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Vol. 26, No. 6

1306th Issue: June 28 - July 4, 2020

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## 2 govt. employees, 3 drivers held in e-pass racket

By Our Staff Reporter

M. Udayakumar (a Junior Assistant in Chennai Collectorate) and E. Kumaran (Senior Revenue Inspector) were arrested along with A. Manojkumar, R. Vinothkumar and M. Devendran (all cab drivers) for being involved in e-pass racket.

While the government had made the entire process of issuing e-passes online to make it foolproof and to ensure that only genuine applicants get an exemption to travel, the offenders managed to get over 100 passes through illegal means for people to travel from Chennai to other places in the State as well as to other States.

According to the police, Vinothkumar was acquainted with both the govt. officials and used that influence to get the e-passes.

The drivers were part of a WhatsApp group for drivers in Chennai. Whoever got a customer request for a vehicle would post the customer's details in the group and Vinoth would get the e-pass with just Aadhaar proof.

The customers were charged Rs. 2,000 for a pass.

Police are also checking whether the gang also issued fake passes.

While Chennai Corporation only issues passes to people coming from other places to the city, the drivers managed to convince the police at checkpoints that they would be returning the same day. "Since the passes are original, police have been considerate, which was exploited by the offenders," he said, admitting the existence of the loophole in e-pass verification by police on the ground.

Based on a tip-off, CCB sleuths investigated the matter and nabbed the offenders.

The accused have been booked under Sections 269 and 3 of Epidemic Diseases Act, 51 of Disaster Management Act and 420 of IPC and remanded in judicial custody.

## 3500 volunteers to monitor those in home quarantine

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai Corporation has deployed a team of volunteers called Friend of COVID Citizen Under Surveillance (FOCUS) across its 200 wards in 15 zones to help monitor those under home quarantine and home isolation.

While home quarantine is for those who have returned from other states or abroad, home isolation is for those who have tested positive for the coronavirus but are asymptomatic.

Each of the 3,500 FOCUS volunteers will visit every house under quarantine, coming under their limits, at least thrice daily. Their responsibility will include ensuring quarantine protocols are not violated by those under isolation.

Additionally, they will also make sure that essential needs, like groceries, medicines, etc. of those under quarantine and isolation are met.

The Corporation has also been focusing on its fever camps conducted daily across zones. Since June 8, it has conducted 6,811 such fever camps, 532 on June 23, attended by 4,33,857 persons.

The fever camps are equipped with thermal scanners and pulse oximeter and are used to check persons for COVID-19 symptoms like fever, cough and throat pain. Over 13,000 influenza-like illness (ILI) patients have been identified in the fever camps. So far, swabs from 10,697 persons have been taken.

With there are over 18,000 active COVID-19 cases on date the Corporation is working towards improving its institutional quarantine centers.

A new COVID-19 care center with 5,000 beds is being set up in the vacant Tamil Nadu Housing Board Tenement in Ambattur.

## 3,645 fresh Covid-19 cases in Tamilnadu on June 26

By Our Staff Reporter

Tamilnadu's Covid-19 infections spiked for the third day running on June 26 with 3,645 fresh cases.

32,305 people are still under treatment, while 41,357 have been cured.

The death toll in the state has risen to 957 with 46 more deaths.

32,317 persons were tested across the state on June 26.

Chennai reported 1,956 fresh cases.

Over the 10 days, Chennai added 15,000 cases, an increase of 1.5 times.

## Rlys to refund tickets booked till Aug. 12

By Our Staff Reporter

The Railways on June 25 announced that they would refund all tickets booked for regular trains between July 1 and Aug. 12 as coronavirus cases in the country surged a month after the government started relaxing some of the restrictions imposed in March. Only special trains announced in May and June will run, the railways said.

Rail services, apart from the movement of some essential cargo, were abruptly halted in late March ahead of efforts to contain the virus that froze almost all economic activity, leaving crores out of work overnight.

Earlier this month, the railways had increased the number of special passenger trains from 30 to over 200. These include 15 pairs of trains running on the Rajdhani routes since May 12 and 100 pairs operating since June 1.

Before the lockdown, the railways operated around 12,000 trains everyday, transporting 2 crore passengers.

## EB bill payment date extended to July 15

By Our Staff Reporter

In view of the total lockdown from June 19, TNEB has extended the payment deadline for the April/May bimonthly bill to July 15.

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## 70% of COVID-19 patients in six zones

By Our Staff Reporter

Six out of 15 zones in Chennai, account for around 70% of the COVID-19 cases.

Tondiarpet, Royapuram, Anna Nagar, Kodambakkam and Teynampet Zones have more than 2,000 active COVID-19 cases.

With Thiru Vi Ka Nagar Zone accounting for around 15,300 cases, the six zones together account for over 70% of the cases.

Though Adyar has around 1100 active cases, the remaining 8 zones have less than 1000 active cases each.

When the virus began spreading in Chennai, north Chennai emerged as a hotspot. Consequently the hotspots have changed to other areas.

The majority of the cases reported from the six vulnerable areas were identified by Corporation officials through their camps.

In just one day, between June 20 and 21, Anna Nagar Zone reported a spike of 100 new cases.

