# AIADMK may benefit in six corner fight

**MD. IBRAR ARSHAD**

**Chennai:** The Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) leader 'Captain' Vijayakanth's decision not to ally with the DMK and to go it alone in the May 16 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections has opened up what some parties see as opportunities for an alliance.

Still hopeful of a tie-up with the 'Captain', the Left parties, under the Peoples Welfare Front (PWF), are wooing the DMDK to form an anti-DMK and anti-AIADMK front. Also the BJP, desperate for some credence in Tamil Nadu, has shown its readiness to form an alliance with Vijayakanth's party.

According to CPI-(M) party secretary, Kumaraswamy, the multi-party PWF, lead by MDMK'S Vaiko is hopeful of Vijayakanth joining hands with them.

However the DMDK is hopeful of succeeding on its own. "Captain is a great leader and under him we will win enough seats to play kingmaker in the new government", said Ravindran, DMDK party member.

The incumbent All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) is however unconcerned about these political events. When asked whether a DMK-DMDK alliance would affect his aprty's chances, Ananda Krishnan, an AIADMK member, termed it insignificant.

"A zero plus zero does not make a hero", he said.

Krishnan believes that the AIADMK will not form any alliance for it is confident in its own strength. "The DMK, the PWF, the DMDK are asking other parties to join them. This shows that they are not confident about their prospects." The DMK left the UPA before the Lok Sabha elections, but now they are in an alliance with them again. This shows that they are a party of no morals," added Krishnan.

Analysts have claimed that this six-front fight will benefit the ruling party, as the anti-AIADMK votes will be split among the DMK-Congress, the PWF, the DMDK, the PMK and the BJP.

When asked about the AIADMK's chances, Krishnan claimed that "People are satisfied with Amma's work during the floods. Even the opposition parties support our policies."


Vijaykanth goes solo this elections.
PHOTO: THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

*"The DMK, the PWF, the DMDK are asking other parties to join them. This shows that they are not confident about their prospects" - Anand Krishnan*

Anbumani Ramadoss, leader of the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), claimed that the DMDK's decision to go it alone in the elections would be favorable to it. The PMK enjoys huge support in the Vanniyar belt of North Tamil Nadu, and hopes to gain from that region.

But according to Krishnan, these small parties were fighting among themselves to get some seats.

"We are getting an absolute majority, and are unconcerned about the small parties", he said.

Claiming that the DMK had lost the confidence of the people, Krishnan added that the party led by veteran M Karunanidhi which couldn't manage a single seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections "will be destroyed after the Assembly polls."

# What do women want in TN elections?

**MANSI CHOUKSEY**

**Chennai:** Tamil Nadu is going to the polls on May 16 and the women of the State who outnumber men will have a decisive say on which party forms the government.

The AIADMK ruled government has been distributing freebies and launching universal schemes to woo voters. It has spent Rs 7,756 crore on the distribution of freebies like laptops, home appliances and welfare schemes like Nutrition Meal Scheme and Marriage Assistance Scheme in last five years. The total expenditure of the schemes has left the State with a whopping Rs 9,100 crore deficit for the financial year 2017, according to its critics.

While those who got the freebies are happy, the rest who have not got anything are unhappy.

J Balaprabha (20), a final year B.Com student and part time staff at a Mcdonalds outlet, says, "In the last four years the AIADMK Government has distributed free laptops to students. I did not get one so this time I will vote for DMK."

She wants more student benefit schemes and scholarships for students, from the new government.

Fruit Seller Mangala says her vote will go to the party which will 'help' her. The help includes distribution of more freebies like electric fans and stoves.

The demand for a ban on the sale of liquor has also been strident in the run-up to the elections.


PHOTO: MANSI CHOUKSEY
**Bhuvaneshwari demands liquor prohibition**

from the sale of alcohol through its TASMAC outlets and this is 20.5 percent of the total state revenue. It is unlikely that prohibition will be imposed because of the huge revenue that the state gets from the sale of liquor.

Even 29 years after his death, the magic of film star and former chief minister M G Ramachandran is still alive.

Janaki Ammal (62), a housewife says she will vote for AIADMK leader and chief minister Jayalalithaa as she belongs to MGR's party.

Valarmathi (42), who runs a shop selling Puja items, agrees with Janki Ammal.

"We like Amma because we like MGR," she said.

They have put their expectations on more welfare schemes from the new government.

"I would like to see schemes like Government Child day care centres from the new government," says mother of four children, Valarmadi.

P. Bhuwaneshwari (44) is a housewife who wants elimination of corruption from the State government. "I was asked a bribe of Rs 12,000 just to transfer a name on my property documents. Go to any Government office and you will have to shell out a minimum of Rs 10,000 to bribe a government official even for small work that you wish to get done," she said.

"I am going to vote for an independent candidate this time," she added.

Bhuvaneshwari, a flower seller, says she wants prohibition. "My husband drinks every day. I will vote for the party which will promise to impose a liquor ban," she said.

The State Government has earned Rs 26,188 crore in 2014-15

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# MTC wants T-Nagar hawkers out


**Hawkers are forced to set up stalls far outside the T Nagar Bus Terminal**
PHOTO: MD. AFFANUL HAQUE

**MD. AFFANUL HAQUE**

**Chennai:** Hawkers around the Thyagaraja Nagar Bus Terminus are facing difficulties conducting their business as officials of the Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) are trying to move them out.

"Unauthorized hawkers hinder the movement of pedestrians outside bus terminals in Parry's and T Nagar causing traffic jams," said P. Mohammed Saleem, General Manager (Projects), MTC.

In November 2015, the state government passed an order for local bodies to implement the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act 2014 and also form a committee to look after the urban street vendors.

"This committee once constituted, would have to enumerate hawkers in the city, give them identity cards and earmark free zones, demarcate hawking zones and no hawking zones. But since the model code of conduct for the assembly election has come in place, the plan is on hold," added Saleem.

Tamil Selvarajam, Asst. Director, Public Relation, MTC said that these hawkers who were mostly engaged in selling fruits, vegetables and small household articles were causing a hindrance to the movement of commuters and also hampering the operation of bus services.

Karuppuchamy (71), who sells fruits on the pavement just outside T. Nagar Bus Terminus, said that the police took steps against the hawkers based on complaints from MTC officials.

Sixty-year-old Bansali Chakori sells flowers outside the small temple on South Usman Road in T. Nagar. She complained that the police mishandled her and told her to leave the spot where she did her business.

"The police told me there was traffic because of us. I sell flowers far from the temple. Very few people are buying my flowers," added Chakori.

