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Wage inequality among fishermen

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Perumbakkam still battles crime

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'Shaheenpet' women refuse to quit

After police brutality on Feb 14, Wannarpet founded a Shaheen Bagh-like protest

SAYANTAN GUHA

Ignited by the reported police excesses on February 14, the anti-CAA protests, led by women, continued at Washermanpet, here.

The protest which has come to be known as, 'Chennai's Shaheen Bagh,' started on February 14 when the police allegedly lathi-charged the crowd. Ever since then, women have been filling up the narrow alleys of north Chennai and voicing their opinions against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens and National Populations Register.

Organised by the Wannarpet Mosque Federation, the protesters believe that their non-violent, civil movement has given rise to a wave of anti-CAA emotions across Tamil Nadu including Tiruchi, Coimbatore, Tirunelveli, Salem, Vellore and Madurai. After it was passed on December 11, 2019, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act has attracted detractors in Chennai just like it did across the rest of India.

Dr. Nargeez Sultana, a human rights activist, says, "I have been part of these protests from the start but they were always scattered and not intense. This has allowed the

Tankers maybe

blacklisted

strike without prior notice.

The three-vear contract with the

tanker owners ended in October

"They were trying to scare us

with the sudden strike. It has not af-

fected us but it may affect them,"

said A. Muruganidhi, Aavin Deputy

General Marketing Manager. He

added that help was also offered by

agencies like Milma and Nandini.

Muruganidhi said that the new

tankers arranged were being given

the same payment but the demand

of the tanker owners who are on

strike is for a higher payment for

However, Tamil Nadu Dealers

Employees Welfare Association

president S.A. Ponnusamy said,

"The tanker owners have not been

paid for the past three months. So

they are now demanding that the

three month payment be settled and a hike be given as per the diesel rate. They have asked for a 30 per

According to him, the tender should be renewed every two years with regard to the diesel price. Pon-

nusamy said that in 2014 the pay-

ment was increased to Rs 32 per km

but again the rate was brought

down to Rs 24 per km and it remai-

"After December 2018 the ten-

der has not been extended. The die-

sel rate has increased to almost Rs

70 per litre now. In October 2019, a

similar strike was announced but it

was called off because the then Ma-

naging Director of Aavin, C Ka-

maraj had said that he would look

into the matter but he didn't. So the

Aavin has now announced its de-

cision to float fresh tenders for the

transport of milk even after the

strike was withdrawn. Ponnusamy

alleged that Aavin had plans to give

the tenders to a company which he

said is a benami company of two

Tamil Nadu ministers. "If the tan-

ker owners' agreement is cancelled

they may go to the court and get a

stay on the tender," he said.

owners are now forced to act."

the next three years.

cent increase."

ned the same since.

RIZVI SAIF



Several protestors have gathered near Bharath Theatre at Washermanpet | SAYANTAN GUHA

police to overpower these protestors and detain them in marriage halls on questionable grounds."

The police did not permit these protests even after regular pleas. "Since January 14, we kept asking for a large enough place to sit and protest in but no such space

However, on February 14, the police came and allegedly instructed the protesters to clear, before evening, the two streets at Washermanpet, where the crowd had gat-

was allotted," says Sultana.

Farsana, one of the protestors, said, "At around 5:30 p.m. the police came and carried on the first round of lathi-charge after we refused to move." Initially, there were only 40-50 protestors. "The police came in two vans and detained 42 people." But, as the news of the brutality spread, people started to join in thousands. Then, around 7:30 p.m. the policemen came back in large numbers. Hundreds of them barricaded the area. Another round of lathi-charge followed and

detained and injured. The protestors claim that they were manhandled by the police. "Five-six policemen were dragging

hundreds of people were arrested,

one woman to the vans, worse than how animals are treated," said Farsana. Over 200 protestors were reportedly detained

Later that night, an agreement was reached and the police released the detained protesters immediately. According to Latif, President of the Wannarpet Mosque Federation, "To sit for the protest was a decision of the women. We can only try to help them. They have pledged not to move until their fear concerning their children being thrown into detention camps is not

Imitiaz, a volunteer at the protest, said, "During the weekends we saw so many women turning up, but we thought that on Monday the numbers would go down. Surprisingly, more women turned up on Monday.'

Sadia Anzum, another protester, said "The success of these protests lies in the huge turnouts. Women from all backgrounds are coming with their children, leaving aside their work, and trying to secure the future of our country."

The women have gone to the local AIADMK MLA D. Jayakumar, asking him to convince the government to revoke the act in the

The Chennai Shaheen Bagh has found a lot of support. People have turned out to speak on the stage and champion their cause.

"Yesterday, the Hindus helped us with vegetables and fruits as our community had helped them during the 2016 Vardah cyclone," said

People are voluntarily bringing in fruits, vegetables, milk, biscuits and oil in any amount they can. The protestors eat the food that is cooked by the women.

"Our fight is not against AIADMK or BJP. Our fight is against the CAA and the NRC and we will go on until our demands are met," affirmed Farsana.

While the Government has called these protests misguided and the protesters uninformed, Farsana keeps saying, "If we have misunderstood the law why not come and make us understand? During the elections the ministers can come asking for votes at our doorstep, why not now?"

Sadia, eyes unwavering, said,"Lathi-charge karo, goli maro hum nahi haatne wale" (Whether they lathi-charge or shoot us, we

Set to sail



Early in the morning, fishermen on the Marina launch their boat for another day's catch RITUPARNA PALIT

Commandos to prevent beach drownings

SASHWATA SAHA

Fifty commandos of the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services (TNRFS) have been deployed along the 5 km stretch of the Marina Beach, here, as a precautionary measure to prevent drowning inci-

The coast line which is infamous for these accidents is expected to become safer. The commandos are based out of the Marina TNRFS station on Dr. Besant Road at Triplicane, which was inaugurated, earlier this year, on January 29. The rescue unit officially begins its tenure on March 1.

Vendoodth CA, a TNRFS officer said, "Our commandos have been undergoing an 18 day scuba diving training programme since the first week of February. They also undergo daily beach exercise regimens that helps improve their stamina and endurance. The commandos, till now, have all been fire fighters and in order to get accustomed to their roles as marine rescuers and lifeguards, they need to be trained in all manners of deep sea diving.'

The unit is equipped with oxygen cylinders for victims who are having respiratory issues, life jackets and water wheelies which are used by lifeguards to pull a drowning person out of the water and keep them buoyant.

Vendoodth said the commandos would also have to be trained in the use of personal safety devices to

avoid getting drowned themselves. In addition to learning deep sea rescue operations, the commandos are also training in rock climbing as well as in the use of all terrain quad

motorcycles and water ski scooters as well as identifying rip currents (which pull away into the sea) in various spots along the beach K. Parthiban, another TNRFS of-

ficer, said "We are currently identifying spots where the rip currents are at the strongest and accordingly place warning signs in those areas. The rescue forces are to be posted in order to keep a watch over those areas and ensure that no one is breaking the rules and be ready for a rescue when necessary.

