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Vol. 25, No. 52

1412nd Issue: May 16 - 22, 2020

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ANNOUNCEMENT

In view of the Coronavirus threat, we are suspending the publication and distribution of the print edition of *Mambalam Times* until further notice. The internet edition will be uploaded as usual - General Manager

Air pollution down by 36%

By Our Staff Reporter

The closure of industries and the restriction on vehicular movement and reduced combustion activities during the lockdown have ensured that the PM 2.5 levels have now dropped by 36% over the levels before March 24, a Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) study has shown.

The two-part study, undertaken from Feb. 22 to March 21 and from March 22 to April 21, showed that the levels of nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide fell by 5% and 43% over pre-lockdown levels.

Two CPCB ambient air quality monitoring stations in Manali, an area with a significant presence of chemical and petrochemical industries, showed that the operations in the area might be influencing the nitrogen dioxide levels in the city.

The lowest levels of PM2.5 and nitrogen dioxide, on a 24-hour average, during the lockdown period were recorded at 12 microgram/cubic meter, and 4 microgram/per cubic meter, while sulphur dioxide levels decreased by 29% in the city, showed the study.

Similarly, the lowest average hourly concentration during the pre-lockdown period of 26 micrograms/cubic meter at 2 in the morning dropped to 19 micrograms/cubic meter during the lockdown.

Tamilnadu 2nd in active corona cases

By Our Staff Reporter

Tamilnadu on May 15 recorded 447 COVID-19 cases, its lowest count in the last 10 days, but has now moved to 2nd spot in the country with 9,674 active cases.

Two more persons died taking the State's COVID-19 fatality to 66.

Of the 447 cases, Chennai's share was 363. The medical expert committee has told the state that the increasing incidence of the disease is not a cause for concern as long as testing is high and mortalities are low.

The medical bulletin showed 11,773 people were tested for the infection on May 15, nearly 900 less than compared to 12,666 on May 14.

It includes testing of persons moving back from abroad and other states.

Tamilnadu has 58 authorised COVID-19 testing labs, including 38 in the government sector.

Std. 10 board exams from June 1

By Our Staff Reporter

The Std. 10 Board exams in Tamilnadu will begin on June 1, School Education Minister K.A. Sengottaiyan said on May 12.

The exams were supposed to have begun on March 27, but were postponed owing to the COVID-19 lockdown.

The exams will be held from June 1 to June 12 and students will begin with the language paper.

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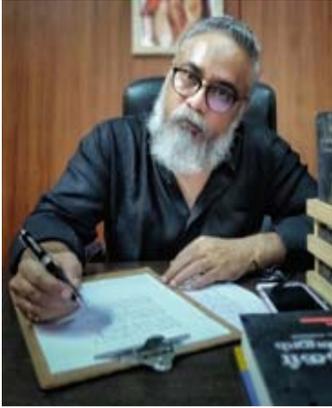
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Ashok Nagar resident provides lockdown entertainment

By Our Staff Reporter

Ashok Nagar resident and theater personality Elango Kumanan has joined hands with young Tamil theater artistes Suraj Raja and Karthik Gowrisankar to produce a series of online videos.



The first, titled 'The Drama', featuring stage veterans Kathadi Ramamurthy, YGee Mahendran, Maadhu Balaji, T. V. Varadarajan, Bombay Gnanam and others takes off apparently with their getting ready to leave for a show.

The video then springs an anti-climax where all of them request the audience to stay safe at home and Kathadi Rama-murthy signs off saying though they are eager to come out and perform the time now is to be vigilant and cautious.

When this video received overwhelm-ing response on social media, the trio quickly conceptualised another video titled 'The Drama Part-2', this time featuring S. Ve Sekar, Madhuvanti Arun, Sureshwar, Prema Sadasivam and others, to narrate a story highlighting the importance of staying brave and confident of overcoming the tough situation created by the pandemic and the lockdown.

The trio of Karthik Gowrisankar, Suraj Raja and Elango Kumanan continued their creation spree with 3 more videos under the same series.

The short film 'Lockdown', featuring actors S. Gowrisankar, Geetha Narayan and Sharath Bharathwaj, spoke about the travails of two senior citizens living in a home for the aged, for whom daily life is already a version of the lockdown itself, and they share their views on the show.

This short was followed by 'Iru!', another riveting 4-minute film, shot entirely in a single shot using candle lights, featuring actors and a mother-son duo in real life, Dhiraj Mohan and Shanthi Charath, as a mother comforting a son who fears darkness.

The video crossed over a lakh viewers on social media with the climax of the film coming in for much appreciation.

The trio then produced a fun-filled yet content driven short titled 'Cheers', featuring actor E. M. S. Murali, who plays an alcoholic who, because of the lockdown conditions, intr-pects the ways of his life and decides to give up drinking. The trio simultaneously created a music video single titled 'Yuddham Velvom'. With lyrics penned by Elango Kumanan and music by Dakshin, the grandson of acclaimed music director Late Dakshinamoorthy, the video featured Isaikkavi Ramanan, T. S. Ranganathan, R. Giridharan, Karthik Gowrisankar and Aarthi.