Anna Nagar, Teynampet and Kodambakkam Zones have divisions that have been reporting a high number of cases lately. "All those areas we are conducting fever camps. In addition to thermal scanners, we also have the pulse oximeter. We also are strong on the house-to-house surveys and mobile medical units," said a health official.

As on June 22, there were 61 containment areas in eight zones - Tondiarpet, Thiru Vi Ka Nagar, Ambattur, Anna Nagar, Teynampet, Kodambakkam, Perungudi and Sholinganallur.

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## Kabasura Kudineer distributed in Lakshmi Street



By Our Staff Reporter

Kabasura Kudineer was served by a Corporation employee to the residents of Lakshmi Street, West Mambalam at 7 a.m on Saturday, June 27. Senior citizens living in the area benefitted from it.

## Roads, streets blocked

By Our Staff Reporter



7th Avenue-4th Avenue junction in Ashok Nagar



Motilal Street, T. Nagar

A number of streets and roads in the neighbourhood have been blocked with barricades due to the rise in COVID-19 positive cases.

## Private schools approach High Court for allowing fee collection

By Our Staff Reporter

Justice R. Mahadevan issued notice to the Tamilnadu government on June 23 to file its response by June 30 while admitting a batch of petitions from associations of schools and colleges challenging an order restraining them from demanding and collecting fees from students in view of COVID-19 lockdown.

"It is the policy decision of the government that all private educational institutions must pay salary to their teaching and non-teaching staff. But if unaided institutions are prohibited from collecting even minimum fees, how will they pay salary, that too when almost all such institutions are conducting online classes," the Judge said in his oral observations during virtual hearing of the petition.

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## Tree branch lying on Gopalakrishna Street



By Our Staff Reporter

A dried tree branch has been lying on Gopalakrishna Street, T. Nagar for several days.

## Masks, sanitisers donated to RMD Trust



By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai Task Force and The Kindness Foundation jointly donated masks, hand sanitisers and handwash to RMD Pain and Palliative Care Trust, T. Nagar on June 24.

Dr. Republica Sridhar (Founder) said that those interested in donating medicines, provisions etc. may contact 93810 16588.

## Radhatri Nethralaya to host webinar today evening

By Our Staff Reporter

Radhatri Nethralaya (12, Hindi Prachara Sabha Street, T. Nagar, Ph: 2433 2229, 2431 1550, 94454 38681) will host a webinar on 'Diabetic macular edema: past, present and future' from 8 p.m to 9 p.m on Saturday, June 27.

Dr. Vasumathy Vedantham (Medical Director & Vitreo Retinal Surgeon, Radhatri Nethralaya) will be the moderator and also speak on two topics.

Dr. Anand Rajendran (Professor & Head, Vitreo Retinal Service, Aravind Eye Hospital) and Dr. Rajiv Raman (Senior Vitreo Retinal Consultant, Sankara Nethralaya) will also speak on two topics each.

The viewer and registration link is [www.technostream.in/index/9/dmepastpresentand-future](http://www.technostream.in/index/9/dmepastpresentand-future)

## CBSE, ICSE cancel Stds. 10, 12 board exams

By Our Staff Reporter

The government on June 25 told the Supreme Court that the CBSE and ICSE board exams for Std. 10 and Std. 12 have been cancelled. They were slated to be held from July 1 to 15.

The government told the court that the CBSE has decided to cancel Std. 10 board exams, while the Std. 12 board exams have been made optional. Students can opt to appear for the exam which will be held later, or opt for results on an assessment basis.

Std. 12 students who do not opt for exams will have their past exams make up for their performance and assessment accordingly.

The government also told the court that the decision was taken after consulting states and that Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu had expressed their inability to conduct the exams.

The Supreme Court was hearing a petition filed by parents seeking the cancellation of the board exams.

The CBSE had directed the schools to promote students of Stds. 9 and 11 to the respective next grades on the basis of school based assessments.

## Pharmacies want paracetamol sale in grocery stores monitored

By Our Staff Reporter

Pharmacists who have been providing details of those availing paracetamol for the past two months to the Drug Control Department want similar measures to be adopted for the general provision stores where the tablet is sold without prescription.

K. Sivabalan (Director of Drug Control) said that they pharmacies across the state had been instructed to submit details of those buying paracetamol and cough syrups. The details are submitted to the department of public health and national health mission which follow up on the patients.

He added that sale of paracetamol is very rare in grocery stores and they have been left out of the purview.

Pharmacists, however, disagree and said for public welfare, sales by general merchants should also be monitored.

A senior corporation official too said that officials have not been instructed to crack down on provision stores selling paracetamol tablets.

## 74-year-old COVID-19 patient missing from hospital

By Our Staff Reporter

K. S. Adikesavan (74) of Alandur stayed with his wife and mother in Alandur, while his son Manivannan stayed two streets away with his family. On June 6, Adikesavan's mother died, and soon after the funeral he had severe cough.

Manivannan took his father to the nearby testing center on June 9 and was told the next evening that he had the infection.

On June 11 morning, sanitary inspector Divya took Adikesavan to the screening center in Guindy in an ambulance for preliminary checkup for diabetes and blood pressure after which he was to be referred to Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital (KMC).

However, it is not clear what happened after that, as the sanitary inspector said she does not track the patients on her own because she does not get an update from the hospital.

