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DMK, AIADMK see no threat from PWF

ARJIT DABAS

CHENNAI: Both the AIADMK and the DMK have downplayed the threat posed by the alliance that Vijayakanth's DMDK has forged with the People's Welfare Front which includes MDMK, CPI, CPI(M) and the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK).

P.Palaniappan, AIADMK member, said that alliance won't be much of a threat.

"The alliance won't make a big difference. The seats the DMDK got in the last assembly elections was because of Amma," he also added that the people of Tamil Nadu would make Amma the Chief Minister again with a huge majority.

T.K.S. Elangovan of the DMK said "The DMK is the strongest opposition party to the AIADMK. The third front (PWF) might get some votes but it cannot match our strength".

He also pointed out to surveys carried out by private companies and media organizations which



PWF leader Vaiko and DMDK chief Vijayakanth PHOTO: PTI

showed the DMK on a strong footing, as compared to the third front.

Political pundits also weren't optimistic about the chances of the third front in forming a government in the state.

A.S. Pannerselvan, Readers Editor of The Hindu and a close follower of Tamil Nadu politics

said that third front would play the role of a spoiler and that the elections would be largely bipolar between the DMK and the AIADMK. "The third front will be a spoiler, but we will have to wait and see whose chance it will spoil, AIADMK or DMK." He added that it would depend on whose votes it would eat into.

Pannerselvan also pointed out to the fact that the third front would be even more weaker now because of the three way split.

"The third front has a vote bank of 15-18 per cent, but now a Vanniyar consolidation will happen for the PMK, Hindutva consolidation for the BJP and leftist consolidation for the alliance. The vote will get split," he said.

D. Ravikumar, member of the VCK and part of the DMDK-PWF alliance sounded confident about forming the next government. "We are definitely going to capture the power and form the next government. It will not be possible for the AIADMK to win without the support of the left," he said.

Ravikumar ruled out a DMK victory and said that the people of Tamil Nadu were waiting for a change.

"People, especially the young voters are very disappointed with both these parties. 20 per cent of the voters are youth and their vote will make a big difference," he said.

CAMPAIGN MATERIAL

Traders wait for profits ahead of poll

BRISTI DEY

CHENNAI: Businessmen are expecting a boom in the sale of campaigning material for the May 16 Tamil Nadu Assembly election and political parties have started placing their orders.

A. Junaith, manager of Olympic Cards Limited in Parry's Corner, said the party leaders came to the store to order visiting cards.

They usually ordered for 200-400 visiting cards each and the store got some orders but they expected that the number of order will be boost up.

Sankar Lal, 45, who sells campaign materials in front of the AIADMK headquarters in Royapettah, said he had stocked up flags, T-shirts, placards, note books with party logo or political party members' picture, pens and other materials from Parry's Corner and Hyderabad.

Lal said he had been doing business in the area for last eight



A. Elumalai with election merchandise PHOTO: BRISTI DEY

years. He earned Rs. 2,000 a day on a normal day and it went up to Rs. 15,000 during the election campaign.

Forty-two year-old A. Elumalai from Valasaravakkam area said he ordered T-shirts and flags from Tirupur. Though, he got a profit of Rs. 2,500 daily now, but during the campaign period he expected to make profit of Rs. 25,000.

He is also collecting CDs and

DVDs of AIADMK party leaders' speeches especially those of Chief Minister Jayalalitha and the songs made on her.

An employee of Khadi Craft of Parry's Corner said they expected orders for making T-shirts and caps.

Sangeetha Restaurant and Rowther Biryani Restaurant in Parry's Corner area are also gearing up for business.

The managers of both the restaurants said last year they got order to provide food during the campaign meeting and made around Rs. 5 lakhs each. Though the business has not picked up yet this year some parties have contacted the managers. They expected that this year would be also more profitable for them.

The political parties also hire sound systems, stages and performers for the campaigning.

A sound system operator in Indira Nagar said this was the peak season when they made a profit and worked overtime.

Ennore fishermen now hunt for odd jobs

DEBAYAN ROY

CHENNAI: Most of the fishermen from the various Kuppams (fishing hamlets) are selling scrap or working as daily wage labourers in construction sites to make ends meet.

Vinoth Kumar, a fisherman who works as a construction labourer.

"We are traditional fishermen, and this is all we knew until the industries robbed us of our profession," he says.

The rising levels of untreated sewage and industrial effluents discharged into the creek have made fishing almost impossible in the creek.

"Now we either wait to be called to work as daily labourers or sell vegetables in the local market," adds Vinoth Kumar.

Most of the villagers in Ennore Kuppam and Netu Kuppam complain that a recently established local coal factory in the area is adding to their woes.

Arugimadi Arivalagan, a homemaker in the area, says, "These new factories do not have any proper canal system, and they deposit all the untreated effluents and hot waters directly into the sea."

After the death of Arumugam, the head of Ennore Kuppam

Fishermen Association, the members feel a need to revive the protests against the industrial establishments.

Desappan, a fisherman in his mid 40's, says establishments such as North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS), Ashok Leyland, MRF and L&T are recruiting people from outside instead of offering the local fishing community an opportunity to survive. "Since they have made fishing impossible for us, recruiting labour from outside to save costs is only aggravating our pain," he says.

D. Narasimhan, professor of Botany at the Madras Christian College, says "Even a simple step like recycling the factory effluents before being discharged, can go a long way in mitigating the hardships."

The continuous construction activities carried around the Ennore creek is also affecting the area. Nived Kumar, a fisherman in his mid 20's and one of the few diploma holders in the community, says, "The bridge which has been constructed to connect Thalankuppam to NCTPS has resulted in huge amount of sand being dumped on the water bed. As a result there is fish available in the area."

There are increasing health

hazards of fishing in the contaminated waters of the Ennore Creek. S. Elango, former Director of Public Health of the State, says, "The presence of extremely high levels of ammonia in the water due to the untreated industrial discharge is causing rare skin diseases among the fishing community."

S. Govindrajan, a fisherman, says, "I do not venture into the sea anymore. The water is contaminated and I need to live to feed my family."

Similar condition prevails in Thalankuppam, Mugadwaram Kuppam, Kattu Kuppam and Sivan Padai Veethi Kuppam.

Jagmohan, a scrap seller, who used to be a fisherman, says, "These industries located all around Ennore hires people like us, mostly as guards or gardeners, paying them Rs 300 to Rs 500 for 10 hours every day. Why don't they recruit us?"

