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State COVID-19 toll crosses 1,500

At least 61 persons died in Tamilnadu on July 6, pushing the state COVID-19 toll to 1,571 even as 3,827 persons tested positive for the viral infection.

While the case tally crossed 1.14 lakh, there were 46,833 persons under treatment for the infection. Chennai recorded 1,747 new cases. Of the 61 deaths, 46 were from Chengalpeta, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts.

Meanwhile, the epidemic continued to spread in the southern districts. While Madurai recorded 245 cases, Theni had 119, Tuticorin 109, Tirunelveli 84, Ramanathapuram 69, Virudhunagar 86 and Sivagangai 51.

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தமாஷா வரிகள்

ஜே.எஸ். ராகவன்

‘ராகவன்! ராகவன்! ராகவன்!’

கோர்ட் வராந்தாவில் கொக்கு மாதிரி ஒற்றைக் காலில் நின்று கொண்டிருந்த என் காதுகளில் இந்தக் குரல் விழுந்தவுடன் சிலிர்த்து எழுந்து கொண்டேன். வெங்கலக் குரலில் என்னை ஆஜர்படுத்தக் கூவி அழைத்தது கோர்ட் ப்யூன் சாமிக்கண்ணு.

விசாரணைக்காக வந்தவர் நிற்பதற்காக வலது பக்கத்தில் இருந்த கூண்டுக்குள் நின்றேன். கனம் கோர்ட்டார் அவர்கள், ‘சீ போடா, பொடியா’ என்கிற அலட்சியத்துடன் என்னை ஏறெடுத்துப் பார்க்காமல் ஏதோ எழுதிக் கொண்டிருந்தார். சுய சரிதையாக இருக்குமோ?

அது ஒரு சிறிய கோர்ட். தற்கால கொரானா போன்ற பீடிப்பு கள் இருந்தால் கட்டாயம் உபயோகம் இல்லாமல் போயிருக்கும். ஒருவர் நுழைவது என்பது இரண்டு தடிமனான பேர்கள் வெளியே வந்தவர்தான் சாத்தியம். தலைக்கு மேலே ஒரு மின் விசிறி ‘லொடக் லொடக்’ என்று டயர் போடாத கட்டை வண்டி சரணாகக் கல் பாதை மேல் ஊர்வது மாதிரி சப்தித்து அனல் காற்றை சுழலவிட்டுக் கொண்டிருந்தது.

திடீரென்று மூக்கைத் தாக்கிய பட்டணம் பொடியின் வாசனை, வக்கீல் சிவராமமூர்த்திகார அருகில் வந்துவிட்டார் என்று அறிவித்தது.

‘நான் சொல்வது எல்லாம் சத்தியம். சத்தியத்தைத் தவிர வேறொன்றும் இல்லை’ என்று பெஞ்சு கிளார்க் சிவகுரு ஒரு புத்தகத்தை என் மூக்குக்கு நேராக நீட்டிச் சொன்னதை நான் ஆமாம் அல்லது இல்லை என்று சொல்வதற்குள் சட்டென்று ஜோலியை முடித்துக் கொண்டு தன் ஆசனத்தில் அமர்ந்து கொண்டார்.

கனம் கோர்ட்டார் அவர்கள் சுயசரிதையைத் தொடர்ந்து எழுதிக் கொண்டிருந்தார். இன்னும் பால காண்டத்திலேயே இருந்திருப்பார் போல.

என்னுடைய வக்கீல் தன் விசாரணையை ஆரம்பித்தார்.

‘உங்க பேரு ராகவன் தானே?’

‘அப்படிஷன், யுவர் ஆனர். இது ஒரு லீடிங் கொஸ்டின்?’ என்று அரசாங்க வக்கீல் ஈஸ்வரன் சிலிர்த்து எழுந்து பாயவில்லை என்பதால் குஷியுடன் தன்னுடைய விசாரணையைத் தொடர்ந்தார்.

‘ராகவன் என்பதே உங்களின் முழுப் பெயரா? அல்லது வீரராகவன் என்ற பெயரின் கச்சித சுருக்கமா?’

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சம்மன் இல்லாமல் ஆஜரான ஒரு அணில் அந்த சப்தத்தைக்

கேட்டு அதிர்ந்து வாலைத் தூக்கிப் பாய்ந்து வெளியே ஓடியது.

வக்கீல் விசாரணையைத் தொடர்ந்தார். ‘நீங்கள் பிறந்த

வருஷம் 1942 தானே. அந்த வருஷத்திலேதானே இரண்டாவது

உலக மகாயுத்தம் நடந்து கொண்டிருந்தது? மெட்ராஸை

ஐப்பானிய விமானங்கள் குண்டு மழை போட்டுத் தாக்கப்

போறது பயந்து மக்கள் தாவர ஐங்கம சொத்துக்களை அடி

மாட்டு விலைக்கு விற்றுவிட்டுத் தப்பி ஓடினார்கள். அந்த

எவாகுவேஷன் பிரியடல் தான் உங்கள் தகப்பனார் உமது

தாயாரைத் திருவள்ளூருக்கு அழைச்சுண்டு போனார்? அங்கு

நடந்த சுகப் பிரவத்திலேதான் நீங்கள் பிறந்தீர்கள் இல்லையா?’

என்னுடைய தலை அசைப்புக்குக் கூட நிற்காமல் வக்கீல்

மேலும் தொடர்ந்தார்.

‘திருவள்ளூரில் பிறந்ததால் உங்கள் குடும்பத்தினர் அந்த

ஸ்தலத்தில் எழுந்தருளியிருக்கும் ஸ்ரீ வீரராகவப் பெருமானின்

திருநாமத்தை உங்களுக்கு சூட்டி மகிழ்ந்தார்கள். இருப்பினும்

நீங்கள் சிறுவனாக வளர்ந்தவுடன் தங்களுடைய பள்ளி

நண்பர்கள் ‘ஐப்பான் குண்டுக்கு பயந்து பூந்தமல்லி ஊரைவிட்டு

ஓடிய உன்னிடம் வீரம் எங்கே இருக்கு?’ என்று கேட்டுக் கை

தட்டிக் கேலி செய்தமையால் விசைப்பட்டு வீரராகவன் என்ற

பெயரிலிருந்து அந்த வீர பகுதியை எடுத்துவிட்டு வெறும்

ராகவனாக அறியப்படவேண்டும் என்று என் இளம் கட்சிக்காரர்

ஆசைப்படுகிறார். ஆகவே யுவர் ஆனர், இந்தப் பெயர் மாற்றத்தை

அங்கீகரித்து உத்தரவுபோட வேண்டி மிகத் தாழ்மையுடன்

கேட்டுக் கொள்கிறேன். வேண்டிய டாக்குமெண்டுகளைக்

கோர்ட்டில் தாக்கல் செய்துவிட்டேன். தட்ஸால் யுவர் ஆனர்!