According to the Coastal Security Group of the Tamil Nadu Police, the Marina stretch is one of the most fatal beaches in the state. In 2016, 40 drowned in the area which prompted the government to take action. In 2017, the number came down to 19 and in 2018, it went down to 10. However, in 2019-20 (till now), the number of fatalities went up to 22 which prompted the inception of this task force.

M. Shankar, an IT professional who is a frequent visitor to the beach, said, "It's appreciated that the government is taking such steps. This will prevent a lot of deaths. However, they should really look out for people who get drunk here and wade deep into the water and drown. Alcohol at the beach must be a strict 'no'.'

LPG price hike highest in 6 years

RAHUL MANOJ

Private tanker operators employed Consumers, eateries and even gas by Aavin maybe blacklisted by the agencies are unhappy with the in-Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Procrease in LPG prices. The price of ducers' Federation for going on non-subsidised liquified petroleum gas (LPG) has been hiked by oil The strike was called by the tanmarketing companies from Rs 734 ker owners, who transport the milk to Rs 881 here. The rate prevailing from Bulk Milk Coolers (BMC) in now is the highest in six years and district unions to the dairies in there has been a hike every month Chennai, demanding a hike in paysince August 2019. The price of the ment. The strike started on Friday 19 kg commercial LPG has also innight and was withdrawn on Tuescreased to Rs 1589.50 as against Rs

1363 in December 2019.

The increase in petroleum prices is the major factor behind the price increase. The Government of India provides subsidy on domestic cylinders which is directly credited to the individual's bank account on purchase. However, the subsidy amount varies every month as it is dependent on international oil pri-

The subsidy has also been increased from Rs 161 to Rs 326 now. After taking the subsidy of Rs 326 into account, a 14.2 kg domestic cylinder now costs Rs 555 for consumers eligible for subsidy.

"Despite the price rise, we have not witnessed any dip in demand as the households cannot cook without a domestic cylinder. Our bookings continue to be around 14,000 cylinders per month," said Hema-



Domestic LPG cylinder prices are at an all time high of Rs 881 RAHUL MANOJ

latha, Manager, Sabha Indane Gas Agencies, Maduvankarai.

She said that normally, LPG rates are revised on the first day of every month. However, this time, it took nearly two weeks more for the revision to take place because of the approvals needed for a huge iump in the subsidy. She added that the customers

who have made online booking at the old rate have to pay the revised amount of Rs 881. If the customers have already paid Rs 734 online, they have to pay the extra amount of Rs 147 at the time of cylinder

Viiayalakshmi, Manager, Savitha Gas Agency, Adambakkam, said "Before the price rise, we were getting orders of 200-250 cylinders per day, now it has reduced by 50-100 cylinders per day." Though the government decides the final price. customers argue with us over the price hike and a lot of time is spent in answering their queries affecting our daily work, added Vijayalaks-

She also said that consumers who are in the non-subsidized category have no protection from the government. They have to pay the revised price and this hike will burn their pockets.

Baskar Subramaniam, owner, Venkateshwara Boli Stall, Adambakkam, said "Even though the government has increased the price of Commercial Gas cylinders, I cannot afford to increase the product prices as I will lose customers."

Alex Papiah, delivery boy, Sree Jayam Gas Agency, Teynampet, said "The hike of Rs 147 per cylin-

der now is very high for the customers and they have cut down on

Malini Raiesh, a housewife, said

"Even with the increased subsidy

by the government, it has hit my

household budget as I have to make the full payment first and then wait for the subsidy to be credited." Malini added that with poor people already reeling under the high prices of onions and milk, the rise in LPG prices will hit them hard

and they will not be able to afford buying cylinders on a regular basis. Sundar Ganesh, a street vendor. Velachery, said "Due to the price hike, I am considering shifting from LPG to cooking on stoves as it works out cheaper for me in the long run.'

Narbadeshwar Mishra, Financial Research expert, Institute for Financial Management and Research, Sri City, Andhra Pradesh, said "The recent increase in LPG is the steepest till now, the household consumption of the middle income class and those staying in the joint family will be affected, since a hefty amount is spent on LPG."

He added that the trickle-down effect of LPG subsidy is also fairly low and it takes a long time to compensate the sacrifice made by the people in the view of the current economic slowdown.

Kannagi Nagar residents want water not paintings

PHURPA LHAMO

More than paintings on their walls, the residents of the Kannagi Nagar Slum Clearance Board (SCB) tenements say they want their basic needs such as water supply to be

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) in collaboration with the St+art India Foundation, Chennai Smart City Limited and Asian Paints launched a project in July last year to paint the walls.

A group of 16 artists of whom five are foreigners have come together to paint the walls of Kannagi Nagar SCB tenements. The work is expected to be finished by March

Though some residents welcome the move to brighten up their lives, not everyone in the community appreciate the initiative.

Among the common reasons for disapproval is the Greater Chennai



About 16 artists from the St+art India Foundation started work in July last year and expects to end it by March 13 this year | PHURPA LHAMO

Corporation's (GCC) lack of action towards the community's major issues of unemployment and lack of

basic needs such as water. Abdul Salim, a resident of the tenement, said that unemployment was a major concern for the people. Since he moved to Kannagi Nagar

a year ago, he has been shifting to various occupations.

"I do whatever I can find to earn an income. I have a child and I need to send her to school. This painting isn't going to bring me an income, right?" he said.

Today, the GCC has spent about

Rs 50 lakh for the mural paintings, said the Smart City Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Raj Cherubal. GCC and Smart City also provide

accommodation and meals to the

The residents want the corporation to invest the money on other purposes such as solving the water scarcity issue, road maintenance and cleanliness of the area.

Another resident, J. Murugan, said that a majority of households in the Kannagi Nagar SCB tenements received water once a week while a few received it once every four days.

"There are so many issues. We don't have water and we have to store it for future use. It is not enough but we don't have an option either. I wish the corporation would try solving other issues over these paintings," J. Murugan said.

On the other hand, others in the community said the makeover was almost like having a new identity, as the community is already infamous for its high crime rate and violence.

S. Kalaiyarasi, a resident of Kannagi Nagar, said that ganja sale and use, stabbing and other forms of violence are common in the

"These painting give a fresh look to the community. It makes the community look inviting and gives us happiness," she added.

tion would allow the commuters to view Kannagi Nagar tenements as a place of beauty. 'The paintings look awesome and the mood feels much lighter

Others said that this transforma-

with bright colours surrounding us," said J. Sandy, 20. Some saw the initiative as an at-

tempt to bring attention to a community neglected and secluded from the city area.

St+art India Foundation's assistant curator, Karan Kaul, said that paintings were more like an art museum displayed at Kannagi Nagar's buildings. "We also chose Kannagi Nagar because this area has been neglected and people have resettled here from various parts of the city," said Karan Kaul.

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Will TN Budget help fishermen?

RITUPARNA PALIT

Despite a 31.3 per cent year-onvear increase in the state budget allocated to fisheries, fishermen are not very hopeful about any improvement in their lives

In its budget announcement on February 14, the Tamil Nadu government allotted Rs 1,219 crores for fisheries.