The music video aimed at infusing a feeling of bravery to stand up to these tough times.

The team then attempted social media's first 'Pattimandram', hosted by Kathadi Ramamurthy with prominent theater actors and personalities, Bombay Chanakya, T. V. Radhakrishnan, Augusto, Poovai Mani, Srinivasan, Gopalakrishnan, Lakshmi and Jayashree Pritham engaging in a riveting session of exchange of thoughts on 'Current Tamil theater trend: are we satisfied or are we not?' on May 9 and 10.

The trio is looking to sign off this lockdown series with a finale video at 9 p.m on May 16, featuring a musical medley of cine songs that instill positivity and confidence.

All the videos in the series have been edited by the father-son duo of Charath Mohan and Dhiraj Mohan.

When asked what motivated them to create content week after week, Kumanan said, "Well, these are the same audiences who go to auditoriums/venues where we perform and entertain them. Now that they are confined to their homes, we decided to reach them where they are and entertain them. After all, isn't it our responsibility to such supportive and encouraging audiences? At the same time we did not want to do regular content."

"If you look at the genres of our videos, we have attempted everything from a social awareness video, to short films that are truly short and capsule size, to music videos and even a pattimandram. So, we did manage it keep them diverse and engaging," he signed off.

Krishnammachari provides Rs. 10 lakhs for diabetic kids

By Our Staff Reporter

R. P. Krishnammachari (Managing Director, Tex Bio Science Private Limited, Ashok Nagar) has contributed Rs.10 lakhs to provide insulin and insulin pumps for diabetic children in and around Coimbatore through Idhyangal Charitable Trust.



The Trust is run by Dr. Krishnan Swaminathan who is the Consultant Endocrinologist & President, KMCH Research Foundation, Kovai Medical Centre and Hospital.

Nearly 40 children will get insulin, insulin pumps and related items for one year.

T. NAGAR & MAMBALAM BAZAAR

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Siddha practitioner held for false claim of COVID-19 cure

By Our Staff Reporter

Siddha practitioner Thiruthanika-chalam (49) was arrested by Central Crime Branch police for creating and circulating videos making false claims that he had found a medicine for curing COVID-19.



He was also charged with abusing the State and Central governments and the World Health Organisation, and ridiculing the procedures prescribed by the government.

The police sought custody, terming it necessary to conduct an inquiry into his professional competence and registration of the Siddha hospital he runs.

The police also submitted a video clip that showed the Chief Minister with Thiruthanikachalam and claimed that the government sent five patients to him, of whom he cured two.

THAMBRAAS helps archakas



By Our Staff Reporter

THAMBRAAS (T. Nagar unit) gave Rs.1500 each to 35 temple archakas and women catering workers on May 13. The amount was contributed by members.

S. Chandrasekaran (Secretary, THAMBRAAS) said that a total of Rs.70,000 had been distributed among poor temple archakas and women in catering service as they had lost their livelihood because of the lockdown.

Barricades removed from two local hotspots

By Our Staff Reporter



Arya Gowda Road



Postal Colony

Corporation workers have removed barricades from streets where coronavirus affected residents lived including Arya Gowda Road and Postal Colony in West Mambalam.

This was done following testing of all the residents of the street. Those who tested positive and are asymptomatic have been put under house quarantine.

Though restrictions have been lifted, few residents ventured out and both streets gave a deserted look.

The pictures were taken at around 4 p.m on May 13.

Corporation to distribute 50 lakh masks among slum dwellers

The Corporation on May 14 started distribution of reusable cloth masks among residents in slum colonies in the city.

Around 50 lakh masks will be distributed in 650 slum colonies in the city. According to an official statement, nearly 26 lakh people will be given two masks each in the first phase.

Officials said that this initiative was taken because people in slum colonies live close to one another which could lead to a rapid spread of coronavirus.

Re-exam for Std. 12 State Board students on June 4

By Our Staff Reporter

There had been concerns raised about 36,842 students not being able to write the Std. 12 State Board exam papers on March 24 owing to the restrictions in place due to the beginning of the lockdown.

The re-exam for the Chemistry, Accountancy and Geography subjects which were held on March 24 will now be held again on June 4.

The final Std. 11 board exam, which had to be postponed from March 26 owing to the lockdown, will be held on June 2.

The evaluation of answer scripts for Std. 12 exam will begin on May 27.

A release from the Education Department stated that steps were being taken to ensure that physical distancing is maintained in exam centers.

Sanitizer, face masks distributed in Tahsildhar office



By Our Staff Reporter

The members of Daasya (Ashok Nagar) distributed to sanitizers, handcloves and face mask to the staffs of Tahsildhar office in Ashok Nagar on May 15.