As Adikesavan did not have a phone, Divya tried to check with another COVID-19 patient who was in the same ambulance and was reportedly told that he had been admitted to KMC hospital.

She passed on the information to Manivannan, who was busy with the last rites of his grandmother, and added that no visitors were allowed.

But when he went to KMC on June 14, he was told that nobody by the name of Adikesavan had been admitted there. He approached St. Thomas Mount police and was told that his father was in KMC based on the information they had received from the screening center.

Manivannan checked all government hospitals, but could not find his father anywhere. He lodged a police complaint online, and also at Kilpauk police station.

"My father was last seen by fellow patients in KMC on June 11 before entering the ward. I still have not informed my mother that he is missing. Because travel by two-wheeler is prohibited, I have been walking 15 km every day hoping to find him somewhere. It poses risk to others also because he is a COVID patient and has been seen in the hospital without any safety gear," he said.

## Lockdown impacts life of people in containment zones



By Our Staff Reporter

Post the stricter lockdown measures from June 19, life of people in containment zones has become more difficult.

"During the past several days, the authorities have become stricter as they are not allowing us to go out of the street," said V. S. Jayaraman, a resident of Motilal Street, T. Nagar that has been under containment since May 28.

Making the situation worse, a vendor, who was allowed by Chennai Corporation to sell vegetables on the street, disappeared after a day" he added.

Officials provided some phone numbers for the residents on the first day and asked them to contact them if they needed any help. "When we tried to call a number, it was answered by a shop in T. Nagar. When we asked for help, it was refused citing lack of manpower. We were forced to manage with food items we had stocked before the restrictions," he said.

Some of the residents of the street managed to order vegetables and other essential items online and received the items at the corner of the street. The police are not allowing the delivery men to enter the street.

The health department has been conducting medical camps periodically on the street and has distributed vitamin and zinc tablets along with Kabasura Kudineer.

Meanwhile, residents of Rangan Street in T. Nagar are opposing the Corporation's move to lodge doctors, who have been deployed from other districts, in an apartment in a building there. "More than 20 doctors will stay in the apartment. There are families with kids and elderly persons in the building. The civic body should make arrangements for them in hotels or community halls," another resident said.

Including Motilal Street, there are 17 containment zones in Kodambakkam Zone.

## E-pass rules

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai, Theni, Madurai and parts of Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts are under complete lockdown since COVID-19 cases are increasing on a regular basis. For people travelling within the three districts and parts of Chengalpattu, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram, the use of ePass has been made mandatory.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on June 24 announced that inter-district transportation in other parts of Tamilnadu will also stand suspended and the movement of people within the zones will not be permitted till June 30.

Travel rules for Chennai and neighbouring districts In the three districts under the blanket ban, only travel for medical emergencies and essential services are allowed.

Persons travelling for marriages and deaths should apply and receive the ePass before commencing their journey. According to the TNePass website, individuals can apply for ePass for marriages, medical emergencies, death of a close relative and if stranded.

Work: For functioning of industries and micro, small and medium enterprises, the employees staying at or near the company are allowed. The employees should undergo a RT PCR test before restarting the work. The employees are not allowed to travel every day, said an order from the government.

Returning to Chennai: All the people returning to Chennai through domestic or international airports should mandatorily carry an ePass. For people planning to travel to other districts from Chennai airport, the passengers should mention their final destination in the ePass.

For applying for ePass, visit the webpage <https://tnepass.tnega.org/#/user/pass>.

## Lawyer alleges DCP threw bike keys in canal

V. Balaji (a resident of Ashok Nagar) has submitted petitions in various forums alleging that Deputy Commissioner S. Rajesh Kannan stopped his bike, removed the keys and threw them in a canal for violating lockdown norms.

The lawyer stated that he was on his way to buy milk and fruits for his children from a nearby shop at around 7 a.m. on June 20 when police stopped his two-wheeler.

"Though I politely told Rajesh about my health condition which had forced me to take the two-wheeler, he did not listen to me, removed the keys from my two-wheeler and threw them in the nearby canal," the petition said.

## Rs. 1,000 relief to be given to disabled at doorstep

By Our Staff Reporter

The State government on June 22 issued instructions to District Collectors and officials to distribute Rs. 1,000 cash announced for differently-abled persons at their doorstep.

As per the statistics with the State government, around 13.35 lakh differently-abled persons will benefit.

As there was confusion among differently-abled persons on collecting the amount, the State government announced doorstep delivery and also issued guidelines for cash distribution.

The District Collector and the district different-abled welfare officer will be part of the team that is to be formed, the order said.

Meanwhile, the process of distribution of Rs 1,000 announced for rice ration cardholders in Chennai and three neighbouring districts commenced on June 22.

PDS workers are delivering the dole at the doorstep. All ration shops remained closed from June 22 to 26 as the workers were distributing the dole.

## Rs. 15 crores collected from lockdown norm violators

By Our Staff Reporter

As on June 25, the police have registered 6,64,944 cases against those who violated the prohibitory orders under Section 144.

Over 7.23 lakh persons have been arrested under these FIRs and around 5,35,640 vehicles have been seized.

