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Anti-CAA signature drive

Protests against the Act 'will not end'

SRISHTI LAKHOTIA

Opposition parties led by the Congress are likely to submit an Anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (anti-CAA) to President Ram Nath Kovind, said K. Balakrishnan, Tamil Nadu State secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

"Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) had collected 2 crores signatures nearly two days ago. We are aiming at collecting more signatures. The process will end today," said Balakrishnan.

The CPI(M) signature campaign was conducted district-wise between Feb. 2 and 10 and contributed to the larger pool of dissent.

Madan, a social media content creator at CPI(M) said, "We had collected our last set of signatures at a campaign at Kalingarayan Street in Royapuram on February

11." All India Domestic Women Association (AIDWA) District Secretary Bakaiyan said that the CPI(M) cadre collected around one lakh signatures from Royapuram, Perambur, Manali and Avadi.

Bakaiyan said that CAA, National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) will not be accepted by women of any religion in Tamil Nadu. "If Muslims from countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are not allowed, then what about women from other countries? NPR will not be accepted by people of *Tamilakam*. We have no problem with the Census process, but NPR we do not accept," she added.

Bakaiyan said that Muslims and people from other religions have been living as *mama-macha* (uncle-nephew) for ages. In case of NPR, the government now asks 21 ques-

tions including place of birth and details about parents. In case a Muslim does not have them, they will be marked 'D' (disqualified).

The signature campaign against CAA was first initiated by the Congress in New Delhi.

Nainar, a member of CPI(M) State committee said, "DMK had not attended the meeting over a small scuffle with Congress in civic body elections, which was childish of them. Even Trinamool didn't participate and the approach taken by them to oppose CAA and NPR was different."

As for the effect the signature campaign will have on CAA, Madan said, "The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has a majority in the Lok Sabha. They do not seem to pay any heed to the Opposition. They can make laws, but not ones that undermine the Constitution."

There have been multiple pro-

tests in Chennai, but none have been intense, Nainar said. "In Tamil Nadu, only protests dealing with cultural practices like Jallikattu can grow. The protests in Valluvar Kotam were not a huge deal. The law and order in Tamil Nadu is very constraining," he added.

Prabhu R, part-time Rapido bike-taxi rider and a medical assistant said that CAA is the best law India has had and Modi the best leader. He said, "Indian law is too flexible and needs a more stern approach."

While a salesperson at a shopping mall here said that they all signed the campaign list regardless of which religion they came from. "It is a divisive law, which needs to be opposed," the salesperson added.

"Since government is not ready to budge, the protests will not end," said Bakaiyan.

Not so smart after all



The colourful mesh built by the Corporation under the Smart City plan hides the Mambalam canal which was last cleaned three years ago and overflows with garbage

| SRISHTI LAKHOTIA



Strict moral vigil on V-Day

MAHIMA MANIAR

On the eve of Valentine's Day (February 14) as the city prepares to capitalise on the day of love, the youth in Chennai frowned upon the 'moral policing' that couples face.

"At times, boys and girls sit and discuss class assignments on the pavement, but that is also frowned upon," said Amir Suhail, who is pursuing a PhD at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences.

Sushmita Bahuguna, a third year student of the Institute of Hotel Management, said, "There are certain organizations that are intolerant and heckle the youngsters. An orthodox outlook towards public display of affection has been inculcated in us since childhood. Sometimes, even we end up judging people."

S. Anita (19), a first year student of Dr. MGR Janaki College of Arts and Science for Women, said, "Whenever I am seen with a male friend, my parents threaten to get me married because they worry about their caste, community and esteem. They are not ready to accept my thoughts."

M. Jothi Prakash, sub-inspector, J13 Tharamani Police Station, said "We often get complaints about couples whose activities cause inconvenience to the public and make them feel uncomfortable."

Head constable S. Ambikeswari mentioned the Kavalan- SOS app as part of the Tamil Nadu State Police Master Control Room initiative. "There are several cases of eve teasing reported during this time of the month. The app is a safety measure that women can exercise if they are caught in an uncomfortable situation," she said.

Trupti Rekha (45), a lecturer at MA Chidambaram College of Nursing, said, "Rather than investing money in buying material things, one could invest in some social

cause. It is entirely a process of commercialisation."

"There was no concept like Valentine's Day, Father's Day or Mother's Day earlier because there was no reason to advertise one's love for their beloved. Today, it is diverting the attention of youngsters from their goals," she added.

Meanwhile, some think it is difficult to change the mindset of the elderly since they are not at par with changing trends. "The older generation is not exposed to the technology and services that promote this day," said M. Dhinagar, a data associate at Amazon.

A couple at the Elliot's beach recollect how they, back in 1987, were morally policed at the same spot even though they were married. "This interference is a violation of our right to privacy," said K. Dhandapani (60), a practicing company secretary and a lawyer.

"This generation is more mature and has a lot more exposure than we had. One should just know where to draw the line," said his wife, K. Meenakshi, a home maker.

According to Dhandapani, this western concept has been thrust into the Indian culture, and is propagated as a marketing gimmick. "Valentine's Day has pressurised relationships today as expectations have increased, resulting in rifts between couples. One should not associate so much importance to one particular day," he remarked.

On cops harassing couples, *The Times of India* reported that they can be booked under Section 384 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for extorting monetary favours from them and under Section 392 of IPC for robbery if they are proven guilty of wrenching cash or any other valuables. Personnel can even be dismissed from service for violating discipline under Article 311 of the constitution.

Few scholarships in state for BC students

SUKRITI VATS

Only 100 students will benefit from the Tamil Nadu government's new Scholarship for the Backward Classes (BC) due to limited funds, according to a circular issued by the Commissioner of Backward Classes Welfare. Expected to operate on a first-come-first-serve basis, the scheme's limited funds means that the rest would be denied an opportunity to study in central universities.

These 100 students of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities will be able to avail a scholarship amount of Rs. 2 lakhs per year, or the entire duration of their undergraduate or postgraduate course," said S. Revathi, who oversees the scheme at the Backward Classes Welfare Directorate in Chennai.

The budget for the scheme is approximately Rs.2 crores, and would cover 85 Central Government institutions across the state, including prestigious ones such as IIT, IIM, IIIT and NIT.

More than 100 applications have already been received two days before the deadline, which is February 15.

"It's unfortunate that all students belonging to backward classes will not get scholarship. Nevertheless, we are trying to get the number of beneficiaries increased to over 100. This is a trial period, so by next year we'll be including this demand in our proposal to the Chief Minister," she added.

A recent report from *The New Indian Express* said that 31 ex-servicemen have been appointed on a

No security for women on MRTS

SHRIJA GANGULY

The absence of female security personnel and proper surveillance systems at the MRTS stations makes rail journeys uncomfortable, say female commuters.

After a rise in cases of sexual harassment in and outside the local train stations, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) has deployed ex-servicemen as security officers. They are deployed on two shifts, one from 8 am to 4 pm, and the other from 4pm to 10 pm.

Reports from *The Hindu* suggest that 15 security guards have been deployed at all the Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) stations so far with more recruits coming in.

However, there are hardly any female security guards.

Kushi Meena Ram, the only security officer at Thirumayilai station, said, "A lady officer was stationed at Thiruvanniyur after a couple of cases of groping and molesting were registered last year. She was withdrawn later on."