P. Raman (President) said the by the support of donors and volunteers daily food packets and groceries are being given to the needy peoples

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Consumers may receive abnormal EB bills post lockdown

Sir, I am a past resident of West Mambalam, but now reside in Nanganallur.

Thanks to the online edition, I am still able to read *Mambalam Times* every week and keep myself updated on the local information.

In last week's issue, I read the report, 'EB clarifies on billing, payment' which was quite informative.

It was mentioned that 'Accurate meter reading for the billing cycle falling under the lockdown period will be determined and the amount due will be adjusted with the payment that has already been made'.

Since the meter readings have not been taken during lockdown, I am sceptical on the basis on which it will now be determined as the consumption starting from mid-April would have gone up substantially due to summer.

So, basing the higher consumption bi-monthly readings post-May to arrive at the consumption for the earlier period will not be a fair, and could lead to inflated bills, thereby affecting consumers.

For example:

Jan.-Feb. actual billing - 300 units

March-April (No reading): payment made same as for Jan.-Feb.: 300 units

May-June: (Higher consumption due to peak summer). The reading will be much more than 300, and the amount already paid for March-April if subtracted, the consumers are bound to be overcharged.

To be fair to consumers, EB authorities should take the meter reading for May-June period and arrive at the average consumption for 4 months (March to June) and deduct 100 units thereof for each bi-monthly period, and then ask the subscriber to pay the difference in amount, if any.

N. Venkatesan, Flat C, Suprabhath., 21, 4th Main Road, Nanganallur, Ph: 94453 11100

Shortage of foodgrains likely

By Our Staff Reporter

The city is likely to face a shortage of foodgrains and pulses as Koyambedu wholesale foodgrains complex and Kothwalchavadi market near Parrys have been shut since May 6, following a spurt in coronavirus infections.

While the city may not face an immediate crisis now, the shortfall is likely to be witnessed by the end of May when the stocks in grocery shops and homes deplete, said T. Shanmugakani, a member of Tamil Nadu Pulses Traders Association.



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Trench dug to repair water pipeline



By Our Staff Reporter

Metrowater workers dug a trench to repair a water pipeline in Brindavan Street in West Mambalam last week.

Since March 24, Metrowater had stopped all repair works except the critical ones due to the restrictions imposed due to the lockdown. After norms were relaxed, it has resumed its pending work in the neighbourhood.

Work on skywalk project resumes



By Our Staff Reporter

The Corporation resumed work on the Madley subway in T. Nagar under the skywalk project to connect Mambalam railway station with T. Nagar bus terminus, last week.

The work was halted due to the lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some shops in T. Nagar open



T. Nagar, one of the biggest commercial hubs in the city, is slowly coming alive after the government allowed a variety of standalone shops to reopen.

The once-bustling Ranganathan Street is deserted though traders have geared up to resume sale of stocked products.

Most of the shop owners and their employees could be seen seated outside their outlets watching the free movement of two-wheelers on Ranganathan Street, unimaginable before the lockdown period.

It is estimated that the yearly turnover from T. Nagar markets is close to Rs. 50,000 crores.

With public transport yet to start and the fear of the pandemic lingering, business has not yet picked up, said a trader in Pondy Bazaar. "Now, we hardly have any customers forcing us to shut our shops after keeping them open for a few hours," he added.

Most retail chains are still shut except for a few reopening without switching on air-conditioners.

Computer accessories and mobile phone dealers said that only desperate customers, who wanted to repair their cellphones or buy accessories were visiting the shops.

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Vegetables unloaded at street junction



By Our Staff Reporter

Sacks of vegetables are unloaded from lorries daily at the junction of Govindan Road and Arangappan Street in West Mambalam for supply to retail shops and vendors who have collected orders. However, social distancing is not being strictly followed.

Earlier, the loads used to arrive at the vegetable market on Railway Border Road, T. Nagar adjoining Mambalam railway station. The market was closed in the wake of the lockdown.

Trunk of uprooted tree resting on wall



By Our Staff Reporter

The trunk of an uprooted tree has been resting on the compound wall of BBC Manor Building on Duraisamy Road, T. Nagar (near subway) for the past few weeks hindering the movement of visitors and nearby residents.

Kabasura Kudineer distributed to passersby



By Our Staff Reporter

The members of Loka Shema Sanathana Dharma Pariपालana Trust (West Mambalam) distributing 'Kabasura kudineer' to the public at Arya Gowda Road, West Mambalam on May 15.

R.Sundaram (President) said that more than 500 person benefited daily and they are giving at the busy streets and roads in the neighbourhood.

Udavum Karangal gives food to homeless



Udavum Karangal has been giving 1000 food packets daily since March 26 to a number of homeless persons, beggars and the blind in Thiruverkadu.