The police have also collected almost Rs 15.18 crores in fines from those who had violated the lockdown rules. Prohibitory orders under section 144 have been in force in the state since the last week of March owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chennai since he intense lockdown was imposed on June 19, over 22,100 cases were booked and over 17,400 vehicles that included auto rickshaws, two-wheelers and cars were seized.

The government had instructed residents to avoid taking their vehicles out to buy vegetables and other essential items and, instead, source them from the n shops within a radius of two km. of their residences.

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## Rs. 5,000 crores earmarked for two power plants

By Our Staff Reporter

The Tamilnadu government has ordered preparation of a detailed project report to set up two re-gasified liquified natural gas-based power plants with a combined capacity of 1,460MW to supply power exclusively to Chennai and its suburbs within the Corporation limits.

The projects are being planned at the site vacated by GMR at Basin Bridge. The two plants will cost Rs 5,000 crores.

Imported gas for the plant will be provided by Indian Oil through pipeline from the Ennore refinery. At present, Tangedco has 516MW gas-based plants in Cauvery delta basin and in the dry belt of Ramanathapuram.

The four units of GMR, each with a capacity of 46MW, were occupying about 30 acres. In 2018, the units were decommissioned due to high cost of fuel and pollution.

Once started, the project will take three years to complete, said a TNEB official.

## Chennai worst hit by cyber attacks

Amongst the number of cyber attacks reported from Tier-1 cities in the country, the maximum of 42% was recorded in Chennai during the quarter, followed by Patna at 38% and Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kolkata at 35% each, said the "Cyber Threat Monitor Report" by home-grown cybersecurity company K7 Computing.

These attacks were designed to exploit user trust and scam people for financial gains.

The report revealed that hackers continued to exploit vulnerabilities in outdated software and operating systems in this quarter which included Windows XP and Windows 7 for which Microsoft has stopped providing updates and security patches.

The report revealed that attacks by rootkits like Curveball, Remote Code Execution, phishing attacks based on COVID-19 trends, and DOS (denial-of-service) attacks were popular.

Complex USB attacks also saw an increase — popular among these were crypto mining malware.

At an individual level, it mostly involved fake COVID-19 apps infected with malware and phishing tools.

## Retailers run low on stock

By Our Staff Reporter

Though Chennai Corporation has provided vehicle passes to deliver loads to shops, government officials have not been accepting them since the latest lockdown.

Vendors said that retail shops have been running out of stock from the past week.

"Dealers stopped supplying products to the shops after the lockdown was imposed. Even if we go and get the stock ourselves, we get lesser than the demand.

We hope the crisis will be over by the next month," said Murugavel, who runs a supermarket in K. K. Nagar.

Retailers added that the number of customers has also decreased in the past few days.

"We are unable to collect the stock ourselves as police checking is strict in the area as there are many positive cases reported from here," said a trader from West Mambalam.

## Death rate rises to 1.47% in city

By Our Staff Reporter

Since June 12, the death rate in the city has been rising slowly to reach 1.47% on June 22.

Till the 1st week of June, the death rate was less than 1%. Among the 15 Corporation Zones, Royapuram recorded the highest number of deaths of 109 as on the morning of June 22.

This is more than double the 52 deaths that the zone had recorded till June 12.

In Teynampet Zone, 82 patients have died (37 on June 12), while the fatality figure is 80 in Tondiarpet zone (up from 43 on June 12). Thiru Vi Ka Nagar and Anna Nagar zones have recorded 73 and 55 deaths respectively.

Despite having the highest number of cases and deaths, all the containment zones in Royapuram Zone have been removed. There were 17,683 active cases in the city on June 22.

## Essentials hit as truck drivers shun Chennai

By Our Staff Reporter

With the number of COVID-19 cases increasing in the city, drivers are reluctant to transport loads to Chennai.

S. Yuvaraj (Member, All India Motor Transport Congress) stated that many drivers are staying back as they were afraid of being home quarantined when they return.

As the compulsory 10-day home quarantine for those returning from Chennai leaves them without work, many are refusing to make the trip, he said.

Even many truck operators are avoiding Chennai as they may lose drivers to home quarantine on their return, and also fear that if any driver is down with COVID-19, he might be forced to temporarily close operations, he added.

## Expert panel member tests negative

Prabhdeep Kaur, a member of the Tamilnadu government's expert committee on COVID-19, who had been in self-quarantine following 'high risk exposure' said on June 23 that her husband has been cured of the virus while she has tested negative for the pathogen.

She took to Twitter and posted that she had also completed the 14-day quarantine.

Kaur, a medical doctor and epidemiologist, is a scientist with ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology in Chennai and a member of the 19-member panel set up by the state government.

## Chennai hits new high in COVID-19 cases

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai saw a sharp increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases as 1,834 persons were diagnosed with the disease on June 25.

The total number of patients currently undergoing treatment stands at 18,969 which is 63% of the total number (30,064) of active cases in Tamilnadu.

## Additional COVID-19 care centers in Anna University

By Our Staff Reporter

The Corporation is planning to set up a 2,000-bed COVID-19 care facility in Anna University.

According to reports, four hostels in the College of Engineering (CEG) campus in Guindy and an auditorium might be handed over to the Corporation to be converted into COVID-19 care centers.

The university has already handed over a few facilities in its Knowledge Park and the postgraduate hostel to set up quarantine facilities.

