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Soon MTC bus tickets with NCMC

MTC will soon enable passengers to buy tickets for its buses using the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC). Payment through NCMC is already functional on handheld electronic ticketing machines (ETMs) provided to conductors. By tapping the card on ETM readers, passengers can pay fares directly from their card balance. NCMCs can be recharged online or at designated counters and offer seamless travel across buses, metros, and other transport modes nationwide. CMRL offers a 20% discount on fares for transactions made through NCMCs and UPI.

Extra buses to clear holiday crowd

TO manage the extra rush at bus depots during the Christmas-New Year holiday week, TNSTC will operate special buses alongside routine govt bus services across the state.

Starting this weekend, 625 special buses will operate from Chennai to various destinations. Of these, 325 will depart from Kilambakkam, heading to Madurai, Trichy, Coimbatore, Salem, and Tirunelveli. Another 280 buses will leave from Koyambedu over three days, serving travellers to Tiruvannamalai, Nagapattinam, Velankanni, Hosur, and Bengaluru, according to an official release. With large crowds expected, managers have been deployed at Kilambakkam terminus. TNSTC has also planned special services to hill stations such as Nilgiris, Kodaikanal, and Yercaud. Previously, Yercaud did not have direct bus connectivity, now there are two buses directly From Chennai and Madurai to Yercaud. Meanwhile, Southern Railway has announced additional special trains for the Christmas season, including the Tuticorin-Madurai-Bengaluru Express, on December 21.

HUG A TREE AND POST YOUR PHOTO: RESIDENTS ENTHUSED

By N Rathi Chithra

FOR BOOKING OF MINI BIZ

HE Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has rolled out a unique green initiative aimed at raising environmental awareness among city residents. Titled #LiveGreen-LoveBlue, the campaign encourages citizens to hug trees, post pictures on social media, and tag the official GCC X handle, @ chennaicorp. The move is part of a larger effort to promote greenery and water conservation in Chennai.

"This campaign is not just about hugging a tree; it's about reconnecting with nature and recognising the vital role trees play in sustaining our environment," said a GCC official.

The initiative has drawn mixed reactions from residents in areas like Mogappair and Anna Nagar, which are grappling with urban challenges like declining green cover and increasing pollution.

"I love the idea of the campaign. It's a fun and



people about the impor- great to promote tree hugtance of trees," said Shruti Iver, a resident of Mogappair West. "Our area has lost so much greenery due to rapid construction. This initiative could inspire residents to plant more trees and care for the existing ones."

However, some residents remain skeptical about the

interactive way to remind campaign's impact. "It's ging on social media, but what about the trees we had already lost?" questioned Anand, a long-time resident of Anna Nagar. "The Corporation should prioritise planting new saplings and maintaining existing parks. Campaigns like this are only useful if backed by real action."

Mogappair residents have highlighted the need for more focused efforts to green their locality. "We barely have enough shade during the summers, and that's a direct result of poor planning. I hope this campaign translates into actual planting drives in neighborhoods like ours," said Kundavai, a Mogappair East resident.

December 22 - 28, 2024

In Anna Nagar, the campaign has rekindled discussions about the importance of maintaining green spaces like Tower Park. :It's a beautiful park, but it needs more attention.

If we don't maintain such spaces, the whole idea of hugging a tree feels hollow," said Ramesh Kumar, who visits the park regularly.

"Small steps like this can lead to bigger changes," said Shruti. "If every resident of Chennai hugs a tree today, tomorrow they might plant one."

With growing participation on social media, the campaign is already making waves. While the true impact remains to be seen, #LiveGreenLoveBlue has sparked an important conversation about the need for greener, more sustainable urban spaces in Chennai.

By Our Correspondent

December 22 - 28, 2024

HE Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) recently imposed a penalty of ₹5.10 crore on the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation Limited (Aavin) for multiple environmental violations at its Ambattur dairy unit. The violations, including untreated effluent discharge and improper waste management, have drawn sharp criticism from environmental activists and residents.

The issue came to light following inspections by the TNPCB, which revealed that Aavin was processing up to 4.5 lakh litres of milk daily-well beyond its consented capacity of 3 lakh litres per day—without obtaining the necessary 'Consent to Operate' certification. Additionally, the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) at the Ambattur unit was either non-operational or functioning intermittently, exacerbating pollution concerns.

"The Korattur Lake has been choking due to years

Aavin Ambattur unit penalised for violations

of neglect, and now the case filed by the Korattur actions of a government Lake Protecting People's organization like Aavin are making it worse," said Ramesh Kanth, a member of a local environmental group . "How can they set an example when they themselves flout environmental regulations?"