According to Vidyaakar (Founder), the NGO has distributed 25,000 food packets so far.

He added that its volunteers maintain social distancing while distributing the food.

With this issue, **MAMBALAM TIMES** completes 25 years of service to the residents of T. Nagar and West Mambalam. We have distributed over 3.97 crores FREE copies of **MAMBALAM TIMES** so far.

706 passengers from Delhi put under quarantine



By Our Staff Reporter

After all train services were cancelled from March 24 due to the lockdown, the first train to arrive at Chennai Central station was Rajdhani Express from Delhi on May 14, carrying 706 passengers.

They were all put under temporary quarantine after screening.

Corporation officials made arrangements for free accommodation for 500 passengers in St. Joseph College of Engineering in Semmenchery in Sholinganallur zone.

Arrangements for paid accommodation were made in two 3-star hotels in Egmore and Kilpauk.

"All the passengers will be tested for the corona infection and, depending on the results, decisions will be made for sending them home after the stipulated time of quarantine," an official said.

Air-India to operate domestic flights from May 19

By Our Staff Reporter

Air-India will operate special domestic flights from different cities between May 19 and June 2 to help passengers stranded across the country reach home.

A majority of the flights are from Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

Chennai will have one flight, Kochi-Chennai, on May 19.

Delhi will have 173 flights, Mumbai 40, Hyderabad 25 and Kochi 12.

A senior official of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said that preparations were on to handle domestic flights because there is a hint that private airlines may be allowed to operate more flights from Chennai.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has come out with a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for restarting commercial passenger flights.

The following are some of the draft SOP suggestions:

- Mandatory to have Aarogya Setu App on phone.
- Mandatory to wear protective gear like mask and hand gloves.
- No catering in flights with travel duration less than two hours.
- Passengers will fill a form declaring their COVID-19 history.
- Separate seats at the back for suspected persons.
- No cabin baggage.
- Only web-checkin allowed.

7 workers cycling home to UP from Tamilnadu

By Our Staff Reporter

Braving the heat, seven young men who were working as daily wage workers in Chennai, are cycling 2,400 km. to reach their hometown Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.

Their luggage includes some food, phone chargers and tool kits.

After six days, the exhausted youths were spotted on May 15 on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

"For most part of the night we have been cycling. Unless we are too tired, we cycle even during the day. We eat either at roadside eateries or where it is available free," said Sumit, one of the workers.

Relying on Google Maps, they have so far managed to give police the slip by traversing through by-lanes and avoiding checkpoints.

The only motivation that is keeping them going is the thought of reuniting with their families.

Top police officials among 36 personnel test +ve

By Our Staff Reporter

An Asst. Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner and 34 other police personnel have tested positive for COVID-19 since May 11.

It is suspected that both the AC and DC caught the virus from Koyambedu as they were part of bandobust duty and also attended meetings there.

After these officers tested positive, samples were taken from around 60 persons, including their personal security staff, camp staff and family members. All of them have been advised home quarantine. Their offices have been temporarily sealed and disinfected.

Among the others, 5 are inspectors (one each from T. Nagar and K. K. Nagar) including a woman, and 19 belong to the 13th battalion of Tamil Nadu Special Police in Tirumullaivoyal.

The remaining four belong to the second battalion in Avadi. They had been posted in Madaveli MRTS railway station.

All of them have been admitted to different hospitals and the areas of their residences and police stations have been sanitised.

Similarly, Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel posted in Perambur Loco Works railway station have also tested positive.

Meanwhile, about 20 police personnel, including a DC, were discharged from hospitals.

Online handwriting workshop for students

By Our Staff Reporter

Jayavidya Education & Learning Systems (2nd Floor, 1310, 33rd Street, 7th Sector, K. K. Nagar) will conduct an online 'Handwriting improvement workshop' for students from Saturday, May 16.

The duration of the workshop is 6 hours spread over six 1-hour sessions.

The course content will be sent online.

The fee is Rs. 600 per participant.

For further details, call 98410 23115 / 72992 32323.

If anything interesting is happening in the neighbourhood, please inform

Mambalam Times

Activist distributes home-made sanitiser free

By Our Staff Reporter

In a move to ensure that members of the public, especially the less privileged, have access to hand sanitiser, 82-year-old social activist V. Santhanam has installed a 1000-liter sanitiser plant in his home in Chrompet and is giving it to locals free.

The plant has been installed at no cost by Noble Eco Systems in the parking area of his home.

"The sanitiser is made through electrolysis using rock salt as the main ingredient. The plant can manufacture 25 liters of sanitiser within 8 hours with 800 grams of salt. This can be mixed with 1000 liters of water for the final product," said Santhanam.

"There is no restriction on the quantity of sanitiser people can take away. All they need to do is bring a container to fill the sanitiser in. I want people to get it from me and then distribute it among others. That is why there is no cap on the quantity. I currently have 500 liters left and will start producing the next batch of sanitiser in a week," he said.