The reason, as explained by an official at the RPF office at Mylapore, "We are running short of recruits due to the large number of vacancies. The Government is reluctant to recruit to its full capacity. Consequently, we are recruiting in batches. Right now, around 4,500 women recruits from across the country are undergoing training out of which only 300 will be deployed in Chennai."

A recent report from *The New Indian Express* said that 31 ex-servicemen have been appointed on a



Majority of the MRTS commuters are women who travel from the suburbs

| THE NEWS MINUTE

contract basis for one year.

The RPF official further said, "Autowalas and cleaners are also a part of our protection network. In case of a mishap, you can either alert the person at the ticket counter or the nearest auto driver or railway staff. The RPF center at Mylapore will be notified and help will be sent in 10 to 15 minutes. The offender will be held at the RPF station until further trial."

None of the MRTS stations have got CCTV cameras installed either inside or outside the stations, making these spaces crime prone.

An official said that on an average, 15 CCTV cameras will be required for each station.

The RPF station at Mylapore is developing a central surveillance centre that will monitor all the CCTV cameras that are to be installed at all stations on or by the

get scared looking at people (mostly men) sleeping on the floor and benches."

Padmaja said that although she now has someone to approach, she would find it easier if it is a woman. "I feel there should be more women walking the streets. No man can make me feel safe," she said. The deployment of security officers comes ten years after it was reported for the first time back in 2009.

The huge unoccupied spaces at the MRTS stations are dark and dingy. The basement at Kasturba Nagar station is allotted for parking but it has been turned into a dumping space.

Thiruvanniyur is the only station that has an IRCTC eatery installed on one of the platforms. However, the rest of the space on the ground floor is unused.

Mylapore Inspector Chithra Devi said, "The deployment of the number of female security officers will vary from station to station."

The former servicemen have been appointed due to a shortage in the RPF force deployed at the MRTS stations.

As per a report from *The New Indian Express* on February 11, Santosh N Chandran, the former senior Director of Security (DSC) of the Madras division had requested the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) to appoint 55 former servicemen on a contract basis to the security branch for the smooth functioning of the railway service across Chennai owing to a shortage of RPF personnel.

month of May.

For the time being, the Railway Protection Force department has come up with a helpline number of 182 in case of emergencies.

However, the lack of advertisement of such an important measure has led to the lack of awareness of possible options for women commuters. A student of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences said, "I don't know of any such number. Had I known that such a number exists, I would have travelled alone more often."

Padmaja S. is an IT employee at Tidel Park and lives in Thiruvallikeni.

She said, "There are times when it gets as late as 10 pm and I have to catch the last train. Usually Thiruvanniyur is bustling with people but at times when I have to board from Indira Nagar, I am all alone. I

Crocodiles up for adoption

SREYA DEB

Fancy adopting a mugger or a *gharial*? Head to the crocodile bank near Thiruvaidanthai on the East Coast Road, 40 kilometres from Chennai.

The 44 year old establishment, houses 2,100 animals and is managed by the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT).

Yaddurai, 55, who has been working at the bank for 30 years says "When I started working here, there were only about 25 crocodiles."

While the establishment is listed as a zoo, it houses much more. There is a government maintained venom extraction booth and a section displaying tortoise and alligator eggs, and crocodile skulls.

Talking about the MCBT's ani-

mal adoption system, Stephanie John, Education Project Manager for the trust, says the adopting party does not get to take the animal home. Instead they pay for the animals' maintenance and diet.

"The disclaimer is very clear on the webpage, yet we get calls asking if people can adopt a reptile and keep it as a pet," she says.

The zoo currently has just one Green Iguana.

The rates for the animals vary, she says, depending on where it is from; the conditions it needs and the cost of the same; and how rare the species is. The details are all available on the MCBT website.

The animals are kept in marshy enclosures with ponds so as to maintain their body temperature.

The zoo manager, Senthil, says some animals are going extinct.



A gharial lies by the water at the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust

| SREYA DEB

Most people want to adopt the rarer species. "The crocs and reptiles are fed every Sunday. The Indian Muger Crocodile and the Gharial are both from here and the zoo is over-

flowing with them."

There are three enclosures for each one, but even still, the marshes are crowded with crocodiles lounging around lazily on the banks climbing over each other to move around the bank.

"Maintaining all of them costs more than maintaining one 'almost rare species' sometimes," says Senthil.

The zoo has exotic turtles, snakes, lizards and crocodiles, lethal and harmless, on display from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every working day.

An enclosure of *gharials* has been adopted by Crocodile India, S. P. Apparels. Currently MCBT has 844 animals up for adoption of which 680 are marsh crocodiles. Some of the enclosures had plastic bottles and wrappers floating in the water. The swish of a *gharial's* tail

brought the trash that had accumulated at the corner of the pool swirling up. The aquarium appears as if it has not been cleaned in the lately.

Yaddurai, also in charge of feeding the crocodiles, says that going into the enclosures does not scare him. Crocodiles that are not in their natural habitats need to be fed more than once a week since they do not get any other form of food in the enclosures.

"Occasionally mynahs, herons, magpies, and other birds will fly into the enclosures, and the crocodiles will eat them - but this is not often," he says.

Senthil, who joined the zoo in August last year, said Jaws, the oldest crocodile that performed tricks a, died at 50 on January 13. "Now another crocodile will be put in that enclosure and taught those tricks."

MTC buses with doors to stop footboard travelling

SUSMITHA ANN THOMAS

In the next two years all the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) buses will have self-closing doors. 300 buses with self-closing doors have been purchased this year to curb the menace of footboard travelling, according to A. Sathyanarayanan, Assistant Executive Engineer, Safety and Training Department, MTC.

"MTC has a total of 3604 buses where 1804 buses have doors while 1800 buses are without doors. But as a step towards curbing this issue we have closed windows on either sides of the footboard," said Sathyanarayanan. Sathyanarayanan was referring to the recent incident of an MTC driver attacked by school students in K. K. Nagar, after he admonished them for travelling on the footboard.

T. Janakiraman, Driving Instructor, Safety and Training, MTC said, "I, along with five other instructors train around 100 MTC drivers and conductors daily in safe driving. There are four training centres operated by the MTC."

A. M. Shanthi, Manager, Industrial Relations of MTC said, "We provide safety awareness to school students through exhibitions. As part of this initiative some of our officials go to the schools in a bus which has slogans like 'Nodiyil Maranam' (death in an instant) painted on them; they counsel, inform and create awareness among students."

Jnanasambantham, Manager at the Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus (CMBT) said "Tamil Nadu received an award for Best Performance in Road Safety from the Centre last year. Every year a road safety week is conducted throughout India. Under this programme pamphlets are issued and police officials create awareness among drivers and conductors."

Sathyanarayanan said "It is an integration of efforts by the MTC and the traffic cops that can bring a significant change."

Thirumuthuvel Pandi, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Nungambakkam, said "We had summoned and warned five student leaders as these students fight amongst them-



Footboard travellers on MTC
I SUSMITHA ANN THOMAS

to establish their supremacy, especially on that bus route. We can take action against them, but since they are students we do not want to penalise them; rather we just advise and instruct them."

One official acknowledged that bus services were not adequate during the peak hours. However the attitude of these students needed to change.