In its report to the Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the TNPCB stated that Aavin had failed to comply with several directives aimed at mitigating pollution. During inspections in November 2024, officials discovered heaps of unsegregated plastic and metal waste dumped in the open near the ETP. This was in direct violation of the board's earlier directive to store plastic waste in a closed, secure area to prevent wind dispersal.

The NGT, hearing a

Movement, expressed concern over the continued pollution of Korattur Lake. The Bench, comprising Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana and expert member Satyagopal Kormust adhere to environmental regulations, especially as it serves as a public utility.

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"Aavin should lead by example and ensure they comply with all environmental norms. The Korattur Lake is a shared resource, and its protection is not optional," said Narayenvironmental activist.

The Bench directed the TNPCB to submit a status report on Aavin's ETP by the next hearing. It also instructed an Aavin official to appear in person to explain the organisation's failure to address the violations. The Korattur Lake Protecting People's Movement, which has been at the forefront of the fight to save the lake, welcomed

the penalty as a step in the right direction but demanded stricter monitoring of Aavin's operations. "This is just the beginning. Accountability must be sustained, or we risk losing Korattur Lake entirely," said a member. The case highlights the urgent need for stricter enforcement of environmental laws to protect Chennai's fragile ecosystems.

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Avadi Cops crack down on gutka network

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IN a major crackdown on sale of gutka and other banned tobacco products, the Avadi police seized more than 2,000kg of illegal items and arrested four people on Thursday. Eleven special teams carried out raids on multiple shops across the commissionerate. The raids, along with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) officials, were carried out in areas including Poonamallee, Mangadu, Ambattur, Ambattur Industrial Estate and neighbouring areas. This resulted in the confiscation of 46kg gutka and other tobacco products.

Anna Nagar: Chennai's pothole capital

By Our Correspondent

ANNA Nagar, one of Chennai's prominent residential areas, has earned the unenviable title of having the most potholes in the city, according to a recent survey by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC). Out of 2,076 damaged road patches identified across Chennai since December 1, Anna Nagar tops the list with 181, followed by Valasaravakkam with 144. This alarming statistic has sparked outrage among residents, who are demanding immediate action.

"It's a nightmare to commute here. Every road feels like an obstacle course," said Meenakshi Raman, a resident of Shanthi Colony. "Despite paying high property taxes, we are left to navigate dangerous potholes that damage vehicles and pose risks to pedestrians."

The GCC has responded to the widespread complaints with a promise to make Chennai a 'pothole-free' city within six months. The civic body plans to deploy 15 mobile jet patchwork machines for rapid repairs. These machines, costing ₹50 lakh each, will use a cold mix injection process to fill and compact potholes efficiently.

"Currently, we have four machines in operation and are aiming to allocate one per zone. Tenders for repairs have been issued, and we hope to see significant progress soon," a GCC engineer said.

However, Anna Nagar residents remain skeptical. "We have heard promises before, but nothing changes on the ground," said Palani Kumar, a long-time resident. "The recent rains have only worsened the situation. Roads are filled with gravel and construction debris, making them unsafe for motorists and pedestrians alike."

The issue is not limited to Anna Nagar. Valasaravakkam's Velan Nagar 7th Street residents reported two accidents due to loose gravel and roadside construction material. Similarly, streets in

George Town and Kondithope, including NSC Bose Road and Linghi Chetty Street, are riddled with potholes despite recent repairs.

The shift from the traditional hot mix method to the environmentally friendly cold mix process, following the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board's ban on hot-mix plants, is a significant step. However, logistical challenges and the high cost of equipment are slowing down implementation.

For Anna Nagar, the stakes are high. "We want accountability," said Priya Venkat, a local activist. "These potholes are not just inconveniences; they are safety hazards. Children walking to school, elderly people crossing roadseveryone is at risk."

As the GCC ramps up its efforts, residents hope the promise of a pothole-free Chennai will finally be fulfilled. Until then, they continue to endure bumpy rides and growing frustration.

Velammal's Pranav bags double; SDAT to launch Chess academy

By R Srinivasa Raghavan

ORLD chess champion Velammal's Dommaraju Gukesh was felicitated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Tuesday. The 18-yearold was honoured with a cash award of Rs 5 crore for his

stupendous achievement. It was a well deserved reward for becoming the 18th World champion. The CM also said SDAT

will launch a chess academy named the 'Home of Chess'.