A. D Vijayalakshmi, Assitant Director (Marine), Fisheries said, "While Rs 18 crores will be used to fit transponders to 5,687 mechanized boats, the rest will be used for continuation of already existing schemes like National Fishermen Saving Scheme, Special allowance during non-fishing period, Relief scheme for Tamil Nadu fisherwomen, development of fish landing facilities, etc.'

N R Karthikeyan, Superintendent (Marine). Fisheries, said that the introduction of transponders will allow fishermen a two-way communication even beyond 100 nautical miles from the shore, which is unachievable through equipment used currently by mechanized boats: satellite phones, Navic, Navtex or VHF handset.

The latest transponder version that costs Rs 35,000 has been tested on 507 boats from Chennai, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari.

Barathi M, a fisherman at Nochi Kuppam, said, "While most of the schemes are targeted for the privileged fishermen who can afford

Unlawful sale of

antibiotics in city

"It is been a long

pharmacists. It is a

starting point: the

person who is

dispensing the

medicine is not trained

in pharmacy."



Barathi M. in his motorised FRP boat

mechanized boats worth Rs 60 lakhs to Rs 80 lakhs, fishermen like us using traditional methods have nowhere to go." In order to keep up with the trawler fishermen, Barathi sold his catamaran in 2009 and got a motorized fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) boat. A trawler was out of his reach.

As per the rules laid out by the Fisheries department, the trawlers can go fishing only beyond 5 nautical miles, whereas the fishermen with smaller boats can fish closer to the shore.

Dr. M.D. Dhayalan, President of Indian Fisherman Association, Kasimedu, said, "The industrial effluents discharged into the sea get harm the marine life near the seashore, due to which, these small fis-

hermen end up getting poor catch." "Dredging, which is crucial to keep the sea bed clean, was last carried out 10 years back. It should be carried out once every two years. This has reduced the catch further,' Dr. Dhayalan added.

Talking of the poor income for small fishermen, Dr. Dhayalan said, "While a group of 3-4 of these fishermen invest Rs 2,000 per trip, they make only around Rs 1,500-1,600 from the catch. Even if the catch is good, the profit is not more than Rs 200 per person.

The introduction of GST for fishing nets and diesel price hike has the types of fishermen, Dr. Dhayalan added.

CIVIC ISSUES

One FRP boat costs around Rs 2 lakhs, whereas a motorized FRP boat would cost anywhere between Rs 6 lakhs and Rs 8 lakhs. The government gives 50 per cent subsidy for mechanized boats amounting up to Rs 1 crore, but there are no schemes for fishermen willing to invest in cheaper boats. Once every 4 years, the government gives Rs 20,000 subsidy on motors worth Rs 60,000

Talking of the depleting fleet, Dr. Dhayalan said, "Over the years, the boat strength of 5,000 at Kasimedu fishing harbour has reduced by half. Due to the poor returns, people have quit fishing to take up other jobs like construction work and painting."

Karthikeyan said that there were 17 authorized offices for monitoring the functioning of coastal activities that take place in the 13 coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. Each office has a District Officer assigned for the implementation and education of fishing schemes.

Talking of the 60-day annual fishing ban, Vijayalakhsmi said that it was introduced in 2000 as a 45-day ban, but was later extended to 61day by the Centre in 2018. "Trawler fishermen are barred from fishing from April to June: this replenishes the sea resources and allows the fish to grow to a size suitable for catch.

In 2019-20, Rs 8,354.96 crores

men during the ban period. Dhavalan, however, complained that the Rs 5,000 given to each fishermen's family was inadequate to sustain a living.

Karthikeyan acknowledged that the trawlers using purse seine nets deprived smaller fishermen of good catch. Strict measures were being taken under Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, which imposed a fine or seized the trawlers intruding into the area meant for small fishermen.

Asked about schemes for small fishermen, Karthikeyan said that through the Blue Revolution scheme, Rs 4.25 lakhs was allocated last year for providing Rs 1.70 lakhs subsidy to each fisherman purchasing a 10 metres long FRF boat with an outboard engine. Fishing nets worth Rs 1 lakh and insulated ice box costing Rs 25,000 were also given to the buyers.

The fishermen complained about the insufficient diesel subsidy which is 18,000 litres per year. Saravanan, a trawler fisherman at Kasimedu, said, "4,000-5,000 litres of diesel are used up per trip of 5 days. Instead of giving us subsidy, the government should help us getting diesel at manufacturer's rate that is around Rs 35 per litre. We now pay Rs 75 per litre.

Dhayalan said, "Our association has approached the government several times with issues of small fishermen, but it in vain. It is only the wealthy class that can get benefits



Workers at an Amma Canteen | THE HINDU

Rs 100 cr to revive **Amma Canteens**

New mobile

Amma

canteens to

focus on

construction

workers

SHIVANAND S

The Rs 100 crore allotted in the Tamil Nadu Budget by Deputy Chief Minister O. Paneerselvam to Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) will be used to develop the 'Amma Canteen' program, according to an official.

The government has also decided that a special purpose vehicle (SPV) will be appointed to finance and manage the canteens.

The SPV is said to raise Corporate Social Respon-

(CSR) contributions from private companies and other sources.

A. Venkatesh, Sanitary Officer (SO) at the city corporation headquarters, Chennai said, "The fund will be used for the development of the existing canteens and the new mobile canteen

"The mobile canteens will focus on the construction site workers as they are the largest consumers of the program. The government will continue to provide subsidized foodgrains to run the canteens and it will also issue grants to the SPV.

"The government has also promised to cover the losses due to the difference between expenditure and the revenue," Venkatesh added.

Asked about the losses faced in the past years. Venkatesh said, "The intention of the program is to provide quality food to the poor at minimal rates. Losses were expected from the beginning. With the new idea of the mobile canteen, the program will become more accessible to its prime consumers and we believe that it will help us in coping up with the losses.

Venkatesh also said that a meeting would be conducted by the City Health Officer (CHO) to discuss the new mobile canteen program. The rates and menu for the

Guindy is 'noisiest' area

was initiated by the former Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha in 2013. All the canteens employ only women from self-help groups. It has faced a loss of around Rs 500 crores since the program was launched.

A. Omana, in charge of the Maduravoyal canteen said, "The canteens witnessed huge crowds for the initial 2-3 years, which gradually decreased over the years. Adding new items to the menu

might bring in more crowd." Asked about the reducing

crowds, S. Kumari, in charge of the Chintadripet canteen said, "Few years before, the management decided to open two canteens in all the zones in the city. At that time more people were serving the consumers and since the crowd came down later, the extra money spent on

the maintenance of two canteens added up to the los-

"The scheme also served as a great job opportunity for women, as all the workers in the canteens are women. Amma started the scheme to provide healthy meals to the poor people at an affordable rate. The recent fund, and government support will further help us in

achieving that goal," she added. While the government is preparing to launch a new model of the canteen, the consumers feel that the quality of the food has declined over the years, especially after the death of Jayalalitha.

