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தமாஷா வரிகள்

ஜே.எஸ். ராகவன்

'கொடி'யது கேட்பின்....

சுதந்திர, குடியரசு தினம் போன்ற விசேஷ நாட்கள் நெருங்க நெருங்க பாலையாவிற்கு அடிவயிறு கலங்க ஆரம்பிக்கும். கிணற்றடி, மாட்டுக் கொட்டாய், கிரைப் பாத்திகளைத் தாண்டி அடிக்கடி கொல்லைப்பக்கம் ஓட வைக்கும். காரணம்? ஆகஸ்ட் 15, ஜனவரி 26 தேதிகளில் அவர் வசித்து வந்த குமரன் குடியிருப்பின் வளாகத்தில் பட்டொளி வீசிப் பறக்கும் மூவர்ணக் கொடியை ஏற்றி, விறைப்பாக நின்று அதன் உச்சியை அண்மையாக பார்த்து வணக்கம் தெரிவிக்கும் சடங்கால்தான்.

அசோசியேஷன் செயலம் நேதாஜி ஒரு வாரம் முன்னால் பாலையாவிற்கு முறைப்படி அழைப்பு விடுத்தவிட்டுப் போனார். மூவர்ணக் கொடி ஏற்ற பாலையா பொருத்தமானவர் என்பதில் மாற்றுக் கருத்து கொள்ள முடியாது. ஒல்லி உருவம், நெற்றியில் கோடுகள், கூர்மையான கண்கள், பழனி பன்னீர் விபூதி வாசனை, காதி பந்தரிலிருந்து வாங்கிய மொட்டமொட்ட சட்டை, வேட்டி, மேல் துண்டு இப்படி!

ஒரு வாரத்துக்கு முன்னாலேயே அந்த மூடு வர, 'ஹ... ஹா! காந்தி மஹான், ஹ... ஹா காந்தி மஹான்', 'வெற்றி எட்டு திக்கும் எட்ட கொட்டு முரசே' போன்ற பிளேட்டுகளை (இசைத் தட்டுகளை) அவர் மனைவி கஸ்தூரி பாய் தயாராக எடுத்து வைத்திருப்பார். உடைகள் இஸ்திரி போட்டு ரெடியாக இருக்கும்.

ஈசிரேலில் சாய்ந்து கொண்டு கொடி ஏற்றுவதின் ஈர்ப்புகளைப் பட்டியல் போட்டு மகிழ்ந்த காலம் எல்லாம் உண்டு. அம்மியையும் பறக்க வைக்கும் ஆடிக் காற்று பொளந்து கட்ட, அபார்ட்மென்டின் ஆழாக்கு, ஒழக்கு உருவ நண்டு சிண்டுகள் கொடிகளை உடையில் குத்திக் கொண்டு அங்கேயும் இங்கேயுமாக உற்சாகத்துடன் குரல் கொடுத்து ஓடி விளையாடுதல் போன்ற காட்சிகள் மனத்திரையில் ஓடின. ஈசிரேலில் சாய்ந்து உட்கார்ந்தார்.

மின்சார மணி அடித்தது யார்? வேறு யார்? நேதாஜிதான். 'ஏற்புப்படுத்த வந்தேன், நாளன்னிக்கு சுதந்திர நாள்' என்று சொன்னவர் அடுத்து எதிர்பாராத குண்டு ஒன்றை வீசினார்.

'இந்த வருஷம்

கொடி ஏற்றிவிட்டு ஒரு பத்துப் பதினைந்து நிமிஷத்துக்கு நீங்க ஒரு உரை ஆற்றணும். எல்லோரும் அதை எதிர் பார்த்து இருக்காங்க. முடியலை என்று சொல்லாதீங்க. சுதந்திர தினத்துக்கு கொடி ஏற்றுதல், ஆரஞ்சு மிட்டாய்க்குப் பிறகு உங்களுடைய உரைதான் வரவேண்டும். நீங்க மறுத்து, கழண்டு விடக்கூடாது.'



பாலையா சிந்தனை வயப்பட்டார். போன வருஷம் கொடி ஏற்றுவதற்கு முன்னாலே ஒரு அண்டங் காக்காய் பறந்து வந்து உச்சந்தலையை 'சரக்கென்று கொத்திவிட்டுப் பறந்து போயிற்று. அது என்ன சொல்ல வந்தது? அதற்கு என் மேல் அப்படி என்ன வர்மம்? போன்ற கேள்விகளுக்கு பதில் கண்டுபிடிக்காமல் தினறியது உண்டு. அப்பழுக்கற்ற தேசியவாதியான அவரைத் தாக்க மறைமுகமாக ஏவிவிடப்பட்ட காகம் எதிரிகளின் சீக்ரெட் சர்வீஸ் ஏஜென்டா? இதனால் அந்த எதிரி நாடு என்ன பயனடையப் போகிறது? யாருக்குத் தெரியும்?

அந்தக் காக்காய் இந்த வருடமும் வருமா? யானை தான் கரம் வைத்து இந்த மாதிரித் தாக்கும். அப்படி நான் அந்தப் பறவைக்கு என்ன தீங்கு செய்துவிட்டேன்? பூழ்க்கடையில் உள்ள மேடையில் பசியாற ஒரு பிடி சாதத்தை வைக்கத் தவறினேனா? மொட்டையில் குடும்பத்தோடு சாப்பிடும்போது மேற்படி காக்காயை எச்சில் கையைப் பின் பக்கமாக மறைத்து இடது கையால் விரட்டி என்னைக் கடைந்தெடுத்த கஞ்சனாக வெளிச்சம் போட்டுக் காட்டிக் கொண்டேனா? அட! காக்கா ஃபோபி யானை ஒரு பயம் இருக்கா என்ன? பாலையா குழம்பினார்.