கூண்டில் நிற்பவர் ராமனாக இருந்தால் என்ன? ராவணனாக

இருந்தால் என்ன? என்று கோர்ட் நடவடிக்கைகளில் கிஞ்சித்தும்

கவனம் செலுத்தாதது போலத் தோன்றி எழுதிக் கொண்டிருந்த

(சுய சரிதை?) கனம் கோர்ட்டார் தன்னுடைய கடைக் கண்

பார்வையை என்மேல் படாமல் இருந்தார். அதனால் என்ன?

அன்று மாலைசுய பெயர் மாற்ற சான்றிதழ் வழங்கப்பட்டது.

கோர்ட்டின் சுறுசுறுப்புக்கு இதுவே சாட்சி என்பதை இங்கே

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COVID-19 patients turned away by private hospitals

By Our Staff Reporter

Despite the Health Dept dashboard showing availability of beds, those needing treatment are being repeatedly denied admission by private hospitals.

Having tested positive for COVID-19 a few days back, 57-year-old Parvathy (name changed) from Perambur, who had been home quarantined, decided to check into a private hospital on June 27 after her blood oxygen saturation levels were low. She also had hypertension and family members did not want to take chances.

However, the search for a hospital turned into a harrowing experience as most private hospitals denied her admission citing one reason or other despite the Health Department's dashboard displaying availability of beds and ICUs.

While health officials claimed that the availability of beds on the dashboard meant that no patient could be denied admission, the ground reality is different. ‘First, we tried a hospital in Ambattur that displayed two available ICUs in the dashboard but when we called them up, the hospital authorities said they were full,’ one of Parvathy's family members said.

When they checked another well-known hospital in Kilpauk that had seven ICUs and five ventilators as per the dashboard, the hospital too denied admission stating they were all full.

Another private hospital in Anna Nagar also denied availability stating that it was working only with government hospital authorities on COVID-19 cases and would admit the patient only if referred by a government hospital.

Eventually, Parvathy was admitted to Stanley Government Hospital.

Two weeks back, a 77-year-old positive patient from Tondiarpet was denied admission in a similar manner by at least three private hospitals though the dashboard listed vacancies in all three.

1,327 policemen in city test positive

By Our Staff Reporter

Of the 1,327 policemen who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the city so far, 586 have recovered, and more than 321 personnel are back on duty. Last week, Deputy Commissioner of Police Deshmukh Shekhar Sanjay and 23 other policemen rejoined duty after recovering from COVID-19.

On July 6, Nagarajan, 32, an Armed Reserve Police Constable succumbed to the infection in the Government Medical College Hospital in Omandurar Estate. He was a native of Otthakadai, Madurai, and was on deputation in Vepery police station. He was in a quarantine facility in the IIT-Madras campus from July 3. As his health deteriorated, he was shifted to the hospital, where he died.

CM inaugurates 750-bed COVID-19 facility

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami inaugurated a 750-bed facility exclusively for COVID-19 patients on July 7 in the National Institute of Ageing located on the campus of The King Institute of Preventive Medicine and Research (Guindy) through video-conferencing.

Of the 750 beds, 300 have ventilator facilities and 70 are in the Intensive Care Unit. The hospital also has wifi facility, a small library and virtual yoga classes for patients.

Active COVID-19 cases dip in over 1,100 streets

By Our Staff Reporter

The intense lockdown that ended on July 5, has shown the desired results, with the number of active cases coming down in more than 1,100 streets in the city, said Tamilnadu Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan.

According to Radhakrishnan, by June 25, active cases were recorded in more than 9,500 streets in Chennai. As on July 3, the number of streets with active cases has come down to 8,402, he said.

According to Radhakrishnan, aggressive testing and fever camps in the city have helped to identify persons with mild symptoms and isolate them to check spread.

The data provided by the civic body showed that the number of active cases in the city is 36 % of the total cases, with Royapuram (zone 5), a hotspot, having the least percentage of active cases (26%).

State reports 3,756 new cases, 64 deaths on July 8

By Our Staff Reporter

Tamilnadu reported 3,756 new cases of COVID-19 on July 8 with a majority of them in the districts.

The state's hotspot Chennai recorded around 1200 cases for the second day in a row, a significant fall compared to the daily infections the previous week.

As per the July 8 bulletin, 1,261 persons tested positive for coronavirus in Chennai, with the active case count in the district s at 21,766.

Tamilnadu has a total of 46,480 patients being treated at home and various health facilities for COVID-19.

Of the 3,756 new cases, 63 patients had recently arrived in Tamilnadu from other states and countries.

Sixtyfour persons died due to COVID-19 in Tamilnadu, 21 in private hospitals and 43 in government health facilities.

They included a 23-year-old woman from Chennai who was admitted to a private hospital on July 6 with cough and fever for two days. She died the next day after suffering from breathlessness for a day. She had no underlying health conditions.

1,700 persons have died in Tamilnadu due to COVID-19. 74,167 persons have recovered from the disease.

A total of 35,979 samples belonging to 34,962 persons were tested in Tamilnadu on July 7 and the total number of samples tested so far in the state is over 14.49 lakh.

Students organise cultural online to raise funds for NGOs

By Our Staff Reporter

Twenty Std. 12 students from different schools in the city have come together and started an independent student organisation called Vortex.

Neeraja Srinivasan, one of the organisers, said, "We knew that physical cultural will not happen anytime soon and decided to do take the digital route."

A large WhatsApp group was created and everyone began discussing and brainstorming as to how they were to go about it. Their aim was to raise money for NGOs doing creditable work. The event was kickstarted on June 23 and went on till July 1.

They received more than 250 registrations and even had to close registration early for a few events due to the overwhelming response. They had events including debate, shipwreck, art, music, dance and Paws Unleashed, an event of furry friends.

Cease The Spread, Yein Udaan, Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary and Team Everest are the NGOs the team has collaborated with.

Currently, it is working on raising funds. "We are sharing all the updates on our Instagram page @thevortexevent," Neeraja concluded.

Rotary Club felicitates Dr. Vasumathy Vedantham

Dr. Vasumathy Vedantham (consultant vitreoretinal surgeon and Director, Radhatri Nethralaya, 12, Hindi Prachara Sabha Street, T. Nagar, Ph: 2433 2229, 94454 38681) was felicitated by the Rotary Club of Madras Central on National Doctors Day on July 1.

The function was conducted through video-conferencing.

Through Gurupriya Vision Research Foundation (the public charitable trust of Radhatri Nethralaya) she is actively involved in community work



and conducts eye screening camps in rural and urban ar-

reas. She has been conducting free screening of preterm infants for retinopathy in several Tamilnadu hospitals and Balwadis in and around Chennai.

Dr. Vasumathy has a distinguished academic record with 15 gold medals including the best outgoing medical student for MBBS and MS in Ophthalmology and the prestigious Rakesh Sharma Memorial Award conferred by All India Ophthalmologic Society in India in 2005.

5 kg more for all rice cardholders till November

By Our Staff Reporter

R. Kamaraj (Food Minister) on July 6 announced that the government would continue to offer additional rice of 5 kg per person per month to all rice cardholders until November in line with the central government's announcement.

The State government has been extending the scheme to 85.99 lakh rice card holders since April.

The minister that the government would adjust in the August bill the cost of essential commodities purchased by the cardholders ahead of the government's announcement of free ration of tur dal, sugar and edible oil on July 4.