These centers will be used to house patients with mild symptoms.



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## Death of 'recovered' patients puts discharge policy under cloud

By Our Staff Reporter

Though the government hospitals state that they are adhering to the recommended protocols and reason comorbidities as primary reasons for deaths, several loopholes in the management of COVID-19 cases in the State are being exposed.

The recent death of a 70-year-old patient, who tested positive on June 9, has highlighted several glitches in the discharge policy.

S. Muthappa was admitted to Stanley Medical College and Hospital on June 9 after testing positive with mild symptoms of fever.

He was treated and sent to institutional quarantine in Pulianthope on June 14.

The patient had co-morbid conditions of diabetes and hypertension. However, he was discharged from the facility and was sent home on June 18 without an exit test as he did not have any symptoms.

He was asked to check for sugar levels in a private institution.

On being checked and tested, the patient's chest x-ray revealed about 70% infection in the lungs indicating pneumonia due to COVID-19.

He was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit in Stanley Medical College and Hospital on June 20, where he succumbed to the virus on June 22.

While the chief of medicine in Stanley Medical College and Hospital Dr Sridhar and radiologists say that the death was due to comorbid cardiac conditions and age of the patient, x-ray reports taken on June 19 showed that his heart and pericardium was normal. Coincidentally, the death of a 54-year-old patient from Mannady, who was admitted with COVID-19 to Stanley Medical College and Hospital on May 9 and discharged on May 19 is strikingly similar. The patient died after developing respiratory issues on May 21.

As per ICMR guidelines, patients with mild symptoms can be discharged after they have been treated in a hospital for ten days and there is no requirement of an exit test to prove that the patient has recovered.

However, these deaths question the protocol that was revised only last month. Meanwhile, public health experts stress the need for monitoring the oxygen level in the blood even after discharge.

Dr. Prabhdeep Kaur (Deputy Director in National Institute of Epidemiology and a member of Tamilnadu medical expert team) said that the saturation levels need to be monitored every four to six hours, even in case of asymptomatic individuals.

In similar instances, a few patients from Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH) are getting admitted in private hospitals after being discharged as they continue to have mild symptoms.

These patients are unaware of their status as no exit test is being made and take this test in private laboratories or hospitals.

Over 2 lakh houses in the city will be under home quarantine at any given point of time as the Corporation has decided to intensify the isolation of potential positive persons and those who are returning from hospitals after recovery.

The civic body has listed 18 categories of people to be home quarantined. According to Prakash, residents will be kept under quarantine if they had tested positive and are in home isolation.

Also, persons who have recovered from the infection, home contacts of the positive persons, their extended contacts, returnees from other countries, States and other districts and symptomatic persons identified in fever clinics will be quarantined.

"Such residents should be under home quarantine for 14 days as the possibility of spread is higher. Also, we have appointed 4,500 volunteers, who will help home quarantined persons to buy essential items," Dr. Kaur added.

## Fever camps help identify 13,000 symptomatic cases

Around 4.3 lakh persons have been screened by Chennai Corporation in its fever camps held from May 8 to June 23.

Of this, 13,829 persons have been found to have influenza-like illness. Swab samples were taken from 10,697 persons to test for COVID-19.

According to the civic body, the maximum number of symptomatic cases was reported in Royapuram zone (3,322) followed by Tondiarpet (2,624) and Anna Nagar (1,626).

On June 23, the Corporation conducted fever camps in 532 places in which around 39,673 persons were screened.

## Colleges to start online classes in July

By Our Staff Reporter

City colleges are gearing up to start online classes for the next academic year in July as uncertainty looms large over reopening of such institutions due to rising COVID-19 cases in Chennai.

Colleges are conducting surveys among students to know how many of them have access to digital devices like laptops, tablets, smartphones and internet connection. Principals say that the webinars and motivational sessions conducted for students in April and May would help in conducting online classes.

The higher education department announced that the new academic year would start with semester exams for final year students. The pen and paper mode test is ruled out for now. Colleges are waiting for the government's direction on conducting exams in alternate modes like online classes.

S. Kothai (Principal, Ethiraj College for Women) said that the college is planning to start online classes in July.

DG Vaishnav College has already started online supplementary classes for students.

## Conservancy workers trained to protect themselves

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai Corporation has been conducting awareness programs for its conservancy workers on how to protect themselves from the coronavirus while discharging their duties.

Instructions specify wearing personal protective equipment, eating a healthy diet, taking vitamin supplements and following social distancing.

According to Prakash (Corporation Commissioner), of the 20,000 field level workers, only 120 have tested positive.

"We provide disposable masks during roll call every morning, ensure that they eat a good diet and also take supplements. This is a successful model which should be followed by others," he said at a recent press meeting.

Only 345 Corporation employees have so far tested positive and 50 of them have also returned for work, he added.

The Corporation also conducts regular health checks for all its employees on duty.

## Police seal busy roads and book violators

Implementing the lockdown strictly in Chennai and suburban areas, police sealed many busy roads and booked cases for flouting norms.

Senior officers including Commissioner A. K. Viswanathan were seen inspecting arterial roads to make sure that the lockdown was enforced.

The policemen at checkpoints were seen wearing face shields, masks and gloves.