மறுநாள் வந்த நேதாஜி புதியதாக ஒரு குண்டை வீசியிருந்தார். அதாவது கொடியை ஏற்றிய கையோடு 'ஜனகண மன' முடிந்தவுடன் அழுத்தமாக மூடிபோட்டு வைத்திருந்த ஆரஞ்சு மிட்டாயை உடனே வினியோகம் செய்யாமல் 'சுதந்திர சிந்தனைகள்' என்ற தலைப்பில் ஒரு உரை ஆற்றி, சிறுவர்-சிறுமியர்களின் பொது அறிவுக்குத் தீனி போட வேண்டுமாம். ராமா! ராமா! ஆகஸ்ட் 14ம் தேதி பாலையா உளறி அடித்துக் கொண்டு படுக்கையில் எழுந்து உட்கார்ந்தார். விடியும் வரை கண் விழித்து எழுதிய நீண்ட உரையில் இடம்பெற்றவை இரண்டே இரண்டு வாக்கியங்கள்தான். 'அன்புள்ள பெரியோர்களே, தாய்மார்களே, இளம் நண்பர்களே' என்று விளித்துவிட்டு அடுத்து 'தினத்தந்தி' பானியில் 'இன்று சுதந்திர நாள்' என்பதை ரிகர்சலில் அறிவித்தவுடன் அவர் வாய் உலர்ந்து போய், நாக்கு மேலண்ணத்தில் பசக்கென்று ஓட்டிக் கொண்டுவிரட்டினார்.

வாசலிலிருந்து அவருடைய மனைவியின் குரல் கேட்டது. 'என்னங்க? நம்ம நேதாஜி லாரர் வந்திருக்காருங்க. உங்க ரூமில் உட்கார வைத்திருக்கேன், எந்திரிங்க.'

'ஐயா, வாங்க! ஒரு முக்கியமான மேட்டரை உங்களிடம் சொல்லியாகணும். நாளைக்கு நீங்க கொடியை மாத்திரம் ஏற்றுங்க. மிட்டாய்களைக் கொடுங்க. ஆனால் சுதந்திர உரையை ஆற்ற வேண்டாம். அதற்கு வேறு ஒரு ஆள் ரெடி.'

பாலையா உட்கார்ந்த நிலையிலேயே புவி ஈர்ப்பு சக்தியை மீறி இரண்டு அடி உயர்ந்து பின்னர் தரை தட்டினார்.

'என்ன? என்னது? நீங்க என்ன சொல்றீங்க? என்ன சொல்றீங்க...'

'நம்ம அசோசியேஷன் மாதர் பகுதி உறுப்பினர்கள், பெண்களுக்கும் அந்த உரிமையை வழங்க வேண்டும் என்கிற கோரிக்கையை முன் வைச்சிருக்காங்க. அதன்படி நாளைக்கு சந்திரகுமாரி கொடி ஏற்றி நீண்ட உரை ஆற்றுவார். உங்களுக்கு மன வருத்தம் இல்லையே?'

பாலையா சமீபத்தில் பிறந்த வெள்ளாட்டுக் குட்டிபோல் துள்ளிக் குதித்தார். 'மன வருத்தமா? இல்லவே இல்லை. அது யார் லாரர் சந்திரகுமாரி? மில்லா, மில்லா?'

'ஹி ஹி ஹி... என்னுடைய சின்ன மச்சினி லாரர்! திருநெல்வேலியிருந்து வந்திருக்கா, இ-பால் வாங்கிண்டு! jsraghavan@yahoo.com

T. NAGAR & MAMBALAM BAZAAR

This column is intended to help small businesses to have a cost-effective advertisement medium. Advertisement in this section will be in standard panel sizes of 4 cm. x 1 column (costing only Rs. 600) and 4 cm. x 2 column (costing Rs. 1200)

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Chennai Metro floats tender for Phase 2 project

By Our Staff Reporter

As the lockdown eases in phases, work to build the 118.9 km Phase-2 metro corridors has picked up.

CMRL has floated tenders for an 8 km elevated line between Porur Junction and Poonamallee Bypass, instead of the monorail project proposed earlier.

The stretch is part of the 26 km corridor-4 from Light House to Poonamallee Bypass, which will be built at an estimated cost of Rs. 2,671 crores funded by Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Phase-2 will have 118.9 km across three corridors with 128 stations, to be built at a cost of Rs. 69,000 crores.

Construction for a 52 km stretch of the phase is likely to begin before the year-end and is to be ready by 2024-25.

Corridor 4 from Light House to Poonamallee will have stations at Nandanam, T. Nagar, Kodambakkam and Vadapalani.

Sales of I-Day items dull

By Our Staff Reporter

Shops have reported dull sales of Independence Day items like flags and badges this year due to closure of educational institutions and lockdown effect on pedestrian movement.