The cardholders will get SMS regarding the cost adjustment.

"These cardholders can also get additional rice allotted for this month," Kamaraj said.

Damaged garbage bins lying near temple



By Our Staff Reporter

Damaged garbage bins lying near the Sathyanarayana Temple on Srinivasa Street, West Mambalam.

Woman cop earns praise for helping octogenarian reach airport

By Our Staff Reporter

A woman constable from the city police earned gratitude from the family of an octogenarian and also appreciation from residents for escorting the elderly woman to the airport and waiting till she boarded a flight to reach her daughter's house in Hyderabad.

The incident happened on July 1 when the city was under stringent lockdown.

Ever since the lockdown came into effect in March, it was difficult for kin to visit Vasantha Subramaniam (80), who lived alone in an apartment on Neelakanda Mehta Street in T. Nagar.

Her daughter Rama Raghu Iyer, who lives in Delhi, managed to get flight tickets and e-pass for Vasantha to reach her other daughter's house in Hyderabad but did not know how to bring her mother to the airport as the octogenarian could not book a cab on her own.

That is when she hesitantly contacted Mambalam police station. The senior officials assigned the job to Grade I constable R. Mahalakshmi. On July 1, Mahalakshmi visited the house and took Vasantha and her luggage in a cab to the airport. She then waited there to ensure that the senior citizen boarded the

flight to Hyderabad.

After Vasantha reached her daughter's house in Hyderabad, Rama took to social media to express her gratitude to the Mambalam police, noting how everything was organised through just a phone call to R1 police station.

"The only thing constable Mahalakshmi asked was my mother's blessings! My mother did not spend a single penny," she said.

City police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal, who came to know about the constable's gesture, invited her to his office and rewarded her on July 7.

Fear of infection makes people avoid fever clinics

Since June 1, Chennai Corporation has organised more than 400 fever clinics in the 15 zoned in the city for early detection of cases with Influenza-like illness (ILI) — cough, cold, fever and breathlessness, so as to control the spread.

Though more than 11,000 tests are conducted daily, many furnish incomplete or incorrect contact details at these clinics due to fear of ostracisation if found infected, said a senior Corporation official.

He also said that only around 25/30% of the residents within the locale attend these clinics as they are afraid of catching the infection from others visiting the clinics.

This in spite of the efforts of the field officers and volunteers of FOCUS (Friends of Covid Persons Under Surveillance) who try to create door-to-door awareness among the residents in and around a particular fever clinic.

The mobile clinics managed by a doctor and staff nurse, are open from 8.30 am to 1.30 p.m.

"The biggest issue that we, as healthcare officials, face on the ground right now is the stigma. People, especially in low-income residential areas, seem to have this fear of what will happen to their families if they test positive and who will take care of them," said Dr. Subha, a health officer.

"We counsel all the persons who undertake the test to address the issues around stigma amid COVID-19 suspects and patients," she added.

She said that more awareness needs to be created to remove the stigma of ostracization of COVID-19 patients by neighbors, especially in apartments.

To provide the psychological support for COVID-19 patients and their family members who face the wrath of society, the Corporation has put a phone-based psycho-social counselling team in place. Once a person tests positive for coronavirus, the psycho-social support center contacts the person and explains to him/her the nature of the disease in an attempt to help them cope with the experience. The center also helps in contact tracing of the patient.

Rains bring down vegetable prices

The showers that hit various parts of the State over the last few weeks have brought down the prices of vegetables, said traders in the city, adding that they are likely to go down even further if Tamilnadu received more rains in the coming days.

The price of ladies' finger has dropped to Rs. 15, beans to Rs. 25 and potatoes to Rs. 20 this week. Fruit prices are also expected to follow the same trend. Vendors stated that the easing of shutdown restrictions since July 5 has provided them more flexibility in their business.

Device in Thirumazhisai market to monitor social distancing

By Our Staff Reporter

With social distancing and sanitisation having become the keys to control the spread of coronavirus, Tiruvallur district police are embracing technology to ensure both are followed.

While they recently came up with a cheap setup to make disinfectants for police stations in the district, they have now installed scanning devices in the temporary wholesale market in Thirumazhisai to ensure social distancing.

The device, called Iris and

developed by Global Thermal Control Systems Pvt Ltd, has been installed in three shops on a trial basis, an official said. "If two people stand within 2.5m of each other, the device will raise an alarm," added the official.

Rajesh, one of the founders of Global Thermal Control Systems, said that the device works on motion capturing technology and each device will cover an area of 400 sq ft and is ideal for shops.

The device will also store the video and cops can access footage on their phones.

Man held for cheating transpersons

By Our Staff Reporter

The Aminjikarai police arrested a man who targeted transpersons and cheated them. The accused was identified as Mohammed Hussain of Puzhal.

While a transperson, Farzana, from PP Thottam, had lodged a complaint against him with the Aminjikarai police in March that he cheated her of Rs 1.5 lakh, the police allegedly issued a CSR receipt and did not arrest him citing COVID-19 related work and lockdown.

Meanwhile, Farzana received information that Mohammed Hussain cheated another transperson, Fathima, in Thoothukudi after which the latter committed suicide by self-immolation.

She gathered her friends and staged a protest in front of the Aminjikarai police station on July 4. Following that, a special team went to Thoothukudi and arrested Mohammed Hussain from Petmanagaram village in Srivaikundam Taluk.

Investigation revealed that Mohammed Hussain, who was doing odd jobs, befriended Farzana claiming to be a rich man. He received about Rs. 1.5 lakh from her and later abandoned her. During the investigation, Mohammed Hussain reportedly told the police that he prefers transpersons over women as the former are more caring and innocent.

He was remanded to judicial custody.

Aavin introduces immunity boosting buttermilk

By Our Staff Reporter

Aavin has introduced five new milk products, including buttermilk meant for increasing immunity, choco lassi, mango lassi, long-lasting ultra-high temperature processed milk and Tea Mate milk.

Chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami launched these products on July 7.

A press release stated that the buttermilk is meant for increasing the immunity of persons to help them fight coronavirus.

The buttermilk comprises ginger, lemon, holy basil, pepper, cumin seeds, asafoetida, curry leaves, coriander leaves and salt.

It is available in 200ml bottles priced at Rs. 23.

The lassi is also available in 200ml bottles for Rs 23.

The ultra-high temperature processed milk is sold in flexi-packets and does not require a fridge for storage.

An official said, "Even at room temperature, this milk will be good for use for not less than 90 days. This milk has 4.5% fat and 8.5% of solids not fat (SNF) and is available in 500ml packets at Rs. 30 per packet." Tea Mate milk has a little more fat and can be used by tea shops and restaurants. It contains 6.5% fat and 9% SNF and is priced at Rs. 90 for a liter.