Coronavirus numbers explained

By Our Staff Reporter

After going past Delhi, the number of coronavirus cases in Tamilnadu look poised to overtake Gujarat as well.

The State discovered 447 new infections on May 14, and now has 9674 confirmed cases.

As has been happening every day, most of the new cases came from Chennai which now has close to 5,637 cases. This is more than 58 percent of the total number of cases in the state.

But Chennai is not alone in this. In several states, the bulk of cases, more than 50 percent, are concentrated in just one or two cities. Mumbai accounts for over 60 per cent of all cases in Maharashtra while Ahmedabad has over 70 percent of all cases in Gujarat. See the table below as on May 12.

City	Cases	State	% of State number
Mumbai	14,947	24,427	61
Delhi	7,639	7,639	100
Ahmedabad	6,353	8,904	71
Chennai	4,882	8,718	56
Indore	2,016	3,986	51
Jaipur	1,281	4,021	32
Kolkata	1,041	2,173	48

The relaxation in lockdown rules from May 4, which has seen the resumption of many activities, and easing of restrictions on movement of people, has so far not had any big impact on the spread of the disease, as was feared. One week after the relaxations were allowed, there are still no signs that there is any major surge in the number of cases.

The rate of transmission of the disease — the number of people being infected on an average by an already infected person — has not shown any major deviation in the last one week. For the period starting April 13, when the first phase of lockdown ended, till May 10, this rate of transmission, called reproduction number, has been 1.23, meaning every group of 100 infected people were passing on the disease to 123 more, on an average. This is significantly lower than the number before the first phase of lockdown had begun on March 24. At that time, 100 people were estimated to be transmitting the disease to at least 183 people on an average.

But some states are seeing a rapid rise in numbers. Apart from Tamilnadu, there has been a surge in Odisha, though the total number of cases is still modest compared to the top five states. This is attributed to number of migrant workers returning to the State.

Corporation to relax containment norms

With an average of 500 cases being reported daily in Chennai, the city already has created 690 containment zones within its 15 Corporation zones.

With strict norms in place in these zones since the lockdown began which severely limited public movement causing inconvenience, officials are now looking to relax the rules.

From now, streets will be contained only if there is a cluster of cases, said Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash.

In case of scattered or individual cases, only the households under question will be under containment.

Nodal officer J. Radhakrishnan had earlier said that if an individual in an apartment complex tests positive, only the apartment complex will be brought under containment, and not the entire street.

Traffic police seize autos flouting lockdown norms

By Our Staff Reporter

The City Traffic Police on May 13 seized more than 700 autorickshaws plying in several parts of city, violating prohibitory orders promulgated to prevent spread of COVID-19.

This action was taken after many autos were seen plying in defiance of lockdown norms in the last couple of days in T. Nagar, Guindy, Egmore, Anna Salai and several other places.

Some were seen carrying passengers in the front seat as well.

However, autos plying for genuine reasons such as medical emergencies are being allowed.

Containment zones up from 90 to 690 in a month

By Our Staff Reporter

From just 90 in mid-April, the number of containment zones in the city has gone up to 690 as on May 12.

The number is likely to increase as the increase in daily number of new cases is not abating, said an official.

A containment zone is an area where one or more residents have been found to be infected with coronavirus.

Currently, the civic body follows a policy of barricading all entry and exit points of these zones to contain the spread.

The data released by the Corporation has some surprising insights. For instance, Thiru-Vi-Ka Nagar has the maximum number of containment zones (124) and recorded 590 cases. However, Kodambakkam zone has just 10 containment zones, but has recorded 713 cases, which is the second highest among zones in the city. Adyar has 23 zones, but has only 1/3rd of the cases as in Kodambakkam.

The Royapuram zone has the maximum number of cases (742) spread across 116 containment zones.

Corporation launches app for free telemedicine services

By Our Staff Reporter

The Corporation on May 12, unveiled a telemedicine app named 'GCC Vidmed' for 24x7 free-of-cost telemedicine services for residents of the city.

The online app hopes to avoid the risk of the person-to-person spread of the virus since hospitals are potential hotspots for virus transmission.

The app connects the patient to the doctor through video for medical consultation that is free of cost.

The Android app can be downloaded from Google Playstore.

Upon consultation, that is done via video conferencing, the prescription will be sent as an email to the registered email id and as a text message to the patient's phone. The app can also send the prescription to the pharmacist.

"If a patient is found with COVID-19 symptoms, the doctor would alert control room, which in turn will communicate the details of the patient to the respective zonal medical officer. This facility will help senior citizens, children and pregnant women avail of treatment in their homes without any constraints," said a Corporation official.

Bakery owner held for religious slur in advt.