Comparatively, business was good last year. This photo was taken at a shop on Lakshmiathan Street, T. Nagar.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Roadside temple occupying public space

Sir, A roadside temple constructed on Ellaiamman Koil Street (at the end of Lakshmi Street, off Pushavathi Ammal Street) is blocking the carriageway, thereby narrowing the road width.

As the road leads to the vegetable market, vans, garbage compactor lorries and water tankers use the road regularly.

As the temple occupies a major portion of the carriageway on one side, it poses a danger to 2-wheeler riders and pedestrians, especially when heavy vehicles pass by.

A traffic constable should be stationed at the spot to regulate the traffic, at least during peak hours. On the other hand, the temple authorities should realize the inconvenience and the danger, and shift the temple. **K. Varadharajan, West Mambalam**

ED attaches properties of NAC Jewellers worth Rs. 7 crores

By Our Staff Reporter

The Enforcement Directorate (Chennai) on Aug. 13 attached immovable properties worth Rs. 7 crores belonging to NAC Jewellers (P) Ltd. under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).

The seizure is in connection with a bogus import case involving Afroz Fatta and R. A. Distributors Pvt. Ltd.

In an official release, the ED said that the attached assets consist of 9,600 sq.ft. land along with a commercial building that comprises basement, stilt, ground and 4 floors totalling 20,292 sq. ft situated in T. Nagar.

Earlier, the ED had arrested Afroz Fatta and his accomplices Madanlal Jain, Manish Shah, Rakesh Kothari and Jayesh Desai and attached their properties worth Rs. 34.29 crores and filed five prosecution complaints before a designated special court.

The ED said that an investigation under the PMLA was initiated based on a complaint received by the Crime Branch (Surat) from ICICI Bank against R. A. Distributors Pvt. Ltd and others alleging that the companies had prepared fake bills of entry and presented the same before ICICI Bank for illegal outward remittance in the guise of import.

The investigation revealed that Madanlal Jain was the main conspirator, who earned commission for his role in the illegal transactions of foreign remittances made on the strength of fake bills of entry.

A part of the commission (Rs. 7 crores) earned was routed to the bank account of NAC Jewellers (P) Ltd.

This transaction was carried out by NAC Jewellers owner N. Anantha Padmanaban with full knowledge that the money being received was tainted. He said he used this money to expand his business.

To cover up these transactions, Madanlal Jain prepared bogus invoices of sale/purchase of diamonds by his company, Natural Trading Co., from NAC Jewellers.

1000th baby treated under Project Balanethra

Project Balanethra of Radhatri Nethralaya (12, Hindi Prachara Sabha Street, T. Nagar, Ph: 2433 2229, 2431 1550, 94454 38681) reached a milestone when it treated the 1000th baby last week.

Dr. Vasumathy Vedantham (Medical Director, Radhatri Nethralaya) said that Balanethra aimed at providing free vision through laser surgery for preterm babies from poor socioeconomic background in urban slums and rural areas. The blinding disorder, called Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), is detected through screening.

Dr. Praveen Krishna (Medical Director, Radhatri Nethralaya) said that more than 4 lakh babies have been screened over the past 13 years under this project which is under the aegis of Gurupriya Vision Research Foundation, the public charitable trust of Radhatri Nethralaya,

"Many philanthropic individuals and organisations such as Rotary, Freemasons, JCI Chennai Royals and Inner Wheel are supporting this project but we often struggle without donors. However, no baby is denied treatment for want of funds," said Dr. Vasumathy.

She said that donations to the trust for this project are exempted under Section 80 G of the Income Tax Act and the trust is also eligible to receive foreign donations under FCRA. Persons residing in the US wishing to avail of tax exemption can send donations to Gurupriya Vision Research Foundation through CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) USA.

Private hospitals turn away critical COVID-19 patients

By Our Staff Reporter

Even as the number of COVID-19 cases are on the decline and health officials assure availability of adequate beds and ICUs, critical care continues to elude several patients who are left to battle it out on their own in case of emergency.

On the night of Aug. 7, S. Sunder Babu (74) from Ayanavaram who had tested positive two days earlier, developed serious breathing problems.

His family took him to a leading private hospital in Kilpauk. By the time he reached there, his oxygen levels had dropped, seeing which the hospital refused to admit him.

While the patient was struggling in the car, the family was told there were not enough beds and the ICU was full.

According to his son Sudarshan, after he contacted more than 10 hospitals which refused to admit his father, he finally managed to admit his father in a private hospital in Perambur.

A senior doctor said that if the oxygen saturation levels of the patient are considerably low and the patient is aged 50 or above, it is considered a high risk case and they generally do not take in the patient. "We refer them to government hospitals or other hospitals with better facilities," he said.

Despite the State government publishing details of availability of beds and ICUs in the government dashboard for COVID-19 patients, such incidents continue to recur in the city. Another private hospital in Anna Nagar claimed that though there is adequate bed availability, patients are sent to other super speciality hospitals if the cases look difficult to manage.

The Corporation has announced that if people are denied admission despite the availability of beds in the dashboard, they should immediately complain to toll-free number '104' or the state government's COVID Helpline 18004250111.

As of now, around 190 private hospitals in the State have been authorised to provide COVID-19 treatment and have been asked to update the bed availability on the State dashboard to facilitate patients looking for admission.

Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan pointed out that public preference for private hospitals over government facilities are the main reason for such incidents. He pointed out that about 80 percent of patients are treated properly in the government sector and treatment for COVID-19 is being done appropriately in all the facilities.