The fishermen are now planning to submit a request to the Tamil Nadu Government, Department of Fisheries to address their problems.

Attempts were made to contact the North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS) officials and the spokesperson from Ashok Leyland, who said that steps were being taken to address grievances.



The Panchayat Union Middle School in Ezhil Nagar

PHOTO: BOISHAKHI DUTT

School dropouts 26% in Ezhil Nagar

BOISHAKHI DUTT

CHENNAI: Twenty-six per cent of the students in Ezhil Nagar, near Kannagi Nagar, have stopped attending schools after the floods in December 2015, according to a survey by the Tamil Nadu Forum for Crèche and Child Services (TN-FORCES).

The study, conducted last month, surveyed 685 families who live in 43 apartment blocks in the neighbourhood.

The government provided Rs. 5,000 as shifting allowance to each family however 70 per cent of the respondents do not think the allowance has been adequate, the study found.

"Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) runs five Anganwadi schools in Ezhil Nagar but there is only one middle school in the area. So parents don't have

any incentive to start sending their children to schools because they can't finish their studies," said Florence Varghese, a first year student of social work in Loyola College, who was a part of the research team that conducted the survey.

Talking about the condition after the floods, Varghese said, "2697 families that were affected by the floods have been resettled here in Ezhil Nagar from the Adyar river bank. Children were enrolled in schools in those areas and after resettlement they stopped attending school because of the distance problem."

According to the survey, 81 per cent of the families have children below six years, and 60 per cent of them have never attended the Anganwadi schools.

Currently 58 per cent of the children between the ages of six

and fourteen attend school, and 26 per cent of their studies have been affected after the resettlement.

The Panchayat Union Middle School was started in Ezhil Nagar in June, 2015, and this is the only option for studying after primary classes in the area. The school currently has 160 students enrolled and has classes from one to eight.

The building has six classrooms but only three are in use due to a shortage of teachers.

Classes for two, sometimes three, standards are held clubbed together because there are two teachers who teach eight grades.

N. Sundari, who teaches standards six, seven and eight in the school, said,

"The government has appointed six or seven field officers in the area to talk to parents and persuade them to send their children to

schools. When the school was opened last year in June, there were only five classes. The higher classes have been added last month but it is not official yet."

Dr. K. Shanmugavelayutham, convener of TN-FORCES that conducted the survey, said, "The middle school in the area does not have drinking water or toilets and there is no furniture so the students sit on the floor."

Some students do go to private schools nearby, and some of them still travel to the schools they used to go to earlier before being evicted, and for this they travel up to two hours one way."

Talking about the reason for dropouts, Shanmugavelayutham said it is because students lost all their study material in the floods. "The government needs to provide incentives for parents to send their children back to school," he added.

He lives with just his feet

DEBAYAN ROY

As the saying goes, the only enemy of art is limitations. But, there are always artists who strive to venture beyond the conventional and prove that it is a blessing.

At the Andhra Mahila Sabha Handicap Hostel, plagued with cerebral palsy since childhood, K. Narasimhalu can hardly use his hands or neck. But for him, his blessing is in his two feet. "I always thought, how would I spend my life if I cannot use my hands and it is then I took refuge in my feet."

Narasimhalu uses his feet to make calls using his mobile phone, to pull a chair and open the almirah.

Hailing from Andhra Pradesh, he was abandoned as an infant by parents and taken under the care of Andhra Mahila Sabha and in 1986, he arrived in Chennai.

After completing his formal education till

standard eight, he enrolled himself in distance education and studied till standard 12. However, he felt a vacuum. "I wondered what would I do with my life, and then I discovered I could paint reasonably well using my feet, and that was just the beginning."

Narasimhalu started displaying his paintings at local exhibitions where he came in touch with 'Heart Beat Foundation', a trust which worked for the promotion of art by the specially-abled.

In 2007, he was selected as an official member of the Indian Mouth and Foot Painting Artists Association.

He has held several solo exhibitions and has participated in group shows in South India. His paintings are often showcased by the Saveria Hotel, ICICI Bank, and his talent had won him a free multimedia course by Arena Multimedia, Vadapalani.

An official at Arena Multimedia, said,

"Narasimhalu displayed exemplary interest and skills, but the most shocking part was, he is an expert with audio, video editing and various multimedia skills, depending only on his feet." He works with his toes on the mouse and keyboard and produces beautiful pictures of nature.

Recently his paintings were displayed at a Tech Mahindra exhibition organised in Delhi and he was brimming with excitement to enquire about the sales. "Do you know they fetch really good money and they all love me a lot."

V. S. Ramana, the managing trustee of Heart Beat Foundation says, "Every year, there is a lot of demand for his painting. The details in his works are inexplicable. One thing which distinguished him from his colleagues was his enthusiasm to live life."

Perhaps his strong belief that a precious thing like time should not be wasted, has indeed rendered him a purpose in life.



Creating beautiful embroidery designs with his foot

PHOTO: DEBAYAN ROY

“Not enough public toilets in Chennai”

DARSHANA DAGA

Chennai: A recent survey conducted under the National Urban Sanitation Policy ranked Chennai thirteenth out of 423 cities for its performance on nineteen urban sanitation indicators.

According to government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, with a population of 46.81 lakh has only 714 public toilets. Apart from the inadequate number of toilets; lack of institutional coordination and poor maintenance by underpaid contract labourers are hampering the ‘right to pee’ in Chennai.

The concept of Namma toilets which made a claim of being environment friendly toilet is in a poor shape across Chennai. Many times it is seen that septic tanks of Namma Toilets are overfilled. Women and disabled find it unsuitable to use.

Just on the pavement of the Independence Day Park, at Nungambakam, Chennai Corporation recently provided Namma Toilet facility. The urinal is only provided for men. With no water and no ca-



Namma Toilets in Chennai

PHOTO: CMA. TN.GOV.IN

retaker, the place stinks.

“We have written to the authority for its removal. There is a need for the public toilet in this area. But this is causing more nuisance than providing any solution,” says R. Balaji, a resident of the area.

M. Kupuswami, a caretaker for the public toilet at Taramani, is working with a salary of Rs.3000 per month on a contract basis. “The contractor has appointed a different person as a cleaner. My job is just to sit here and while away time,” he

People were giving money according to their wish to the caretaker, Murli (70), at the Kotturpuram toilet facility. He works as both cleaner and caretaker there.