By Our Staff Reporter

Prashant (32), owner of Jain Bakeries and Confectioneries (Mahalakshmi Street, T. Nagar) was arrested for using an offensive tagline targeting Muslims in the advertisement pamphlet that he shared on WhatsApp groups.

"Made by Jains on orders, No Muslim staffs" was the tagline that the bakery used in the online pamphlets.

Soon, the image went viral on social media with calls for action against Prashanth growing louder.

Mambalam Police said that a case under two sections of the IPC was lodged against the owner of the bakery on a complaint that the advertisement had 'wrong information' about Muslims.

The police said that he has been booked under 295A (Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs) and 504 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace.)

The police action drew praise and criticism alike on social media after a press release issued by the police announcing the arrest of the owner, said that offensive comments against any faith should not be tolerated.

Corporation distributes reusable masks

By Our Staff Reporter

Corporation has started to distribute cloth masks along with essential items and kabasura kudineer within containment zones.

In a meeting of Corporation and Health Department officials on May 12, a decision was also taken to quarantine the houses and buildings of affected persons rather than sealing the entire street in containment zones.

"One or two houses near the affected persons' houses only will be announced as containment zones. Field officials, along with the members of NGOs, should identify aged persons and also those with comorbid conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension. Those with cold, fever and cough should also be identified and moved to hospitals or COVID care centers," a Corporation press release said.

So far, 1,064 persons have been shifted to the care centers and 115 persons are under home isolation.

"Officials will conduct inspections at the COVID care centers every day and shift patients to hospitals if they require medical care," the release added.

Passengers irked by mandate to use 'Aarogya Setu' app

By Our Staff Reporter

Consumer activists and a section of rail passengers have raised eyebrows after it was made mandatory to download the Aarogya Setu app for travel in special trains.

They fear it would bring asymptomatic travellers under surveillance.

"Acceptance for surveillance through an app cannot be made a prerequisite for using public transport. Travellers who have no symptoms will be monitored," T. Sadagopan (President of Tamil Nadu Progressive Consumers' Centre) said.

He added that the move was condemnable and should be rolled back.

A Railway official stated that passengers who do not use the app may not be allowed to travel.

However, migrant workers have been exempted for now.

Day temperature may increase from May 17

By Our Staff Reporter

The day temperature may spike in the city from May 17, under the influence of the weather system brewing in the Bay of Bengal.

The maximum temperature in Chennai for the past week has been hovering at around 37 deg. against the usual 40 deg. in May. The Met. Department has also predicted light rains over the next two days.

However, the low pressure over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andaman sea, which was expected to intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 16, may trigger hot weather conditions over the coastal region, according to the Meteorological Department.

Railways to run only special trains till June 30

By Our Staff Reporter

The Railways on May 13 suspended all passenger trains, barring the Shramik Special services (for stranded migrant workers) and 30 special trains till further notice.

Tickets booked for all other trains for travel till June 30 will be cancelled and fares refunded to passengers.

The Railways are operating only 30 special trains connecting Delhi and other major cities including Chennai.

These trains have only air-conditioned coaches and the fares are similar to those in Rajdhani Express trains.

The passengers have to arrive 90 minutes before departure, and will go through a screening before boarding the train.

Only asymptomatic passengers or those who do not show any symptoms of coronavirus will be allowed to travel.

Homebuyers struggling amid pay cuts, say developers

By Our Staff Reporter

Real estate developers have sought incentives for homebuyers since they have been struggling with issues like salary cuts due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

"Existing homebuyers are worried about EMI payments on housing loans after facing salary and job cuts. They can't be asked to pay interest over interest when their income has been affected. The government should give interest-free moratorium on home loans for a period of six months or so," said Padam Dugar (President, Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI)- Chennai Chapter) and Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of Dugar Housing Limited.

The focus of the government should be on putting more money in the hands of the people and looking at reducing various fees and levies like stamp duty, he said.

Dugar said that the extended lockdown would be painful for homebuyers, as issues like non-availability of labour and material would lead to a delay in the completion of projects.

He suggested that the government look at offering home loans at incentivised interest rates of 2-4% for a period of one year or so and an additional discount on interest for all women home buyers.

The country has the highest stamp duty of 11% and it should be brought down to 1-2%, he said, adding that the incentives would also help allied industries like steel, cement, furniture and white goods, among others, and lead to job creation.

"The 3-month moratorium and interest rate reduction on home loans have not had a meaningful impact. If interest rates of home loans are brought down and a moratorium of 9-12 months is guaranteed, we can tide over the crisis. Once things improve, the interest rates can be re-calibrated to higher levels," he added.

Incoming train passengers to be quarantined

By Our Staff Reporter

All outstation train passengers reaching Chennai, will be put under quarantine, said an official of Chennai Corporation.

He said that arrangements are being made for free as well as paid facility for the passengers as per their choice.

The 706 passengers who came from Delhi on May 12 are under quarantine, he added.