State augments renewable power generation

By Our Staff Reporter

With the State registering a drop in power demand, and the renewable power generation witnessing a rise, several coal-fired thermal power units belonging to Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) and Central Generation Stations (CGS) have been kept on standby to accommodate wind and solar power.

Of the daily average consumption of 255 million units, wind and solar energy have contributed 91 million units.

Since Aug. 12, twelve units of thermal power plants belonging to both Tangedco and CGS, with a combined capacity of 4800 MW, are under reserve shutdown to accommodate renewable energy.

Six units of North Chennai and Mettur thermal power plants with a combined generating capacity of 1650 MW and another six units of central generating stations in Vallur and Kudgi with a capacity of 3150 MW are under forced standby.

A senior Tangedco official said that the utility has been taking all steps to utilise both wind and solar power as much as possible by backing down the thermal power plants.

Ambattur Zone has most number of active cases

By Our Staff Reporter

Among the 15 Corporation Zones, Ambattur has the most number of active COVID-19 cases.

While the overall city average is 10%, the rate of active cases in Ambattur is 23% followed by Sholinganallur, Alandur and Anna Nagar at 16%, 15% and 13% respectively.

Since Aug. 8, the number of daily new cases has dropped below the 1000-mark.

As on Aug. 12, there were 11,130 active cases in the city. The total number of cases in Chennai stood at 1,11,054 with 97,574 getting discharged and 2,350 succumbing to the infection.

As far as the mortality rate is concerned, Teynampet tops the zones with a total of 346 deaths and mortality rate of 3.01 percent followed by Tiruvottiyur with 2.90 percent. Tondiarpet, Royapuram and Thiru Vi Ka Nagar zones have a mortality rate of over 2 percent.

Donate Blood once in 3 months

Board resting on wall removed

By Our Staff Reporter

An advertisement board, which had toppled over and was resting on the compound wall of a house on Crescent Street, T. Nagar, was removed following a report in *Mambalam Times* (August 8-14 issue).

The nearby residents have thanked *Mambalam Times* for publishing the civic lapse, and the Corporation officials for their quick action.



Before



Now

Damaged drain cover a hindrance



By Our Staff Reporter

A damaged stormwater drain cover has been hindering road users on Somasundaram Street, T. Nagar near Corporation playground for several days.

Garbage piles up at street junction



By Our Staff Reporter

Uncleared garbage has piled up at the junction of Muthukrishna Street and Sivasailam Street in T. Nagar during the past few days.

Thambrass conducts Ram pooja in K. K. Nagar

In connection with the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Shri Ram Temple conducted in Ayodhya, the Tamilnadu Brahmin Association (Ashok Nagar) performed a special pooja for Lord Rama outside the residence of Lalitha Sukumaran (President, Ashok Nagar Unit) in 45th Street, 6th Sector, K. K. Nagar on Aug. 3.

A number of its members participated.

Lalitha told *Mambalam Times* that all wore masks and observed the social distancing during the pooja.

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Online medical consultation offered

By Our Staff Reporter

RMD Nursing Home (13, Raghaviah Road, T. Nagar) provides online medical consultation for emergency care.

A diabetologist, ENT specialist, urologist, gynaecologist and neurologist are available for consultation.

Home care, nursing care and check-up for all including elderly patients and terminally ill patients are offered. There is a pharmacy too.

More details can be had in 93810 16588.

Sruuthi enacts play on Mrs. YGP

By Our Staff Reporter

S. Sruuthi (resident of 44/21, Bagirathi Ammal Street, T. Nagar) has enacted a play on the life of the late Mrs. YGP (Educationist and Founder, PSBB Schools) last month in Vani Mahal (G.N. Chetty Road, T. Nagar). The play can be seen on youtube at <https://youtu.be/GjNqMMDPBw>

This is the second time she has acted as Mrs. YGP.

She is the granddaughter of thespian and renowned actor R.S. Manohar and the daughter of S. Shivprasad who manages the drama troupe RS Manohar NXgs. Sruuthi has also started her own drama troupe and does the props for NXgs.

Organisations help to give COVID-19 victims dignified funeral

Volunteers of multiple organisations in the city are ensuring that COVID-19

victims get a dignified burial

Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) helped Rahman, whose father passed away in a hospital last week.

Its volunteers accompanied the body from the hospital to the burial ground and ensured and also video transmitted the rituals so that family members could pay their last respects.

SDPI provides safety kits to volunteers involved in burials. Several other organisations too have started this yeoman service free of cost.

Among them is Uravugal Trust in the city and Tamil Nadu Muslim Munneta Kazhagam (TMMK) which functions across the state.

They carry out these services with the permission of local bodies who ensure that they are given the necessary safety gear and instructions. Hospitals, local police, corporation officials and families contact the volunteers for help.

In most cases a sanitary officer is also present when the body is buried. A TMMK member said that they have so far buried 130 COVID-19 positive victims across the state.

14-day isolation must for returning workers

By Our Staff Reporter

With Chennai recording a dip in the number of COVID-19 cases for the past few weeks, the Corporation has made it mandatory for workers returning to the city to undergo 14-day quarantine to prevent further spread.

Companies have to apply for e-pass for its workers from other districts or migrant workers from other States by providing a list of names.

When they arrive in the city, the companies should make arrangements for the workers to quarantine themselves.