“Some people come and take their bath here. In two toilets for men, there is no water tap,” said S. Madan, a regular user of Kotturpuram toilet.

According to the data released by the Slum Clearance Board in 2005, as many as 3.2 lakh residents in Chennai live in unrecognised slums, out of which only 29 per cent had an access to individual toilets. Only 30 per cent of recognised slums and 15 percent of unrecognised slums have access to the underground sewerage system.

Many small construction sites in the city lack toilet facility. “I don’t drink water the whole day. Sometimes I don’t go to the bathroom and wait till I get home,” says Lakshmi, a construction worker working at a site behind Indira Nagar Railway Station, Chennai.

Majority of the toilets in the city are currently run under Built Operate Transfer (BOT) basis.

said.

Though the toilet was clean there were very few takers for it.

Satyarupa Shekhar, working with Transparent Chennai, a non-profit organisation which had conducted a survey on public and community toilets in Chennai, said, “The Corporation has built toilets where land was easily available. At many crowded places in the city, absence of toilet leads to denying accessibility to thousands where the need is pertinent.”

Awareness campaign needed to treat TB

ASHNA KUMAR

Chennai: In the wake of the World Tuberculosis Day on March 24 that went by, city doctors and research scholars are emphasizing the need to spread awareness of the disease, which is often mistreated or diagnosed at later stages.

TB is a curable disease but due to lack of knowledge about new diagnostic techniques and poor follow up treatment by private hospitals, the condition either worsens or the patients suffer social ostracization.

Sheela Augustine, Project Manager at Reach India, a Chennai-based NGO that works towards a TB free India said, “We work with private hospitals to educate doctors to follow the guidelines and procedures prescribed in the revised National Tuberculosis Control Program that would allow them to offer a wholesome treatment plan.”

Moreover, unlike as in government hospitals where patients are regularly monitored and dosage of the drug is given in the presence of a doctor; private hospitals do not feel any such responsibility towards patients.

Dr. Jayalakshmi Sreedhar, a medical consultant with Reach India

said, “No counseling is given to the patient, which is important because of stigmatization that is attached with TB.”

MDR-TB (Multi-drug resistance Tuberculosis) is a condition where the body develops resistance against the drugs that are used to cure TB bacteria. This happens due

to frequent change or poor quality of drugs, interruption in treatment or incorrect use of drugs.

S. Priya, a patient suffering from MDR-TB is being treated at the National Research Tuberculosis

Centre (NRTC) in Chetpet. She says, “My visits outside are limited, as no one wants to come near me due to the fear of contracting TB, I’ve had innumerable failed marriage proposals and have given up on that dream altogether.”

Awareness regarding the disease is of paramount importance to Reach India due to this very reason.

“There are five stages in TB and only the later two are dangerously communicable,” said Dr. Sreedhar.

Not everyone contracts the bacteria, mostly those with weak immunity system do like HIV, Cancer, diabetes patients,” added Dr. Sreedhar.

Officials at NRTC and various NGOs advise people to go for DOTS treatment that is carried out by the government at designated centers and hospitals, as they provide a standardized treatment for six to eight months that comprises of a constant drug supply, monitoring the patient and keeping records of the treatment.

A. Sundari, Nursing Superintendent at the NRTC said, “Several patients come here after a bad experience with private hospitals, they are mostly those who discontinued treatment or developed MDR-TB.”

Reach India NGO hosts TB awareness campaigns

PHOTO: ASHNA KUMAR

to frequent change or poor quality of drugs, interruption in treatment or incorrect use of drugs.

S. Priya, a patient suffering from MDR-TB is being treated at the National Research Tuberculosis



Taking healthcare to people’s doorsteps



PHOTO CREDIT: BOISHAKHI DUTT

Now, healthcare on wheels

BOISAKHI DUTT

Chennai: March 30: Wockhardt Foundation, a national, non-profit organisation, has tied up with Shriram Commercial Vehicle Finance in the city, to provide free mobile clinics in areas without proper healthcare services. This initiative, called Mobile 1000, was started in collaboration with the Chennai Goods Transport Association Charitable Trust on February 28, 2016.

Ajay Somvanshi, Director of Wockhardt Foundation, said “We have been running the van service since 2014 and currently have 79 mobile vans across 18 states in the country... Our aim is to operate 1000 mobile health vans for the 25

million Indians who live in rural India... For this we have tied up with different partners in different states.”

Talking about Wockhardt’s plans of adding more vans to the service in Tamil Nadu, Somvanshi said, “We are working on bringing more vans in Chennai and other places in South India. We currently have two vans operating in Andhra Pradesh and one in Karnataka, other than the one just launched in Tamil Nadu.” In North India, one van treats 25,000 patients every year, and our per-patient cost is Rs. 116, which is less than the National Rural Health Mission’s Rs. 150, he added.

Dr. Raghu Nerasimma of the

Wockhardt Foundation who accompanies the van in Chennai said, “We go to slums in Ezhil Nagar, Saidapet, Elephant Gate near Stanley Medical College, Koyembudu, Tondiarpet, and Manali in Thiruvallur district every 15 days and see patients between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.”

Talking about the number of patients that he treats daily, Dr. Nerasimma said that currently they see about 80-90 people every day, but they are working to increase this number to 100-150.

“We have the support to be able to expand our reach. Along with me, I have an assistant as well as a driver. And the van, a Tata Winger, well equipped with antibiotics, painkillers, anti-malarial drugs, as

well as nutritional supplements, also has a BP machine, a nebuliser, an oxygen cylinder and a weighing scale, among other equipment,” he said.

If there is an emergency then we send the patient to the emergency room in Tambaram Hospital or Royapettah Government Hospital, with whom we have tie ups so they provide treatment at a subsidised rate, Dr. Nerasimma added.

N. Vaidehi was in the long line of patients who had lined up to see Dr. Nerasimma in Ezhil Nagar yesterday afternoon.

“The last time the doctor came here he gave both my children medicines for fever. I bought them for a check-up again.”

Georgetown bogged down by heavy traffic

ARPITA RAJ

Chennai: Residents and shop-owners of Georgetown find congested roads and uncontrollable traffic to be the biggest problems of the area.

Roads like Mint Street, N.S.C Bose Road, Wall Tax Road and surrounding streets of the Sowcarpet and Georgetown areas are clogged with cars, two-wheelers and autos in a constant, noisy stream of traffic. The area is a hub for small businesses, many of whom are continuing the family business for generations.