காஞ்சி ஸ்ரீ மஹா பெரியவா அருளாசியால் ஜாதகம் துல்லியமாக எழுதி தரப்படும். ஜாதக பலன்கள் மற்றும் தோஷ பரிகாரங்கள், திருமணப் பொருத்தங்கள் பார்த்து தரப்படும். ஜோதிடர் கோபால் ஷர்மா மேற்கு மாம்பலம் 86673 74138

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Roads choked, shops packed in T. Nagar as lockdown eases

By Our Staff Reporter

Emerging from a 100-day lockdown, punctuated by a brief, fortnight-long exit, the city on July 6 opened up to brisk business.

Roads saw heavy traffic and retail nerve centers such as T. Nagar registered considerable crowd movement. In residential areas too, there was activity with tea shops and bakeries packed.

Ranganathan Street was bustling with activity that mirrored the pre-lockdown days in mid-March.

Staff in retail outlets in T. Nagar and Pandy Bazaar struggled to attend to consumers thronging their shops to purchase non-essential commodities.

28% of swabs have tested positive for COVID-19

By Our Staff Reporter

From a total of 8,79,606 persons who attended the fever camps conducted between May 8 and July 5 in all the 15 zones of Chennai Corporation, swabs were taken from 37,616 persons who showed fever symptoms.

Of these, 10,569 persons (26 percent) have tested positive for COVID-19.

The Corporation has conducted 13,723 camps during the said period and 38,280 persons have been found to have Influenza Like Illness (ILI).

The most clinics have been held in Royapuram (1,543), Anna Nagar (1,400) and Thiru Vi Ka Nagar (1,316), where the highest number of COVID-19 cases are concentrated.

Anna Naga has had the most number of persons, 2,175, who tested positive for COVID-19.

However, the positivity rate is highest in Alandur, a non-hotspot area, where 71.44% of swabs tests have returned positive for COVID-19 followed by Anna Nagar with 59.77% and Madhavaram (55.61%) and Manali (55.24%).

Tondiarpet and Royapuram which have been reporting a high number of COVID-19 cases have a lesser positivity rate at 16.75% and 14.15% respectively.

In the camps conducted on July 7 alone, 29,422 persons attended of whom 1,693 symptomatic patients were identified.

Fever camps can be attended by persons showing COVID-19 symptoms. Doctors test for temperature, oxygen saturation, pulse rate other parameters. Swabs are taken from persons showing ILI symptoms and sent to testing labs.

As on July 7, Chennai had 22,374 active COVID-19 cases, 47,735 discharges and 1,120 deaths.

Still under containment zone



By Our Staff Reporter

While the stretch of Lake View Road between Station Road and Subba Street in West Mambalam is still under containment zone, the other streets and roads were opened for traffic last week.

IIT develops nano-coated filter for health workers

Researchers in Indian Institute of Technology-Madras have developed a nano-coated filter for healthcare workers treating COVID-19 patients.

This filter has applications not only in healthcare but also has defense applications and where air filtration of submicron particles is required. The coating properties are optimised for efficient removal of sub-micron sized dust particles in the air, said a statement from the institute, adding that they were currently in the process of field-testing the practical applications of the nano-coated filter. After validation through field trials, it will be recommended for bulk manufacture in collaboration with the industry.

Prof. K. Arul Prakash (Department of Applied Mechanics) said that the nano-coating has a fibre diameter of less than one micron, which can filter particles of one micron size. It can be positioned according to the need to enhance surface/depth filtration for healthcare workers or public responders.

The practical applications of the filter media include facemasks with an enhanced particle filtration efficiency, respirator devices, air purification systems in operation theaters, cabin air filters on flights, filters for armoured vehicle engines, computer hard disk drive filters, and pneumatic equipment, he said.

Std. 11 students must choose 4 major subjects

By Our Staff Reporter

A Tamilnadu government order issued in September last year announced that Std. 11 students could opt for either three or four core subjects from the 2020-2021 academic year.

The students, parents and teachers demanded that the government cancel the order since the decision reduces job opportunities and prospects for higher education for students choosing three subjects.

On July 6, the government reversed the order and announced that the students will continue to study four core subjects this academic year also.

Masks, sanitisers donated to RMD Trust

By Our Staff Reporter

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

Dr. Republica Sridhar (Founder) said that the donations would last a month.

Those interested in supporting the cause may contact 93810 16588.



Amma canteens record 30% rise in visitors

Since July 1, a total of 4.7 lakh residents have been visiting Amma canteens every day, registering a 30% increase in patronage.

Civic officials said that the first few days of July had registered the highest number of visitors so far, and the number is expected to increase during the pandemic.

As all hotels will be closed due to the total lockdown on Sundays in July, the Corporation has made arrangements to supply food in Amma canteens which will be operating.

According to officials, the canteens have reported an increase in food supply owing to the demand for free food by residents who are unable to afford vegetables sold at very high prices in their neighbourhood during the lockdown. Originally meant to help daily-wage labourers, the canteens have emerged as a source of food supply for salaried professionals and traders in many residential areas.

The canteens provide idli and pongal in the morning; curd rice and sambar rice in the afternoon and and chappati at night.

How gated communities are managing COVID-19 positive conditions

By Bhavani Prabhakar

While the Corporation has not issued any guidelines for an affected housing society, most associations adopt certain practices to ensure that the virus does not spread.

A few of the recommendations are:

Remain indoors if the affected family belongs to the same floor/block

Allow delivery persons only till the main gate

Do not loiter in the complex without masks

Maintain at least 1-meter distance from all if you have to step out

Mandate thermal screening for every housekeeping staff/delivery person entering the community

Non-essential staff can be asked to stay away to minimise contact

COVID-19-positive contingency?

Many housing societies in Chennai have formed crisis teams. For instance, a gated community in Nolambur has formed a team with two representatives from each block for micromanagement in handling emergency needs.

As part of the action plan, every representative is entrusted with the responsibility of communicating the status of COVID-19 patients to the residents of the affected block on a regular basis, and work with local Corporation officials for disinfection and other activities.

Guidance from medical professionals living in the community is also sought by the crisis team.

Coordination with local body officials

Many resident associations in the city maintain a cordial relationship with corporation officials and the local police station which has helped them handle the crisis smoothly.

As soon as a resident tests positive, the patient's flat will be sealed. Upon identification of more cases on the same floor/block, the entire floor/block will be sealed. The Corporation will carry out immediate sanitization / disinfection if a resident tests positive.

Contact tracing process

Associations keep contact details of all maids, drivers and facilitate any other contact tracing for the Corporation.

Domestic help working in the infected flats are asked to home quarantine and are not allowed to enter the premises. If the domestic help had worked in other flats, they too are informed and asked to quarantine themselves.

Quarantined persons are advised to report to the Corporation if any COVID-19 symptom is experienced.

Handling waste from a patient's house

According to guidelines, quarantined/isolated residents should hand over biomedical waste such as used masks, gloves and the like packed in a yellow bag to sanitary workers. The yellow bags will be distributed among quarantined houses by the civic body every day.

Slum areas no longer COVID-19 hotspots, report fewer cases

By Our Staff Reporter

The city's slums and high density areas now account for just 7-10% of COVID-19 cases as against 30% in April, according to Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash.

There are 1,979 such high density areas in the city and, in the last 45 days, 1,500 have not reported a single case.

In Royapuram, 234 cases were reported in the last two weeks of May with an average of 18 cases a day. This came down to just nine new cases on July 5.