D. Manimaran, a construction worker and a regular customer of the Amma canteen in Egmore said. "I have my breakfast and lunch here every day. I get more quantity of food here for much cheaper rates compared to any other outside eatery.

However, he added, "The quality of the food ingredients has declined, especially after the death of Jayalalitha but since they provide food for one rupee and five rupees,

I don't feel like complaining.

were invested in supporting fisher-

SAMEER KULKARNI

Several pharmacies in the city continue to sell Schedule H antibiotics without the prescription by a registered medical practitioner in violation of government regulations.

The rampant sale and consumption of antibiotics has led to Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), where the pathogen turns resistant to the antibiotic thus nullifying the

efficiency of the drug. According to the Indian Journal of Community Medicine, AMR has emerged as public major health issue, expected to cause 10 million deaths annually by 2050.

However, pharmacies in the city. including the corporate-run entities, continue to sell Schedule H antibiotics as over-thecounter (OTC) drugs without demanding a prescription, which is the procedure dictated by Drugs and Cosmetic Rules 1945 (amended up to 2016).

The access to stronger antibio-

tics has been further improved by online sales. The newly launched websites and mobile applications enable e-purchase of Schedule H antibiotics. These websites, however, are off the radar as they act as technology platforms, which connect sellers and buyers and "are not involved in sales.' Commonly available Schedule H

antibiotics like Azithromycin, whose over-dosage can lead to loss of hearing, even come with warning saying 'not be sold without prescription.

"There is a demand for these antibiotics among the public and we [chemists] continue to sell it," said a pharmacy owner in Adyar on condition of anonymity.

K. Manoharan, President, Tamil Nadu Chemists and Druggists Association, denied there was any sale of antibiotics without prescription and said he has not received any complaints.

Swami Subramanian, a pharmaceutical R&D expert and author of Mastering Sleep, said "It is been a long standing issue that we do not have qualified pharmacists. It is a starting point: the person who is dispensing the medicine is not trained in pharmacy, which means they would not be able to make the distinction between Schedules and what kind of information should be there on a prescription.

"The other issue is that the doctors prescribe antibiotics when they are not completely required, which is the driver for anti-microbial resistance. The problem persists at the doctors' level not just at the pharmacy level.

"The pharmacists do not follow the regulations so people are able

to, at least in some pharmacies, persuade them to sell a drug that is regulated.' Unregulated

pharmacists aside, self-medihabits cation among people also help the unlawful sale of standing issue that we antibiotics. do not have qualified "Everywhere

in the world people indulge in self-medication because it will cost time and money to go to a doctor," said Thomas George, an orthopaedic sur-

- SWAMI SUBRAMANIAN A PHARMACEUTICAL R&D EXgeon at Isabel Hospital. "Most countries overcome it by pre-

venting it. The same regulation is available in India, but people do not follow it."

Chennai Declaration, a document co-authored by representatives of various medical societies, aims to formulate implementable recommendations to tackle AMR. said "It is obvious that ban of overthe-counter (OTC) sale of all antibiotics without prescription will be the ideal step...but whether such a strict policy could be implemented is questionable."

Abdul Ghafur, Coordinator, Chennai Declaration, refused to comment further on the issue.

In December last year, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) asked all the state authorities to stop the sale of antibiotics without a doctor's prescription at pharma-

"All state and Union territories' drug controllers should sensitize their enforcement officials to keep strong vigil to ensure that such drugs are not sold by retail without prescription of registered medical practitioners...," DCGI V.G. Somani said in an advisory, according

Officials of the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Department were not available for comment.

Parvo affects pet shops

SANCHARI SAMANTA

Sales of dogs have dropped with the outbreak of Parvovirus among canines, say pet shop owners.

"From at least five puppies a week, the sales went down to two to three and now there has not been a single sale this week," says Sanjay Agarwal, owner of the Adyar Pet Shop in Chennai.

Starting from Australia, the Canine Parvovirus has spread to other countries. It is one of the highly contagious pathogens that spreads easily among dogs and cats through direct contact and indirect contact with the faeces or saliva from animals suffering from Parvo, according to A Chowdhary, member of

the Animal Welfare Board of India. Vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite, lethargy and blood in excreted material are the main clinical symptoms observed in the animals

suffering from Parvovirus. "It has been reported so far that parvovirus is more prevalent in puppies less than 100 days old as compared to the mature dogs," he

added. Puppies nowadays are separated from their mothers and her milk too early and put up for sale. This reduces their immunity.

"Also, pets sold online are mostly not vaccinated", said Chowd-

Dr. Dhanapalan, a veterinarian in the Blue Cross Of India, said "One of the main reasons of the origin of these fatal infections are the illegal

Damaged drain

Unsafe: Shaky and broken slabs of Storm Water Drains

in front of the Kasturba Gandhi MRTS Station | RIZVI SAIF



A parvo infected dog being treated with the' Fluid Therapy' in the Blue Cross of India | SANCHARI SAMANTA

import of the foreign breeds of puppies and cats to India.'

According to Dr. Dhanapalan, at least 7 out of 10 puppies infected with Parvovirus are being treated in Blue Cross of India each day.

Dhanapalan said "The virus causes the maximum damage to the gastro intestinal tract and the bone marrow. Villi, the tiny finger-shaped protrusions attached to the intestines, allow it to increase the area needed for the normal absorption of the fluid and nutrients. These cells are frequently replaced by new cells where they get divided

further in the foot of the villi.

"When there is no formation of new cells the villus gets blunt and can no more absorb the food that the animal intakes. This results in diarrhea and vomiting. Further the diarrhea becomes bloody and with the presence of bacteria, it leads to severe infection and around 80 per cent die due to dehydration."

According to Chowdhary, there is an urgent need to educate the pet sellers and buyers of the way to deal with it. He said "Until the illegal trading and selling of animals stops, nothing much can be done."

new canteens will be decided at the meeting. The subsidized canteen program

SAYANTAN GUHA

Guindy is the noisiest industrial area in the city, as per the latest Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) reports, clocking 77 decibels (dB) during daytime and 73-75 dB at night.

The standard limit, however, lies around 65 dB and 55 dB for those hours of the day.

The daily breach of the standardised numbers has impacted the residents of Guindy. R. Murugan, a resident of the area, said, "The noise levels during the peak office hours become unbearable. The traffic on Velachery Main Road is chaotic."

K. Ponnusamy, a daily commuter, said, "Guindy has a suburban railway station and also a metro station which adds to the noise pollution.'

With the railway services extending till midnight, resident S. Vaneeta said, "It disrupts the sleep cycle of our children as they can't sleep because of the noise. But it is not only the traffic, metro or trains but the industries nearby heavily



Heavy traffic adds to the noise pollution | TNIE

add to the noise pollution."

K. Vardharajan, Executive Engineer of the Zone 13 Greater Chennai Corporation, said, "We have received no complaints from the Guindy residential area. Most of the noise is generated by the industrial plants and it is up to SIDCO (Small Industries Development Corporation) to look into that.