"We also conduct awareness

campaigns in all the problematic colleges," said S. Gopal, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Police, Traffic Planning, speaking of the colleges that maintain rivalries.

R. Siva, a 40 year-old bus driver, said "The students travel on footboards on purpose. Even when asked not to do so they do not pay any heed to us, resulting in fights. They should consider other passengers on board and start acting mature."

M. Karthik (36), bus conductor at CMBT, said "If someone falls off the bus we (driver and conductor) bear the brunt of it. I will be sent for one month training while for a bus driver it is six months of suspension."

Prabhakaran (25), an engineer, said he travelled regularly on the footboard. "I do it because by the time I return from my office the buses are crowded. So, I'm left with no other option."

B. Rukmini (45), a housemaid, said, "The people who travel on footboard make it difficult for us to get off at our stops. It is a big hindrance when we are in a rush."

Anything is a plaything



Deprived of toys, children of the Rohingya refugee camp, Kelambakkam, make do with leftover food ingredients for entertainment. In frame, a child cracks open a coconut with a sickle to help her mother and later on distribute the husk among her friends

I PHURPA LHAMO & VALLARI SANZGIRI

"Garbage not cleared for last 3 months"

SRISHTI LAKHOTIA

Garbage is piling up at the Thiru. Vi. Ka. Kudiyiruppu tenement at Teynampet because not enough dust bins have been provided even though new ones are lined up at the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB), near the entrance of the colony.

"The new dustbins from Municipal Corporation are yet to be painted," said Rajesh, who works in the Department of Maintenance at the TNSCB.

There are just five dustbins in the area, out of which two are damaged. "One dustbin is shared by two buildings," said Yuvraj, who works as a delivery boy and stays there with his grandmother.

Meanwhile, officials at the Greater Chennai Corporation's Zone 9 office at Nungambakkam said they did not send dustbins for the area. "There has been no reinvestment



Garbage littered near new dustbin

I SRISHTI LAKHOTIA

made in this region. I don't know about this area," said Suresh, Assistant Engineer.

The residents had complained last week about the increasing pile of garbage between buildings and

the Mambalam Canal.

"The heap is increasing and no one comes to clean it. Since last three years, no proper effort has been made to clean the canal either," said K. Venkatesh, a resident there. The TNSCB had asked the tenants to be patient. It also said that the work can only take place after the cleaning tender is given to a private party, he added.

Rajesh added that the contract given to Ramky, a private company, was on the verge of ending. There was confusion with the tender as in the past the Corporation which was supposed to terminate its contract with the company ended up giving it back.

According to the TNSCB, the number of dustbins distributed will be in accordance with the population in that area.

The sewage from public toilets is also let into the canal. "Lack of dustbins force us to throw the gar-

bage on its bank," said P. Anitha, originally from K.K. Nagar and now a resident of T.V.K. Kudiyiruppu.

Pointing to a green coloured cylindrical object, Bhavani, another resident, said that it was a dustbin but then it was now just garbage on the canal bank.

Bhavani, a second year B. Com student, complained of increase in the number of mosquitoes. "Last month, during the rainy season, mosquitoes from the canal and garbage heap made life difficult. Malaria is a common disease here. Last year, my brother had malaria. It is partially also resident's fault as they throw the garbage in the canal," she added.

Pushpa, grandmother of Bhavani, said "The Corporation is doing their work but sometimes they are not. They are not picking garbage or cleaning the canal. They are just cutting the trees here."



De-silted soil from Adyar River to level the hockey ground

I SHREYA SAMTANI

'Smart poles' to come up in 50 locations

TANISHKA SODHI

The newly erected 'smart pole' outside Ripon Building at Periamet boasts of features such as a facial recognition camera, a public address system, an emergency distress call button and a rainfall assessment device.

However, people in the area are not aware how this pole will improve their lives.

According to Shakti, who works at a restaurant in the locality, the smart pole has been erected for the benefit of metro users around

Ripon Building at Periamet.

"I haven't seen this solve any traffic problems yet. No one has come and officially told me anything about this; I have just heard nearby people talk about the new pole and camera that were installed," he said.

According to Raj Cherubal, CEO of the Chennai Smart City Limited, which works with the Greater Chennai Corporation, awareness about the project is low as the smart pole outside Ripon Building is just the first among the many such proposed for the city.

"The smart poles will vary a bit, depending on the needs of the particular area," he said, "There are many factors that go into deciding where a smart pole will be located. Public spaces will be targeted as there is a need there to have such facilities there."

The smart pole is part of the Smart City project undertaken by the Greater Chennai Corporation. As many as 50 locations have been finalised for the installation of the poles, the preparation for which is going on at the Greater Chennai Corporation.

"The camera feed will directly go to the police who will oversee this. They plan to use the high resolution cameras to identify and catch criminals," said Cherubal.

The smart pole has a public address system that draws the attention of the people when there is a civic problem.

According to people in the area, this has only happened a couple of times since the smart pole was installed two months ago.

Satyan, a hotel owner from Kerala, has his hotel diagonally facing the smart pole. "It's good for me

because it provides light at night. I doubt how much use it will be to the public, though. We haven't been made aware of its features, even though we are right here," he said.

Abdul, who runs a travel agency close to the Ripon Building, claims that a lot of petty thefts happen around the area.

"The camera can see what people are doing too. There are people who sleep on the pavements. They have been doing this since years; even the police cannot stop them," he said.

Kotturpuram to get sports complex

SHREYA SAMTANI

Residents of Kotturpuram have requested the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) to raise the level of the hockey ground, located on the Canal Bank road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar, for them to play.

They complained of water logging in the playground during rain as it is a low level ground. "The water filled the ground during the Vardah cyclone, in December, 2016," said P. Haridas (67), a resident. People complained that silt dredged up from the Adyar River is being dumped on the hockey ground.

"Building the hockey ground is part of a bigger project which includes construction of a park and a sports complex at a cost of Rs. 7 crores," said N. Thirumurugan, Zonal officer of GCC (Zone-13). "The construction of a sports complex comes under Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust Project," he said.

Apart from the sports complex and a park, saplings are being planted in a nearby ground using the Miyawaki method (plant growth is faster than usual as native species are planted in the same area).

"This ground is being used for dumping silt from Adyar River as it is in close proximity to it," said Manovaran (45), a resident of Kotturpuram.

C. Podupani Thilagam, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, Kosasthalaiyar Basin Division, Tiruvallur said, "We are using the desilted silt to strengthen

the bunds on the banks of the Adyar river while only the excess quantity of silt is being dumped onto the hockey ground as requested by the Corporation." He said that the silt would be used to level the ground and the work will take around one month.

Most of the residents here are football and hockey players. "Till the time this is being levelled we will be playing hockey in the adjacent playground," said Naveen Kumar (12), an 8th standard student of Kumara Raja Muthiah Higher Secondary School, Gandhi Nagar.

"My sons come here daily but when it rains they can't play for 10 to 15 days as the soil becomes damp - so we asked the Corporation to raise the ground level," said Parameshwari (34), a housewife whose husband is also a football player.

Ramesh (42), another resident said that a new gym will be constructed for both men and women.

However, *The Hindu* had earlier reported, "Residents of Kotturpuram are irritated about the dumping of the silt at a hockey playground located on Canal Bank Road. The Water Resources Department, is deepening and desilting the Adyar River. As per the norms, the desilted silt will be used to form or strengthen the bunds. Instead of strengthening the bunds on the banks of Adyar River running adjacent to the playground, the WRD has dumped the silt on the ground, residents complain."