Jeweler M. Govindraju, tending to the store his father started in 1943 at the same location, says that the new shops have not just eaten into his business but they also oc-

cupy public space.

“People kept building shops illegally by bribery which is the reason for what Sowcarpet is today. In those days, this used to be a hub for jewelry shops but now there is so much competition that we have all changed to the gold covering professions. Many new shops are set up in even in small spaces between two shops. The traffic is so high that my 1 km away home takes half an hour and there is ruckus everywhere. They say that there is going to be eviction of illegal buildings soon which will make lives easier for us,” he says.

Govindraju is referring to the drive initiated by the Greater Chennai Corporation and the Chennai Metropolitan Development Autho-

riety (CMDA) against illegal construction in the area.

Fruit and vegetable vendors who operate from the roadside face even greater problems of safety. Kupamma, a fruit vendor, says that she fears for her life sometimes when the traffic becomes too much.

“The unmanageable traffic ruins the peace of doing our jobs and also the whole charm of Sowcarpet. The place needs a lot of re-planning and settlement,” she says.

Constant construction and rebuilding in the area has led to the presence of open manholes and dug up roads that is a concern for both residents and shopkeepers.

“The traffic drives us all mad. There is no space to even walk in peace,” said Jayashree.



Traffic Congestion at Georgetown

PHOTO CREDIT: THE HINDUBUSINESSLINE.COM

ECR share autos - boon or bane?

BHAGYASHREE NAIR

Chennai: Illegal share auto-rickshaws are plying along the East Coast Road and Rajiv Gandhi Salai and most of them carry more than the stipulated number of passengers, according to a transport official.

“Officially there are 14,000 autos registered under us, but there are much more in operation bearing the registration numbers of other regions,” said C.Karupachamy, Regional Traffic Commissioner, Thiruvanniyur.

According to the rules and regulations of the Regional Transport Office, a share auto should not have the partial elevated seating created to fit in more passengers and should not carry more than five passengers.

P. Vijayaraj, Joint Transport Commissioner (Road Safety) said that there were over 80,000 shared autos including the ‘Ape’ model operating in the city. “These autos should not carry more than 3-5 passengers but are often found carrying double the number,” he said. “The State Transport Department has started tracking down these autos which violate the rules specially the ‘ape’ ones which run around as modified shared autos,”



A share auto brimming with passengers near Mayajaal, ECR

PHOTO: CHENNAIONLINE.IN

he added. Bala Mani (53), a resident of Perungudi, said “On the Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR), some of the auto drivers have now upgraded to bigger vans which can accommodate 15 people. These vans are becoming a greater threat to all other

road users. I wonder why no action is taken against these vehicles. Accidents on the OMR seem to be a common sight these days.”

Last month, the Madras High Court directed the transport department to take action against auto-rickshaws flouting safety norms

and Vijayaraj is positive that the traffic police will do what is necessary.

Karupachamy said that they had been conducting regular checks on the ECR and OMR and keep confiscating the vehicles and cancelling their permits.

“80% pediatric cancer cases can be cured”

BRISTI DEY

CHENNAI: Sixteen year-old Gokila from Tiruppur district passed 10th grade with good marks and is now trying to get admission into a college. This is exceptional because she has been fighting blood cancer for the last three years and has to go for check-up every two months.

Dr. Venkatraman, head of pediatric department of Mahesh Memorial Pediatric Oncology Centre at the Adyar Cancer Institute in Gandhi Nagar, said the most common cancer among the children was blood cancer. The reasons for the disease among children are mostly genetic. Almost 80 percent children get well from the cancer and live normal life like other people.

The Centre in collaboration with the Cancer Institute in Adyar gives free treatment to the patients. Dr Venkatraman said there were more boys than girls as cancer patients. One of the reasons could be that parents considered the boys as the heir of a family and so took them for treatment while the girls were deprived of better treatment.

He said sometimes the parents start panicking knowing that their child has cancer. The doctor told them not to panic in front of the children as most of the time the cancer affected children do not know about the disease and its impact. So, the situation can create a black sting in their mind.

The doctors asked to the parents to go under counseling to learn how to behave with their affected children. To make awareness among the people about pediatric cancer several NGO take initiatives such as campaigning and arranging programs on the world cancer day.

While asked about the current situation of the pediatric cancer in regards of a report in 2014 that Chennai has the highest prevalence pediatric cancer cases, he said the reason might be than being a developed city with modern treatment technology most of the cases detected at early stage.

P. Sowmya, the administrator of the Mahesh Memorial Trust, said there were 46 beds for patients who had to be admitted and around 40 people were treated as out patients.

V Radhakrishnan, P Ganesan, R Rajendranath, TS Ganesan and TG Sagar from Department of Medical Oncology of Cancer Institute, Adyar conducted a study where a total of 295 patient (age under 16) case records were analyzed two years ago. The study said acute lymphoblastic leukemia was the most common malignancy and under-nutrition was seen in 44 percent patients during diagnosis which increased to 46 percent midway during treatment and decreased to 27 percent at the end of treatment.

They said under-nutrition is present in close to half of the pediatric cancer patients presenting to the institute. Active nutritional intervention and education were able to significantly reduce the prevalence of under-nutrition in patients at the end of treatment.

BJP yet to find allies

ARJIT DABAS

Chennai: With Tamil Nadu assembly elections less than six weeks away, the BJP has failed to attract any allies ahead of the polls.

It seems the party will have to fight the polls alone, which might prove to be a big disadvantage.

A.S Pannerselvan, Reader's Editor of The Hindu blamed it on the small base which the party has in the state as one of the reasons for failing to attract any allies.

"People don't vote for national parties in Tamil Nadu," he added.

Pannerselvan also downplayed the Modi affect, saying he won't make much of an impact.

"This is an assembly election, but even during the general elections when there was a Modi wave, the BJP failed to win any seat in the state," he said.

D. Ravikumar, member of the VCK, said that it was because of



BJP President Tamilsai Soundarajan.

PHOTO:PTI

the low vote share that no one wanted to ally with the party. He accepted that the party has increased its presence in the state and might open its account in the state.

"They certainly have presence in Kanyakumari and Coimbatore, and can win a seat if it's a close contest" he said.

TKS Elangovan, member of the

DMK said "The BJP has no role to play in the Dravidian land and its Hindutva agenda is not even accepted by Hindus of Tamil Nadu".