A commuter who was about to board the bus from the Terminus, said "Because the election is round the corner, hawkers are unlikely to see any harsh treatment, a committee should see to it that it protects public space and keeps the interest of pedestrians and livelihood of vendors in mind."

P. Vijayaraj, who sells fruits right outside the Bus Terminus, said "The police can only fine us and force us to set up our stall elsewhere, but they cannot do anything to the number of auto's standing here. Don't they cause any traffic problem?"

# Parties attempt to buy voters by offering money

**MAHESH KONGARA**

**Chennai:** With the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections scheduled for May 16, the major political parties are busy wooing voters. The incumbent party, AIADMK has offered many sops at the last minute before the election code of conduct was enforced.

Many welfare schemes have been launched under the Amma brand: the Rs 15 crore Amma Mobile Phone Scheme for trainers of self-help groups (SHGs) in rural areas, Amma drinking water scheme and Amma Master Health Check-up scheme.

With the AIADMK is aiming to retain power, its cadres are working hard to win over the voters. Members of the opposition DMK, and 'Captain' Vijaykant's party, DMDK, are doing their best to ensure the AIADMK's defeat.

The parties are using middlemen to rustle up crowds for their public meetings and for their top leaders' campaign. Some say that cash is being offered to people.

Madan, an auto rickshaw driver, who did not reveal which party he is supporting, says that he was paid Rs 500 and given a packet of biriyani for attending a political party's rally.

"I spent two hours in the rally and after it was over we got paid," he said.

It is said that middle men get paid Rs 2000 to Rs 5000 daily for mobilizing people to the meetings or rallies.

There are different offers from various political parties and sometimes it is based on the candidate's reputation.

"If we spend the entire day and participate in public meetings we are paid Rs 800 to Rs 1000. But it is different from party to party and men to women. While men are getting Rs 1000 women get Rs 400 to 600 including food and liquor," says 40 years old Sekhar, a shoe maker on Anna Salai.

Asked about voters being bribed, Senthil Kumar of the DMK says that it was being done by the AIADMK because it has amassed huge wealth over the last five years; it is bribing the voters again in order to win this election.

But, AIADMK leaders did not comment on this issue.

DMDK leader Madeswaran criticizes both the AIADMK and the DMK "Both parties are competing with one another in bribing the voters even in campaigns."

But, leaders of the People's Welfare Front (PWF) which is an alliance of CPI, CPI (M), MDMK and VCK claim they were very fair in this regard.

"We never lure voters and we always oppose these kind of politics and electioneering. But, we will expose the wealthiest and corrupt parties' games," said Arumuganeri, CPI (M) state committee member.

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**Boys jumping off a train before it halts at Greenways station**
PHOTO: MARIA KURUVILLA

# Perils of footboard travel

**MARIA KURUVILLA**

**Chennai:** Travelling on the footboard of trains and buses during rush hour has become a habit for many passengers, especially young boys between the age group of 17 and 22 who find it easier to get on or off during the rush hours.

Some playfully jump off or board the train or bus when they are on the move and this has led to accidents.

"If they are caught by our personnel during school or college hours we call the institution and speak with their headmaster or a school official. Sometimes they get off with a warning, but most of the time we reprimand them and call their parents to the station," said Officer D. Suresh, a member of the Government Railway police force (GRPF) at Park Town station.

Victims of such accidents have suffered broken bones and head injuries and some have even died.

"Jumping off a moving train is a punishable offense but more than punishment it is awareness that these boys need. We do speak to schools and colleges but what they do after that is beyond our control. We do bring it to the attention of their parents but these incidents have not decreased at all," he added.

Railway stations come under the jurisdiction of the Railway Police Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police Force (GRPF) personnel are present at major stops like Park Town, Velachery, and Chennai Beach. Smaller stations like Kasturibainagar, Indiranagar and Greenways Road have very few railway police present making it easier for such incidents to take place.

"I often see groups of boys jumping off the train before it comes to a halt at crowded stations. There is nobody to stop them because they do as they please and the lack of personnel at some stations encourages them to continue these antics," said George Selvan, a regular commuter of the MRTS, beach line.

While footboard travelling

has grave consequences for those commuting in trains, bus passengers also use these methods to get on or jump off the buses.

During peak hour, MTC buses see a surge of passengers, mostly males standing near the door in the rear of the bus in order to avoid the hassle of wading through the crowd when they have to get off.

"Schoolboys often jump into buses during peak hour and stand near the footboard. Safety is the least of their concerns and they enjoy the attention they get, especially from their female companions. There is no use in fining them because they either come from poor families or jump off before we can reach the stop," says Kumarasamy, a bus conductor.

Most of these boys who study in Government run institutions are unaware of the repercussions that come with committing such an offence.

While awareness drives are organized with great gusto,

they have no effect on the students.

"We used to have the police come to our school at least twice a month till last year but now their visits have reduced to once in three months because the students show little or no interest," says B. Malathi, a teacher from Chennai Boys Higher Secondary school.

The traffic police department has undertaken a lot of campaigns and awareness drives. In spite of these measures, passengers travelling on footboards in buses account for 10 per cent of road accidents while there are a minimum of six casualties every week in the MRTS.

"Everybody is in a hurry to get to their destination. If people would only wait instead of running into already crowded buses or jumping down to avoid walking a distance these accidents would be reduced," said Inspector Sushil Kumar, Investigating Officer for the Traffic Department in Sastri Nagar.

## Timeline of suicides

**P NILESH CHRISTOPHER**

**JUNE 2, 2009**

An 18-year-old mechanical engineering student, Vivek, of St. Joseph College of Engineering committed suicide by hanging himself in the college hostel.

**Cause:** Vivek was disallowed from appearing for the model examination in the college as he allegedly had been caught cheating in the first semester practical tests.

**SEPTEMBER 6, 2015**

K.Anusha, a final year B. Tech student in a private engineering college at Chimakurthy committed suicide by hanging herself at Kothapalem, near Thallur in Prakasam District.

**Cause:** K. Anusha (21) stopped going to college for 10 days and was under pressure from parents to go to college. Unable to reconcile with the marks awarded by her lecturers in the college she took the extreme step.

**FEBRUARY 28, 2016**

A 21-year old student, Sivakumar, of a private engineering college near Tiruchirappalli committed suicide in the hostel by hanging himself.

**Cause:** Sivakumar hanged himself in the hostel fearing exposure over his 'involvement' in a mobile phone theft.

**MARCH 11, 2016**

A first year student T. Abinath of Sairam Engineering College in West Tambaram, was found dead in a well on the college campus.

**Cause:** Abinath had flunked the internal examination and was manhandled by a college official after which he committed suicide by jumping into a well.