"It is a congested area and we are trying our best to maintain the noise levels but the responsibility also lies on SIDCO and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board

However, an official from the

TNSCB said, "We have instructed the GCC to follow certain protocols and it depends on them now." No SIDCO officials were available to make a comment on the si-

tuation. But as the blame game continues, the residents remain the worst hit. S. Suresh, another resident of the area, said, "It's not only the noise that bothers us, during winters we

suffer from heavy smog due to the

emissions from the industries and the traffic.' Talking about the health hazards, Dr. Niraj Joshi, an ENT specialist, said, "The problems of noise pollution are not short-term. It initially leads to irritation and over time can lead to hearing impairment and heart ailments." As the immediate

seldom object. As per the report, Chennai has been recorded as the noisiest metro city averaging 67.8 dB during day, which is higher than Delhi (61 dB).

effects are hard to detect, the people

CITYSCAPE

Displacement causes crime

One case of emergency is reported at Perumbakkam everyday

PHURPA LHAMO

The crime epidemic at the Slum Clearance Board (SCB) tenements at Perumbakkam, Chennai could be the result of 'victims-turningoffenders'- a term used to describe a person who was subject to victimisation leading to them commiting a crime.

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This is according to Dr. S.Ramdoss, a professor at the University of Madras in Chennai.

About 20,000 families were resettled in Perumbakkam from various parts of Chennai. Years after resettlement, issues of unemployment, violence and lack of basic facilities plague the community.

to 54-year-old According Saiyadeli, of about 3,000 working men, only 50 are employed near the tenements. "Others have to go to the old place they worked at to find job because that's where they used to work in the past," Saiyadeli said. Resettlement has left a large

number of people unemployed in the area.

Dr. S.Ramdoss said that although Chennai lacked a study on effects of displacement and resettlement, a study conducted in Canada shows that displacement of people led to rise in street crimes that include use and sale of drugs, prostitution and violence.

Perumbakkam tenement, alcoholism, theft and fights are common.

According to Bedi Salema, a resident of the tenement, moving out of home, after nightfall, is risky as young men of the community



About 20,000 people were resettled at the Perumbakkam SCB tenement from across Chennai city | PHURPA LHAMO

gather around to rob and instigate fights without any viable reason.

'They are either drunk or are on weed. So they always pick fights. We just had a fight in the morning (yesterday)," Salema said.

While adolescents are among the many who are involved in such crimes, Saiyadeli, said that it was also because the parents of these children were involved in similar activities. "These are children of drunkards and prostitutes," Saiyadeli said.

In criminology, this practice of criminal behavior is termed the 'differential opportunity structure.'

Dr. S. Ramdoss said that in 'differential opportunity structure,' if a child is surrounded by adult criminals, the child is expected to also become one in future.

"The person who grows up in the community tends to follow the

footsteps and become an apprentice. These children (at Perumbakkam) come from broken families, single parents, or families where the child was neglected," Dr

The majority of children involved in gang fights, alcohol and drug use are school dropouts and are unemployed.

S. Kuttiammal, a 40-year-old housewife, said that her daughter lived in Egmore due to safety

"The conditions are so bad here. There are fights, stabbing and theft. The schools are also bad," S.

Today, apart from police patrolling the area at night, little is done to help minimise the increasing crimes that take place in

According to V. Manogaran, a constable on duty at the police booth near the tenement, at least one case of emergency is reported at the booth every day.

"It is either a fight among gangs, or theft. When that happens we rush to the scene," said Manogaran.

If a person needs to report or make a complaint, he/she will have to visit the Pallikaranai police station, which is located about 5 km

Manogaran said that a new police station was expected to be built soon in the area to prevent

"Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) installation process is also underway. Wiring has been done and we are expecting about 38

must

such as Uber and Flipkart had

become big companies now, every

new concept proposed by enterpreneurs had disturbed the old

concept. This has resulted in

promising ventures turning into

Drawing from the failure of his

venture, Momenta, which created

touch-sensitive tablets in the late

80's before Apple's introduction of

the iPad, he said his company had

sold 5000 units. Despite initial

success, Elahian was fired from the

Elahian said "To be proud is the

board in April, 1992 due to inflated

killer for an entrepreneur. My first

two companies, CAE Systems and

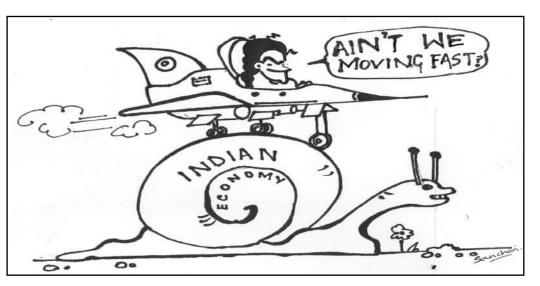
Cirrus Logic were a huge success

and I thought I knew everything."

sales projections of the products.

massive disruptors.

RAHUL MANOJ



Chepauk open for TNPL

SASHWATA SAHA

The M A Chidambaram Stadium at Chepauk, here, which had earlier announced that it would not be hosting any domestic matches for a year following the 2020 Indian Premier League (IPL) season, has now clarified that it would be hosting the 2020 edition of the Tamil Nadu Premier League (TNPL).

On Sunday, February 16, The Hindu had reported that the ground would not be hosting any of the TNPL 2020 or Ranji Trophy matches because the stands I, J and K needed "immediate renovation."

However the repair work has been postponed.

On Saturday, R. Ramesh, president of the Madras Cricket Club which leases the ground, had said in a video message shared on the club's social media handles that the work would take over eight months to complete.

The news sparked fears that the

Start-up Social debuts in Chennai

Chennai Super Gillies would be left without a home ground for the 2020 TNPL season. The home ground advantages are not only psychological and financial (a lion's share of the ticket proceeds go to the home team) but also a tangible one. The pitch is usually conditioned to give the home team advantage over the away team.

The Tamil Nadu Cricket Association had stated on its website that the new grounds built at Salem and Dindigul would replace the Chepauk stadium as alternatives.

"The problem is," said R. Prabhakaran, a grounds management secretary and a member of the team in charge of ground renovation. "neither the Salem nor the Dindigul grounds are in any condition to host TNPL matches which usually attract a 20,000 to 30,000 audience, per match. Then there is the problem with match revenue collection. Losing out Chepauk on the

would lead to huge match day income losses.'

C. Shankar, one of the Chennai Super Gillies' assistant managers said, "If Chepauk was lost to us before the fifth season - a season where we will be defending our title – it would have been terrible! After all, what are the Chepauk Super Gillies without the Chepauk stadium? The team management is glad that the grounds managers have decided to postpone the repair work till after the coming season. This will do the team's morale a lot of good."