Of the 7,680 cases in the zone, only 566 were from these areas. In Tondiarpet, out of the 7,067 cases, 796 were from these areas.

The Corporation took up community intervention program in these locations through 92 empanelled NGOs and the focus was on educating them about wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining social distance. Every street was allotted to volunteers who visited about 200 households every day.

Now, with more cases reported from the other parts of the zone, the Corporation plans to rope in residential welfare associations and provide them with technical support and volunteer support to replicate the same program.

3rd cop in city succumbs to COVID-19

By Our Staff Reporter

M. Nagarajan, a Grade II Constable attached to the Armed Reserve wing of Greater Chennai Police, died in Omandurar Government Hospital, where he was undergoing treatment for COVID-19. After inspector S. Balamurali and SSI Manimaran, Nagarajan is the third COVID-19 victim in the city, and is the youngest of the three.

A native of Madurai, Nagarajan joined the force in 2013 and is survived by his wife and year-old daughter.

Violate COVID-19 norms, pay fine

By Our Staff Reporter

Violating COVID-19 precautions can attract a penalty of up to Rs. 2 lakhs or more if the public health department has its way, Director of Public Health Dr. T. S. Selvavinayagam has said.

In the wake of several persons and offices violating norms, the Director of Public Health, in a letter to deputy directors of health services and municipal authorities, gave instructions to register cases under the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act.

"The state can recover the cost of treatment for persons infected or the cost of sanitation from individuals and institutions," Dr. Selvavinayagam said.

Senior public health officials said that if the state decides to strengthen cases, it can book offenders under the Disaster Management Act and Indian Penal Code.

"Punishment under these legal provisions is more severe and includes jail term," a senior deputy director of public health said.

Corpn drive to quarantine homeless people

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai Corporation has launched a drive to rescue, test and quarantine homeless persons to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among them. The city has 9,087 homeless persons.

Many of the 281 Corporation schools have been prepared for housing homeless residents during the pandemic.

The city has 51 shelters for the homeless, and 1,051 persons are sheltered in them free of cost.

Each shelter can accommodate 50 persons. Owing to the need for physical distancing, the civic body has reduced the number of inmates and identified more buildings to accommodate homeless persons.

"We will rehabilitate all the homeless persons. We plan to reunite the homeless people with their families. So far, we have rehabilitated 2,369 persons. At least, 3,872 persons have rejoined their families. Many of them are employed," said an official. The civic body has arranged rental accommodation for the homeless people after getting them jobs.

An official said that all the rescued persons will be screened for COVID-19 and provided free treatment.

Normalcy returns to city

By Our Staff Reporter

Following the partial relaxation of the lockdown from July 6 except on Sundays, people throng roads and commercial hubs even as police implement strict monitoring to ensure people comply with safety regulations

As police permitted free movement within city limits, a large number of two-wheelers, autorickshaws, call taxis and other private vehicles took to the road, including the arterial Anna Salai, Kamarajar Road and E.V.R. Salai.

Steel barricades, which had been placed during the lockdown to deter free movement, were removed. Flyovers, including Usman Road and G. N. Chetty Road flyovers in the neighbourhood were opened for traffic.

At main junctions, traffic police were busy releasing vehicles seized during the lockdown as many motorists queued up before police outposts. Additional Commissioner of Police, Traffic, N. Kannan said, "We had made arrangements to ensure smooth flow of traffic from the morning on the roads."

A senior police officer said, "Our personnel are positioned at vantage points in busy commercial areas and are vigilant. Using a public address system, personnel are frequently appealing to the public to maintain physical distancing," he said

Saloons and spas reported good business. Outside some barber shops, people could be seen waiting to get a haircut.

Neighbourhood shops, vegetable vending outlets, hotels and restaurants opened. P. Pandiarajan (Secretary, Ashok Nagar Traders' Welfare Association) said that though all shops were open on July 6, there were not many visitors. Most shops reported only 50% of the usual customers. They were managing with 50% of workforce since the government has allowed only minimum number of employees.

App to monitor home quarantine

Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash launched an app, HQIMS, last week to monitor patients under home quarantine. The HQIMS app will contain details of patients under home quarantine, details of family members and the quarantine period.

The Corporation, with the help of Friends of COVID Citizens under Surveillance (FOCUS), will monitor the containment streets and the movement of persons. FOCUS volunteers will also help quarantined persons receive essential supplies.

Traffic flow increases with easing of lockdown



By Our Staff Reporter

Following the easing of lockdown, the flow of traffic has increased in many roads including Nageswara Road in T. Nagar. Many big shops are open.

1,327 policemen in city test positive

By Our Staff Reporter

Of the 1,327 policemen who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the city so far, 586 have recovered, and more than 321 personnel are back on duty.

Last week, Deputy Commissioner of Police Deshmukh Shekhar Sanjay and 23 other policemen rejoined duty after recovering from COVID-19.

On July 6, Nagarajan, 32, an Armed Reserve Police Constable succumbed to the infection in the Government Medical College Hospital in Omandurar Estate. He was a native of Otthakadai, Madurai, and was on deputation in Vepery police station.

He was in a quarantine facility in the IIT-Madras campus from July 3. As his health deteriorated, he was shifted to the hospital, where he died.

Commercial vehicles must pay road tax

By Our Staff Reporter

Road tax exemption for commercial motor vehicles for the lockdown period would cost the state Rs. 1,724.43 crores, the government informed the Madras High Court while making it clear that such a relief cannot be considered.

"Since the movement of goods transport vehicles was not banned by the state or the central government, the question of granting exemption from payment of road tax for the period April to September would not arise. Lockdown period has not affected free flow of goods," the state government said.

The government made the submission in response to a plea moved by the Tamil Nadu Lorry Owners' Federation seeking tax exemption for the lockdown period.

As per the orders of the Union transport ministry, the validity of documents related to Motor Vehicles Act was extended till June 30 considering the lockdown, it said, adding that grace period for payment of road tax without penalty was also extended to June 30.

Lockdown has crippled state's financial reserves

By Our Staff Reporter

The continuous lockdown has crippled the financial reserves of the state and paying salaries to government employees itself will be a tough task in the coming months, said a senior official from the revenue department.

The state is also unable to dispatch the special salaries announced by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami for frontline workers.

The situation is such that a group of contractor consortiums has asked the government not to float high-cost tenders as contractors are suffering without cash flow.

The pending payments of contracting firms are also increasing and 2020 will be the worst financial year for the government, the official said, adding that revenue through government tax collections has fallen by more than 60 percent.

According to Tasmac insiders, the purpose of opening liquor shops in the state amid the coronavirus threat did not serve the purpose as tipplers could not contribute much to the exchequer due to the financial crisis following the com-

plete lockdown.

To generate money in this situation, Tasmac, the second highest money generator after State Income Tax Department, opened more than 3,000 outlets barring Chennai and its suburbs from May 7 after more than 40 dry days. Even sales had picked up initially, with more than Rs. 100 crores revenue coming in daily. However, they have dipped to 60% since the first week of June with most shops, especially in southern districts, wearing a deserted look with a few takers. Not only the State and the Central government, but the corporate and small-scale industries are also choking due to the lockdown, admit industry sources.