**MARCH 12, 2016**

A 22-year-old civil engineering student, Vignesh was found hanging from the ceiling of the hostel of Kathir College of Engineering.

**Cause:** In his suicide note, Vignesh accused the college management of forcing him to give a letter confessing that he had come drunk to the college hostel. He claimed that he was targeted by the management for raising issues of lack of facilities at the hostel.

# Another suicide on campus

### Students of Sairam Engineering College staged a protest for the second time in 6 months

**P NILESH CHRISTOPHER**

**Chennai:** The death of T. Abinath, a first year student of the Sairam Engineering College in West Tambaram has highlighted the lack of counselling facilities and the absence of student unions to address grievances in engineering colleges in the state.

The boy's body was found in a well on the college campus on March 11.

A police probe has concluded that the boy had flunked his exams after which his parents were summoned by the college authorities. He was also ill-treated for not taking his internal exam following which he reportedly committed suicide by jumping into a well.

"Students with backlogs are disrespected and ill-treated. They are taken for granted as if they don't deserve any respect," said Sundar (name changed) a final-year mechanical engineering student.

Efforts to reach the authorities at the college were futile. The person who answered the call at the first instance mumbled excuses and hung up. Thereafter the calls went unanswered.

"He [Abinath] was very silent in nature, never used to socialize with anyone," said Pondiraj, another final-year mechanical engineering student. "He succumbed to pressure not just from the management's side, but also from his parents for forcing him to do engineering despite getting admission in a medical college."

The incident comes barely months after the students of the college protested at Anna University against the 'draconian' rules the management has imposed on them.

Sairam college professors refused to comment on the issue.

Students are under pressure for not just poor academic performance. They are targeted for what are seen as acts of indiscipline.

In the name of discipline, "Public shaming of women for wearing certain kinds of clothes and talking to boys is common in our college," Pondiraj added.

A third-year student who wanted to remain anonymous said, "They think that they are the saviour of all women in our college. But, the management itself resorts to name calling, ill-treating and harassing women".

A report in *The Hindu* said that the day after the death of Abinath, a group of students sporting handkerchiefs over their faces, protested against the college management at the T.Nagar bus terminus, and demanded the arrest of the college's CEO Saiprakash Leo Muthu and director Balu.

Sundar alleged that in order to prevent boy-girl interaction the management conducted 'social media surveillances' regularly.

"One of my friends was caught because of a Facebook post in which his female friend was tagged," he said.

"Imposing fines is the biggest nuisance," Sundar said. He claimed the management fined students for flunking exams, improper dress, interacting with the opposite sex and to redeem confiscated ID cards.

"If you are not in possession of your ID card, you would be questioned by everyone in the college. One cannot enter the class without the ID card. We need to pay a fine and redeem it from Balu," he said.

Pondiraj said "The formation of elected student union will help put an end to such 'ultra-conservative' rules and 'moral policing' on campuses."



PHOTO: G. KRISHNASWAMY

**Policemen outside the Sairam College campus**

# Hawkers wait in transit



**Hawkers at thier makeshift shops in Adyar**

PHOTO: MANSI CHOUKSEY

**MANSI CHOUKSEY**

**Chennai:** About 50 flower and fruit vendors in Adyar are conducting business in makeshift shops on pavements even three weeks after the new shops allotted to them were opened by Chief Minister Jayalalitha in the hawker complex meant for them.

The complex was inaugurated on February 27, before the enforcement of the model code of conduct, but the green shutters of row shops are still down and the keys have not been handed over to the 32 fruit vendors and 14 flowers vendors, to whom the shops were promised.

These vendors earlier had carried on their business from the shops provided by the corporation at Thiru-Vi-Ka Bridge in Adyar. The Chennai Corporation demolished these shops in 2012 for the expansion of the bridge and promised shops in a new hawker complex. Now the fruit sellers and flower vendors are on the pavements opposite to Malar Fortis hospital.

Mangala (36), a flower seller who will be given the shop number 12, is eagerly waiting for the keys. "I am waiting to shift to my new shop. We were told that we will get keys to our shops in a week," she said.

Fruit Seller Janaki Ammal hoped she would be allowed to shift to the shops by April. "It gets very hot during April. I don't want to sit in hot sun while selling my fruits," she said.

A Chennai Corporation Zone 13 official said "The keys will be handed over within two three days. Some work is going on the parking area and once that is finished in two three days, the keys will be handed over."

The hawkers on the pavements are accused of encroaching roads and pavements by commuters. Pedestrian say they are finding difficult to walk as the entire pavement is occupied by the hawkers.

"I don't know where to walk. It is difficult to walk on a high speed traffic road and the pavement is most of thr times, occupied by hawkers and vendors," said N. Venkatesan, a commuter.

# Law College starts afresh

### The upgraded campus has redressed the grievance of inadequate class rooms and hostel facilities.

**P NILESH CHRISTOPHER**

**Chennai:** The School of Excellence in Law (SOEL), previously located at RA Puram has now been relocated to Perungudi. The upgraded campus has redressed the grievance of inadequate class rooms, space constraints and hostel facilities.

"Our old campus was cramped. You didn't get the feel of college," said Priyanka Bhat, a third year B.COM.B.L. student.

The new campus sprawls over 15 acres vis-à-vis the old 5 acre campus and is built at a cost of Rs.60 crore sanctioned by the State government in 2013 "It's slightly maze-like now," Priyanka added.

The new campus has separate under-graduate and post-graduate blocks with gallery-shaped seating arrangements provided in many of the law schools. "We have three AC's and five fans in a single room," said Rachel Andrea, a first year B.COM.B.L student after her first day at the upgraded campus.

Students at the University are excited about the spacious campus and its facilities. "Soon we'll have a

cafeteria as well," Andrea said.

The SOEL established in 2002 was aimed at imparting legal education on par with other premier law schools in the country. The inclusion of integrated courses like B.L (Hons.), B.Com.B.L, B.Sc.B.L etc. and additional PG courses the student's strength increased.

> **"We didn't get the feel of college in the previous campus. Now it's big and maze-like," says Priyanka Bhat, a student.**

The lack of adequate infrastructure and hostel facilities for the students became a daunting problem for the authorities following which a new campus was commissioned.

The addition of new integrated courses has resulted in shortage of permanent faculty. "Since our course was started recently, we had a problem with the faculty. We had

complained to the registrar and now it's not bad. This semester is like a dream semester." said Calvin Lobo, final year student at the college.

M. Sree Vishwanthini said that the old hostel room had to be shared by 12 students which caused space constraint. "Compared to that we are three in a room, and we have got individual cupboards, locks and hangers. It is better now."