In an interview given to The Hindu, Environment Minister Prakash Javdekar and election-in-charge of the BJP in Tamil Nadu said the party would take inspiration from what Mamta Banerjee did in West Bengal.

"I would like to cite the example of West Bengal and its Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The State had three decades of Congress, followed by three decades of the Communists, she held on, did not compromise, fought on her issues and managed to win the State," he said.

"The BJP had been in alliance in the past, once in Assembly and once for the Lok Sabha with the DMK, but we realised the futility of that soon," he added.

Chennai's oldest mall finds no takers



The mall bears a deserted look with low footfall.

PHOTO: ARPITA

ARPITA RAJ

Chennai: With the closure of national franchises like Pantaloons, Westside and Landmark at Spencer Plaza in recent months, business has reduced greatly.

But shopowners say they are sure that the tide will turn for the better.

Occupying three stories, Spencer Plaza has almost no known brands. Customers, especially foreigners come to the mall primarily to shop at the Kashmiri art and craft shops that is the mall's speciality.

Ufaid, owner of Cashmere House, says that business has never been worse.

"I have been running this store for 12 years. What the business used to be earlier has now changed. All the new malls like Express Avenue, Vijaya and Phoenix have left almost nothing for us. It has reduced by 50 per cent. Our main clients are foreign tourists but even they don't come anymore. I pay a rent of Rs. 1, 50,000 and barely break even," he says.

Another shop owner Ahmed, claims that the shopping culture has changed drastically and the problem is not unique to Spencer Plaza

alone.

"I used to hire 20 people in my shop but now I hire just two. The footfall used to be high, almost 75,000 visitors in a day now we're lucky if a thousand people come. Buying capacity is low now. The middle class only spends on food. High prices force them to reduce expenditure," he says.

Ahmed, owner of Alim Exports, says that earlier families used to come once every two weeks on an outing which doesn't happen anymore. Now, they only come for the air conditioning and buy nothing.

He says that under the earlier Congress government, the situation was not that bad but current high taxes are impeding business growth.

"The mall culture is actually bad for business. 95 per cent of people just come to window shop. Expenses keep increasing and income is dwindling. What can I do?" he asks.

Koiceta, a customer at the mall, says that she only comes to the mall to visit the handicrafts stores as it's the only place in the city to have so many stores in one place.

"The only advantage Spencer has is that it is centrally located.

Apart from that, it has little to offer. I feel it is on its way out," she says.

However, shop owners have not lost hope.

Bhaskar T.M., Managing Partner at The Spencer Books and Journals, set up the only book store in the mall one month ago and is confident that it will do well.

"I know that other malls have come up but what I am seeing is that Spencer has a niche audience that other malls cannot compete with. They will come here only to buy those things. The customers are not stereotypical mall-goers," he says.

Anita, administrator at Spencer Plaza, admits that business has been failing in recent times.

"Some of our biggest stores have shut down and that badly affected business. But customers have been coming here for years and are loyal to certain shops. We have already reduced the rental rates to assist shop-owners," she says.

"We believe that customers will eventually grow tired of those big malls that all sell the same things and come back. Even tour operators in Chennai bring tourists here first to give them a mall experience," she added.

Unethical reporting of criminal cases highlighted by Madras HC

ASHNA KUMAR

Chennai, 31 March: The Tamil Nadu Police Department and media houses have come under fire for unethical reporting of criminal cases.

The Madras High Court pulled up the police for divulging sensitive information related to a criminal case to media persons who published it along with pictures of the accused.

The Tamil Nadu Director General of Police Ashok Kumar then issued a circular to all police personnel instructing them to not share every detail of a criminal case or of an investigative proceeding.

Journalists have often drawn flak for putting out information that compromises the fate of the case.

Though guidelines have been issued for the same by the Press Council of India and Editors Guild of India, it is mostly a self-regulatory practise.

A.S. Panneerselvan, Readers' Editor of The Hindu said, "Revealing sensitive information like the name of the accused or the victim leads to further stigmatisation by society, character assassination or in some cases severe mental damage."

Every media agency has different set of rules for publishing details of criminal proceedings.

Talking about The Hindu he said, "The most important rules for a just report on criminal cases are - minimising harm and respecting privacy."

Sharing intricate details of cases

that are sub judice often results in trial by media that further polarises the public opinion.

Still there are no laws to check unethical reportage or media trials of criminal cases.

A Madras High Court Advocate, Subhith Parthasarthy said, "The right way to approach such cases is to act in public interest, if revealing certain information helps in shaping public opinion then it is fine, but these are exceptions - like the Nirbhaya rape case."

However, guidelines are different for reportage on juvenile cases.

The Press Council Act 1978 lays down rules to be followed by the media, keeping in mind the rights of children.

This includes prohibition on disclosing the identity of children,

sharing details of a sexual exploitation case to protect the child from harm and stigmatisation and negative stereotypes.

Talking about the protocol followed by the police, R. Anita, Sub-Inspector at Kotturpuram Police Station said, "We are not allowed to give any details of criminal cases to the media, it is up to IPS officers to do that."

She said that the police had no jurisdiction to dictate terms to journalists if they procured sensitive information from other sources.

At the same time she said that it mostly depended on the relationship officers share with journalists. "Information is mostly given off the record."



The gallery will open next month

PHOTO: DIVYA GROVER

Nuclear Gallery to come up at Birla Planetarium

DIVYA GROVER

In an attempt to promote nuclear energy, Tamil Nadu Science and Technology Centre (TNSC) in collaboration with the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) has taken an initiative to build a nuclear gallery at Chennai's Birla Planetarium.

The gallery which has been built under the Public Understanding of Nuclear Science Programme to popularize nuclear energy amongst the general public, will be third in the row in India.

Deva Prakash, Manager of Public Awareness and Press Relations at the Kundankulam Nuclear Power Project, NPCIL said, "The gallery has been made to communicate complex nuclear energy to people in a common man's language. There will be dynamic exhibits, informative panels, historical dioramas, working models, 3D theatre and interactive games to discuss the need of nuclear energy."

"A Nuclear Power Plant acrylic model has also been built to describe the functioning of a nuclear plant," Mr. Prakash added.

The gallery will throw light on how the nuclear energy is useful for the society. Palaniapillai

Iyamperumal, Executive Director, TNSC said, "We will focus on the generation of electricity using the nuclear energy. Generating electricity through nuclear energy will reduce the amount of energy generated from fossil fuels. Less use of fossil fuels means lowering greenhouse gas emissions."