The third oldest cricket ground in India, the M A Chidambaram Stadium can seat 50,000 people and is home to the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) of the IPL and the Chepauk Super Gillies (CSG) of the TNPL. Both of the teams are enormously successful in their respective leagues. While CSK has won 3 IPL titles, the CSG has won

children in his backvard. Ali, who

is 26 now, runs Ananda Siksha Niketan, a school which is

managed entirely on donations

without government support in

underprivileged backgrounds have

passed out of the institution with

free education now", said Ali. He

added that his institution enrolled 60 per cent girls and 40 per cent

In his advice to the potential

entrepreneurs, Ali said "Do not

expect success in a day, struggle

and courage are needed in the long

In an interactive session with the

panellists, the members of the

audience pitched their startup ideas

such as connecting aspiring chefs

"Over 6,000 students from

Murshidabad, West Bengal.

boys.



Rohingya children at the Chennai refugee camp | SANCHARI SAMANTA

Frequent pregnancies at Rohingya camp

SANCHARI SAMANTA

It has been only four months since Fatima Sheikh lost her baby, after giving birth for the fifth time. Fatima was informed that her baby died due to malnutrition.

Now, 23-year-old Fatima is pregnant with her sixth baby. She is worried about giving birth to another malnourished baby.

Fatima lives in the overcrowded and unsanitary Rohingya camp in the Kelambakkam area of the city.

The houses in the camp are dingy with barely any ventilation. Each room is no bigger than 10 square feet and stacked with utensils, clothes, mats and cardboards. The area is a breeding ground for the mosquitos. There are 70 people living in the

Anwar Shabti, a refugee at the camp, said," Since we have only three toilets, it is insufficient for so many of us. We had bought two sets of wooden toilets for the pregnant women here, but couldn't fix them inside our room as there is no space left. The toilets are now used to keep our clothes and stuff."

Dr. P Amrutha, who works in the Government clinic in the area, says "Frequent pregnancy increases the risk of death for both mother and child. No matter how much we make them aware, they fail to take contraceptives. Each woman here, gives birth to at least three to four

Most of the women and children suffered from diseases like diphtheria, measles and cholera, she said.

According to the refugees in the camp, they are often confused from where to seek proper medical aid. "In Myanmar, generally women give birth at home with the aid of midwives but here, we can't find such help," says Fatima.

Commenting on the high cost of the medicines and sanitary pads in the outside shops, Asifa Bibi, a seven month pregnant refugee, says, "Every month we cant afford to buy medicines as there is no money left after feeding my four children.'

continuously and many failures are needed to develop an advanced product, said Kamran Elahian, founder of Global Catalyst Partners, at the first edition of the Startup Social, a platform where potential entrepreneurs and venture capitalists meet each other to exchange ideas, was held at the Forum Vijaya Mall here today. Elahian said though startups

Kamran Elahian, speaking at the session | RAHUL MANOJ

closure to lack of enough product testing and failure to obtain adequate customer feedback.

Lakshmi Prathury, founder of INK (Innovation and Knowledge) Talks that assists Indian innovators, said that the industrial economy that existed 200 years ago had changed to a creative economy

"Companies are now being started in colleges and garages without any support system," said Lakshmi. The best idea could come from anybody and people should shed their stereotypes.

Anusha Ravi, the CEO of Park Elhaian attributed Momenta's Group of Institutions, said,

'Poor maintenance' at Guindy Park

"Entrepreneurs must stop addressing problems money consumerism Referring to the huge global inequality, Ravi said that her venture DoAram, an E-Giving connected corporates to NGOs to assist their CSR (Corporate Responsibility) activities.

Referring to the fact that there were over 3 million NGOs in India and that only 10 per cent of them were compliant with the law, she said companies

found it difficult to offer funds in the absence of a database.

Ravi said her company ensured transparency in funding through a strict verification process for NGOs. "Social start-ups are also selling themselves online by promoting causes, trends and raising funds for the differentlyabled", she said.

Babar Ali, who was recognized as the youngest headmaster in the world by BBC in 2009, said, "Education for all with equal opportunity is my goal."

Amidst adverse poverty and child marriage in Murshidabad, Ali at the age of 9 began teaching

with foodies, an app that offers hair-cutting services on demand and an app that offers mental health services by analysing the emotional state of patients.

Later, around Rs 1.5 lakhs was raised through crowd-sourcing to improve amenities in Babar's school.

"These events help me to bond with like-minded people and will be useful for transforming my ideas into business ventures", said Naveen Kumaran (30), an aspiring

Visitors want better facilities at library

PRIYADA K S

The facilities at the Anna Centenary library, the largest and most-modern library in the state, are inadequate to cater to the needs of patrons.

"Updating of books and journals is an issue. There are not enough seats, especially in the "own book" section, where people bring their own books to sit and read without any disturbance," said P. Praween Subbu, a TNPSC aspirant.

Praween, who visits the library frequently, added that the rest rooms and escalators had been

under maintenance for monthsl. People preparing for competitive exams come here for both books

and space to sit and prepare. "Under maintenance work," says the notice on the door of some toi-

Radhika Kosuri, who is preparing for competitive exams, said "The staff clean the toilets twice a day. But sometimes there will be no water available in the toilets"

D. Tamil Madimannan said, "Internet is slow mostly and is not up to the mark".

S. Annapoorani, a chartered accountant, said "I used to come here as a student. A few months back when I checked books for one of my friends, updated books were unavailable".

S Sowmya and C S Santhanabharathi, both students, said that they had to go out for lunch as there was no canteen in the library.

S. Santhana Karthikeyan, a librarian, said "We are waiting for government funds to repair the rest rooms. About the canteen, the lease will be given next month.'

Currently a stall provides snacks, tea and coffee, it's only for lunch that people have to go to out.

About the "own book" section, he said, "it has got 342 seats and the booking for it starts early in the morning as many people are coming. Passes are provided on a first come, first served basis".

SHIVANAND S

An ostrich, a Brahminy Kite, and an Asian palm civet died at the Guindy Children's Park last week. While the park authorities claimed that the deaths were due to natural causes, SPCA officials suspected that poor maintenance caused the

S. Kazhaivani, Inspector in the Tamil Nadu Forest Department said, "The animals were old; most of the animals at the park were brought in the mid-90s. They died due to natural causes."

The forest department and the park authorities claimed that all the animals in the park were well fed and taken care of.

There were an in-house veterinary doctor and a biologist, who performed regular checkups. However, an official from the

SPCA (Society for The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) said, "Most of the zoos in the city are not well maintained. The animals are not well fed. The cases of animals dying earlier than their estimated





A monkey drinking water from a botttle collected from a dustbin (Left) and an Emu drinking water (Right) | SHIVANANDS

life span is more prevalent than we realize. In 9 out of 10 cases of animal deaths in zoos, it is due to poor maintenance by the authorities. " However, the park

authorities denied his allegations. He also alleged that the ostrich

and kite at the Guindy Children's Park died after they were injected with the wrong dosage of a

medicine. .

The animals and birds drink the dirty stagnant water in their cages. Though visitors have informed the authorities about this in the past no action has been taken.

N. Kumar, an IT employee said, "My one-year-old son is very fond of animals and birds. We visit the park very often and I have never seen clean water in the cages. When I complained about it to the authorities, they said that the water won't affect the animals."