The new campus has a separate women's hostel with over 200 residents. However, the campus still lacks a hostel for boys. "Boys stay in PGs [Paying Guests] and rooms outside the campus. They never stayed inside the campus," said Ananda Krishnan, an alumnus who is a practicing lawyer.

The management has planned to build a separate hostel for boys outside the campus as reported by one of the students.

The Registrar of SOEL M.S. Soundara Pandia said, "We are still in the process of shifting," and refused to answer further questions.

Though the class have resumed for students the administrative wing of SOEL is still in the Old campus at RA Puram.

## SEARCH FOR BONE MARROW DONORS

**GOKUL NAIR**

**Chennai:** A bone marrow donor drive held on Sunday at R.A Puram in a bid to find a matching donor for a 2-year-old baby in Boston has raised hopes of finding a perfect match from her ethnic background.

"The number of volunteers who turned up was only around 30, compared to the turnout of close to a 100 in drives held in Delhi and Noida. However, we are hopeful of finding a match for her as there are more chances of having an Asian donor match," said Sethulakshmi, an employee of DATRI, the non-profit that organised the drive.

> **The procedure for finding a match entails taking cheek swabs of potential donors, and then testing them for the correct human leukocyte antigen (HLA).**

The child, Mira, who is of Indian origin, was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, a type of blood cancer, in 2015 and was put through several cycles of chemotherapy. However, she suffered a relapse late last year and her parents have been struggling to find her a match. DATRI has been coordinating drives in India on her behalf and has already conducted them in Delhi, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

"Our purpose for holding the drive was specifically to find matches for Mira and another person, Vidya, a 24-year-old student of Sri Lankan origin in London. They couldn't find matches in the international donor registry, so looking for an Asian donor would be their best shot," said Hinduja S, spokesperson for DATRI.

The procedure for finding a match entails taking cheek swabs of potential donors, and then testing them for the correct human leukocyte antigen (HLA). Optimally, a perfect match is preferred since the chances of rejection are high. The data is then stored in the registry for use whenever a patient requires a match. If matched with a patient, the donor can choose either to donate stem cells from the bone marrow, or to donate peripheral blood stem cells (PBSCs), based on the nature of the disease.

"The doctors' division at the particular transplant centre makes a call on which patient will get priority over others. Mostly the criteria involved are severity of the disease and the age of the patient. Mira falls under both categories, and hence it is essential we find her a donor immediately. It takes between 30 to 45 days to correctly identify the HLA type. So we can only know then whether we have found a match for her," added Hinduja.

The child's parents have also launched a Facebook page called Mira's Fighters, which they regularly update with photos and information about her treatment.

# To B.E or not to be?

### No takers for B. Tech as 50 per cent seats stay vacant

**MD. AFFANUL HAQUE**

**Chennai:** "Over fifty per cent vacancies in engineering colleges last year was due to the increase in the number of colleges, rather than dearth of students," said D. Manjula, Professor, Computer Science Department at College of Engineering, Guindy.

While engineering college teachers blame the All India Council for Technical Education's policies for the extra seats, career counselors say the government's skewed policy has adversely affected the students.

"When you keep giving free laptops to students, their mind gets diverted and they become disinterested in higher education," says Zubin Malhotra, a counselor with Career Guidance.

According to a report by The Hindu, about 36 per cent of the applicants did not appear for counseling last year.

A professor in College of Engineering, Guindy, said that there were only 350 colleges in 2009 but now there are more than 500. "The supply is more than the demand. There are two lakh seats



PHOTO: POORANI PALENDRA

**College of Engineering, Guindy still remains the most sought after college for students**

for one lakh applications."

Nikila Balakumar, final year student in the Electronics Department at St. Joseph's College of Engineering, said that the quality of infrastructure both in government and self-financing

engineering colleges were poor. "The government should hire good teachers as they ensure quality technical education," he added.

Lakshman Bharath, student of Mechanical department at College of Engineering, Guindy, said "It's wrong to say that students are losing interest in engineering courses because they are not able to get jobs."

"Smart students get placed anywhere, it is unfair to say that unemployment is the reason for students to not opt for engineering," said Bharath.

Malhotra said "Some students want admission only in reputed engineering colleges with good facilities. Otherwise they are ready to take up other courses." He also said that a number of third tier colleges lacked qualified teachers and had poor placement records.

Twelfth standard student, Samyukhta Jay said that she would choose a degree in humanities if she did not get into a reputed engineering college.

# Importance of Actuarial Science not yet realised



PHOTO: MD IBRAR ARSHAD

**Girija Kumar at the event at University of Madras**

**MD. IBRAR ARSHAD**

**Chennai:** Actuarial Science is an important field in business, but it has not received much recognition and there are not many takers for it, say academicians.

"We have a dearth of interested students, for most of them opt for Engineering. Also, the entrance exams for the course are also tough, making it less popular," said Dr M R Srinivasan, Head of the Statistics Department, University of Madras.

Srinivasan said actuarial science was important and the course was itself at par with Chartered Accountancy, but not many applied for it.

Srinivasan said that of the 200 students who sat for the annual exams, only 40 were selected for the actuarial science and the statistics course.

Citing lack of exposure from top institutes, Srinivasan said "the students are unaware of the potential of this course. Only if the likes of the Madras Christian College and the Loyola College support and help in marketing these courses, can we see a change in the system."

Actuarial science helps business houses analyse their market projections and formulate a strategy. It also helps insurance companies manage their finances and make profits.

The Department of Statistics at the University

of Madras organized a two-day seminar at the Chepauk campus to promote the subject. The National Symposium on Actuarial Science and Business Analytics (NSASBA) is the first such event conducted by the University in collaboration with the South Zone of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

Attended by over 132 registered participants, the event witnessed lectures from eminent scholars and academicians on a variety of topics, ranging from data science, the role of actuaries and its future, growth of e-commerce, effects of social media and trends in the Insurance sector. Over 70 students, from colleges of Coimbatore, Puducherry and Bengaluru participated in the event.

Professor P.R.Vittal, former principal of Vivekananda College and visiting faculty at the University, was concerned about the future of the actuarial science course.

A.V. Girija Kumar, Director and General Manager of United India Insurance, encouraged students to take up actuarial science courses.

"No company can survive without data, information and insight. These are the factors managed by Actuarial scientists," said Kumar.

Kumar praised the NSASBA by calling it "a model event for students and business analysts. I am amazed by the expanse of topics covered in just two days at the event. Also the students are very bright here, and will definitely do well if they are given proper opportunity."