These tracks are no longer for bicycles only

SRINJOY SANYAL

Due to the lack of maintenance of the designated lanes and encroachment of the same leading to lack of safety, complaints from cyclists all over the city have been increasing since the Bicycle Lane Project was inaugurated here in June 2018.

"The main reason why some of my friends have stopped riding to school is because of the pot-holes on the roads," said Sai Prasanna, a student of the Sri Krishnaswamy Matriculation Higher Secondary School at K.K. Nagar, which has a 3.8 kilometre long bicycle track-- Chennai's first-of-its-kind facility.

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) in association with Chennai Smart City Ltd. has laid 17 kilometres of bicycle lanes in the city. While 13 of those kilometres cover some of the happening parts of the city like Kasturba Nagar, Indira Nagar, Besant Nagar, the remaining four kilometres span across the Island Grounds like Swamy Sivananda Salai, Flag Staff Road, Napier Bridge and Anna Salai.

The project, which had been flagged off

with signboards every 200 metres to indicate the presence of a cycle track and the pathways marked in green thermoplastic paint, is now either packed with two-wheelers and auto-rickshaws or with waste all over.

"The cars and the bikes do not see us as road users. First, they will occupy our space and then constantly honk at us while we are cycling," said Deepak, a resident of Adyar who prefers taking his cycle for short distances. A major side-effect of it is that walking those lanes becomes dangerous as well.

What is worse is that the authorities are reluctant to mend these issues. K. Varadharajan, Executive Engineer, GCC, Adyar, said, "Whenever we go catch a vehicle parked on the bicycle lanes, they say they are waiting. And, they leave within five minutes."

Asked about waste being dumped on the lanes, he said it is the same people riding bicycles who litter the area. "It is equal responsibility of the residents to keep a locality clean," he added.



Parked cars in the bicycle lanes at Indira Nagar
I SRINJOY SANYAL

With the officials not taking much notice, the bicycle communities here led by Felix John have been trying to promote the bicycle culture by addressing these issues. "We are

focusing on personal safety, but considering the severity of the issues, we do raise our complaints to relevant authorities," said the Bicycle Mayor of Chennai.

"Bicycle Mayor" is a global initiative by the Netherlands-based social enterprise BYCS, which focuses on encouraging cycling around the world. According to John, who is also a part of We are Chennai Cycling Group (WCCG), a Chennai-based cyclists group, there are 3,000 active cyclists who ride at least once a week, as compared to just a dozen in 2009.

As reported by *The Times of India*, 14 kilometres were supposed to be dedicated for bicycles at Anna Nagar in 2010 owing to 7000 children cycling to 14 schools in the locality. The plan, however, had fallen through due to lack of funds and metro-rail work.

As a move to further the cause, 18 kilometres of bicycle tracks will soon be laid along the Cooum river and 24 kilometres along the Adyar river as part of the Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust's (CRRT) river restoration project, said R. Balasubrahmanian, Superintending Officer, Special Projects, Greater Chennai Corporation.

Cyber smart police

TN police to get 40 cyber crime cells and 6 labs

TANISHKA SODHI

A woman sits outside the Deputy Commissioner of Police's office in Vepery here, holding a receipt for the police complaint she filed in one hand, and her phone containing obscene unsolicited pictures and messages in the other. She has been receiving such pictures, along with multiple calls, from a phone number in Uttar Pradesh for weeks now.

To better manage such complaints, the Tamil Nadu Police Department will soon have 40 cyber crime cells and 6 cyber labs.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 36 cases of cybercrime were reported in Chennai in 2016. While the city is doing relatively better in this aspect compared to other metros, many cases go unreported as well.

According to Shanmuga Priya, Superintendent at the Cyber Crime Division, constables are currently being recruited and trained for the upcoming cybercrime units. "We are recruiting serving constables and sub-inspectors who showed willingness to work in the cyber-crime units by conducting a screening test along with IIT Madras. Now, they are undergoing training in universities for the same."

Currently, complaints related to cyber crime are forwarded to the cyber crime wing at the Commis-

sioners' office, said a police constable at Egmore Police Station.

According to S. Balu, President of Cyber Society of India, this constant 'redirection' is something that causes citizens to lose faith in the police, something that will change once the 40 cyber cell units

"We have to make common people aware of digital banking and cybercrimes. In traditional banking, the responsibility is more on the banker, while in digital banking it is on the customer."

- S. Balu, President, Cyber Society of India

are established.

"On the top there will be a State Cyber Command center and at six places there will be cyber regional labs. We are also all on the job of creating awareness in all districts about cyber crime," she said.

According to a report by The Hindu, Rs. 28.97 crore has been sanctioned by the government for setting up the cyber stations and labs. Shanmuga Priya said that this is the first time in India that a separate cyber crime unit was being

created.

Police Commissioner A K Viswanathan had recently said that 80 per cent of cases in the cyber crime division are due to the revealing of ATM passwords, OTPs and details of bank account.

Through his organization, S. Balu regularly conducts workshops to raise awareness about cyber-crime, especially among college students. According to him, most bank frauds take place because of the negligence of the customer. Cyberstalking is also a common form of cybercrime where women are targeted by perpetrators who can easily hide their identities online.

"We have to make common people aware of digital banking and cyber crimes. In traditional banking, the responsibility is more on the banker, while in digital banking it is on the customer. Now, we are doing banking operations ourselves, which is why customer education is so important," said Balu, who was also a part of the Cyber Crime Department in Chennai in the early 2000s.

He said that conviction rates are not good as crimes often go unreported. "Blocking a number is just a way to avoid; it won't help find the criminal. One must not hesitate to file a complaint."

Besant Technologies, a computer science coaching centre chain,

SREYA DEB

A message was sent out by the state police recently, stating that viewers of child pornography on the Internet, will be apprehended and penalised under the IT Act and the POCSO Act. Over the last few years, the cases of cyber crimes have been rising. Reports over the last month have shown a flurry of cyber crime cases such as cyber stalking, bullying and distribution of revenge porn being solved, thanks to ethical hacking groups.

While cyber security is yet to reach our educational institutions as a subject of study, it has certainly become something that makes a resume for a computer programming job look a little brighter, says Sheetal, 22, studying ethical hacking from her older brother, who took a course when he was younger.

An ethical hacker is an expert in cyber security and can protect information systems from being breached. This skill is an asset to most IT companies. Training in this field is available only through coaching centres and tutors. Chennai has over 15 coaching centres offering courses on ethical hacking, in addition to their curriculum alongside teaching Java, C++, Python, etc. The number of takers for this study in Chennai, however, is slow in growth.

Besant Technologies, a computer science coaching centre chain,



Ethical hackers have helped solve crimes | WIRE19.COM

offers the course only on Sundays. "There are only about seven to eight students in the batch," says Madan, the manager at Besant Technologies, West Tambaram. "We only require a basic undergraduate degree in Computer Science to sign up for the course."

They offer it at Rs. 18,000, but are planning on increasing it to Rs. 15,000 in a few months time. Sachin Pathak, an ethical hacking trainer here, explains that it is a study of coding with an emphasis on cyber security, penetration of firewalls, and how to avoid security breaches. "You cannot learn 'ethical hacking' without learning how to hack," he says. "Simply put, you get to hack into a private network, with the permission of the network owner, to identify, and prepare it against vulnerabilities and malwares."