"The factual impact of COVID will be known only from August as many units will work on orders under execution in June and July.

Unless fresh orders come, August will be the worst month," KE Raghunathan, Convenor of CIA- Consortium of Indian Associations, said. The CIA expects the brunt will be felt between August and December as demand will be very low.

Mixed reaction to Sunday shutdown

By Our Staff Reporter

As the shutdown eased in the city, residents shared their experiences over the last few weeks, and the feelings of frustration and exhaustion surrounding the shutdown. The complete lockdown on Sundays has received mixed reaction across the city.

For many, the new shutdown was difficult to adjust with following the easing of restrictions prior to it. With offices open and functioning, and even restaurants re-opening again, the city was on the curve to regular life, and thus the new shutdown felt more burdensome, said residents.

"We had just returned to work when the new shutdown was announced. It was difficult to go back to closing down offices and return to work from home after getting that sense of normalcy. With the shutdown easing we have been able to return to work," said Ashaa Vigashini, a designer.

The work from home requirement for some became tiresome, and many spoke about mental health taking a big hit. "There's no division between home and work. I went into a depressive spiral during the shutdown, all because of increased work and living alone. I just wanted things to return to normal," said Daniel Dinakaran, an analyst.

The total shutdown on Sundays has received mixed reviews. Some feel that it is not very effective, as the numbers in the city are already very high. However, others feel that the move was a smart one.

"The spread in the city is due to contact. By restricting all movement in the city, it will help curb the spread even further. We just need to prepare in advance for Sundays, because all facilities are closed, but as long as you are careful, we will be fine," said Alamelu, a resident of Kodambakkam.

Fence on wall to discourage trespassers



By Our Staff Reporter

A fence was installed on the wall of Mambalam Railway Station adjoining Lake View Road in West Mambalam to prevent people from climbing over to cross the tracks.

Over 30,000 stranded abroad await repatriation

By Our Staff Reporter

With 33,727 persons still stranded abroad waiting to be flown to Tamilnadu, the Madras High Court on July 7 sought details of the complete schedule of flights to Tamilnadu under Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) and asked why some international operators were being denied permission to operate evacuation flights.

When the plea, moved by the DMK, seeking the evacuation of the stranded came up for hearing before a division bench comprising Justice M. M. Sundresh and Justice R. Hemalatha, counsel appearing for the Centre submitted that that 44 flights had been provided between July 3 and July 20 to bring back stranded Indians to Tamilnadu.

He further submitted that around 5.02 lakh Indians stranded due to lockdown in 137 foreign countries had been flown back in less than two months.

The highest number of 94,085 had been flown to Kerala, followed by UP, Bihar and Tamilnadu, which, he added, was a significant achievement.

Recording the submission and the undertaking given by the Centre that all Indians stuck abroad would be repatriated soon, the bench sought details regarding cancellation of chartered flights destined for India two days ago and the utilisation of Indian welfare fund for deserving Indians stranded abroad.

During the previous hearing, another division bench had directed the Centre to come up with a solution that would enable all the 30,000 stranded Indians to return to Tamilnadu.

How to stay safe from cyber attacks

By K. Karthick

With increased use of internet for financial transactions and accessing bank accounts, the risk of cyber attacks has increased.

These cyber criminals use different methods including software tools, impersonating bank employees over phone to hack accounts and fraudulently draw money from user accounts.

Account holders have to be cautious while receiving unsolicited calls from persons who claim to be bank employees, and ask you to download applications or seek OTP numbers received through SMS related to your account.

Similarly, never give out ATM pins or login passwords to anyone either in person or over phone.

Do not click any links related to your bank account that you receive on email or on phone or on WhatsApp, unless you have generated it for changing a password or other details.

COVID-19 themed attacks:

Malicious emails with unsafe attachments about COVID-19 are in wide circulation. However, when such attachments are opened, they automatically download tools that steal personal and financial information.

How to mitigate cyber threats?

Have a strong password on your router and firewall.

Maintain safe email handling practices. Secure your device by keeping it up-to-date and patched for the latest vulnerabilities.

It is advisable to download tools only from Android's official Google Play Store and Apple's App Store. Do not click on unknown links delivered via SMS, email etc.

671 students to write final paper on July 27

671 students, who could not sit for the final paper in the Std. 12 Board exam held on March 24, will write it on July 27, K. A. Sengottaiyan (Education Minister) announced on July 8. These students were caught inside containment zones and could not travel to the exam centers on March 24 as lockdown was in force.

He also said that the hall tickets for the exam will be available on the website till July 17. Students who do not have access to the internet get them from their schools.

The exam on July 27 will be conducted in their own schools. The minister also assured that transport will be arranged for the students to reach their schools to write for the exam.

There will be no exam centers in containment zones and students from containment zones will have to write their exams in separate rooms in the centers allotted to them.

The Directorate of Government Examinations (DGE) completed evaluation of the answer papers of Std. 12 students on June 10. However, since these students had not written their last exam, the DGE has still not released the results.

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

Provisions given to self-help group members

By Our Staff Reporter

Jaimaa Charitable Trust distributed bags of provisions among 30 members of self-help groups in and around West Mambalam, T. Nagar and nearby areas on July 6.

The trust has been distributing food packets among needy persons on pavements for several days.

Those interested in supporting the trust's activities may contact 93456 65918.



Lockdown lessons for local businesses

By Our Staff Reporter

With the easing of lockdown from July 6, the city has returned to the partial lockdown rules prior to June 19.

For those operating through this period as well as businesses that reopened, the intensified lockdown has taught them valuable lessons.

For restaurants, the shift towards delivery-focused services was reinforced over the last three weeks.

"Customer feedback was direct delivery through an app was preferred. We, therefore, made one employee handle direct delivery. We are thinking of ways to make the parcels more appealing to customers, as this is the short-term future," said Nitesh Surana, founder of Flower Drum Restaurant.

Although the timings of various businesses have been extended, some have decided to work for only part of that

time for safety concerns.

"It takes us 30-45 minutes to wrap up for the day. If my employees leave later, they risk being apprehended by the police. There is no match between closing time and time required for staff to travel back," said Bharat Chowdry, owner of a supermarket in Anna Nagar, who downs shutters an hour before the government-stipulated time. "Customers, however, are very resistant and often fail to understand my position," he added.

Logistics is also an issue for local manufacturers who have opened.

One employee in a local textile manufacturing unit said, "Based on the unpredictability of the situation, we learned to give ourselves more elbow room. If an order would typically take two days to complete, we say it would take five, due to travel issues and reduced timings."

Fall in positivity rate of COVID-19 cases in city

By Our Staff Reporter

The daily COVID-19 positivity rate in Chennai fell to 11.87% on July 7, data released by Chennai Corporation reveals. The drop comes at a time when the monthly positivity rate has come down from 24.2% in June to 18.2% in July.

The number of positive cases has stayed around the 1200-mark, even with more than 10000 tests being done daily.

The doubling rate in the city is now 25 days. On June 19, this figure was 14-15 days.