Corporation officials will inspect the company premises to check whether they have basic facilities to accommodate its employees.

Amma canteens see more customers on Sundays

There are huge crowds at Amma canteens on Sundays as hotels and eateries remain closed because of the total lockdown.

A canteen worker said that while 400 persons usually turn up daily, the figure is much higher on Sundays.

She said that breakfast, lunch and dinner are available at low prices on all days.

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With exams cancelled, all Std. 10 students declared passed

By Our Staff Reporter

The Directorate of Government Examinations (DGE) in Tamilnadu declared the results of the Std. 10 board exams on Aug. 11 and said that all students who had registered to write the exams have been declared as passed.

The exams were cancelled due to the lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 9,39,829 students (4,68,070 girls and 4,71, 759 boys) had registered to appear for the board exams which were originally scheduled to be held from March 27 to April 13.

Audio books popular following lockdown



By Our Staff Reporter

Though audio books have been around for a long time, they were not as popular as hardcore copies in India.

Following the lockdown, audio books have become popular among regular readers.

Deepika Arun (33), who was initially averse to audio books, now does most of her reading through the digital editions or their audio formats.

"I must have read the audio version of Harry Potter books umpteen times," she said.

After realizing the potential, Deepika now runs 'Kadhaisai', a storytelling platform on which she regularly shares narrations of Tamil stories written by authors like Kalki and La Sa Ramamritham.

She quit her IT job in 2016 to start an activity center where children are encouraged to pick up essential life skills, with reading holding the top spot.

Due to the lockdown she had to close it permanently in April.

Since then she has shifted her focus to promoting famous Tamil books by narrating them in story form. She has an audio recording setup at home where she records stories in one go to maintain the modulation and voice quality.

The audio books can be accessed on the website <https://kadhaisai.com/>.

Copious rain augments water table

By Our Staff Reporter

As Chennai and its surrounding areas received good spells of rains during the last week of July, all the 15 zones have witnessed a rise in groundwater levels.

According to the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (Metrowater) data, the city's average groundwater table has increased by 1.54 meters.

During June, when there was no significant rain, the average groundwater level was at 6.68 meters and in July, the average level rose to 5.21 meters.

Among the 15 zones in the city, the water level in Kodambakkam has increased by 2.57 meters, which is the highest.

In June, Kodambakkam's groundwater level was at 7.51 meters and in July, the level rose to 4.94 meters.

Metrowater has several observation wells (open wells) across the city to measure the groundwater levels every month.

However, the groundwater table in Royapuram zone remained almost the same with only 0.90-meter rise. Tiruvottiyur also witnessed only a 0.88-meter increase.

Apart from Kodambakkam Zone, Perungudi and Alandur Zones recorded more than two-meter increase of groundwater level.

Meanwhile, the storage level in the four lakes — Chembarambakkam, Red Hills, Cholavaram and Poondi — that supply drinking water to the city is also several times higher than the water stored in 2019. On Aug. 10, the lakes had a combined storage of 4,508 mcft against the previous year's storage of 16 mcft.

TNEA applications cross 1.5 lakh

By Our Staff Reporter

For the first time, online registration of the students seeking engineering admission has crossed 1.5 lakh, and more candidates are expected to enrol by next week.

Last year, the number of applications was only 1.3 lakh.

According to an official of the Directorate of Technical Education, 1.47 lakh engineering seats are available in about 500 engineering colleges across the State.

So far, 1,18,704 candidates have paid registration fee, and about 80 percent have uploaded their original certificates, he said.

The last date for registration is Aug. 16.

The rank list will be announced on Sept. 7, and general counselling will start on Sept. 17.

Photography contest to celebrate Madras

By Our Staff Reporter

Photographic Society of Madras (PSM, which is sharing 163 years of its history with the city, is holding a photography contest called 'Shoot Madras' as part of the Madras Week celebration.

There are three themes for this contest. In the first theme 'terrace/balcony view of Madras', participants can share extraordinary views of the city from their terrace/balcony. The second theme is 'architecture of Madras'.

Madras architecture is a mix of different styles that include Dravidian temples, Indo Saracenic buildings, art deco, and the latest steel and glass architecture. Those interested can share any shots of Madras architecture.

The third is the 'streets of Madras' and participants can send street photographs reflecting the ethos of the city.

The last date for submission of entries for the contest is Aug. 18.

For details, visit www.photomadras.org.

Unemployed diploma holders can apply for BE, B.Tech courses

Part-time BE and B. Tech courses will be offered to currently unemployed diploma holders in 9 government and government-aided colleges in Tamilnadu from this year.

Till last year, the 31/2-year degree program, comprising evening classes, was offered only to working diploma holders.

The unemployed diploma holders must possess minimum 2 years of work experience.

Candidates can apply online on the website www.ptb-tnea.com till Aug. 30.

The application status will be published on Sept. 10, and ranking will be announced on Sept. 17.

Online counselling will be conducted from Sept. 23 to Oct. 9. For details, call 94869 77757, 422-2574071, 422-257407, Extn: 460.

School admission to begin on Aug. 17

By Our Staff Reporter

Admission for students to Stds. 1, 5 and 9 in schools in Tamilnadu for the academic year 2020-2021 will begin on Monday, Aug. 17.

Minister for School Education K. A. Sengottaiyan made the announcement on Aug. 11 while urging parents and school administration staff to strictly adhere to physical distancing norms and other COVID-19 preventive measures during the admission process.