Abroad, there are services one

can avail, whereby a team of ethical hackers will be hired by a company, to perhaps trace a hack or add security to their information systems. In India, however, the practice is not as popular yet.

"This is possibly the first generation of students actually paying to learn ethical hacking. Most of my peers and I were teaching ourselves off the Internet when we first heard about it," says Sneha R., an ex student of IIT. She is engaged in a freelance research project and tutors college students on weekends.

The Velachery Branch of the FITA Academy, has only two to three students per batch in its ethical hacking class, and it is the trainer's part time job. FITA offers a range of computer science courses - ones that last a week as well as those that take five to six months to complete.

"There aren't enough students,

because most people do not know what ethical hacking entails. Until three years ago, most ethical hackers were self-trained," said Linda, desk manager at FITA, Velachery centre.

A Madurai based ethical hacker, Kishore T.K., had identified vulnerability in Google's security system and had consequently been invited to the Google Bughunter Hall of Fame. Another, called Laxman Muthiya, found security flaws in Facebook.

Like Kishore and Muthiya, there have been a few isolated cases of ethical hackers from Chennai being celebrated for their achievements, as well as for their capabilities in tracing back the IP addresses of systems distributing illegal content, finding privacy loopholes, etc. Most of these were hackers by night and students or IT professionals by day.

Sheetal says she does see a future maybe two years down the line where ethical hacking will be a much sought after and well paid skill.

"It's like we have to find ways to live with the Internet, not the other way around. I see ethical hacking as a way to fight back against all the news we hear about online financial frauds, identity thefts, and Trojan horses. The internet is huge, and it's easier when you have certain tools," she says.



Sweepers in the process of cleaning Chintadripet fish market in the afternoon | SUKRITI VATS

'No pollution in Chintadripet fish market'

SUKRITI VATS

Chintadripet fish market is not a cause of pollution in the surrounding areas, according to officials in Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) who investigated the allegation in a petition that vendors did not dispose of the waste properly.

"We found that the owners have employed proper mechanisms to dispose both, solid and wet waste. Everyday cleaning is done and the waste from fish and other marine life is collected to be disposed of at a nearby facility for treatment," said Vijay Rajan, District Environment Engineer.

The National Green Tribunal had asked TNPCB to inspect the fish market for possible pollution after petitioner S.Ranjith Fernando complained that the surrounding air quality was affected by the fish waste not being treated properly.

Rajan said, "The vendors use plenty of water for cleaning the market in the afternoon."

"By 1 pm they remove all the collected waste from the sight and use bleaching powder for disinfecting the area. The amount of bleach used is too little to be a cause of concern."

According to him, these findings are crucial because they will form the basis of the report to be submitted to the National Green Tribunal. As reported by *The Times of India*, the first hearing of the case will be held on March 18.

Despite being declared by the TNSCB as "pollution free," the Chintadripet market continues to be a nuisance for the people with shops next to it.

"There is a water stagnation problem here. The overuse of water in the fish market for cleaning purposes leads to the collection of water in small pools in front of my shop,

breeding mosquitoes and other flies. They have made the area very dirty," said Kalaiselvi, who runs a chemist shop near the fish market.

Similarly, A Balaji, who runs an electrician shop next to the fish market, complains of the smell from the fish market among other problems.

"Sometimes the pieces of fish are dropped around my shop, attracting all the stray dogs in the colony. They make the area very dirty with half-eaten pieces scattered everywhere," he said.

Balaji had complained to the Corporation but there has been no response.

Apart from the waste problem, customers who come to the fish market park their vehicles blocking access to shops.

According to the owner of a toy shop adjoining the fish market, his shop is not even visible to outsiders because there are always so many vehicles parked in front. He said, "The vehicles belong to the customers who come to buy fish. The situation is the same at any given time of the day; I don't even know if they are allowed to sell fish in the middle of a market like this."

Even though it has been alleged that the fish market is running illegally, the owner who bought it in 2017 said that he has all the required trade licenses. M Irfan Khan showing his trade licence approved by Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) said, "We have improved the conditions of the market after buying it from the previous owners."

"We have employed cleaners specifically for the purpose of filtering solid from wet waste. The waste collected is sent to a treatment facility for processing. The disposal and cleaning system is much better now," Mr. Khan added.

Fee hike may discourage engineering, says AICTE

SHREYA SAMTANI

Some of the private engineering colleges want the fee to be hiked from the next academic year by at least 50 per cent, said P. Rajendra, Administrative Officer, All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE).

According to the AICTE, increasing the tuition fee might lead to a decrease in the number of students enrolling in engineering courses.

"There are vacancies, but no admissions are taking place even with the current fee structure. The colleges are only going to suffer," said Rajendra.

Media reports have said that 50 per cent of the engineering college seats remained vacant in Tamil Nadu last year and AICTE has decided not to approve the setting up of new engineering colleges.

The colleges want to increase the fees in order to revise the salaries of the teaching and the non-teaching staff, which has not been done since January 1, 2016.

Also, the 7th Pay Commission's recommendations need to be implemented, according to news reports.

P. Parthiban, Fee Fixation Committee officer at Anna University, said "With good salaries, come dedicated teachers. The 50 per cent hike reportedly sought by the private engineering colleges would not be implemented as it is. Instead, we will have to see the income and expenditure statements of the colleges; but the student being the end user will have to pay."

"The colleges which already have a well defined curriculum

might still be able to attract students while the ones not performing well will have to improve themselves in multiple dimensions," he added.

Shrija V. Francis, Head of Department of Biomedical Engineering in Jerusalem College of Engineering (JCE) said, "If we see from the management's point of view, the number of students has come down while the fee structure is the same. Then in order to maintain the same number of faculty members, they are increasing the fee."

"However, it would result in teachers losing their jobs as there would be no students enrolling in engineering courses with higher fees," she added.

Shrija also claimed that the quality of students graduating from the engineering colleges was not good enough to meet the industry requirement.

Also, the number of jobs was low while the number of students were high, according to the department head.

However, R. Ramakrishnan, Controller of Examination (JCE), said "It is not the fee structure but the uncertainty of jobs after graduation that is discouraging students from enrolling in engineering courses."

N. Jaishankar, the Head of Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, in Misirimal Navajee Munoth Jain Engineering College, Thoraipakkam, said that students were not enrolling in engineering colleges because what was being taught was outdated.

Officials ignore complaints, allege SC and ST students

VALLARI SANZGIRI

Government-run hostels in Chennai for college students belonging to the Adi Dravidar community and Scheduled Castes are ill-maintained with poor quality or inadequate water supply and overcrowded rooms, among other things.

Students at the Government Boys College Hostel for Adi Dravidars and Scheduled Castes at Mylapore, said they were falling sick often because of the muddy water they are supplied.

One of the residents, Vishvesh (19), a student of the Vivekananda College, Mylapore claimed that there was a complaint regarding every aspect of this hostel.

Located behind a slum near Thirumayilai railway station, the students of this hostel are often victims of thefts. According to Vishvesh, mobile phone thefts occur almost every week.

"The water stored for bathroom use has become muddy. A lot of students here are suffering skin problems," he added.