While the results can be attributed to the intense lockdown when most people stayed home and testing was done at the ward level, the big question is if this encouraging trend will hold now that the lockdown has been relaxed.

Experts said that people must cooperate to keep the spread under control and to further bring it down by wearing masks and practising social distancing.

They have advised against big gatherings and free air-flow at workplaces as it has been proved that the pandemic is airborne.

On July 8, the active cases in the city further went down to 31 percent while discharge rate rose to 67 percent.

29 succumb on July 7 to COVID-19

By Our Staff Reporter

As per reports, 29 persons have died due to COVID-19 complications as of July 7 morning.

The highest toll was reported in Rajiv Gandhi Hospital with 10, Stanley Hospital (7), Omanthoor Hospital (7), Kilpauk Hospital (4) and one in a private hospital in Chetpet.

Meanwhile, Chennai reported 22,890 active cases. Kodambakkam remained on top with 2,990 persons under treatment followed by Teynampet (2,447), Anna Nagar (2,383), Royapuram (1,999), Thiru Vi Ka Nagar (1,898), Tondiarpet (1,810), Adyar (1,673), Ambattur (1,314) and Thiruvotriyur (1,214)

Pandemic impacts life of auto drivers

By Our Staff Reporter

Unemployed for months and lack of support from government and private entities is taking a toll on auto drivers.

As many drivers are not members of the Autorickshaw and Taxi Drivers' Welfare Board, they have also been denied the cash support of Rs. 1000, 15 kg of rice, one kg of dal and one kg of edible oil given by the government since the lockdown.

As it turns out, only 24,600 of the total 1 of lakh authorised auto drivers in Chennai belong to the driver welfare board, according to data from the CITU-affiliated Tamil Nadu Auto Drivers' Association.

Besides the 1 lakh, it is estimated that there are 50,000 more drivers plying without proper documents from the Regional Transport Office.

Of the 24,600 members, only 10,000 members have been able to avail of the aid as the rest have not renewed their membership.

Velan, who is attached to the auto stand on Burkit Road, told this reporter that the lockdown forced him to draw upon his savings, which he had kept aside for his daughter's education. "I was not even aware of the Welfare Board when the CM announced the dole. I have plied only for 11 days in the last three months with total earnings of only Rs. 3,000, he said.

Online classes for Corporation school students from Monday

By Our Staff Reporter

Online classes for students of all Corporation-run schools in the city and Government-run schools in other parts of the state will start on July 13.

Five private channels have been roped in to broadcast the classes.

The Education Department has also made arrangements to distribute textbooks among all students in time through the respective schools.

High Court resumes full operations through video-conferencing

By Our Staff Reporter

After about 100 days of restricted functioning, the Madras High Court resumed full-fledged operations on July 6. All the judges have started hearing petitions through video-conferencing.

They have the option to hear the petitions through video-conferencing from the court or from their residences.

At present, six benches with two judges each and 27 single-judge benches have started functioning.

The court had been functioning with only eight judges, hearing only emergency cases due to the lockdown since March 25.

Since March 25, two benches with two judges each were hearing Public Interest Litigation petitions and habeas corpus petitions, while four other judges were dealing with bail, anticipatory bail and other cases individually.

The court had resumed physical hearing in the first week of June, with several precautions like not permitting litigants and allowing only lawyers with listed cases to enter the premises. However, the physical functioning of the court had to be suspended within a few days after a few judges and court staff members tested positive for coronavirus.

Pension applications to be accepted only online

The State government has decided to accept applications for old-age pension (OAP) under eight schemes only online.

The Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA) has rolled out online services for eight OAPs in the State — Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme, Destitute Widow Pension Scheme, Destitute Deserted Wives Pension Scheme, Unmarried Women Pension Scheme, Chief Minister Uzhavar Pathukappu Thittam, Indira Gandhi National Disabled Pension Scheme and Differently Aabled Pension Scheme.

Asked about the difficulty for the deserving elderly persons in rural areas in accessing the internet and applying for these OAPs, he said: "We have not introduced anything new. e-Sevai centers are already receiving applications for issuing several certificates and there are about 11,000 e-Sevai centers across the State."

However, a Revenue Department official acknowledged the difficulty for the unlettered in the rural areas for applying for OAPs. In view of the COVID-19 lockdown this year, it was decided to stop accepting manual pleas for the annual jamabandhi and to receive them online.

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'Friends of Police' services suspended
 By Our Staff Reporter

The Tamilnadu police have suspended the services of 'Friends of Police' (FoP) organisation for two months, including in all neighbourhood police stations.

In an oral instruction to all the district police offices last week, senior police officers told them to recall identity cards issued to the volunteers and not to engage them in police-related activities.

The move comes after allegations of 'FoP' volunteers joining policemen in the assault on P. Jayaraj and J. Bennix in Sathankulam police station on June 19. Due to the ban, FoP volunteers will not be allowed to work with the police in patrolling, vehicle checks and arrests.

However, they can do social work and join COVID-19 awareness and road safety campaigns.

The FoP headquarters is located in 5A, Central Avenue, Taylor Estate, Kodambakkam.

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Private hospitals turn away COVID-19 patients with insurance cover

By Our Staff Reporter

Following the General Insurance Council (GIC)'s announcement capping COVID-19 treatment rates, private hospitals in Tamilnadu have said that they may have to turn away insurance holders as the rates were "unrealistic" and not economically feasible.

Indian Medical Association (IMA) on July 7 wrote to the GIC saying the stratification of rates based on geographical location of hospitals was unfair as the cost involved is almost the same throughout the country.

Dr. T. N. Ravishankar, head of a leading city hospital, said even in metro hospitals, there cannot be any compromise on accessories needed for healthcare workers to treat a patient. They cannot wear the same Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) throughout the shift. And, except for anti-viral injections, there is not much regulation on cost of other drugs and injections which would cost at least Rs. 1 lakh for two shots.

So, insurance companies, which are under great financial pressure now because of lesser new policies and increased claims, cannot work on a fixed budget rate and shift it to hospitals even as governments too are unable to function within a fixed budget. They should come forward and take a justifiable decision by releasing claims on a case-by-case basis, he added.

Insurance companies, however, claimed that some hospitals gave unduly high bills even after the cost of PPE was reduced, saying the actual cost would have been at least 20% lesser.

227 COVID-19 patients reported missing from hospitals

By Our Staff Reporter

The Corporation is on the lookout for 227 COVID-19 patients who are at large in the city.

According to reports, of the 473 COVID-19 patients who went missing till July 5, 246 have been traced, leaving 227 persons yet to be traced.

Officers attribute these missing cases to patients giving wrong contact data to the authorities.

Speaking to reporters, Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash said that the Corporation has been testing about 11,000 samples a day off late and it is difficult to verify the addresses when patients provide incomplete or incorrect information.

He added that the missing patients are being traced with the help of the police.

Rice bags given to needy families

By Our Staff Reporter

All India Human Puratchi Organization (West Mambalam) distributed 5-kg rice bags among 50 needy families on July 8.

They were distributed by R. Sundharamurthy (President). K. Gopinath (President, Chennai district) was present.