Sengottaiyan added that no decision has been taken on opening schools in the foreseeable future.

A staggered schedule for admissions has been planned by the education department to facilitate a safe admission process.

Admission to LKG and Std. 1 in private schools will be done online.

According to the Minister, for admission to entry level classes through the Right to Education (RTE) Act in private schools, the Directorate of Matriculation Schools will initiate the online admission process from Aug. 17.

With Std. 10 results announced on Aug. 10, admissions to Std. 11 will begin on Aug. 24.

The students will receive their provisional mark sheets from their schools from Aug. 17 to 21.

Government schools can issue free textbooks to students when they come for admission.

Currently, the state has been telecasting lessons for government school students on the state-run Kalvi Television channel.

On July 31, the government issued guidelines for online classes, regulating timing and offering precautions to be taken by teachers and parents before and after sessions. Accordingly, it was announced that attendance, assessments and assignments were not mandatory.

Buy and sell used toys, accessories through Instagram

By Our Staff Reporter

During the lockdown, a lot of mothers did not have access to many children's products because they were categorised as non-essential in most websites. Three friends (who are mothers) from the city experienced similar challenges.

They decided to solve this issue and started the 'Twice Treasured' venture through Instagram last month.

According to Divya Abhishek, a co-founder, "Children tend to outgrow their clothes quickly. Also, most of their toys, baby accessories and gear will be lying around after a certain age without any use. Mostly, these things would be barely used and in good condition. We thought why not give a platform for parents to sell and buy such goods from other parents."

The other two founders of 'Twice Treasured' are Vaibhavi Prakash and Tripti Chordia.

Divya said that a number of parents with low income can also benefit from this initiative as children's products like clothes and toys are usually expensive.

They have so far achieved over 150 sales and have 3,000 followers.

From creams, prams, clothing to cribs, the Instagram page features a curated selection of accessories and provides a convenient shopping experience for its users.

The prices of the products are based on the condition. "Whenever we get a product, we shoot a 360-degree video. We send the video along with all the details of the product — description, sale date, number of uses and so on — to the prospective buyer. Since we don't have a warehouse, we don't stock items. They are procured once the orders are finalised. Once we get the product, we double-check the details, sanitise it, pack and send it out," explained the mother of two, adding that the seller gets 75 percent of the proceedings.

For details, visit Instagram page @shoptwicetreasured.

Complaints pour in about e-pass rejection

By Our Staff Reporter

In the past fortnight, people have taken to social media platforms and a number of posts have been made on the Corporation twitter handle stating that e-passes sought for even valid reasons are being rejected en masse.

Many have complained that even when proof of death of near one is provided with supporting documents, the e-passes are rejected.

As per the government regulation, a person can get an e-pass in case of a wedding, medical emergency, death of a close relative, government tender bidding, ongoing government work, or if someone is stranded.

According to the e-pass data released for July by Chennai Corporation, the Tamilnadu government received 4,63,618 requests for emergency e-pass on the official website. Of these,

the government approved 1,53,583 and rejected the rest.

It has also badly affected job seekers stuck in home towns as they are not able to travel for attending interviews or those who are not able to join duty even after getting jobs.

After the volley of complaints, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Aug. 12 announced that an additional team will be set up in each district to double the issuance of e-passes.

On Aug. 9, the Madras High Court also asked the Tamilnadu government to seriously look into the complaints about officials taking money for issuing e-pass.

Justices N. Kirubakaran and V.M. Velumani mentioned that there have been many allegations about brokers who charge Rs. 500 to Rs 2,000 to obtain e-passes.

Free online course on Gita from today

ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) is starting a free online course on Bhagavad Gita in Tamil, English and Hindi on Saturday, Aug. 15.

The course is divided into 4 sessions, and the classes will be from 8 p.m to 9 p.m.

The audio/video sessions will include lessons, moral stories and slokas and their practical applications.

For more details, call 98406 72286 or 99410 92331.

Online puppet show based on Janmashtami

By Our Staff Reporter

For Janmashtami, Velammal Nexus Group did a live telecast of a puppet show on its YouTube channel.

It was preceded by a discourse by Shri Vittal Das Maharaj, who also sang hymns praising Lord Krishna.

A number of its kindergarten students dresses as Radha and Krishna also participated in the event from their homes.

The T. Nagar - Mambalam edition of **Mambalam Times** can be accessed in www.mambalamtimes.in

Tree falls on unoccupied car



By Our Staff Reporter

An avenue tree toppled over during rain and fell on a Maruti Swift car (TN 09 AW 7830) parked on Jaisankar Street, West Mambalam at around 4.30 a.m on Aug. 12.

The unoccupied car was badly damaged.

Corporation workers axed the branches to enable free flow of traffic.

Masks with flag image a hit



By Our Staff Reporter

Face masks with an image of the national flag have become a hit. Each costs Rs. 20. This vendor was spotted on Venkatanarayana Road in T. Nagar on Aug. 13.

Vitamin tablets distributed



Vitamin tablets to boost immunity were distributed among members of R6 Kumaran Nagar Police Station Boys Club (Jaffer Khanpet) and nearby residents by Kalaiarasan (Inspector) on Aug. 10.