Stalin, a second year BA student, who came to Chennai from Villupuram, said, "We have complained to the authorities many times but they ignore our complaints because of our background."

"The cleaners only come once a month and our warden visits occasionally. We have no way of contacting him when he leaves," Stalin added.

Last year, the Srinivasan Services Trust had invested in a project to renovate the government hostels in Chennai under the Adi Dravidar



Other than freshly painted walls, renovation work at Kodambakkam hostel remains | VALLARI SANZGIRI

and Tribal Welfare Department. However, of the three hostels, (Government Boys Hostel in Kodambakkam, ADW SC/ST Hostel in Mylapore and M. C. Raja hostel in Saidapet) only M. C. Raja hostel seems to have benefitted from this project.

Students from the Government Boys Hostel, Kodambakkam, complained about the impending renovation.

The Kodambakkam hostel looks brand new with its freshly painted outer walls. However, according to Vijaykumar, a second year Bachelor of Commerce student from Government Arts College at Nandanam, the students still wait for the toilets to be renovated.

"The western toilet is broken and hasn't been cleaned. The door of that toilet is broken as well and the taps need maintenance. Since we got a new warden last year, we no longer have water-related problems but when I mention the toilets or the lack of a pathway from the hostel gate to the building, the warden ignores my complaints," he said.

Vijaykumar also mentioned that non-students enter the hostel at times. "We do have watchmen here but they slack off during their shifts," he said.

Last October, *The Hindu* had written an article regarding the transformation of M C Raja Hostel. The once dirty hostel known for its unsanitary condition went through a complete makeover.

Maniselman (20), a third year Bachelor of Computer Application student from Thiruvallur, said that a year ago, the hostel was plagued by a foul smell and was in dire need of a clean-up.

"Now the situation has improved drastically. Today, the building has running tap water, regularly cleaned toilets. Even the quality of food has improved," he added.

Students from all three hostels said that there are 10-15 people in every room.

At Mylapore hostel that houses no less than 12 people a room, some of the residents are unregistered. Some of these outsiders get drunk leading to problems.

On a crusade against official apathy

VALLARI SANZGIRI

With a knack for spotting glitches in the local administrative system and an unconventional style of agitating, V. Santhanam (83), also known as "Petition Santhanam", is a social activist who looks into the everyday life grievances of people. The retired trade union leader is known and respected by many at Chrompet.

"I joined the trade union in Chennai in 1990 when I started working at Indian Oxygen Limited. By then I had already entered the Communist Party of India (Marxist) thanks to the encouragement of union leader, V. P. Senthnan," he said.

The union served as a platform for Santhanam to develop his activism.

"I realised the power we, as taxpayers, hold over the public service officials. Whenever I go to the police, I tell them I'm a documented citizen. It is in the Constitution that



V. Santhanam makes his own placard. This one reads, "In search of pavement" | VALLARI SANZGIRI

I have a right to question them," said Santhanam.

However, Santhanam's work as an activist started much earlier in life.

In 1962, the workers of British Oxygen India Limited had complained to him about the unclean toilets in the factory and taps that spouted contaminated water. When

his formal complaints to the authority failed to have any effect, Santhanam decided to take a more radical approach.

"I went to the general manager's office, naked from waist up, with a bucket full of my clothes. I told the general manager we wanted to use his toilet since no one cleaned the toilets in the workers' room. He

laughed but he got my point and had the toilets cleaned. I made a spectacle of myself but I succeeded because my cause was right," said Santhanam.

In 2015, he had staged a protest against the pending MIT flyover construction by bringing a buffalo to the construction site with 'municipality' written on its side. He gave it a cake that said 'five years' denoting the five years that the work had been pending.

"I also make placards that say "In search of pavement" meaning that I walk for a cause. The usual agitations don't have any result but if you create a stir then police take notice and something happens."

Santhanam was later threatened and assaulted thrice for the buffalo stunt. However, he refused to quit activism. He considers the current government a capitalist state.

"This is not a welfare state. Though it is touted as such, it is not. The government machinery itself is anti-worker. The Industrial Labour

Law states eight hours for labourers but these labourers don't have prescribed hours in reality. This is a colonial behaviour," he said.

Despite his fame in his locality, Santhanam has failed four times in the local election.

"I think I must be the only man in Tamil Nadu who contested four consecutive times and received an increasing failure rate," he said with a laugh.

"Even so, I view myself as an unofficial MLA here. If I go to a hospital, I look around for any glitches myself. You can't expect the people to come to you with issues."

Recently, Santhanam formed a Resident's Association where citizens can voice their concerns.

"Goods roads, civic amenities, playgrounds, these are issues of the citizens."

"We don't have a single open ground nearby. This is my favourite subject but I can't do much about it because the MPs and MLAs never seem to care."

V-Day sees an offer surge

Sale dip by 20 per cent this year as people opt for online shopping

SUSMITHA ANN THOMAS

Roses and red colour hold remarkable value on Valentine's Day. However, when the day is a weekday (Friday) as it is this year, shop owners and traders in Chennai have mixed feelings about their sales.

S.Thangam (50), owner of Adyar Anand Florist, said, "Rose is the most sought flower on Valentine's Day with around 300 being sold on a normal day and the number has shot up to 5000 on the 13th and 14th of this month."

"And now more sales are happening because it is not just limited to young lovers. For the past 10 years on Valentine's Day, a man, who is 70 years-old now, comes and gets roses for his wife. Similarly a company has ordered 200 roses for its employees," he added.

M.Saravana (45), Manager, Archies, Adyar, said, "We have introduced special products like couple ring, couple statue, couple cup, teddy bear, message bottles and greeting cards exclusively for Valentine's Day. But, in all our stores across Chennai, sales have decreased by 20 per cent this year because more and more people are opting for online shopping."



Roses sell more as Valentine's Day approaches | SUSMITHA ANN THOMAS

Prashanth (24), Manager, Café Coffee Day, Velachery, said, "We are providing gift package of four days to Singapore and Goa to two lucky customers who come first and second in the lucky draw we are holding. There are also Rs. 500 gift vouchers for 500 customers. Last year the sales were great – around 70,000 people had participated. This year we are expecting a 10% increase in customers."

Restaurants and movie houses also have offers for the day.

Arun, Manager, Patisserie, Velachery, said, "We have introduced a special menu just for Valentine's Day, providing a four-course meal

to couples with the desserts having a red theme."

N. Karthik (28), Executive Manager, PVR, Velachery, said, "Movies like Vaaranam Aayiram, Vinnaitaandi Varuvaayaa will be played from the 14th till the 20th of this month, since the new Kollywood movies releasing on the 14th are very few."

Lucy, Makeup Artist, MAC, Velachery, said lipstick sale increases as women like it. Here, instead of online platforms which take time to deliver, people prefer shops because they can buy it across the counter. Also, the option of finding the right colour is possible only at a

store. "So we are expecting great sales with the offers we are giving," she added.

Deepika, a beach vendor of ice gola and spring potato, said, "On lover's day last year I earned an extra Rs 3000 to Rs 4000. But now since board exams are approaching, the number of people coming to the beach has decreased. But, since the day is a Friday, I'm hoping to make at least the exact amount I could make last year."