More details can be had in 86673 27700.



Theater artistes seek odd jobs to survive during lockdown

Suthan Raj is a Guinness lockdown spoiled everything. I he said. The lockdown has world record holder for incurred a huge loss. Some made many such theater directing the "longest play", friends helped me, and that is artistes look for daily jobs to but these days this theater how I survived for two months," support their families.

He said, "I managed to survive for almost a month since the lockdown began, but then it became difficult. I had to take care of my parents. I started taking up painting jobs. I get Rs. 700 every day. I never thought that I would land up in such a miserable phase in my career. It's not only me but many of my friends are facing a difficult patch. Finding a job every day is difficult due to the lockdown. And that is my only worry."

G. Vijayakumar, another theater artiste, has started working as a 'helper' in his friend's catering unit.

Vijayakumar, who has been working as a theater artist for more than 20 years, said the lockdown has destroyed his dreams. He had organized a book launch function for a compilation of plays on March 27 in Thanjavur. He had booked a hall and all arrangements had been made. "The

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Wall for playground

By Our Staff Reporter

Corporation workers constructing a compound wall and installing a gate for the corporation playground on 9th Avenue, Ashok Nagar.



COVID-19 screening camp conducted



By Our Staff Reporter

A number of persons attended the free COVID-19 screening camp conducted in Thambiah Road, West Mambalam on July 9.

A Corporation team recorded the temperature and pulse of participants and provided vitamin tablets and a cup of 'Kubasura Kudineer'. A member of the team said that any person having cough, fever and breathing problems is diverted to the main hospital for further checks.

Centre to notify guidelines on online classes by July 15

By Our Staff Reporter

The Union Government, reiterating its commitment to ensure that online classes, which had come into vogue during the COVID-19 lockdown, were safe for school and college students, informed the Madras High Court on July 6 that the guidelines for the same are being finalised and set to be notified by July 15.

The submission was made before a division bench comprising Justices M. M. Sundresh and R. Hemalatha by the newly appointed Additional Solicitor General R. Shankaranarayanan.

Recording the submission, the bench refused to grant any interim stay until the guidelines were notified.

The bench then adjourned the batch of pleas in this regard to July 20 while directing the state to submit its stand on the issue.

The bench also directed the Dean, Regional Institute of Ophthalmology and Government Ophthalmic Hospital to submit a report on the eye strain children will suffer viewing computers and mobile phones for long hours spent. The report has been pending submission since a couple of hearings.

1.7% fall in COVID-19 growth rate in a week

By Our Staff Reporter

The growth rate of new COVID-19 cases in the city has become negative for the first time after the enforcement of the complete lockdown.

According to a Corporation official, the average compounded average growth rate for the last seven days in the city was -0.2 percent on July 6 while it was 1.6 percent on July 5.

The data shared by the civic body in its Twitter page shows that eight of the 15 zones in the Corporation have recorded negative growth of new cases.

Four of the five zones in the north region of the Corporation have registered negative trends. Royapuram, Thiru Vi Ka Nagar and Tondiarpet, which were recording high numbers of cases, have recorded negative growth.

However, Perungudi zone has recorded the highest growth rate of 10.9 percent for new cases while the Kodambakkam zone has seen 5.7 per cent growth.

"As per the latest data, all the five zones in the north region have recorded negative growth following the efforts taken to reduce the case burden in the densely populated

localities. Overall, the city has seen -1.7 per cent fall in the new cases in the last seven days," a corporation official said.

On July 7, the Corporation recorded 1,203 new COVID-19 cases as against the 1,747 cases a day earlier. The total number of cases in the city touched 70,071 on July 7, while 24,052 persons are under treatment.

Can't reopen Koyambedu market immediately, High Court told

By Our Staff Reporter

There was no scope at present to reopen the Koyambedu wholesale market, a COVID-19 cluster deemed to be responsible for the spread of infection across Tamilnadu, the government informed the Madras High Court on July 6.

This was stated in the submission by government pleader V. Jayaprakash Narayan before a division bench comprising Justices M. M. Sundresh and R. Hemalatha in response to a plea moved by social activist 'Traffic' K. R. Ramaswamy, who sought a direction to install disinfectant tunnels using herbal sanitisers for those entering the market.

The government pleader said that the Centre had issued guidelines that disinfectant tunnels would not help but would instead be harmful to the public, adding that plans to create such tunnels were given up.

Also, the State government had no immediate plans to resume operations in Koyambedu market complex, which was possible only after putting in place all safety measures, he added.

Following this, the bench reserved orders on the plea.

HC reserves orders on plea against high power bills

By Our Staff Reporter

The Madras High Court on July 6 reserved orders on a public interest litigation (PIL) petition which termed as 'unjust and arbitrary' the method adopted by the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) to calculate power consumption charges during the lockdown period when meter readings could not be taken.

Justices M. M. Sundresh and R. Hemalatha deferred their verdict after observing that the litigant had not challenged the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Supply Code of 2004 as per which electricity charges had been calculated.

Additional Advocate General P. H. Arvindh Pandian said that the calculation was strictly as per the Code.

M. L. Ravi of Desiya Makkal Sakthi Katchi (DMSK) had filed the PIL petition, claiming that consumers had to pay 12% to 50% more than the usual charges due to the methodology adopted by Tangedco to calculate power charges. His counsel Kabilan Manoharan said that Tangedco workers normally record meter readings of domestic consumers once in two months.

Since the readings could not be recorded after the nationwide lockdown from March 25, consumers were asked to pay the amount they had paid during the previous billing cycle. After the relaxation of the lockdown, actual readings were recorded from households for the next billing cycle.

Subsequent to recording of readings, the number of units of power consumed were divided equally for two billing cycles and the consumers were asked to remit the charges. Such equal division of units had led to many consumers falling under higher slabs (in which every unit of power cost more) during both billing cycles, he said.

The petitioner insisted that

Tangedco should have let the consumers fall under a lower slab for one billing cycle and a higher slab for the next billing cycle.

Opposing his plea, Tangedco told the court that adopting the formula suggested by the litigant might turn out to be beneficial for one section of consumers and not for others.

Stating that power charges could not be calculated by applying different formulae for every individual consumer especially when there were around 1.5 crore low tension consumers in the State, the AAG said that Tangedco had

followed the provisions of the 2004 Code only after obtaining the approval of Tamil Nadu Electricity Commission.

It was also brought to the notice of the court that the poor who consume less than 100 units bi-monthly would not be affected at all in any way since the State government provides 100% subsidy to them. Similarly, those who consume over 500 units bi-monthly too had no issues to complain about.

Litigant's grievance was only with respect to those whose consumption fell between 200 and 500 units.

Chennai to get 1,000-bed facility for Siddha COVID-19 care

By Our Staff Reporter

Chennai Corporation has decided to set up 1,000 more beds in Siddha COVID-19 care centers in the city.

As 569 patients including a 90-year-old man were discharged following recovery from Saligaramam Siddha facility, the Corporation plans to set up beds for Siddha treatment for patients. Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash has said that Siddha treatment along with allopathy medicines have helped to cure patients.

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