"The work on setting up the gallery was started two years ago and is near its completion," said P. Iyamperumal.

The gallery is expected to be thrown open to the public next month.

"The delay has been caused due to the upcoming elections. We are still contemplating whether we should wait until the elections are over or not. The decision will be taken by the higher authorities," Mr. Prakash added.

"The inauguration will take place somewhere around May 16," confirmed Dr. SounderajaPerumal, Joint Director, TNSC.

An estimated expenditure of 2 to 3 crore has been done so far on the construction of this Nuclear Gallery.

There would be no additional charges to enter the gallery. "The gallery would be open to all," said Mr. Prakash.

Flood warning system to come to Chennai

DIVYA GROVER

Chennai: After the death and devastation caused due to heavy rainfall and flooding in Chennai last November, the Water Resources Department (WRD) plans to install a flood warning system in the water reservoirs to alert people.

The flood warning system will be installed to provide accurate information about the impending floods and issue warnings in advance.

"With the help of the new system, we would be able to warn people living in the downstream areas and take preventive measures," said V. Shammugam, Chief Engineer, Public Works Department (PWD), Chennai region.

Describing the functioning of the flood warning system, an Officer of WRD said, "The siren installed in the water reservoirs will be activated when the water level reaches its full capacity. Sensors will also be fitted to record the data on rainfall and inflow of water at frequent intervals for better monitorization."

Besides a flood warning system, the project would also include works on strengthening the bund and repairing sluice gates of these reservoirs.

Dr. N.K. Ambujam, Professor and Director of Center for Water Resources, Anna University said, "Our team is doing a study on Real Time Decision Support System. This might also be commissioned if the results prove beneficial."

While the work has already been initiated at the reservoirs of Red Hills, Cholavaram, Poondi and Chembarambakkam, it is expected to be completed within a few months.

"Once the system is commissioned, issuing early flood warning will be possible to prevent loss of life and property in the areas prone to flooding along the waterbodies," said the WRD Officer.

"No warning was issued about the release of excess water from the reservoirs during the Chennai floods. Many people were trapped in their houses because of the immense flooding. The installation of

such warning system might prove to be a boon for the residents," said Meenakshi Raj, a resident of Koyambedu.

Being a city on the high-energy coast facing the Bay of Bengal, Chennai has been no stranger to heavy rain and cyclonic storms. Chennai has experienced unprecedented heavy rain roughly once in every 10 years. The floods that occurred in 2015, causing a damage of approximately Rs. 10,000 crore, forced the city to question its helplessness in the face of a natural disaster.

Proned to the urban floods, Chennai was considered underprepared in their planning to reduce risk, mitigate damage and increase resilience.

"As compared to other cities, Chennai has topography with a different gradient. Apart from the flood warning system, we should also study the drainage system and develop mechanisms to drain water," said N.Mathavan, who is a disaster management expert.



The project would also include works on strengthening the bund and repairing sluice gates of these reservoirs

PHOTO:PTI



FITE campaigning for women workers

PHOTO:DARSHANA

IT labour union fighting for workers' rights

DARSHANA DAGA

Chennai, March 30: Forum for IT Employees (FITE), an all India IT labour union, is fighting for uniform labour laws and withdrawal of exemption given to IT sector from labour laws and also demanding paid maternity leave for at least six months and an internal security committee to enquire into sexual harassment cases.

"The IT industry is exempted from Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act in many States. There is no uniform central law governing the IT industry. That is why layoffs become easy for this industry," said P. Parimala, President of the FITE's Chennai branch.

The FITE, is an all India forum which acts as a labour union catering to the concerns of IT employees. It has its branches in Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Pune, Mumbai and Kochi.

The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act ensures that a company classifies workers, their working hours and shifts, wages, leave and attendance. It also demands that conditions of termination of employment and suspension for misconduct be made clear to employees while offering them a job. Under the act these details should be submitted to the State labour departments and should be made available to the workers and unions working in the industry.

"Exemption granted to IT sector makes layoffs easy. The case of layoff by TCS in 2015 carried out under the name of workforce optimization is famous. The FITE had organized an all-India protest

against it," she added.

"Recently we filed a case in the Madras High Court against Helios and Matheson, Chennai based IT service company, for non-payment of salary, bonuses and income tax to the government that was deducted from employees payroll. We also provide legal assistance to our members who have faced unjust termination or any other injustice at the hands of employer," said Parimala.

On the occasion of International Working Women's Day the FITE organized a campaign in Chennai, bringing to light issues faced by IT employees. During the campaign the FITE had demanded that employers should grant paid maternity leave for at least six months and crèche facility. They also demanded that women should be deployed consensually for night shifts, establish internal complaints committee to enquire on sexual harassment cases and organise gender sensitization workshop at regular intervals for all employees at workplace.

"After the campaign we had sent these demands to the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM). Though FITE is not a large scale IT labour union, it wants to act as a pressure group and as a collective voice of IT employees," said Satish Kumar General Secretary of FITE.

"All the labour unions fight for permanent or temporary workers but nobody wants to fight for contract workers who are more vulnerable to exploitation," said M. Vijaybaskar, Associate Professor at Madras Institute of Development Studies.

A tribute to Ilayaraja

BHAGYASHREE NAIR

Chennai: Thaikuddam Bridge, a Kerala-based music band performed a tribute to music composer Ilayaraja at the recent 'Ilayaraja 1000' show on March 20, which took place at the Nandanam grounds.

The show was in honour of the music maestro for his composing music for 1000 movies.

The band's performance was touted as 'one of the best tributes performed by Kamal Hassan and Ilayaraja himself.'

Govind Menon, the lead vocalist, violinist and founder of Thaikuddam Bridge, said "Ilayaraja is like God! We were given just 7 minutes to perform. We arrived at the venue at 3 in the morning, started rehearsing at 4 and our performance was at 1 am."

"It was a lot of pressure with such a packed schedule. For the main event which included our act, he was going to be there himself and we'd heard stories about him and his moods. We'd heard he would criticise people for their performance, so we were pretty worried," he said.

"But after we started, it was all a blur. The crowd was fabulous and



Thaikuddam Bridge performing at Sacred Hearts College, Thevada

PHOTO: THAIKUDDAM BRIDGE

Ilayaraja himself was smiling. We got a standing ovation from Kamal Hasaan and that was enough.