A. Balaji, Manager, Tanishq, Adyar, said, "We have a 20 per cent discount on diamonds, colour stones and silver from the 7th to the 16th of this month. Moreover, we have come up with a Valentine's Day collection of the latest designs."

Sabuj Kumar Mandal, Assistant Professor, Economics, IIT Madras, said people were generally assumed to be rational beings but a day like the Valentine's Day questions the very existence of rationality.

"We are more than happy to spend Rs. 100 on chocolates wrapped in a bright red wrapper which would cost Rs. 50 otherwise. More than the quality of the chocolate, the wrapper is what that really matters," he said.

Films canned for years

SHREYA HARIDAS

After being canned for four years Gautham Menon's *Enai Noki Paayum Thota*, that hit the screens in November 2019, has won the audience's heart. His next film Vikram-starrer *Dhruva Natchathiram*, which had started its process in 2016, is set to release in 2022. Other films like 1818 (boxed for 3 years), *Aakko* (boxed for 5 years) *Bhogi* (boxed for 5 years) are expected to release in 2020.

An assistant cinematographer speaks of a film he has been waiting for since his childhood. "Marudhanayagam is a Kamal Haasan-starrer, that started its filming in 1997, but has not been released yet. The film has been put on hold due to protests relating to caste issues."

In 2019, when the number of movies released was 209, the number of films that could not be released was around 103 or 49.28 per cent. When big budget and high star value films face such a fate, what would be low and mediocre budget films, with or without star value be facing?

Arunlal S P, a VFX producer who works in south Indian film industry, says that almost 40-50 per cent of the films made in Tamil do not reach the theatres. "If you take

a casual walk along the Kodambakkam-Valsaravakkam stretch, you will see thousands of posters saying 'shoot begins today', or 'casting call'. But those films are never seen on screens."

2013 to 2017 saw only 30 to 40 per cent of the films certified by the CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification) released. For example, in 2016-17, when 304 films were certified by CBFC, only 189 were released. The data for 2015-16 stands at 188 of 291 and for 2014-15 it is 208 of 297. The CBFC data for 2018 and 2019 were not available.

But the films also need to have luck to reach the CBFC. This is mostly in the hands of the producers. Producers often cheat the director and mess with the process of the film, putting the director himself in debt. Sometimes, the producers do not buy a film because they 'do not like' the final output. An example is the movie *Varma*, a remake of the Telugu film *Arjun Reddy* with slight differences. *Varma* was canned because it did not reach the expectations of the producers, but a Tamil remake of *Arjun Reddy* was filmed as *Adithya Varma* in just 45 days.

Nadodigal 2, which is a sequel of the hit-film *Nadodigal* (2009), had completed its work in June 2018, but had to be withheld due to

financial hurdles till January 2020. *Madhagaraja*, a Vishal-starrer that started work in 2012, has still not planned its release.

Another factor that influences release is the politics behind a film. An example is 2019's *Comali*, starring Jayam Ravi. Due to strong political statements, its release was withheld, but thanks to the crew and money power, the film could hit the screens. *Vizhithiru*, a low budget film due to be released in 2012, was released in 2017. Now, *Droupathi* has been shelved due to caste issues and misogynistic comments. The film has low star value for its release without anyone's support.

Film critique Bharadwaj Rangan says, "Films are easier to make these days, but it needs a strong producer to take it to the screens. Even if they have a good film with low star value, they can make contracts with the theatre owners like, 'distribute this film if you want my next film with high star-value.'" Citing films like *Angaditheru* and *Subrahmaniapuram* that released in the earlier part of this decade, and ran on the back of just a good script and no star-value, he said, "It is hard to have such films nowadays. Films like *Peranbu* ran only because of star-value of Mammootty."

Hinduism and India's road to modernity

SHRIJA GANGULY

Swami Vivekananda countered German philosopher Georg Hegel's theory that only the West had ability to reason, which was the basis for true science and philosophy, and that all other religions were dead rituals as they did not possess the faculty to reason, according to author Makarand Paranjape.

Speaking at the launch of his book *Swami Vivekananda: Hinduism and India's Road to Modernity*, he said contrary to Hegel's beliefs, Vivekananda pointed out that it was Christianity and Europe that were at loggerheads with Darwin's theory of evolution. In his famous Chicago speech, Vivekananda had turned Hegel around and said that it was only the

Hindus today who could accept science, as their entire way of understanding spirituality was based on "verifiable experience" or *anubhav*.

Paranjape's book traverses through the life of the Swami, and his ideology that snowballed into him laying a new foundation stone for *Vedanta*.

The book launch at T. Nagar saw a panel comprising Dr. S. Rammo-han, Swami Isha Premananda, Makarand Paranjape, and K. N. Ramaswamy discussing Vivekananda's ideas.

Vedanta, like any other Hindu tradition, is defined as the one which has its ideals in the impersonal Supreme Being or the Paramatma. A scholar on Vivekananda and his works, Paranjape talked

about practical *Vedanta* which comprises two lectures delivered by the Swami.

The author read excerpts from both the lectures with stories from the *Upanishads*. He said, "In ancient India, *Vedanta* was practical. The proof of it is that the greatest sages were kings and not Brahmins or priests. The rulers were the custodians of knowledge. Indian spirituality was not other-worldly. It was this-worldly. It is one of the few systems in the world which does not promise anything in the afterlife. Spirituality lies in attaining success. It is actually about *shreyas* (the idea of succeeding in this life) here and now and to attain immortality."

Swami Isha Premananda said, "Only another Vivekananda can understand what this Vivekananda said because of his vast knowledge." The head of the Ramakrishna Math in Chennai said he agreed with Swami Vivekananda that *Vedanta* was not exclusive for ascetics and renouncers. Other people could also follow it.

Vivekananda's guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa practised several traditions. Vivekananda continued on the plural path as well. "However, the difference between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda was that the latter could be assertive when required, that is, in cases of motivated attacks such as conversions that went against Hinduism or defaced it. Hinduism need not be aggressive. All the Hindu deities are armed but it is not like they are always fighting. It gives no license

to be needlessly aggressive," he said.

Premananda said, "The extremist form of Hinduism is easy Hinduism where you can get by without reading anything or knowing about your traditions that only comes with experience." He cited the examples of Steve Jobs who had visited India in search of spiritual peace. Yogic traditions had become a resort for the West that was now tired of its materialistic environment.

Not debunking the power of science, Paranjape called himself "an optimist for India" and emphasized the need for a rigorous academic study of every culture and tradition. "All of us must agree to disagree, for differences exist," he said.

Haokip howler keeps Chennaiyin in title race

SRINJOY SANYAL

With the match deadlocked, as Thongkhsiem Haokip ran past Chennaiyin FC's centre-backs, with only the goalkeeper to beat, Chennaiyin FC's hopes to secure a play-offs berth seemed to go up in smoke. But, when the Manipuri forward struck the woodwork with 10 minutes of regulation time remaining, even Sunil Chhetri, who was on the sidelines, covered his face with palms in disbelief.

The 50th ISL match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here ended 0-0 on a night in which both teams could be accused of profligacy, leaving Bengaluru FC (29 points in 16 matches) third in the table and the hosts (22 points in 15 matches) one place away from the top 4.

There were chances squandered by both sides as nerves seemed to get to the forwards, with them rushing into shots. Or, in CFC's case, the league's second-highest goal-scorer,

Nerijus Valskis dropped deep at times to facilitate the wingers into play – a move that didn't pay dividends.