Giant buffalo causes panic



By Our Staff Reporter

A giant buffalo with curved horns caused panic among road users on 2nd Avenue, Ashok Nagar on Aug. 9

NGO makes, gives biodegradable sanitary pads to underprivileged women

By Our Staff Reporter

Bliss Day, a company making biodegradable sanitary napkins, has joined hands with a group of volunteers to form an initiative called Varam.

Through Varam, the team is distributing sanitary napkins among women from underprivileged backgrounds and migrants from other states free of cost amid the lockdown. Nivedha and Gautam (Founders of Bliss Day) came to know of a wildly growing plant called kenaf in Andhra Pradesh from which a fiber is made which has good absorbency.

They started making biodegradable pads using kenaf fiber.

According to Gautam, it started as a crowdfunding initiative, and they received help from friends and Rotary Clubs for doing field work and started distributing the sanitary napkins.

He said that extension of the program will depend on finances. If donors are willing to support them financially, they will continue with the distribution, he explained.

Corporation adds four symptoms to virus watch list

By Our Staff Reporter

Based on continued assessment of commonly reported symptoms for COVID-19, the Corporation has added four symptoms to the watch list.

Earlier, only those exhibiting fever, cough, cold and sore throat were being monitored daily.

Now, those with a headache, lack of taste or smell, body pain and vomiting will also be tested immediately.

This is to reduce the number of deaths in the city, officials said.

The Corporation added that elderly citizens with any type of wheezing problems

COVID-19 leaves cab industry dented

By Our Staff Reporter

The government may have relaxed a lot of lockdown norms, but the cab industry in the city continues to struggle to get back on its feet.

Cab aggregators like Ola and Uber have been able to offer just 25%-50% of the rides they had been offering in the pre-COVID-19 phase, industry insiders and drivers said.

J. Ramanujam of the Tamil Nadu Call Taxi Owners Association said that a driver in the city, on an average, gets just 2-3 bookings a day now. Despite the offer of hand sanitisers and drivers using face masks, many customers remain wary of boarding cabs. Some drivers have even placed plastic screens between them and passenger seats, but customers remain unconvinced.

Given the increase in diesel price, very few drivers opt for long trips to the suburbs. Those who rent daily to work for aggregators have stopped logging in.

Only those who own cars continue operations to meet daily needs, Ramanujam said.

Vegetable, fruit prices rise

Due to persistent rains, the prices of vegetables and fruits have gone up by 20 to 50 percent in the last 2 weeks due to supply issues.

Certain vegetables like carrots have registered almost 200 percent increase in prices.

Though the rains have abated, prices may continue to remain at the current levels for another 2 weeks due to the shortage of labour and the low second crop yield this time around.

These are just the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that we are seeing now," said P. Sukumaran (Treasurer, Koyambedu Wholesale Market Merchants' Association).

Mambalam High Road relaid



Before



After

By Our Staff Reporter

Mambalam High Road was relaid last week. The road had been milled earlier to facilitate relaying (photo published in *Mambalam Times* issue dated July 25-31).

E-passes to be issued for job seekers

By Our Staff Reporter

Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash on Aug. 9 announced that e-passes to the city will be issued under two additional categories for work-related requests.

According to reports, the Commissioner has said that those seeking e-pass for job interviews and business engagements will now be considered.

So far, e-pass into the city had been approved only for marriage, death and medical emergencies.

The Commissioner added that around 1.4 lakh migrant workers who had left for their home states have started returning to the city for work and they too will be allowed e-passes under different categories along with arrangements for a 14-day quarantine facility.

Madras Day celebrations go online

By Our Staff Reporter

Every August, the city comes together to celebrate the founding day of Madras, said to be on August 22, 1639.

The month is filled with heritage walks, talks and events celebrating the city and its culture. This year, due to the shutdown, the celebrations have been moved to the digital space.

From digital webinars to online exhibitions, most celebrations have been moved online. Although a few groups, such as Madras Musings, have opted not to host any events, others have taken this opportunity to reach out to larger and new audiences.

According to local historian Nivedita Louis, who specialises in topics on north Madras and women of Madras, the shift to the digital space, specifically Facebook, has expanded the audiences from the typical 'elite' audiences of Madras Month.

Architect and urban planner Thirupurasundari Sevel (a resident of Shenoy Nagar) did not have an Instagram page until last year. Now, with the shutdown, she has shifted all her work through 'Nam Veedu Nam Oor Nam Kadhai' online to hold household heritage exhibitions and seminars.

Another benefit of the online space is the accessibility across time zones, said Ramaswamy Nallaperumal, co-founder of Chennai Photo Walk, which holds photo exhibitions for Madras Month every year.

This year, the photo exhibition, which has three topics – Kollywood, Hidden History and The Chennai Bond – will be hosted on their social media pages, and will be accessible 24x7 for all to see.

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3 conservancy workers lauded for selfless act

By Our Staff Reporter
 Amidst heavy rainfall on Aug. 9, three sanitation workers went beyond their call of duty to report a lost package on the road during their daily chores, earning laurels from the police department.

When Selvi (49), Tilaka (43) and Nila (48) were winding up their routine cleaning work in Teynampet at midnight, they came across a carton box. Without any hesitation, they

decided to report their find to the police and get it delivered to the owner even as heavy rains lashed the region. The package had details of the person.

"We contacted him and cross-checked the documents before returning it to him," Hari Kiran (DCP, T. Nagar) told this reporter.

The official page of the police department also put out a post praising the workers for their honesty.