However, the authorities denied Kumar's claim and said that the water was replaced every day.

The ticket charges are, Rs. 20 for an adult, Rs. 10 for a child and Rs.30 for bringing video cameras. The restroom service is also a

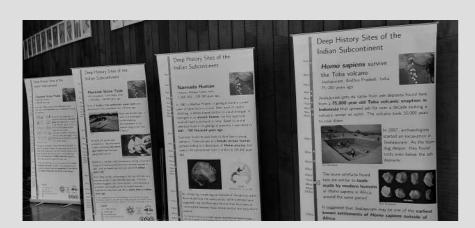
Kazhaivani said, "On an average, we see a crowd of 2,000 to 3,000 people every day and during weekends and festival days, the numbers can go above 4,000. All

for the maintenance of the park." Regardless of all the claims made by the authorities, the park is covered with dry leaves, empty water bottles and plastic covers. The cages are dirty and not maintained well.

the revenue collected here is used

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5th edition of Science at the Sabha



The panelexhibition titled 'Deep History Sites of Indian Subcontinent' was set up at the entrance of the TTKauditorium highlighting prehistoric sites discovered over a peroid of time | SAMEER KULKARNI



(From left to right) Harinath Chakrapani, Shannon Olson, V Madhurima, R Ramanujam answer to questions raised by audience | RITUPARNA PALIT

Continuing fight against antibiotic resistance

SAMEER KULKARNI

In spite of having an arsenal of antibiotics, the drug resistance among the bacteria is increasing in frequency and this a huge public health problem, said Harinath Chakrapani, who heads a laboratory working towards understanding the mechanisms of antibiotic drug resistance at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune.

Chakrapani, one of the four speakers at the annual event Science at the Sabha at Music Academy organised by the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai, was talking about 'Chemical darts to find antibacterial targets'.

Chakrapani explained the process of discovery of drugs. Quinine, which was discovered as the medicine to treat Malaria in the 17th century, was initially just a bark of a tree and it was only later that the specific compound from the bark was synthesised.

His laboratory, he said, through a team of researchers, was finding new ways to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which has emerged as a global public health issue.

Antibiotics consumption has gone up globally, including in India, which means better access to medicines. "But the problem is, consumption of antibiotics is not always necessary – overuse and abuse can be avoided," he added.

In India, according to him, the daily doses have increased, too. Increase in the consumption provides a bigger environment for the bacteria to develop resistance, hence AMR goes up.

He addressed the issue of antibiotic resistance among livestock. India has become a large scale consumer of animal products where excessive antimicrobials are used. Therefore if pathogens were getting resistant then it means that the animals were being overdosed with anitbiotics, he said.

For reasonable solutions to the problem, he said, educating people about antibiotic consumption was important as not completing the prescribed dosage and excessive consumption might result in severe long-term side-effects.

The bacteria developing resistance to antibiotics is natural and has been happening for centuries, he said, it will take few more years to effectively combat antimicrobial resistance.

Changing connections between organisms

SAMEER KULKARNI

Human impact on the ecosystem has disrupted the connections between different organisms, which are fundamental not only to humanity but also to the world, said Shannon Olsson, who heads the Naturalist-Inspired Chemical Ecology (NICE) group at the National Centre for Biological Science, Bengaluru.

Olsson was speaking on "Connecting with Nature" at the Music Academy. The annual event, Science at the Sabha, was organised by the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.

She talked about the molecular connections between different organisms, including plants and insects, which play an important role in maintaining the stability of the planet. She mentioned pollination (the process by which plants reproduce) and their dependence on bees and other insects.

Bees, according to Olsson, are heavily impacted by increase in the urban pollution and this in a domino effect has also affected the pollination processes. The uninterrupted reproduction of plants is important for growing fruits and vegetables, which are also consumed by humans.

"There are cases of Cardiac arrhythmia among bees," said Olsson, who has developed an Air Quality Index (AQI) sensitive enough for measuring the pollution's impact on bees.

For instance, she added, chillies, which are invariably hot and spicy for humans, are easily digested by the parrots and the seeds excreted by the birds grow into new plants. "Organisms in nature detect chemicals from each other and they are chemically connected," she said.

The climate change and increase in the urban pollution's effect on the agricultural processes should also be studied, she said.

"We are all one planet, things that affect plants, animals and insects will probably have an impact on us, too," she added.

Viewing dance forms through a scientific lens

RITUPARNA PALIT

A detailed study of dance movements can find huge application in robotics, said V Madhurima, speaking at the 5th edition of Science at the Sabha, here on February 16.

"People have analyzed the movements of dancers and sportsmen. I can study movement using an inverse problem approach of a dancer, pick that motion up and apply it to robotics," she said.

Juggling between her love for physics and dance, Madhurima grew up spending her week-days in academics, and weekends in dance classes. Currently a *Rasika*, a connoisseur of Indian classical dance and music, and a Professor of Physics at the Central University of Tamil Nadu, Thiruvarur, Madhurima has been spending time analyzing the objective aspects of dance, music and photography using the laws of physics.

Talking of *Rasikatva*, the appreciative power of a Rasika, Madhurima explained that the aesthetic experience can be better enhanced by understanding movement. She described the three divisions of the human body, as described in *Natyashastra*, *anga* (vital parts like hands, legs, waist), *pratyanga* (secondary parts like shoulder, back, thighs), *upanga* (facial parts) and how each one of them is vital in performing a movement.

Referring to India's cultural texts, Madhurima said, "I have always been fascinated by the *Natyashastra* that was written around 2000 years ago; the amount of observation of human body and the eventual classification is amazing."

While the first half of her talk dealt with the basics of classical dance, the second was about viewing dance through a scientific lens. Madhurima said that there were two broad approaches to analyzing body movement – biomechanics, application of the laws of physics to understand the human body and kinesiology, treating of the body



V Madhurima | CAROLINE D'SOUZA

as a combination of lever and pulleys.

Relating the centre of gravity principle to different dance styles, she explained how different

centre of gravity, required to achieve stability.

Using the laws of rotational motion, she explained the tricks that *Kathak* or ballet dancers used to achieve successful spins. "Extended legs store momentum. When the dancer brings in the legs, the stored momentum can be used to spin. You can spin faster if you pull in your legs and

dance forms varied the way a body balanced its

arms while dancing," she said.

"While a Kathak dancer constantly keeps going on her toes to give the legs the muscle power to for a fluid movement, a ballet dancer uses the tiptoe to reduce friction, pulls in her arms and legs, keeping her core straight. A classic black swan ballet dancer is known to make 32 rotations in 30 seconds at the end of the performance. Researchers have analysed this movement

in great detail."

Asked about her views on the scientific studies of Indian dance forms, Madhurima said, "Dance in India has always been treated as divine or pious; hence people do not question it or connect it with science. We need to overcome our inhibitions to question art forms. The confluence of science and arts can create wonders that you would have never wondered of."