The arterial roads including Anna Salai, GST Road and Poonamallee High Road appeared deserted after the morning hours, and officials also barricaded all major flyovers.

There were drones fitted with high-definition cameras and speakers deployed at important junctions on Anna Salai, Usman Road, Aminjikarai, Anna Nagar, Saidapet and Tambaram. The drones monitored the roads and transmitted photos of crowded places.

Motorists found wandering beyond the 2-km from their homes had their vehicles seized, forcing them to return home by foot.

## Some zones sees a 20% drop in active cases

Even as the percentage of active cases is steadily increasing in 7 zones in the city including Kodambakkam, Anna Nagar and Royapuram zones, Tondiarpet zone witnessed a drop of 20% over the past week. It was the biggest hotspot after Royapuram. In Tondiarpet, the number of recovered COVID-19 patients has exceeded the number of fresh cases, and this comes at a time when testing has been ramped up in all the zones.

Data from the past 10 days shows that the number of active cases in the zone was around 2,100 active cases on June 17, it has come down to 1,891 as on June 25.

K. P. Karthikeyan (Nodal Officer) said that the R-naught -infection rate is now officially below 1 for the zone.

The other zone that has shown a drop in the number of active cases is Teynampet. It had 2,031 active cases on June 25, lower than the high recorded on June 18 (2,162).

Thiru Vi Ka Nagar has also recorded a drop, with the number of active cases being 1,205 compared to a high of 1,359 on June 21.

## Daily online talks on Career Guidance

By Our Staff Reporter

Velammal Nexus (a wing of Velammal Group of Schools) has organised online talks on Career Guidance at 10.30 a.m daily from June 26 to July 4.

It can be watched in the YouTube channel Velammalnexus.

Eminent personalities from various fields will guide school students to choose right career options.

The following persons will take part in the program:

Santhosh Narayanan - Music Director

Sujith Kumar - Founder and Managing Trustee (Maatram Foundation)

Sylendra Babu - IPS Officer

Mic Murali - Stage Host

C. Sivankalai - Deputy State Tax Officer (Commercial Taxes Department)

C.A Ramvel - Student Mentor (Sharpen Your Strength Academy)

Ramesh Aaditya - Head Strategy (Shankar IAS Academy)

Venkatraman Umakanth - Futureskills (NASSCOM)

Rajmohan Arumugam - Social Media Influencer

For more details, call 80567 71790

## Chennai, suburbs have 79% rain deficit in June

The city and its suburbs have so far a rain deficit of nearly 79%. But all is not lost, as weathermen have forecast light rain in the next 48 hours and weather watchers said that the city will receive some spells from this weekend.

In his daily weather update, N. Puviarasan (Director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre) said that the city would be generally cloudy and light to moderate rainfall may occur over some areas. Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 37°C and 28°C.

"Rainfall this month is mostly due to the wind and speed convergence. So, showers could either be in the morning or in the evening," an IMD official said. The average rainfall expected in Chennai subdivision this month is 57.3mm and it has recorded 12.3mm leaving a 79% deficit. Subdivision includes Nungambakkam and Meenambakkam weather stations and a few rain gauges in the city's north and southern suburbs.

While several far flung areas like Poonamallee, Thiruvallur, Mangadu, Thiruthani and Arakkonam including catchment areas like Poondi have received good spells, experts said that poor rainfall in and around the two main weather stations was also a reason for the deficit.

## Velammal Nexus organises online concerts by leading musicians

By Our Staff Reporter

Velammal Nexus (a wing of Velammal Group of Schools, Mogappair) has organised a web series of music concerts by popular playback singers and musicians from at 7 p.m daily from June 26 to July 7.

The concerts will be streamed live on the YouTube channel velammalnexus.

The following musicians will be featured:

Music Instruments: Shylu Ravindran (Guitar), Vainika Rajesh Vaidhya (Veena), Manonmani (Sarangi),

Vocal: Srinivas, Rajalakshmi, Senthil, Aravind Srinivas, Reshma (Granddaughter of late Dr. Balamuralikrishna), Kalpana, Nithyashree Mahadevan and Swagatha.

Other performers include Sharma (Magician and Ventriloquist) and Rajavelu Vijay (Mimicry).

For further details, contact 80567 71790.

## Daily online yoga classes till July 5

By Our Staff Reporter

Velammal Nexus is conducting daily online yoga classes at 7.30 a.m till July 5.

It will be streamed live on the YouTube channel velammalnexus.

The classes will be conducted by Dr. Lakshmi Andiappan (daughter of Asana Andiappan). She is an acclaimed yoga teacher and recipient of several national and international awards.

The regular practice of the asanas will improve stamina, concentration, immune system, blood circulation, vision and also alleviate orthopedic problems and control the body weight.

Apart from asanas she will also teach breathing exercises and surya namaskaram.

For more details, call 80567 71790.

## Families of frontline victims still to receive Rs. 50 lakhs solatium

The kin of Corporation staffers and doctors' associations are alleging that the Rs. 50 lakhs solatium through health insurance claim, announced by the Central Govt. for the families of deceased government personnel on frontline duty during the lockdown has not been paid.

Similarly, the Tamilnadu government's scheme of providing a government job for a family member of the deceased has also not taken off.