Ilayaraja came to meet us after we performed and congratulated us. We were the only performers he chose to meet. But personally, I know we gave a horrible performance," he added.

Govind spoke about the medley they put together for their act.

"Ilayaraja apart from his songs, is known as one of the best

background scorers. We started with the background score from 'Raja Raja Cholam', went on to 'Nee Partha Parvai', then the 'Nayakan Reddy' theme, the love theme from 'Nayakan', the Intro from 'Kaka Koile' and ended with 'Adivakam'," he said.

Talking about the importance of performing at live shows and the boost the crowd reactions gave them Govind said that passion was all it took and the reaction of the

crowd made a performance.

"I did not start well in this act. I was doing a piece on the violin and I was nervous and I knew it. It was not my best. But Ilayaraja smiled and encouraged me which was enough to build on."

Thaikuddam Bridge is one of the most popular bands in the country.

It has a fanatical fan following which mainly includes college students and youngsters.

But they are being noticed by music directors in the South and have been getting numerous offers to play for commercial films.

Govind Menon said he had no plans to commercialise the band and tarnish their quality of music.

"Our main focus is uplifting independent music in the country. In our field, you're the master, you're the slave. You don't have to listen to someone instructing you about what to make."

He added, "We spend a lot of time making music and plan to keep it that way. In films, only certain portions require music. The main act is done by the script and the actors. Music is secondary. But maybe, if we get an offer for a film like Rockstar by Imtiaz Ali, which centred around music, maybe then we might think about it."

The band released its last album 'Navarasam' in 2015, and plans to release a new single next month.

"It's going to be a video directed by Vijay Nambiar who is one of the most talented upcoming music video directors in Kerala. It should be out next month unless a delay occurs. That's something we plan to do, coming up with excellent videos for the songs we can give to our audience."

Presidency College: 175 and running

AVANTIKA MANU

Chennai: Presidency College, one of the premier institutes for higher education in the city established by British Government in 1840 celebrated its 175th anniversary on March 12.

The College stemmed out of the British Governments desire to promote European literature and sciences among the natives of India.

It had taken decades for the college to take shape. It was Lord Elphinstone's (Governor of Madras) resolutions that resulted in the birth of Presidency.

The college that was established as a Madras preparatory school and later upgraded to graduate college has developed into one of the top ten colleges in India offering 18 under graduate courses in Arts, commerce and science streams. It also offers twenty four post graduate courses with research facilities in various departments..

The College was granted autonomy in 1987 and in 1998 the College was accredited with four stars by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. In

March 2005 the NAAC reaccredited the college and awarded it 'A' grade.

The College has produced a long history of politicians, scholars, writers and scientists, C.Rajagopalchari, C.Subramniam and P.Chidambaram are among some of them. Srinivasa SR Vardhan also an alumni of Presidency figured in the White House Honors list of 2011, he is recipient of Padma Bhushan for his work in Probability Theory.

The Physics department of the college boasts of two Nobel prize winners, Sir C.V Raman and Subramaniam Chandrashekar as its alumni.

Despite its long standing history of producing eminent alumni and rich cultural heritage, most of the students feel that the College has lost its charms that existed twenty years ago.

Pitchiah D, an industrialist and ex-student of Presidency College, said, "The College is not what it used to be, and I believe that the standard of academics has dropped to a considerable extent. During our times, education level was high. Now it has drooped down."



March 30 is celebrated as World Idli Day

Idli in different shapes, tastes

JOICEY ANTON

Chennai: Hot tempting Idli is something which every South Indian would swear by. Whether it be for breakfast or as an accompaniment with savoury curries, Idli has certainly made a niche for itself all across the globe. What better way to remember the millions of satiated tummies than by celebrating Dr. Eniyavan's birthday on March 30, as the World Idli Day.

Dr. Eniyavan, a chef prepared 1308 varieties of idlies and displayed them at Dharmaprakash marriage hall in Purasaivakkam in March last year. By a stroke of luck, Madras High Court justices

Vanninayagam and Gnanpragasam along with Vellayan, president of the Traders' Union were present and decided to set aside a day dedicated to the humble idli.

"Initially I thought of changing the shape of idlies because it is very boring to see only a circular shape. We decided to make with many flavours and now we learnt to make pizza idlies too," says Eniyavan.

Eniyavan believes that preparing idli is not only easy for any person but by changing the shape and size of idlis, one could bring variety in breakfast, lunch or dinner.

He says, "Media and people were surprised to hear about the new kinds of idlies. This is not a scientific invention. I just wanted to

change the taste and shape and now people have started liking it."

To mark the occasion of World Idli Day, Eniyavan and his colleagues prepared various types of idlies and distributed them to the general public.

"Dr. Abdul Kalam is our treasure and to remember him we made an idli with his image representing a male, whereas Mother Teresa, who is going to become a saint soon, has her image imprinted on the female idlis," he said

However, though the day attracts a lot of media attention, the common public are still not aware of such a day.

"This is the first time we are

hearing about this" said Bhuvaneshwary, cashier at Taramani's Amma Unvaham.

"Nobody will celebrate a day for idli", said A.Ravi, cashier of Hotel Saravanbhavan in Puraisavakkam.

But Eniyavan is still hopeful of a day when his efforts would be recognised by all.

He says, "We started a year ago so we cannot expect that everyone will know this but are working so that one day the whole world will celebrate it."

The American Christian University awarded him an honorary doctorate degree in 'idli making' as he has the recipes to make ragi idli, thunder coconut idli, kambu idli, and pudhina idli.

GAYLE SEQUEIRA

Chennai: Exhibits that trace the rich history of the Integral Coach Factory which has produced 51,000 coaches since it was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955 and has since then been visited by Queen Elizabeth and the Dalai Lama; some so large that one of them required an 80 tonne crane to maneuver it.

This and more can be found at the Regional Rail Museum near ICF in Perambur, which turned 14



A model of an engine in Perambur Railway Museum

PHOTO: GAYLE SEQUEIRA

on March 31.

From 13,672 visitors in 2004 which garnered a total of Rs. 77,271, the museum saw 78,489 visitors last year, bringing their revenue to Rs. 2,125,495.

According to M Chandrasekaran, the museum's photographer, the museum sees 500-600 visitors every day.

"It is not the quantity of the visitors but the quality that matters," says Arun Devraj, Museum Curator. "Students of colleges in the area visit the museum as part of their stipulated industrial visits. Thus, they are forced visitors."