R Soumya, a final-year student, who got placed at LIC India, said that being a student of Statistics gave her a good job opportunity, and a chance to do well in life.

When asked about the potential of actuarial scientists and business analysts, Director and General Manager, Girija Kumar said "The sky is the only limit for them."

## METROSCAPE

# Understanding abuse

**MAHESH KONGARA**

**Chennai:** It is estimated that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 years of age have been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence, according to a report released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).

This prompted S. Narmada, an IT professional living in Palavakkam, to establish Abhaya, a group conducts awareness sessions for school students and their parents. The group has 15 members some of whom are lawyers and they conduct programmes for students who are under 14 years of age and for their parents during their free time and off days.

Abhaya also teaches the children how to behave with others—relatives, friends, neighbours.

"We focus on a child's mental ability, how much he or she can understand so that we can slowly explain things. Moreover we always teach them to take care of their body because it has to be protected," says Narmada.

So far, the four-month-old group has conducted sessions at


**Nearly 150 million girls subjected to molestation**

schools in Thiruvanmiyur, Purasaiwalkam, Anna Nagar, Medavakkam and Chromepet.

"At the initial stage, our focus is on government schools, where most children are from a poor background. Those children are more vulnerable to exploitation," says Narmadha.

On violence against children, she said, "According to UNICEF, violence against children can be physical or mental; this includes negligence, exploitation and sexual abuse. Violence may take place at home, schools, on the streets where children play."

The group does not use words like molestation, sexual abuse or refer to genital parts which are not understood by children.

"We explain the subject to them by using simple words and examples. Kindergarten children and children from classes I to III are too young to fully understand this subject and so we just give them instructions. We teach students from classes IV to VIII what feelings of discomfort—both with touch and stare—are," Revathi, one of the volunteers of Abhaya, was quoted as telling The Hindu.

Parents should monitor any change in the behavior of their children.

"A child does not realise what has happened to him/her. But when the child grows up and gradually comes to understand that the experience was nothing but a sexual abuse that he/she was subjected to, the individual suffers from a trauma and will suffer from guilt for no fault of theirs," Revathi told The Hindu.

Sometimes children suffer silently when they are forced to show respect to the adult who abused them.

Narmada says that her aim is to expand this volunteer initiation across Tamil Nadu state.


**PHOTO: MARIA KURUVILLA**
Injured deer attacked by stray dogs are treated at the Guindy National Park

# Stray Dogs killing deer in IIT- Madras

**MARIA KURUVILLA**

**Chennai:** The number of Black Buck ( Indian Antelope) living on the Indian Institute of Technology -Madras campus has been dwindling due to the increasing attacks on them by stray dogs. Another cause for their death is the littering of plastic cups, plates and other hazardous items that are dumped near most of the food joints and cafes on campus which these animals feed on.

The campus which is built on the land acquired from the Guindy National Park is home to a number of wild-life species of which the Black bucks and the spotted deer number to around 2000.

"They were a common sight in my first year, especially near the forest area that surrounds my hostel and the canteen. Now I hardly see them around unless it's late at night," says P. Sushil, a student of Mechanical Engineering.

The park authorities conduct monthly visits to the college campus to maintain a count on the deer and buck(s) among other animals. Buck and deer that are injured or suffering from an illness are kept in the park and cared for by its team of biologists and doctors, an official from the park said.

"Most of the bucks live in what was known as the Governor's bungalow and are safe and free to move around the park with no dogs and only staff vehicles allowed after the main gate," says T.Balan, a member of the park's maintenance team.

One of the main reasons for the fighting over territory and food is the location of a number of food joints in close proximity

> "We have sent the college a proposal which talks of dealing with stray dogs in a non-violent manner"- S. Srinivas

to the forest. The smell of food attracts both species due to which there is a fight over territory.

"This is completely natural. Animals fight over land, food and territory. Nature is just taking her own due course," says S. Davidraj, Forest Range Officer of Guindy National Park.

A number of deer and bucks from the park had strayed into other parts of Chennai such as the Velachery Railway station and Kotturpuram where they live in herds. There are atleast 340 bucks and deer spread out in these areas, he added.

However while there are over a 100 dogs on the campus, the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme that was initiated and carried out on a large scale in many places to curb the population of dogs by the Blue-Cross of Chennai is yet to find a way into IIT-M.

"We have sent the college a proposal which talks of dealing with stray dogs in a non-violent manner. ABC is a healthy and safe way to curb the over-population of dogs. It is also a form of positive therapy for them, a soothing factor," said S. Srinivas, a member of Blue Cross of India.

Prakriti, a group created by the students to preserve and protect the environment on campus, has banned the use of plastic and styrofoam because a lot of the deer often choke on it and die.

"Students who sleep late have decided to patrol the area close to their hostels in an attempt to prevent attacks," says V. Kavya, a second year student of Biotechnology.

# Twitter to be involved in poll drive

**MITAKSH JAIN**

**CHENNAI:** "My job requires me to travel. I am in Chennai now then I am leaving for Hyderabad after that Kolkata and so on," says Raheel Khursheed with a smile. While constantly on the move, Raheel Khursheed, Head of News, Politics and Government at Twitter India, visited the campus of Asian College of Journalism here on Thursday.

Raheel Khursheed, who has been working at Twitter India for more than two years now, spoke on issues ranging from the upcoming Tamil Nadu elections to social media censorship under the current regime.

While explaining what he does at Twitter, he says, "My team works with news agencies, political parties, governments on ways to expand their service via Twitter. The tools that Twitter provides can maximize the experience a user has when it interacts with a certain organization."

Acting as a liaison between Twitter and various organizations,


**PHOTO: MITAKSH JAIN**
**Raheel Khursheed, Head of News, Politics and Government at Twitter India speaking to students at the Asian College of Journalism.**

Raheel and his team comes up with ways to streamline data in times of a disaster.

What brings him to Chennai is the upcoming elections in the State where Twitter has tied up with

Election Commission in order to spread awareness about the importance of casting a vote.

He will be talking to newspaper, news agencies, political parties and talk about methods in which they can harness Twitter's potential vis-à-vis elections.

"We are using the #TN100percent to promote voting in the State using celebrity engagement through Twitter," he added.

When asked about what Twitter does to take care of online abuse, he said, "Trolling is a construct of the internet. Twitter has a very robust mechanism in place to filter out abuse. Twitter has been incorporated in India so it is sincere about its intention to abide by the law of the land."

Social media censorship has become a hotly-contested topic in the wake of recent controversies surrounding freedom of speech and expression.

Claiming that Twitter has a mechanism to take down censored content is well-grounded, Raheel said, "We do not have to worry too much about the content since all

tweets are public and we need a warrant from a valid authority to even initiate proceedings."