While many frontline workers in civic bodies who tested positive are being provided Rs. 2 lakhs, medical professionals who have tested positive rue the lack of benefits.

**If anything interesting is happening in your neighbourhood please inform Mambalam Times.**

## Most lockdown norms violations in south Chennai

By Our Staff Reporter

Contrary to public perception that south Chennai, with a lot of posh neighbourhoods, is home to more law-abiding citizens than the north, traffic police data shows that a majority of lockdown norms violators between June 1 and 19 were from the south.

South Chennai, comprising areas like Adyar, ECR, Velachery, Guindy and Nanganallur, registered 32,575 violations with Rs.1.62 crores being collected in fines, while north Chennai registered 14,179 violations with Rs. 70 lakhs collected as fine.

Of these, 5,359 cases were booked against bike riders in the south and 1,911 in north Chennai.

A key factor in the high number of violations in south Chennai, police said, is that the area includes busy places like T. Nagar, Adyar, ECR and Tambaram where there is better enforcement and more checkpoints.

In north Chennai, the large number of COVID-19 cases in areas like Royapuram and Tondiarpet could have forced many to remain indoors.

Autorickshaw drivers in north Chennai had 758 cases registered against them, while 749 cases were booked against auto drivers in south Chennai where 648 cases were also booked against car drivers. The number of car drivers violating rules in north Chennai was 50. Traffic enforcement officials said that most people in North prefer walking to nearby markets, while those in affluent areas of the south took their vehicles out, searching for better shops and quality food items.

In western Chennai, areas like Anna Nagar, Arumbakkam and Koyambedu, 13,806 violations were booked, while 16,193 cases were booked in the east including Triplicane and Mylapore.

## Trust hires poor women for COVID-19 survey

By Our Staff Reporter

Since the coronavirus outbreak, 27-year-old R. Padmaja, who lost her teaching job, is out every morning at 7.30 a.m, masked, gloved and notes in hand, to show vulnerable homes in Ayanavaram how to stay armed against infection.

She is one of the 15 woman COVID-19 warriors recruited by Neelam Trust in an intervention program it is conducting with Chennai Corporation.

The women are in the 22-38 years age group, and a team comprising wives of unemployed husbands, child brides and homemakers with no previous work experience – all from poor families.

Since May 19 when they first reported for work, each outreach worker has to cover 300 households in slums and high-density population neighbourhoods, conducting door-to-door surveys, enumerating seniors, children under 12 months of age and people with comorbidities.

They distribute free masks, identify seniors with health ailments to see if they develop fever, cough or influenza-like symptoms, and refer them to Kilpauk Medical College and Hospital.

In addition, they take turns to script and perform awareness programs on hand-washing and social distancing for residents of these neighbourhoods.

Neelam Trust was founded by Muthamizh Kalai Vizhi which works for women empowerment.

## Speeding biker hits cop, held

By Our Staff Reporter

R. Vijay (23) of Kolathur, a second-year college student, was arrested on charges of injuring Inspector Kumaran and driving his bike rashly under the influence of ganja. His friend S. Jayakumar, who was on the pillion, was also arrested.

According to the police, Kumaran tried to stop a bike which was being driven at high speed.

While trying to escape, Vijay lost control and hit Kumaran.

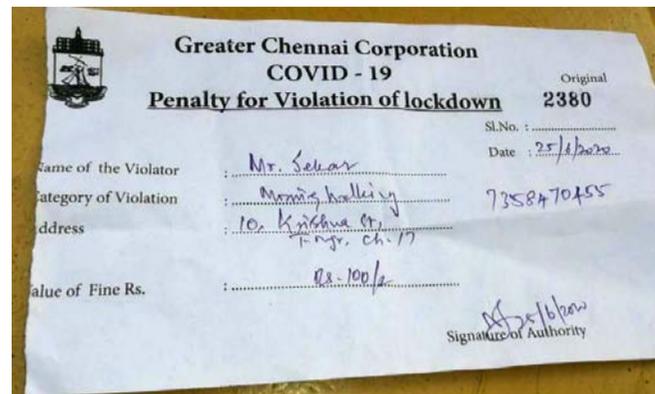
The Inspector suffered injuries on his face and legs. The duo too lost balance and fell off, suffering injuries.

Other personnel secured the riders before they could escape.

The cop and the riders were taken to Government Kilpauk Medical College Hospital for treatment, after which the offenders were handed over to Anna Nagar Traffic Investigation police.

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## Morning walkers fined for violating lockdown norms



By Our Staff Reporter

The police have started imposing fines on those who go on morning walks in the city, violating the stringent lockdown norms in force since June 19.

“Around 7.30 a.m on June 25, I was stopped during my morning walk on Lake View Road and fined Rs. 100,” said Raghuraman, a resident of West Mambalam.

“I was taken by surprise when the policeman informed me that the morning walk was a violation of lockdown rules. I normally walk around the park near my house, but today I decided to take this road to break the monotony. I saw the policeman fining other walkers too,” he added.

Varadan (62) was fined Rs. 300 on June 24 while taking a morning walk along the pedestrian plaza in Pandy Bazaar.

A senior corporation official said that many were walking in the morning in small groups which could not be allowed. “We have been asked to enforce rules strictly and we cannot help but ask them not to come out,” he said.