Gukesh arrived in his hometown on Monday to a rousing welcome, with his school Velammal Vidyalaya at the forefront. One of his celebrations after making history in Singapore was doing a Bungee Jump along with his main coach Grzegorz Gajewski

After his intense showdown with Ding Liren, which went to the wire, the Chennaiite said he will not be competing in the World Rapid & Blitz Championship in New York, which is the next big event in the chess calendar. It's understandable that Gukesh requires rest and relaxation to recharge his batteries after his gruelling match.

CHESS ROUND-UP

Pranav Triumphs

Pranav V of Velammal Vidyalaya, Mel Aynambakkam continued his good form, bagging a double in the World Youth (U-18) Rapid & Blitz in Brezice, Slovenia. Pranav clinched the rapid crown (9.5/11) with a round to spare! He followed it by winning the blitz crown (19.5/22) in even more emphatic fashion He performs well in all the formats (classical, rapid & blitz). Playing a lot of online blitz games from a young age has made Pranav one of the

top blitz players in India. Competing regularly in Titled Tuesday (chess.com event) tournaments with the likes of Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura and Alireza Firouzja has improved his blitz skills without a doubt.

Illamparthi excels

India's A R Illamparthi, who has been making progress with every tournament, made his second GM norm in the Singapore Open, which was organised as a part of celebrating the World Championship. Illamparthi had a fruitful tournament. finishing eighth with 6.5 points. Gaining 28 rating points, besides having a performance rating of 2688, were the other highlights of his successful campaign.

Arjun joins 2800 club

Arjun Erigaisi, joined the 2800club recently. Arjun had an incredible 2024, winning three tournaments, playing a big part in India bagging Chess Olympiad gold with an individual gold on the third board. He also became India No.1 with his consistent performances. The 21-year-old is in contention for a Candidates spot, occupying the second spot behind Fabiano Caruana in the FIDE Circuit. He has to perform exceptionally well in the World Rapid and Blitz (starts on Dec 26) Championship in New York to earn a spot in the 2026 Candidates. It's a difficult but not impossible if he performs at his best.

(The writer of this article is a senior sports correspondent)



HC seeks TN response on stray cattle menace



MADRAS high court has directed Tamil Nadu govt to explain the steps taken to prevent stray cattle getting on to roads, on a plea moved by advocate M

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Ramesh of Thiruverkadu. According to the petitioner, many accidents have taken place due to stray cattle on public roads. Such cattle often

block roads and their sudden movements cause accidents. Moreover, they defecate on the road, causing two-wheeler riders to slip and fall, resulting in fatal injuries, he said. Many students who commute on bicycles have also suffered injuries due to stray cattle. The presence of cattle and their droppings leads to proliferation of mosquitoes, he added.

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A common factor is that these cattle sometimes push or attack people walking on the road. In poorly lit areas, these cattle rest in the middle of the roads and when they suddenly jump, causing accidents.

Therefore, on Nov 11, he made a representation to the municipal commissioner of Thiruverkadu seeking action against stray cattle. Since authorities failed to act on the representation, he moved the high court.

Posts to hold interview for direct agents

THE Department of Posts will hold a walk-in interview to engage direct agents for sale of postal life insurance products at Anna Road head post office on January 4 at 10.30 a.m. A press release said candidates aged above 18 years and who have passed class 10 are eligible for the posts. Chennai residents who are eligible for the interview should bring original and photocopies of certificates as proof of age, address and educational qualification with three recent photographs. Those selected would have to provide cash security of Rs.5,000 in the form of National Savings Certificate/ Kisan Vikas Patra, the release said.

Schools to open on Jan 2

The Department of School Education on Thursday said that all schools will reopen on January 2 after a nineday break for Christmas and New Year. The half-yearly exams for all school students are currently under way. The Government, aided, and private matriculation schools' exams conclude on December 23. Following the exams, students will enjoy a nine-day vacation, which begins on December 24.







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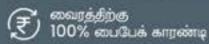
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THE CSI Church of Resurrection, Mogappair West conducted the Christmas celebration with pomp and gaiety on Dec 15. The highlight of the day was the inauguration of the crib, depicting the birth of Jesus Christ. Children thronged the premises to have a glimpse of the well decorated crib. There were elders of the parish who gathered in good numbers. A cultural programme by the children added more colour to the evening. Around 500 parishioners took part in the Christmas celebrations to make the evening memorable. The vice president of the Chennai Diocese C Jayaseelan Gnanathikam was the chief guest. The secretary, treasurer and other church committee members were also present.





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