Agatheeswarar temple also has an Indonesian connection that is hidden in its backyard. King Srivijaya who ruled over Sumatra in the 8th century had donated funds to the temple to dig a water tank. Four stone-slab inscriptions from that time are lying abandoned in the temple compound.

The Chennai coast, along the Bay of Bengal or the Chola Lake as they called it back then, had always been a trade hotbed, said journalist R. Rangaraj. Through the Mylapore port, the city was well-connected with the Chinese and the Greek as

well as countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Burma and Indonesia. But a lot of Chennai's history was either lost or could be found in other countries, he added.

Speaking about heritage sites getting lost in obscurity, Balasubramani mentioned the spot in Pallavaram where British archaeologist and geologist Robert Bruce Foote discovered Asia's first lower Palaeolithic era stone axe in 1863. A study undertaken by the Sharma Centre for Heritage Education in Chennai revealed that the stone tool could be over one million years old, putting Chennai on the prehistoric world map.

In Chennai alone there are more than 169 spots where such axes and

tools have been found. Foote's first spot, very close to the airport, was supposed to have been taken up by the ASI for further excavation but ran into trouble with the corporation and real estate players, said Balasubramani.

Today, the possible spot where the axe was found lies under a layer of garbage and oblivion.

"Whenever you go abroad, even 200 or 300 years of history is well-marked with descriptions. But here we aren't doing it," said Balasubramani, who has worked with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as a freelance archaeologist, assisting it with multiple excavations.

"They should put up a board at the Chennai airport saying 'This is

the place where the Asia's first stone axe was discovered,'" he added.

The ASI, he said, was also facing a personnel crunch and wasn't equipped to undertake excavations by itself. The organisation allowed the Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, a private foundation, to carry out excavations in Attirampakkam, another prehistoric site close to Chennai. Stone-age tools dating back to 1.5 million years were found there.

"Tamil Nadu, over the years, has given more importance to temple-based history. We need more physical anthropologists to trace the historical significance of the city," added Balasubramani.

Noizzy Box: Making all the right noises

SRUTHI VENUGOPAL

Chennai: Neeraj Sablok witnessed the happiness on his grandmother's face when he gifted her with a vintage radio. This inspired him to make speakers that mix the retro with the present.

To promote the use of radios in this technologically-bound world, NRJ Ventures manufactures bluetooth speakers with four radio bands. These speakers are designed in retro style with the brand name, Noizzy box.

Sablok, founder of Noizzy box said, "I wanted to mix the vintage and the current trend of using bluetooth speakers. After research and development for eight to nine months, we came up with our product. It was fast moving and hence we had to double our production."

The products are out for sale only after a check for almost a month. They are designed in such a way that there is a balance between vintage and technology.

Analog output is used instead of digital output to improve the qua-

lity of sound.

"I started this on 2016. An exhibition was set up in the Chennai Trade Centre when a few youngsters declined to buy it as it was a Chennai product,"he said.

"I then decided to make this product a benchmark. Now we have got clients even from Bollywood," he added.

Safety measures are taken for every product. These bluetooth speakers work only when it is not connected to the charger. This helps in avoiding battery damage.

"If a product is senior citizen friendly, then it can be used by anyone irrespective of their age group," Sablok said.

According to him, Chennai has a good customer base. Kolkata has larger number of customers for the product.

The Noizzy box has released five models of Bluetooth speakers. The features includes four radio bands (FM, AM, SW1 and SW2) , USB, TF card, AUX and Bluetooth. The price ranges from Rs. 1499 to Rs.4000.

4 THE WORD

CITYSCAPE

Reviving culture diversity and linguistics

ANUSHKA DEEPAK

Chennai: International Mother Language Day has been observed every year on February 21 since 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. To mark the day, the International Institute of Tamil Studies (IITMS) celebrated 'Tamizh' through poetry.