There was a pall of gloom among the 10,953 attendees as India captain Sunil Chhetri's name was missing from the team sheets. India's leading goal-scorer in international football was replaced by Ashique Kuruniyan on the left flank in a 4-3-3 formation. CFC also missed their key player Anirudh Thapa to injuries, who was replaced by Afghani Masih Saighani in midfield in a 4-2-3-1 setup.

The match started with the higher-placed team dominating proceedings with CFC's Vishal Kaith drawn into a couple of saves and the BFC wingers – Ashique and Udanta running at their backline. The big-match pressure seemed to affect the hosts as goalkeeper Kaith once fumbled the ball to concede a corner.

The biggest chance of the half, however, fell CFC's way with 31 minutes on the clock,

as the Hero of the Match, Rafael Crivellaro played in Chhange with a beautifully weighted pass, only for the winger to blaze it over the crossbar despite having lots of space around him.

Though the numbers suggest a different story with the hosts having 54 per cent of possession in the first-half, it was BFC who looked the dominant of the two.

The second half started with Crivellaro orchestrating the midfield – dropping his shoulders, twisting and turning his hips to wriggle past the opposition. Similarly, he laid a ball outside the box for Valskis to charge in, but strike a powerless shot for keeper Gurpreet to register his first save of the night. It was then BFC's turn to send the West Block Blues (BFC's official fan club) into disbelief.

If Udanta, playing on the right, slipped inside the penalty area, thus failing to fire a shot, Rahul Bheke – a long throw specialist – delivered deep into the box for it to go un-cleared across the face of the goal and an un-

marked Haokip fired it into the side netting. Moments later, India's right-back was clearing Suresh Singh's shot off the line after Crivellaro, who has got six goals and six assists to his name this season, bisected three markers to lay a through-ball for Suresh to slot it home.

It was a period of intense madness as three golden opportunities were wasted in a space of three minutes. Haokip was again on the wrong side of things as CFC's Schembri was dispossessed by Juanan, who then delivered an immaculate long ball over the hosts' backline, only for the substitute to let the ball ricochet off the left post.

To make matters worse, Thoi Singh, deputising for Andre Schembri, was shown a second yellow after needlessly bringing down Borges. Reduced to 10-men, the side, which had scored 15 goals in the previous four games, sat deep and somehow survived the late flourish to end the Southern Derby on even terms.



A poster from the event

| MAHIMA MANIAR

Every drop counts

MAHIMA MANIAR

Having tankers to deliver water daily is not sustainable for a long time and the poor people will be affected the most, said Dr. William Pennock, a Fulbright-Nehru Researcher in Chennai. "Water was a big issue in Chennai which has lost many lakes and canals," he said in his speech at the Water Matters exhibition at the Periyar Science and Technology Centre being held from February 12 to 29.

The exhibition was organized by the US Consulate General in collaboration with Care Earth Trust (CET), the Government of Tamil Nadu, and the Smithsonian Institution.

Inspired by Smithsonian's travelling exhibition, *H2O Today* held in Bengaluru, the water expo was inaugurated by Academy Award winner A. R. Rahman in the presence of Consul General Robert G. Burgess and CET Managing Trustee, Dr. Jayshree Venkatesan. "The exhibition comprises film screenings, interactive experiments, heritage walks and lectures. It emphasizes on the centrality of water across themes, geographical areas and time scales," said Seetha Gopalkrishnan, project matter, CET.

Anirudh Kishore, project assistant, CET, said, "In Chennai, either we have too much water, or too little. We never seem to have enough. This is for a city which has so many lakes and wetlands..."

In the context of Tamil Nadu, there was a separate section on how water has been an integral part of South Indian culture. It further elaborates the various technologies in place to promote sustainable water management. "Chennai has an urban heat island effect. Wetlands, lakes and any natural vegetation cover keep the climate cool. So, the economic services that are associated with what natural ecosystems provide cannot be replaced by tech-

nology. This is where preference towards nature-based interventions makes more sense," Kishore said.

Locker, a two-minute documentary, directed by Selvaraj R., was also shown, highlighting the importance of water.

The exhibition deals with the concept of water and climate change in relation to water scarcity in Chennai. Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems, which provide carbon sequestration, flood control, and groundwater recharge. However, urbanisation for meeting the demands of a growing population has resulted in the loss of Chennai's wetlands. It has forced Chennai to expand south and southwest, causing a further disconnect between urban and environmental planning.

"Chennai has faced floods and droughts. It all boils down to the effective management of natural resources and to make water sustainable. Chennai gets water in the first quarter from rains; in the second quarter, from the lakes; and in the last quarter, ground water is used," said Kishore.

"Everyone has to consciously take ownership of the fact that water matters. Every drop saved is every drop gained to ensure we leave some water behind for the next generation," said Padmapriya Baskaran, a heritage blogger and author. She conducted a heritage walk around the township of Chintadripet created around Cooum River on February 9, preceding the exhibition.

Srivatsan Sankaran, a travel photographer and founder of Madras Photo Bloggers, said, "It is important to protect the Cooum River since it was important for transportation and provided employment for the people." The Smithsonian-curated exhibition is open to the public till February 29 at the Periyar Science and Technology Centre. Entry is free.

SHREYA HARIDAS

As spectators crowded around a make-shift stage to see the famous Jallikattu bulls, a Kangayam bull from Sivaganga, pounced at the audience. An even more aggressive Naattumaadu Jallikattu bull, whose nose was covered with houseflies, stared at the performance and belatedly.

This was the scene at the third edition of Village Ticket - *Idhu Namma Ooru Thiruvizha* (this is our land festival), held in Chennai. Villages of 32 districts in Tamil Nadu came together at this live village setup organised at the YMCA Ground, Nandanam, from 6th to 9th Feb. This was aimed at preserving the great tradition and culture of village life by honouring farmers, artisans and cooks.

Village Ticket 2020 was inaugurated by K Pandiarajan, Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture.

Sreedevi Devarajan, who takes her five-year old girl to one of the village houses to teach how food is



prepared in pots, said, "This whole setup is nostalgic. My daughter has never been to my village in Dindigul, so I love explaining all these things to my daughter."

Customs that even adults did not know of drew them to ask the villagers their relevance, like how cow dung was used to brush teeth, wash vessels and as cooking fuel. At the traditional musical instru-

ments' display, fathers stopped to show off their *ghatam* (a clay percussion instrument) skills to their children.

Amidst a temple setup with a massive chariot and a giant wheel, artists from the villages performed cultural dances like Karagattam, Mayilattam, Kaalaiyattam etc.

A bullock cart, horse cart and cycle rickshaw took the visitors

around and dropped them at various stalls where one could try palmistry, tarot card reading by parrots, potters' wheel and a paddy setup where children tried farming, colouring their arms brown with the mud.

Apart from these, the other highlight was that visitors could experience culinary skills of villagers across 32 villages.



Kangayam bull (left), kid taught to process rice (top) | SHREYA HARIDAS

Art Director, T Deepan, who was in charge of the set-up, told how the mud houses could stand very harsh climates like heavy monsoon and hot summers. During summers, the houses remained cold. He said, the PM Awaas Yojana should also concentrate on building these cheap houses of traditional value, to which water and electricity can be supplied easily.