Raheel Khursheed used to work at change.org, a petition website which had 3,000 members in 2012 but has grown to have members in excess of 1,000, which helped him develop continuity to his work at Twitter.

"We helped build a bridge in Maharashtra for physically-disabled people who had no means to cross the railway track after a petition was filed and signed by more than 3,500 people," he said.

The scope of operations has scaled up compared to what Raheel was doing at change.org, like for example, Twitter Seva that was launched to help government organizations redress the grievances of the public in an effective manner.

The service has been adopted by the Indian Railways and the Ministry of External Affairs for its Passport Service and Bangalore Police. The Delhi Police and the Mumbai Police are soon expected to follow suit.

# Student losing time commuting to School


**PHOTO: MANSI CHOUKSEY**

**MANSI CHOUKSEY**

**Chennai:** About 30 students, from Class 5 to 10, now spend four hours commuting to and from school, after the Goverment moved them from the Adyar banks in Kotturto Perumbakkam, about – km away. With Board exams starting from March 15 and students spending four hours travelling every day, the Kottur High School teachers are anticipating a fall in affected students' results.

The school children who were the residents of Suryanagar prior to the 2015 Chennai floods were recently shifted with their families to the government allotted houses in Perumbakkam.

K. Deepa, a topper from class10 says she travels a distance of about 20 km in two hours every day to attend her classes. "I take a bus from Perumbakkam to Taramani at around 6:30

a.m. and then a train from Taramani to Kotturpuram. I reach school by 8:30 a.m. if buses and trains are available on time, otherwise I get late and could only reach by 9:00 a.m.," says Deepa.

The hours which were earlier put into self-study by the students, are now spent in travelling to and from school "Students do not get time to revise all the lessons taught in the class. Some of the children, whose families were shifted, were highest scorers in their respective classes, but now their performances are getting affected," says S. Chitra, the class X English Teacher at the Kottur High School.

M. Raghvi, a student of class X says she gets tired by the time she reaches home. "We stay at school till 6 p.m. to attend special classes for the preparation of the Board exams. I reach home by 8:00 p.m. and do not get time for self-study," she said.

# Sexism rampant in the Media Industry

**MITAKSH JAIN**

**Chennai:** If someone is going to demean me just because I am a woman then I am going to put my foot down," said journalist Kavitha Muralidharan.

Taking part in a talk on 'Sexism in Media' organized by Prajnya at Asian College of Journalism (ACJ) here Kavitha Muralidharan, a journalist for more than 16 years who is now working independently, spoke about her experiences when she first joined a newspaper and the comments that follow just by "my virtue of being a woman."

"While I had my differences with the editor, he asked me to give in my hundred per cent until I get married because it is assumed that women cannot perform their duties properly after marriage; but you do not see a man being asked this question," she said.


**PHOTO: MITAKSH JAIN**
Seated from Left to Right: Kavitha Muralidharan, Dr Uma Mangal, Kavin Malar

Kavin Malar, an independent journalist, spoke of the constant harassment she faced at the hands of a certain MLA from the ruling party who took offence at something she wrote against caste-based issues.

"I was his target for more than a year where I was subjected to vile comments from all corners. We can't ignore the emotional and psychological impact of online

harassment. It really did affect me," she said.

Kavin filed an FIR with the help of Geeta Ramaseshan, a prominent women's rights lawyer. But nothing came of the complaint as the harassment continued.

She also spoke about the kind of prejudice a woman victim faced—emotional or physical whereas the perpetrator went on to

> "He asked me to give in my hundred per cent until I get married."

live his life unaffected, as if nothing had happened.

Pointing out the double standards, she said asked "How many dark-skinned, overweight men host popular Tamil TV shows and how many women do?

Uma Vangal, a filmmaker and professor who started her career as a journalist spoke about how when she first joined a newsroom as an intern along with four other girls the editor asked them to pick one man each out of the lot of five young men who were journalists themselves.

Vangal said she told him that they were not after young men but

were there to work as journalists.

Ms. Vangal spoke about the stereotypical representation women continued to deal with in the media. Popular platforms such as television and media continued to paint women as caricatures defined through the eyes of the men in their lives.

Along with sexism and casteism, communalism was also rampant in the industry.

Uma pointed out a case of a Muslim female journalist who was labeled as a terrorist after writing a story which did not sit well with others.

The panel wondered why there were not many women in the newsrooms given the fact all the institutions including ACJ had a large number of women studying to be journalists.

Prajnya is a Chennai-based non-profit centre for research, public education and networking working on issues of security.

# El Nino affects Olive Ridley nesting

**JOHN ABRAHAM**

**CHENNAI:** The nesting of Olive Ridley turtles on the beaches here has declined sharply this year, said animal conservationists who suspect the El Nino phenomenon to be the major cause.

The nesting that happens along the coast here during January and April is "lower than average," said Akila Balu, convenor of Students' Sea Turtle Conservation Network (SSTCN).

With the average number of nests that they discover being 230, they have found only around 130 so far.

"We might end up with 150-160 nests at the end of the

season, which is lower than the last I can remember," said Prem of SSTCN who has been on turtle walks for more than eight years now. The nesting mostly stopped by the end of March, he added.

Animal conservationists suspect that the change of direction in ocean currents caused by the El Nino to be a major factor for the decline in nesting this year. The turtles come to nest where they were born, and the direction change can make them lose their orientation.

"They have not been able to


**PHOTO: JOHN ABRAHAM**
A participitant collecting eggs from a turtle nest

congregate in the areas that they normally do," said Supraja Dharini, founder trustee of the TREE foundation, which is involved in environment education and conservation. Her organization that conducts

turtle walks between Neelankarai Beach and Alambara and sees an average of 350-370 nests; but it has found only 212 nests so far this year.

The eggs collected from each nest vary from 60 to 110, with

the number sometimes going up to 230. The eggs are then placed in recreated nests in hatcheries for nearly 45 days where they hatch. The hatcheries were affected by the deluge in the city last year though.

"It was extremely bad. Huge amounts of garbage washed up to the hatcheries. We had to clean up the areas where debris had washed up ashore," said Sandip, a third-year student at an egineering college here, and a regular participant in turtle walks by SSTCN.

The number of dead turtles washed ashore had declined this year though, said Sandip. "Maybe, most of them stopped coming and that is why it's low" said Manivannan, a participant in the SSTCN turtle walk.