K. Pandiarajan, Minister for Tamil Official Language and Culture said, "Languages are important to preserve our heritage. Every two weeks a language disappears, taking away the culture connected to it. Hence, the UNESCO's announcement that a day like this should be celebrated makes me very happy. This effort by IITMS is a way to spread awareness about our dying languages."

According to a UNESCO report, 43 per cent of the estimated 6000 languages spoken in the world are endangered. India has about 22 officially recognised languages, 1635 rationalised mother tongues, 234 identifiable mother tongues, according to Census 2001.

R. Ventakesan, IAS, Tamil Development and Information Department said, "Our mother tongue is the first thing we learn to speak. If it is under a threat of disappearing we should take steps to preserve it and this day marks a major step to revive our lost heritage."

To celebrate International Mother Language Day 2019, the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services invited people to send their favourite proverbs in their particular mother tongue on various topics such as peace, harmony, conflict resolution/competence to deal with conflict, mindfulness, resilience, and well-being. These proverbs will be compiled, and published on its website and other digital platforms.

Dr. G. Vijayaraghavan, Director Directorate of Tamil Development, recited a poem. "Our mother language is what makes us united. Tamil is not a language, it's our religion."

Short films from all over the world
20 - 25 screened in a day
Relationship, ecology, alienation and repression in focus

Chetlur in conversation with Ramani Bharadwaj | FACEBOOK

SNEHA KANCHAN
SWAPNAJITH KUNDU
SOHEIB AHSAN

Chennai: The 6th edition of the Chennai International Short Film Festival (CISFF) is an attempt to build a community where you can just sit back, watch and appreciate films, said Shylaja Chetlur, Additional Festival Director, CISFF. The 8-day festival happening at the Tagore Film Centre NFDC will conclude on 23rd February with an award ceremony highlighting the best films.

The festival saw an online submission of short films from 61 countries including entries from countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Ecuador, Estonia, France, the US and a bunch of Indian films. It has collaborated with the National Film Development Corporation of India and Cinema Rendezvous, a Chennai-based film club headed by Chetlur. "These are the kind of films that you won't find on YouTube or any other streaming sites. We've carefully curated the list," said Chetlur.

The films, divided into categories like fiction, animation and documentary, are being screened in three slots from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. A total of 186 films will be screened during the course of the festival. So far, 111 films have been screened with wide themes covering climate change, social alienation and family drama among others.

Speaking about the response they've been receiving halfway through the festival, Chetlur said that the response has been decent but the there was definitely a need to spread the word. "It will pick up as the festival progresses," she added.

In a bid to facilitate audience interaction, the festival this year has designed a separate session called the Celebrity Interaction with film industry personalities like director Rajiv Menon, acress Lakshmi Priyaa Chandramouli, music director Ramani Bharadwaj, filmmaker Jayendra and others. These sessions have given the festival a boost and were attracting the right audience. For instance, the second day of the festival which had a session titled 'Designing a film – top to toe' with visual designer Siddharth Chandrasekhar had a big group of students from the National Institute of Fashion Technology.

The reception from the younger audience has been overwhelming groups of students "We're also planning to have a shorter version of the festival in Coimbatore later," she added.

Film: Katran
Direction: Prem Singh

Screened on the fourth day of the Chennai International Short Film Festival, Katran deals with love and turmoil. The film revolves around an aged couple who has spent most of their married life fighting with each other. Finally, the husband (Piyush Mishra) decides to get divorce from his wife (Alka Amin). They visit a lawyer (Rajendra Chawla), and after a series of events their life takes a different turn.

The film shows the complex unidentified layers of love that exists between every middle class couple. The concept of love changes its definition according to the class structure of society. The narrative of the film has been aptly complemented by the sublime direction of Prem Singh. The length of the film is short and the dialogues crisp. In the acting department, both Piyush Mishra and Alka Amin did an excellent job with Rajendra Chawla doing his bit with aplomb as a lawyer. The film traverses the boundary of time and depicts the subtle emotions of marriage deftly.