Decoding societal patterns using mathematics

RITUPARNA PALIT

Looking logically at the societal relationships is important in order to understand the society better, said R Ramanujam, speaking at the 5th edition of Science at the Sabha, here on February 16.

In his talk "Looking for logic in social practice", Ramanujam, Professor at the Indian Institute of Mathematical Sciences, explained that there was a different rationale that was followed when a person acts individually and in a crowd.

"What is the reasoning pattern that a person applies while acting in these situations? How is an individual rationale different from a collective rationale? We should be able to relate both of these in some logical fashion," he said.

Citing examples from an election, Ramanujam, who won the Indira Gandhi Popularisation of Science Award 2020, described the logical pro-

perties of a voting process, which are, voter's eligibility, vote confidentiality, universal verifiability (every vote cast has been counted), individual verifiability, no summaries, and receipt -freeness (the voter shouldn't be given a slip identifying the candidate he or she voted for).

But are these requirements consistent? And can we run an election that guarantees all these properties? These were the questions answered by him using inferences from economist and Nobel laureate Kenneth Arrow's impossibility theorem.

Drawing analogy to food, Ramanujam said, "From the day we got our food directly from farms to now, where it travels a huge distance before it reaches our plates, a similar scenario is applicable to society and social relationships. It's no longer the things that you see and understand through experience, but is way more complicated. Therefore, some mathematics definitely goes



R Ramamujam | CAROLINE D'SOUZA

into this.

"The logic that we are discussing in the context of social procedure requires insights from mathematical logic, computational theory and game theory; by combining these we can hope to address our society's logical foundation," he said.

Schools neglect sex education

PRIYADA K S

As parents are reluctant to talk to their children on topics like sex and menstruation, these subjects have to be taught at schools; otherwise children will depend on other methods to know more about these things, said Child rights activist Virgil D'Sami.

The National Crime Records

Bureau's data of Crimes in India released in 2019 shows that the cases registered under the POCSO Act (The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) in 2018 was 37,830 against 32,608 cases in 2017.

The Crime in India 2018 report puts Tamil Nadu at 6th position in the country, with 2,039 crimes reported under POCSO. The maximum crimes were reported in Maharashtra, followed by Uttar Pradesh.

Virgil, who is the founder of Arunodhaya Centre for Street and Working Children, said her centre was providing sex education only for students of middle school and high schools at first.

But in their multidisciplinary committee meeting, which consists of teachers, psychiatrists and psychologists, the teachers suggested providing sex education to primary school children as well.

"We conducted counseling classes for teachers as they were reluctant to cooperate at first," she said.

To change the mentality about menstruation among kids, NGOs like Arunodhaya conducts sessions with both boys and girls.

The increasing number of cases of crime against children shows the importance of educating children on these issues.

Daphne Margret, zoology teacher at Arignar Anna Government Higher Secondary School said that the teachers followed the syllabus on sex education properly.

She added that clubs like Red Ribbon (to provide awareness on HIV AIDs) were formed for providing awareness among children.

"As a part of these club activities, children get paper cuttings and discuss the news in class. We call in experts to give sex education classes for all students and girls are given separate classes also," Margret said.

S Geeta, a teacher at Chennai Higher Secondary School, said that the school conducted awareness classes and students were given helpline numbers in case they needed help.

"Chennai Corporation takes initiatives in conducting awareness classes. Some classes are conducted for girls and boys separately," she said.

But some schools like St. Francis Savio Matriculation School don't provide any awareness classes to the students. The authorities at the school said that theirs was a primary school and so they didn't feel the need to give awareness on such topics.

The Principal of Advent Christian School siad that students are not taught about sex education because of the low student strength.

Scrounging for gold



Children as young as 12 years of age engage in ragpicking business on the 220 acres Perungudi dumpyard. They opt ragpicking over school because of the huge income it generates RITUPARNA PALIT

'Prostitute' wins best short film

RIZVI SAIF

When the word 'PROSTITUTE' came up in bold white letters on the big black screen, murmurings were heard from the young audience of the SRM College.

This was the opening frame of a short film directed by Arun Yoganath of the Nehru College of Arts and Science. The film tells the tale of a mute woman who was branded as a prostitute after a reporter wrote about her. He took the word of the locals without finding out the truth and the film ends with him realising his mistake.

'Prostitute' won the loudest cheer and the award for the best short film in the inter-college category of "Silver Frames', a national level short film competition conducted on February 18 by the visual communication department of the SRM University of Science and Technology, Ramapuram.

Out of the 300 short films registered, 15 were shortlisted by the faculty and selected students of the department after which they were sent to assistant directors and cinematographers of the Tamil film industry. The judging criteria was based on concept, script, direction, cinematography, editing, sound and overall work.

B. Sharavanan, a professor at the college said, "Most of the entries this year were from the thriller genre and many touched upon the theme of sexual abuse."

The ten three short films were selected.

The top three short films were selected by veteran director Suseenthiran who was

also the chief guest of the event. The other two winners are 'Yuthishtan' (Pondicherry University community college) and 'Irandha Naal' (PSG College of Arts and Science). These three along with a few other short films directed by the students of the SRM College were screened during the event. The crew of the upcoming movie, Mafia was the guests of honour.

The college has been conducting this competition for the past four years but it was made national level only last year. Most of the films screened were in Tamil language. Shankar Vincent, coordinator of the event, said that the entries included English, Hindi, Telugu and a few Malayalam short films as well. The students also organised cultural programs towards the end.

Spanish film festival bids adieu with 'Can't say goodbye'

PRIYADA K S

A movie set in 1980s Spain and the story of two detectives, who are poles apart, trying to solve the missing of two sisters, 'Marshland' is a thriller with beautiful frames that drag the audience in.

The movie was screened at the Spanish film festival organised by Indo Cine Appreciation Foundation in association with Embassy of Spain in India, New Delhi.

The three-day film festival was inaugurated on

February 17 by Antony Lobo, Honorary Consul of Spain, Chennai. Cine actress Sukanya Ramesh lit the lamp at the inauguration.

The festival began with Academy Award winning 2009 film "The secret in their eyes" and ended with the movie 'A Gun in Each Hand' on 19 February.

A total of five movies were screened at the festival at Alliance Francaise of Madras, Nungambakkam. Other films screened were 'Flowers' on the second day and "Can't Say Goodbye" on the third day

'Flowers' was the Baque language film to be nominated for the Academy Awards.

E. Thangaraj, general secretary, Indo Cine Appreciation Foundation said that 150 people attended the first day, on the second day it was 100 and about 80 to 90 people came on the last day.

"The festival is mainly for our film society members, so the same people come every year. We have been conducting the festival for seventeen years now," he added.

In 2019 the festival was conducted from May 28 to 30.

Ishita Ghosh, one among the audience, said that it was her first experience coming to a film festival. "The film (Marshland) was good but the inconveniences caused by the issues with the projector disturbed the viewing experience."

She was talking about the technical issues that disrupted the screening of the movie 'Marshland'

Another spectator Triloknath Arivelu said that the films screened at the festival were impressive. "It was my first time here; the experience was similar to other film festivals."