He says that on Sundays after 4:30 pm, the number of visitors to the museum shows an increase.

However, these visitors simply see the museum as a low-budget, clean and open space, an alternative to the parks in the city.

"Even though a guided tour is just Rs. 10 per head, these visitors don't opt for it. They mostly come here for the toy train ride, viewing the museum as a theme park."

Devraj's mission is to interest people in railway heritage.

"I'd like to target schools. I

toy train ride though some said the lack of a canopy over the tracks made the heat unbearable.

Devraj believes a few significant changes can help the museum attract a wider range of visitors.

He cites the need for the museum to sell attractive souvenirs so that visitors have a memento of their experience and museum revenue increases simultaneously.

"If you come once and wish to come back next month, there has to be something new to see. People from Chennai would, for example, not know about trains in Matheran so we could use software to display such visuals."

He adds that the museum could hold workshops, such as those hosted by the Railway Protection Force.

Live demonstrations of how brakes are applied, what happens when a chain is pulled inside a train or when tracks are changed could also be demonstrated.

He believes that the museum's strong suit is its warm treatment of guests.

"In 2008, a girl visiting the museum asked me the meaning of a Latin phrase on one of our pictures. Our staff didn't know what it was then, but we got it translated later and then emailed her. The phrase meant, 'Such is the way to Ooty that one does not take a single step back'."

Devraj liaises with Ramasamy, a locomotive expert, to help him answer the visitors' technical questions. Devraj, who has a background in mechanical engineering himself, is able to talk of metre gauges and combustion engines with ease.

Teachers from Kids Centre attested to Devraj's warmth.

Leading the way without eyes

GAYLE SEQUEIRA

Chennai: What's even more exceptional about the Nethrodaya Free Residential Resource Centre, a self-help organization for the visually challenged in Mogappair, is that its founder, C. Govindakrishnan is himself visually challenged. His own impairment is what inspired him.

"Initially I viewed it as a curse but later I realized it was a blessing. If I had been a sighted person, I wouldn't have taken up this initiative."

He says he faced a host of challenges when he first started out

in 2002, most of which were fuelled by people's stereotypes and narrow mindsets.

"How can a visually challenged person start an organization?" is a question most people threw at him," he says.

"People began to exaggerate the problems faced by the visually challenged, inundating him with questions such as, 'How will you differentiate between currencies?'" he says.

"I replied to them through actions, not words," he says grinning.

He started out with a 450 square foot building, Rs. 82 and eight

students.

The centre boasts of technology such as an Angel Pro Recorder, a braille printer and talking watches.

Nethrodaya first launched a reader's centre as Govindakrishnan realized that students would go to their neighbours' houses and request them to spare an hour or two reading out their lessons to them, an inconvenient move that Govindakrishnan himself had relied on as a child.

Next, he began the task of converting text into audio. At Nethrodaya, lessons are professionally recorded by local dubbing artists and distributed to the students free of cost. "We want students to realize that braille is not the only alternative to reading," he says.

The centre also conducts part-time computer lessons so that students can go to college in the morning and learn computers in the evening without missing out on their lessons.

Nethrodaya also boasts of producing state-level and international-level chess, volleyball and cricket players. All these activities are publicly funded as Govindakrishnan does not want to involve the government or political parties for fear that they may start dictating terms.

He considers himself a crusader against those who spread

misinformation about visual impairment. He says that hospitals that promise patients a cure for blindness are misleading them.

"There are more than 148 eye-related problems. Even cornea donation only cures corneal blindness and not the other types of blindness."

Govindakrishnan adds that such misleading statements get victims' hopes up.

"A visually impaired person being told that they can regain their sight is like being in the final over and needing 30 runs but still being optimistic," he says.

Other misconceptions that rile Govindakrishnan are, "Blind people give birth to blind children," "Blind women are very weak," - a reference to movies that depict blind women as easy targets of rape and harassment and "Blind people can't use computers, mobiles or appliances."

"There is a need to campaign against such misconceptions," says Govindakrishnan, adding that he considered himself an activist even in his college days.

Govindakrishnan says that education, employment and health are the three avenues in which the visually challenged need the most aid. "Only by empowering the visually challenged can they live a dignified life. We need to glorify their successes," he added.



C. Govindakrishnan, the founder of Nethrodaya, who himself is visually challenged. PHOTO: GAYLE SEQUEIRA

Dual roles for livelihood

JOICEY ANTON

Chennai: It's been 18 years Laxmi has been working as an ice-cream vendor near Besant Nagar beach. She became the sole earner of the family four years ago when her husband and her 19 year old, eldest son, passed away leaving behind an expecting daughter-in-law.

Two years ago her daughter got married to a fast food vendor and now she leads a comfortable life. However, her in laws are not allowing her to visit her grand children.

"Like every other parent, I too wish to see my children happy," says Laxmi.

Her son works in a company as a quality control officer after he completed his diploma in polytechnic. He sometimes helps Laxmi in her business.

Having spent her adolescent years in Vanaanthurai, she shifted behind Annai Velankanni Church

after her marriage.

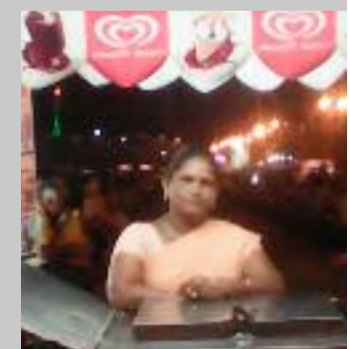
She has two brothers and a sister all of them are married and settled in different parts of Chennai, but nobody could help each other as they have their own families to take care of.

Her husband too worked as an ice vendor, but the meagre income could not suffice domestic expenses and she soon started working as a maid in Reserve Bank quarters in Besant Nagar to keep the pot boiling at home.

After her husband's death she started selling ice creams from 5pm to 11pm on the Besant Nagar beach and earns Rs 500 to Rs 1000 a day. This additional income helps her to send her grand children to an English medium school in Adyar.

Though she belongs to a staunch Hindu family, she and her family often visits the Velankanni church.

The December floods took a toll on her life as the prices of all the essential commodities went up and



Laxmi waiting for customers at Besant Nagar Beach

PHOTO: ANTON JOICEY

she had to shell out all her savings to feed her family. However, she is still ready to face any hurdle life may have in store for her in the near future.

"After all, it's all for my family," said Laxmi whilst fetching out an ice cream for a two year old.