# India becomes E-waste dump

**MANSI CHOUKSEY**

Chennai, March 15: India has become an e-waste dumping ground for developed countries like the UK and the US. According to a 2015 report of United Nations Environment Programme, 90 per cent of the e-waste of the developed world lands up illegally in developing countries of Asia and Africa. India with its wide and scattered informal sector has become the most appealing destination to dump the end-of-life products.

Sadia Sohail, a former Senior Research Associate of Environment Unit of CSE said, "The developed nations send these wastes under the garb of charity or mis-declaring the contents of the container carrying e-waste. Lax implementation of laws and a flourishing informal sector favours the incoming e-waste from illegal imports in the country."

A MAIT-GTZ study showed that every year around 50,000 tons of e-waste is imported in the country. According to a recent U.N report India itself generates 1.7 million tons of e-waste every year making it the fifth largest e-waste generator in the world. With illegal imports the pressure of e-waste is mounting on the country.

Priti Mahesh of Toxic Links, a non-profit organization known for releasing reports related to toxic impacts of e-waste on environment, said, "Two primary reasons for developed countries to export e-waste are; first environmental laws in these countries are very strict and the recycling process is expensive. Second, in countries like India it is easy and cheap to export."

"In their own country they pay to discard but in India they are paid to export the same waste", she added. Sadia Sohail explained the reason for cheap recycling in India and said "The waste from the imports land directly in the informal market where extremely poor sections of society engage in dismantling and recycling the old goods to recover the re-usable components from the end of life EEE. Since all their operations are carried out manually or with some equipments and


PHOTO: MANSI CHOUKSEY
**E-waste at Moore Market**

absolutely no infrastructure the costs of carrying this out is very little." UNEP report says that the estimated cost of e-waste illegally traded is around $19 billion annually which attracts recyclers from developing countries. The organized e-waste recycling sector faces a tough competition with organised sector and finds it difficult to gather material at capacity scale. As a consequence of this organized recyclers resorts to buying of illegally imported e-waste. The hubs of such activities are often metro cities like Chennai and Delhi. "Since last two years areas around cities are developing as e-waste recycling hubs", said Mahesh on expansion of recycling belts. According to a Toxic links report on Chennai, Moore Market, Richie Street and Royapuram are the main recycling areas and they get the majority of supplies from illegal imports. R.Ganesh a small recycler at the New Moore market said, "All supplies we get are from the local households. Only organized big recyclers can afford to buy illegal imports."

Currently one of the biggest e-waste exporter, the US does not have any legislation mandating recycling of e-waste in the country, thereby allowing exports through backdoor. On the other side the European Union has a directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) since 2003 which curtails the scope of e-waste exports.

More than 70 countries of the world have agreed on the Basel convention which prohibits developed countries from sending hazardous wastes to developing countries. The US has not ratified to the convention.

# High Court Building loses sheen

**MD. IBRAR ARSHAD**

Chennai, March 15: Poor maintenance has affected the 124-year old Madras High Court, an Indo-Saracenic style building. The structure is considered to be a heritage of the city. But with the saline breeze from the nearby Bay of Bengal and the decades of neglect have affected the murals on its domes, its intricate ornate arches and latticed 'jali' structures. To recover the city heritage, a Rs 17.20 crore-project, funded by the State government, is currently underway.

The High Court, designed by Henry Irwin and built by Namperumal Chetty developed cracks after the recent floods and due to poor maintenance of the air-conditioning unit. The excessive dampness lead to the growth of vegetation, both on the stone structures and on the wooden roof, built in the 'Madras Terrace' style, which are made with teak wood joints.

"The timber started bending and cracking due to age and due to the leaking water tanks", said Mr. R. Govindan, Assistant Engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD), High Court section.

It was because of this that the Bar Association requested for the renovation to start, said Advocate M. Easan, member of the Bar Council. It was then that the PWD, North Division and the High Court Heritage Committee asked the National Centre for Safety of Heritage Structure (NCSHS) of IIT-Madras to conduct a study of the structure.

"The NCSHS provides technical assistance to the PWD. We study the water proofing and the architecture of the building", said Dr. Arun Menon, Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering and State Convener of the NCSHS.



According to the investigation report submitted by the NCSHS after a month-long study, the Court premises were affected by the dampness during the Monsoon and from the unplanned constructions at the roofs. The weight of the tanks and the air-conditioners led to foot deep cracks and weakened the latticed 'jali' and the stone slabs supporting the roofs.

Restoration is currently underway at the Court, with artisans, specializing in heritage restoration. The contracted laborers, from Virudhunagar, Thanjavore, Tirunelveli and Rajapalayam have been sheltered within the Court premises.

"We are removing the old plasters by chipping it off the brunt brick structures and applying a traditional lime mortar, made from sand, jaggery and Kadukkai (Haritaki) seed water to strengthen the mixture," said M. Pandian, a laborer, working at the building for the past four months.

The renovation works have sourced the original materials like the traditional terrace tiles from Rajapalayam, lime stones from Virudhunagar, Granite, jaggery (panaivellam) and Haritaki (kadukkai) seeds from Kazhuugu Malai of southern Tamil Nadu.

"We are looking to complete the replastering work by June," said S. Rajagopalan, Executive Engineer of the PWD, North Division.

The renovation conducted by Justice R. Sudhakar headed High Court Heritage Committee will also cover restoration work in the subordinate courts in George Town and the 'Old Light House', within the court area. N.L. Rajah, an advocate of the Madras High Court, and member of the Madras High Court Heritage Committee has said that the restoration will take about 3 years to complete.

The 24 onion-shaped domes and its murals will also be repainted by the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLCCP), an organization under the Union Ministry of Culture.

# Old Books wooing new buyers

**MAHESH KONGARA**

Chennai, March 15: Purchasing new books sometimes might not be pocket friendly because of the high prices but with a little patience, bookworms and those who are preparing for competitive exams can get the books at one fourth of the price from pavement book shops in the city.

. Egmore railway station, Central railway station, Anna Salai, Ashok Nagar main roads are some of the second hand book selling hubs in the city.

Books on Social, Political, Historical and Cultural subjects could be seen here along with school text books and State and Central governments' competitive exam preparation books. The popular fiction include Moonstone, Middlemarch, Harry Potter series to the God of Small things, and renowned writers such as Jhumpa lahiri, Paulo Coelho, Jeffrey Archer, Arundhati Roy and Chetan Bhagat novels, Amar chitra katha are sold here at affordable prices.

"We provide all kinds of books

at cheap prices," says Arumugan, (55) who is in this business for the last 30 years. This is a business with no loss. When readers buy a book after reading it they can sell


**A second-hand bookseller in Triplicane**

and purchase new one.