As it is not possible to test all passengers coming in a train at a time, the initial thermal screening will be done by the railways, after which the Corporation will take the passengers to quarantine facilities — government operated (free) or hotels (paid).

The current hotel room inventory is about 7,000 at a daily tariff of not more than Rs. 2,500 inclusive of food.

Shopping malls await govt's nod to reopen

By Our Staff Reporter

There are more than 25 major malls in the State which are now closed due to the ongoing lockdown.

With PM Narendra Modi hinting on extending the lockdown post May 17, the Association of Mall Owners has appealed to the State Government to relax the lockdown norms and allow them to open.

The Association has it that standard operating procedure will be followed including maintaining social distancing and ensuring a hygienic environment.

Nearly 40,000 jobs are provided in the sector both direct and indirect.

The shopping centers generate an annual consumption turnover of Rs. 15,000 crores.

Desperate migrants from Assam stopped near Moore Market



By Our Staff Reporter

False information, compounded by a lack of clear communication from the authorities, led to hundreds of migrant workers from Assam and a few other States moving towards Central Station in the hope of catching a train back home.

It all started with the train that left for Mizoram on May 12 with around 200 workers.

This was followed by the spread of information that another train would leave for Assam the next evening.

As this piece of information spread rapidly, hundreds of migrant workers descended on Assam Bhawan in Pallikaranai on May 13, not caring for social distancing. Since there was no such train service, contrary to what they had been led to believe, the workers were asked to return to their places of stay and wait for further communication.

Later, tension prevailed as many workers gathered near the Central Railway Station. The police had a tough time convincing the labourers about the arrangements being made for them.

65-day online courses for NEET, JEE exams

By Our Staff Reporter

Velammal Nexus has organised online crash courses for students appearing for JEE and NEET examinations this year.

The 65-day course will start on Monday, May 18.

Students can join till May 31.

The classes will be held for 5 hours a day from 9.30 a.m to 3.30 p.m.

There will be 8 part tests and 11 major tests.

Worksheets comprising all concepts, graded level exercises, daily practice problems and previous entrance examination questions will be provided online.

Subject-wise doubt clearing sessions will also be held with special focus on error analysis and grey areas.

For registration, visit the website www.velammalnexus.com.

For more details, call 86086 28637 / 98841 33552.

Expert panel favours staggered exit from lockdown

By Our Staff Procedure

An expert committee of health professionals appointed by the Tamilnadu government on COVID-19 on May 14 once again favoured a staggered exit from the lockdown scheduled to enter its fourth phase.

The committee had a two-hour long discussion with Chief Minister K. Palaniswami and other top officials. Soumya Swaminathan (Chief Scientist, WHO) participated in the consultations through video conferencing.

"The lockdown is going to enter the next phase. It can be released only gradually, not all over (at the same time). If done, there is a chance of increase in the spread of coronavirus," she said.

More community participation, strict adherence of health protocols like social distancing, including in workplaces and wearing mask is key to handling the contagion, she added.

COVID-19 affected civic workers to get Rs. 2 lakhs each

By Our Staff Reporter

According to an order on May 12 issued by Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash, 35 officials and employees in COVID-19 prevention work who had contracted coronavirus till May 11 will get ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakhs each.

Of 35, 13 are from Royapuram zone, including two Asst Revenue officers, while 10 employees belong to Anna Nagar zone. Employees from Thiru Vi Ka Nagar, Kodambakkam and Teynampet zones will also receive the relief.

The Corporation will also write to the government seeking clarification on distributing Rs. 50 lakhs relief for the families of those dying due to the virus that was announced by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

Hereafter, the civic body will distribute ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakhs to all employees working in the field, if they contract the virus.

The workers' union alleged that the ex-gratia amount was being given only to the permanent employees, and urged the Corporation to provide the relief also for temporary workers engaged in prevention work.

A union member said that more than 100 temporary workers were infected while doing prevention work.

Priority for symptomatic patients in govt hospitals

By Our Staff Reporter

As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the city is on the rise, all the 4 major government hospitals in the city - Stanley Hospital, General Hospital, Omandurar Hospital and Kilpauk Hospital - are almost full and not in a position to take in more patients.

Considering the increasing number of cases, the Corporation has prepared 4,000 beds in 32 COVID-19 care centers to house asymptomatic patients to enable it could to admit vulnerable patients in the hospitals.

According to Health Department sources, Stanley, RGGGH and Kilpauk have 400 beds each for COVID-19 patients, while Omandurar Hospital has 500 beds.

As on May 12, more than 800 asymptomatic patients were moved to the care centers and around 200 were sent to home quarantine.

'Do-it-yourself' meal kits popular

By Our Staff Reporter

The city-based Chefathon Kitchenette (Ph: 80725 98838) has been churning out 'Do-it-yourself' (DIY) meal kits which are getting popular since the lockdown.