A still from the short film Acide

Poster of the short film Paduvarahalli

Film: Blue Tomorrow
Direction: Numan Ayaz

Released in 2018, Blue Tomorrow is an animation that deals with the journey of a man who lives alone in an Island. When the water level of the ocean begins to rise, the man is forced to leave his home and go to a city, which is already destroyed by the menacing ocean. His journey continues, and in the end he finds solace in an unexpected place.

The film borders on surrealism, with the prime example being the boat tied to a flying kite that works as its engine. The willing suspension of disbelief is further highlighted by the picture of the submerged city, where people have transformed into stones, depicting the agony of emotionless modern man so often seen in the writings of Beckett and Camus. It portrays the dangers of global warming, and the apocalypse awaiting mankind. In the end, it gives a ray of hope, but also shows that human being will always suffer from an existential crisis caused by our own deeds.

Film: Acide
Direction: Just Philipot

Based on a short fast forward in the 21st century when acid rains have become very common, Acide depicts a family of three looking for shelter to escape a storm on its way.

It also shows how dangerous situations affect the attitude of the general public in a time of scarce resources. It points to an eerily potential future with depleting resources on the earth.

Acide shows the struggle of a couple struggling to protect their only son.

It also shows the efforts a parent goes through to protect the innocence of their children while dealing with the skeptical society around.

Above all else, the film is a show of how nature fights back when it is threatened and how ruthless it can be.

This film is a wakeup call and a reminder for all of us as to what we can expect if nature keeps deteriorating at the rate it already is.

It is also a heart melting tale of ordinary people which could end up being our own tale if the horrendous future of this film comes

Film: Paduvarahalli
Direction: Jamadagni Manoj

The film is set in the colonial era at a time when numerous Indian rebels are arrested and executed on a daily basis.

Set in the city of Paduvarahalli in Mysore,the protagonist, Hari Samashti is a barber whose family has been in the profession for generations. He is a secret informant for the rebels. His dilemma starts when a local officer Avinash working for the colonials visits the shop for a shave. Hari is torn between his sense of duty to his rebel friends and his family and professional reputation.

The film's narrates all the thoughts going through Hari's mind as he gives Avinash a shave. The film is more than a simple good and bad person story. It shows the effect of colonial control as two characters of the same country are pitted against each other.

The audience is also shown the different perspectives that go unnoticed in a rebellion and how difficult it can be to decide

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Old age homes under scanner

VIVANESH PARTHIBAN

Chennai: Old age homes are finding the procedures of inspection cumbersome and random after the Madras High Court ordered the inspection of all private and charitable old age homes following a public interest litigation filed from Coimbatore by a senior citizen.

Charu Old Age Home officials said "We have made all changes in the building and necessities according to the rule in Social welfare department rules 2016". They officials said they had spent around Rs.10 lakh on the changes.

The old age home in T.Nagar was started in 2016 after the Chennai floods. M.S Charles, the founder, turned a part of his own house into an old age home.

His mother Jennie (65) said "This is wholly my son's idea, when he saw many old women stranded in the street during the 2015 flood he gave us a idea that we can accommodate two or three of them in our own house, in rooms built for guests".

"Then we got funds from an NGO which transformed this idea into a charitable trust- aided old age home."

Charles said "many people especially from software companies donate a lunch or breakfast for the people here." Now there are 33 old women in the home.

Arjunan, who is with the Satiyameh Jaya Charitable Trust (Ramapuram), "The palliative care for an old person is different from that for a young person. In the last six months out of six people who joined our old age homes three died because of some health issues. This earned me a bad name as many blamed for inadequate facility being provided to the old ones in my trust."

Now Arjunan is planning to send the remaining three old people to another old age home as he cannot provide necessary care toward the old ones.

"When people came for inspection they told me to give special attention to the old ones and told us to comply with the rules mentioned in the 2016 social welfare department rules as soon as possible."

The 2016 social welfare department rules states that inmates must be provided nutritious meal thrice a day, at least 7 square meter space for an inmate in the home, recreation, outings to a religious place , park or cinema once a week and changes in infrastructure like the ramps, railings, toilet with hand holdings and wheel chairs.