R. Shanmugham (a member of Chennai Runners' Club) asked what could one do to stay fit. Walking as an exercise should be allowed in the morning and evening as long as distancing norms are maintained and all walkers wear masks, he said.

## Undertakers risk lives in line of duty

By Our Staff Reporter

With the high risk of exposure to COVID-19, undertakers in the city are facing a hazardous time in the line of duty.

N. R. Kothandan has been working as an undertaker for more than 2 decades in Kannamapet burial ground.

But, since the spread of the pandemic in the city, his life has become perilous as he has been burying bodies of COVID-19 victims almost daily for the past 6 weeks.

Kothandan said that often bodies brought from government hospitals are not properly packed and they have to take extra care while handling them.

“Further, at times we have to face the ire of neighbourhood residents when they protest against burial of bodies of COVID-19 victims in the burial ground,” he said.

As of June 23, Chennai recorded a total of 645 COVID-19 deaths. The risk of infection has made mourning a loved one's demise harder than it already is, with family members often unable to bid them goodbye.

A number of voluntary organisations are also involved in the burial of COVID-19 victims with the approval of Chennai Corporation.

Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam is one such Trust.

Its volunteers spend about half a day to pick up bodies and lower them into an 8-foot, machine-dug pit using a 15-meter cloth.

While every volunteer is provided with PPEs, disinfectants and vitamin tablets, the risk of getting infected is manifold, said Kursheed (Member of the Trust).

## With no takers, vegetable prices crash in Tirumazhisai

By Our Staff Reporter

Since the stringent lockdown was imposed on June 19, business in the temporary wholesale vegetable market in Thirumazhisai has come down by 50%

This led to a crash in prices, and even forced many traders to dump the remaining vegetables at the end of the day.

“On June 20, there were no customers after 2 a.m. Prices had increased after two weeks but with so few customers, we had to sell all the vegetables at a low price,” said a trader.

P. Sukumaran (Secretary, Koyambedu Wholesale Market Merchants' Association) said that the prices crashed as there was no business. Usually, business picks up during weekends but with total shutdown on Sundays as part of the lockdown, the traders are incurring huge losses, he added.

## Total Covid cases in India crosses the 5-lakh mark, 58% recover

By Our Staff Reporter

Six days after it recorded four lakh infections, India's COVID-19 tally raced past 5 lakhs to reach 5,08,953 on June 26, with the highest single-day surge of 18,552 cases.

The death toll climbed to 15,685 as 384 died of the infection on June 25.

The number of active cases stands at 1,97,387, while 2,95,880 people have recovered.

## Native rice varieties help boost immunity



Menaka Thilagarajan

Indigenous rice varieties like Karuppu Kavuni, unpolished Thooyamallirice and Mappillai Samba rice help boost immunity better than the standard white rice.

I and my husband Thilakrajan are on a mission to revive indigenous rice varieties, and this lockdown period has become an extremely busy time. I get calls daily enquiring about the nutritional value of different kinds of rice and millets. Since the lockdown and due to the fear of COVID-19, people have become more cautious about their diet. They now prefer simple home-cooked meals rich in nutrients.

Apart from many shifting to indigenous rice varieties, there is an increase in millet usage.

There are around 100 traditional rice varieties in Tamilnadu, but most of them have been forgotten over time.

For the past few years, I have been travelling to various parts of the state in search of traditional rice varieties.

These rice varieties have great nutritional value and can be consumed by children and elders as well.

Through my organic rice store, Mannvasanai, I have been home delivering rice bags during the lockdown. I have also made a health mix with Karuppu Kavuni and different grains.

I provide tips on cooking the rice as some varieties need to be soaked for a few hours before cooking.

Menaka is a resident of Kodambakkam and runs the online store <http://mannvasanai.com/>. For more details, call +91-9884166772/4857 0017 or visit the website.

## COVID-19 curve may flatten by September-end, says study

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai will reach the peak of the COVID-19 curve on July 3 with more than 21,000 active cases and will flatten it on Sept. 30.

On July 5, Tamilnadu will reach the top of the curve with more than 30,000 active cases and will touch the baseline on Sept. 29.

By mid-July, India will hit the peak with 2.6 lakh active cases before reaching a baseline on Sept. 19.

These were projections for the month of July released by the Times Fact-India Outbreak Report.

The report, a joint effort by Times Network and data research firm Protiviti, encapsulates six national projections and includes individual analysis for eight states and four cities.

The projections were made based on three different models.

According to the ‘most likely’ model or scenario, Chennai will have 21,268 active cases when it reaches the peak on July 3.

But, according to the Susceptible Exposed Infected Recovered (SEIR) model, the city will reach the peak on July 6 with 19,054 cases.

Similarly, the ‘most likely’ model projects Tamilnadu's peak to be on July 5 with 30,247 active cases while the SEIR model shows the peak to be on July 6 with 32,909 active cases.

According to the experts, the report took into account the healthcare capacity of the nation and its states, to understand shortfall of beds and availability of ICUs, in the event of an escalation.

The report aims to empower the administrative authorities to spot possible hotspots, critical gaps and build capacity to meet the arising.

On July 15, India is projected to hit its peak of 2,59,967 active cases according to the ‘most likely’ model on July 15 and 3,86,916 active cases as per the SEIR model on July 25.