"We change the cuisine every week. We have done the Mediterranean and Mexican menus so far. This week, we have introduced Asian meal kits with a variety of popular Asian delicacies. Each kit is a wholesome menu that has an appetiser, main course and a dessert for one person. We will add more varieties in the coming days," said Lekhamithra of Chefathon.

Novotel (Chamiers Road) (Ph: 2430 2333) has also introduced 10 DIY kits ranging from Chinese to Thai cuisines.

Similar kits have been launched by BurgerMan (Ph: 4852 8668). The kits contain fresh vegetables, patties, brown buns and sauce.

Jigsaw puzzles popular amid lockdown

By Our Staff Reporter

Jigsaw puzzles have become a popular pastime during the lockdown.

Recently, a resident of Teynampet posted an image of a 2,000-piece puzzle he had solved with his wife and son on his Facebook page.

Partibhan of K. K. Nagar said that he had gifted a 2500-piece jigsaw puzzle to his 10-year-old daughter on her birthday last year.

But after trying a few times, she had packed it and never touched it again for paucity of time.

But in the last week after being struck by the boredom of being at home, she singlehandedly solved it and was thrilled by her achievement.

It is good exercise for the brain for children, especially during these trying times when there is no school or any other physical activity, he said.

India ranks 12th in number of coronavirus cases

By Our Staff Reporter

The total number of coronavirus cases in India has been rising constantly.

The country now is just a whisker away from overtaking China, where the virus originated.

India's tally of cases stood at 81,997 (China had 82,929) and 2,649 persons have died so far.

Globally, 45,21,174 persons have been infected, and the total number of deaths from the disease stands at 3,03,070.

Appeal to reopen wholesale foodgrain shops in Koyambedu

By Our Staff Reporter

Koyambedu Food Grains Traders' Association has filed a petition in the High Court requesting it to direct the authorities concerned to allow the foodgrain shops to open in Koyambedu Wholesale Market complex.

In its plea, it has stated that though the vegetable, fruit and flower vendors were provided space to operate in the temporarily set up market in Thirumazhisai, no provision has been made for foodgrain merchants.

It also alleged that while COVID-19 cases were mostly detected only among the workers and traders in the vegetable market within the sprawling complex, only the foodgrain vendors had to suffer due to the shutting down of the entire market.

After hearing the plea through video conference, Justice M. Duraisamy issued a notice to the Chief Administrative Officer of the Market Management Panel.

The judge also directed the Member Secretary of Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, the Special Nodal Officer of Disaster Management and Mitigation, Commissioner of Police, Chennai to file their counter and posted the matter for further hearing to May 26.

Temporary market opens in Tirumazhisai

By Our Staff Reporter

The temporarily set up vegetable/fruits/flowers wholesale market in Tirumazhisai started functioning on May 11.

"Only less than 10 persons are allowed in a wholesale shop, which figure used to be at least 25 earlier," said P. Sukumaran (Secretary, Koyambedu Wholesale Market Merchants' Association).

To avoid crowding, members of the public are not allowed in the market.

"All the traders and vendors are given an entry pass, which they have to show to be allowed inside," Sukumaran added.

Meanwhile, vegetable prices have gone down by 10 to 15 percent compared to the last few days after the market opened for business.

Now, onion is being sold for Rs. 20 per kg., tomato Rs. 10 per

kg., potato Rs 25-30 per kg., broad beans Rs. 25-30 per kg, and carrot, beetroot, and ladies' finger for Rs. 15-20 per kg.

At present, 200 shops have been set up in 140 acres, with a minimum gap of 20 feet between each shop.

The market is disinfected every day, thermal scanning is done for vendors and traders. Also, more than 300 police personnel have been posted to monitor the market.

At Koyambedu wholesale market, more than 500 semi-wholesale traders who were not provided slots in Tirumazhisai staged a protest on May 13 demanding reopening of the market.

Donate Blood Once in 3 Months

Lockdown maybe extended till May 31 with easing of norms

With Tamilnadu continuing to see a rise in COVID-19 cases, the government is likely to announce a lockdown extension up to May 31, but with more easing of norms.

With Chennai contributing more than 50% of the new daily cases, the curbs could be comparatively higher in the city.

The government is not likely to allow public transport, gyms, malls and theaters to operate during the extended lockdown period.

The state will take a call on May 16 factoring in local aspects and the recent spike in cases.

The Chief Minister has already requested the Centre not to resume regular flights and train services until May 31.

3 coronavirus positive women deliver while in isolation

Two pregnant women in the city suffering from COVID-19 had safe deliveries while being treated under quarantine in Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (Egmore).

As both were asymptomatic, they tested positive only at the fag end of their delivery when they underwent a routine test.

They went into labour a day after admission and, after spending 12 days in the isolation ward, they were declared virus-free and discharged on May 11.

Another patient from Perambur, who also delivered in an isolation ward, was discharged on May 13.

All the three babies are healthy without any complications.



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