Board games lounge to attract kids

SOHEIB AHSAN

Chennai: From regular meetings for playing board games, Arjun Sukumaran (31) and Chitra Bianca Appasamy (31) have opened a lounge for the same.

Unlike other cafes that provide board games to its visitors, 'The Board Games Lounge' focuses on the games primarily while also providing a few beverages for their gamers. They charge Rs. 200 per person on weekdays and Rs. 300 on weekends.

The idea of starting a board game lounge had wandered in their minds for years but they began working towards it in October last year. Out of 200 games, most were owned by them beforehand and a few were lent to them by close friends. The idea was kept under wraps at first, family and close friends being the only ones who were told about it. Arjun and Chitra say the response from their families was not only positive but extremely enthusiastic as well. "They offered to help design this place, even brought decorations from their own home for it" said Chitra.

In the past three days since the lounge has opened, they have received an overwhelming response over the weekend as the place was jam packed on Sunday. On weekdays they barely have any visitors. They plan to extend their working hours as some people have shown interest in visiting on weekdays after they finish working.

Although they haven't targeted any specific audiences, their visitors are of all ages from 12 and above. "We are hoping to get more young children because let's face it, which one would their parents prefer for their kids - an internet cafe or a board games lounge?" asks Arjun. They have been visited by teenagers and adults wanting to relive their younger days as well as by an elderly couple.

Chitra and Arjun are working as writers. While Chitra writes food blogs, Arjun writes game reviews for the new Indian express. They have no plans for the growth or expansion of their lounge. As of now it is only an experimental project for them to see where board games stand in the hearts of people.

> **"We are hoping to get more young children"**
> **Arjun, CEO of the board game lounge**

The board games provided to visitors |SOHEIB AHSAN

Kalakshetra alumni come together to drive visual arts forward

SRINJOY DEY

Chennai: A.D. Saju (32), who graduated in Visual Arts from Rukmini Devi College of Fine Arts in 2010, says he had been waiting for this moment for nine years. A series of his paintings hang next to each other at the Lalit Kala Akademi.

On February 11, the Kalakshetra Foundation alumni and visual arts faculty announced 'Kalanubhava', the first art exhibition that they would organize since the department's inception in 1940s. Although there was no overarching theme that ran throughout the event, it was dedicated to Prof. K. Sreenivasulu – a veteran contemporary artist who pioneered the Madras Art Movement in 1960s, and was one of the founding faculty members of the department of Visual arts.

"We had been trying, but music and dance is usually promoted in the foundation," Saju says, claiming that the foundation will henceforth work with the alumni association to organize art exhibitions every year. According to a report in The Indian Express last year, Kalakshetra Foundation alumni met with Union

The exhibits at 'Kalanubhava' were an experimental blend of contemporary and traditional art forms that has been practiced in Kalakshetra | SRINJOY DEY

Culture Minister, Mahesh Sharma, to discuss a greater role for the alumni in running of the institution. The alumni demanded that the "board have 50 per cent members from Kalakshetra Alumni", and also an alumni director for the foundation.

"The exhibition brings together a generation of art students of Kalakshetra reflecting the route taken to evolve an authentic language for rigorous practice and understanding historical contexts of art." says Rm. Palaniappan, the curator and former Regional Secretary of Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai.

"This collection is a manifestation of new realities portrayed in contemporary art," Lawanya Vikram (28), says. The exhibition took place between February 16 and 20.

According to Saju, Sreenivasulu's legacy lives on through his student's works – "With the chosen figurative expressions based on folk traditions, he was able to create paintings that could stand the test of time – we are blessed to have had him as one of the pillars of our institution."

Palaniappan says the present upgraded and revised syllabus matches the trend in art pedagogy – "The expansion of facilities and progress of the students' skill and creative ability indicate that the department will become a part of Kalakshetra's legacy and gain national reputation for its unique approach in visual arts education."