Evicted COVID-19 worker takes to Facebook, owner relents

A 28-year-old man went live on Facebook on the night of Aug. 10 alleging that his landlord has locked up his place in Pallikaranai and made him stay on the street, though the government had instructed landlords not to throw out tenants out or harass them for rent during the pandemic period.

While activists picked up the issue and put pressure on the officials, the landlord reached the house in the wee hours the next day and opened the door in the presence of police.

The tenant, Arul Jegan, a design engineer in an IT firm in Sholinganallur, has been working as a COVID-19 volunteer in Zone 14 (Perungudi), while the landlord is also said to be an IT professional.

LED monitor shows govt's achievements



By Our Staff Reporter
 A big LED monitor, recently installed at the junction of P. T. Rajan Salai and 100 Feet Road in Ashok Nagar, displays the government's achievements, awareness messages and information about projects.

'No parking' rule violated



By Our Staff Reporter
 A number of vehicles can be seen parked in the 'No Parking Zone' in Nageswara Road in T. Nagar. Photo was taken on Aug. 11.

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Expressway fascinates road trip heroine

B. R. Shivaji

Manasvini, my 5-year-old granddaughter, the heroine of our recent long road trip (detailed report published last week), which she tackled with carefree aplomb, had a whale of a time, especially the fast ride on the Lucknow-Agra expressway.

On some stretches, we rolled the window glasses down to her great delight. With her hair flying in the whipping wind, she let out whoops of joy. Her favourite perch most of the time was the arm rest in the middle of the rear seats from where she had a ringside view of the road ahead. She buckled on the safety belt for good measure to sail through the rough patches.

She was none the worse at the end of the 1300-km trip and still bubbling with enthusiasm. In fact, she is keen on making another trip soon and wants it to be longer.



She is a Std. 1 student and is attending video classes online which will continue for the rest of the academic year.

Her repertoire includes yoga, dancing and cycling. She fancies coloring. She is set to join roller-skating classes. She is eager to learn swimming but the pool in her school and the one in our apartment complex remain closed due to coronavirus restrictions.

Photographer creates awareness through stories



By Our Staff Reporter

Sharadha Rajagopalan (a professional photographer and a resident of K. K. Nagar) is spreading awareness on the importance of breastfeeding through a photo series.

Her studio is located in Shenoy Nagar.

Through the series, she hopes to reach more mothers and teach the next generation that breastfeeding is a natural act and is healthy both for the baby and the mother.

Her friend, who recently became a mother, modeled for the photoshoot.

Mass testing has helped contain new cases say experts

Chennai Corporation has managed to bring the pandemic situation under control by aggressive testing, conducting more than eight lakh RT-PCR tests so far, which is the highest in any metro city in the country.

According to Corporation officials, 12,000 tests are conducted in a day on an average, with the highest number recorded on Aug. 8 when it tested 14,027 samples.

This high testing rate is considered to be the reason for the city achieving reduction in positivity rate in recent weeks, which has gradually dipped to about 8.5-9.5 percent from 14-15 percent last month.

Moreover, the doubling time has improved to 72.2 days in the city from 25 days in June.

Dr. Prabhdeep Kaur (Deputy Director, National Institute of Epidemiology, Chennai) had commented that masks and testing have helped slow down the COVID-19 transmission in the city.

On Aug. 13, the city recorded 993 new cases, taking the total to 1,12,059 cases, of which 98,736 have been discharged.

Active cases have come down to 10,953 and the toll 2,370.

Ladies' toilet not properly maintained

By Our Staff Reporter

Following the easing of lockdown, a number of shops including vegetable shops have opened resulting in the increase of pedestrians on roads.

The e-toilet adjoining Kittu Park, Ellaiamman Koil Street, West Mambalam is now being used by a number of persons. But the ladies' toilet is not being maintained properly with the result many women are reluctant to enter given the strict sanitary conditions required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Independence Day rehearsals on Kamarajar Salai



By Our Staff Reporter

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, rehearsals of Independence Day ceremony took place on Aug. 8, 10 and 13 on Kamarajar Salai, following social distancing norms.

Vehicles were diverted from Kamarajar Salai, Rajaji Salai and Flag Staff Salai during the rehearsals.

Police, Traffic Police and Fire Department participated in the rehearsal.

Two held in Rs. 33 crore fake input tax credit racket

By Our Staff Reporter

The Central GST Commissionerate in Chennai has arrested two persons, considered to be kingpins of a racket involving claims of fake input tax credit, running to Rs. 33 crores. Since the lockdown came into effect in March-end, the GST and Income Tax departments have not conducted any searches in the state.

The racket came to light in the first search in the state by the GST Commissionerate during the ongoing lockdown.

A former Vice-President of a private bank, A. Diwakar (a resident of Anna Nagar) and

his accomplice John fake firms.

Livingston (a resident of Koyambedu) are the key players. "The overall GST evasion is likely to be higher as investigation is going on," said

Ilango.

They used their contacts in the banking sector and trading community to carry out the fraud, said CGST joint commissioner Leo John Ilango.

A probe revealed that 20 firms were created by the two and fake GST invoices to the tune of Rs. 182 crores were generated for 315 existing and

The involvement of more persons, if any, was being probed, said another official.

During sustained interrogation of the duo, it emerged that they had established an elaborate network of fake firms to create and supply fake invoices.

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