We deal with the book sellers based on its demand as do with buyers. We buy a book at a fourth of its price and sell them for the half rate or even more sometimes," Arumugan who earns nearly Rs 30,000 a month in this business.

For second hand book selling business there is a no need of well equipped shop to invite customers. All that the book sellers need is to

get the Corporation's permission for putting their shops on the footpaths by paying nominal charges.

The second hand book shop owners also have their own employees for buying and selling books from readers.

"We would prefer being mediators between readers who buy and read first hand books and readers who look for second hand books. Rather than businessmen, our job is like exchanging books between them not more than that," says Sai Murugan, owner of the Murugan old books shop at Mylapore.

He provides employment for four youths for maintaining his business.

In the digital era, online business giants - Amazon, Flipkart - who provide books with huge discounts have started affecting second hand books sellers.

And the important thing is that the second hand books bought from these sellers are not always torn and threadbare, some books can be as good as new. "I bought this book [Collected Poems of Ted Hughes] for Rs 250 from a second hand book seller in Triplicane. It is as good as new. The cost of a new copy is Rs 1200 online," said Vishnu Swaroop, a student of Asian College Journalism (ACJ).

Narayana Aiyer, a lover of Tamil literature and retired teacher says that he finds cultural books such as Sangam literature in this market and not in main shops and he advices readers that 'Do not let your books be shelved once you read it; give chance to let it be read by others'. Narayana says he will never quit coming to the shops as they are a reprieve booksellers who are only concerned about profits and not what people want.

# Going strong despite 'breaks' in life

**GOKUL NAIR**

Chennai, March 15: Clearing the Common Proficiency Test (CPT), the first step towards becoming a Chartered Accountant in India, is a milestone for every CA aspirant in the country. But the feeling of success is multiplied manifold when it is attained after several 'breaks' in one's education.

Nineteen-year-old R.Rajaraman, who suffers from Osteogenesis Imperfecta, a congenital disorder of the bones which causes them to be extremely brittle, is now relishing that feeling. The resident of Perambur in Chennai, who has been confined to a wheelchair since the age of five, recently cleared the CPT exam despite his condition.

"I used to always get fractures in my limbs, especially my legs. Till the age of five I could walk slowly but soon the bones couldn't even withstand the weight of my body. I have been using a wheelchair ever since," said Rajaraman.

Osteogenesis Imperfecta is a genetic disorder that affects the body's production of collagen, a major component of bone. Based on the extent of deficiency, a person can have several hundreds of fractures in a lifetime. Rajaraman says that he has lost count of the number of fractures he has had.


PHOTO: THE HINDU
**R. Rajaraman**

"I've been in stages where my entire body was in a cast due to multiple fractures," he says. His mother, Rajeshwari, also gave up a teaching career to take care of her son.

"He was very fragile since birth. The doctors told me that it is a very rare condition. Even if someone held him too tightly or in an awkward position, he would suffer a fracture. Because of these issues he could not attend school. Only after the age of eight did we actually decide to send him for formal education. Until then I tried to home-school him in the alphabets and basic arithmetic," said Rajeshwari.

Rajaraman says that he always liked arithmetic, which helped him when he had to write an exam to get admission to class II in Sacred Hearts Nursery and Primary School in Perambur. He had to switch schools after class V to KBJ Gurukulam School, where he received support from students and the school management.

But the frequent fractures did not deter him from exercising his cultural abilities. He especially excelled at chess competitions held at the school level. Sports activities were impossible, but he loved watching cricket on television.

Rajaraman's immediate priority is to study to clear the Integrated Professional Competence Course (IPCC), the next step in his dream of becoming a CA .

# Pirated CDs still a hit in Burma Bazaar


**Pirated CD's being sold at Burma Bazaar**
PHOTO: MANIK SHARMA

**MANIK SHARMA**

Chennai, March 14: Famous for its bootstrapped versions of the most well known products in the Indian market the Burma Bazaar, in Rajaji Salai, is the breeding ground of Piracy, the root of which extends beyond international borders. Out of the 700 shops in the market, nearly half deal in pirated CDs and DVDs.

"My shop is almost 15 years old. We started with selling musical instruments but then we switched to CDs. Frankly, it is a much more profitable business," Sivakumaran, owner of a shop, said.

The collection of CDs and DVDs available at the market is an eclectic mix ranging from old classics to the new releases. Surprisingly, a number of films (mostly international documentaries)

that are not even released in India are available in the market. Upon asking how one such film (Amy, 2015) was available the shop a shopkeeper said, "Most of these discs come from Thailand and Malaysia. There is very little [CDs] here that are produced locally."

For its many constraints of quality and medium (CDs are no longer the norm) the market has its dedicated customers. Madhav, a 23-year-old college student, who is also a part-time freelance content writer, and a cinema buff gets his films from the market.

"I still prefer the CDs because going to a theatre still costs more than a disc. I know the quality isn't that good but then here I find some of the best films that never even go up in theatres. Look here, I have a copy of '45 years'," Madhav said pointing to the disc in his

hand "this film wasn't even released in India and is incredibly hard to get online."

Surprisingly, only a handful of shops in the market had pirated versions of the latest Tamil movies. About this Sivakumaran said, "The artists association [Nadigar Sangam] held a meeting with us last year. So we decided mutually, that we won't sell pirated Tamil discs anymore. Or at least wait till the movie comes out of theatres. But still some shops continue to do so."

Despite the age of internet having taken over, the Burma Bazaar is a sprawling space full of moviegoers who want to ditch the cinema ticket for the back seat of their couch. "13 shops closed in the [latter half] last year and started selling other things. Policemen patrolling near the market refused to comment on the situation.

# Film Producers hit hardest by Piracy in 2015

### Tamil Nadu Film industry releases close to 200 films on average a year

**MANIK SHARMA**

Chennai: Film piracy in the four southern states of the country (Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), hit new heights in 2015. With big films becoming the common target in the Malayalam and Telugu industries – the biggest one being the multi-lingual blockbuster Bahubali – both Kerala and Andhra Pradesh setup anti-piracy cells in 2015. But the Tamil Film industry again proved to be the soft spot that most miscreants targeted.

The Tamil Film industry releases close to 200 films on average each year – largest number in the country. Since the beginning of the year, however, the issue of piracy proved to be a thorn in the industry's eye. In March of 2015, the Tamil Film Producers Council (TFPC) was forced to consider blocking the release of nearly 150 films to prevent piracy.

"We were left no choice. As it is our films don't remain in theatres for more than a week.

We have new releases every weekend. Unlike the Hindi [Film Industry] we don't get much collection [Box Office]. So piracy is a bigger problem for us," T. Siva, Secretary of the Producers Council said.
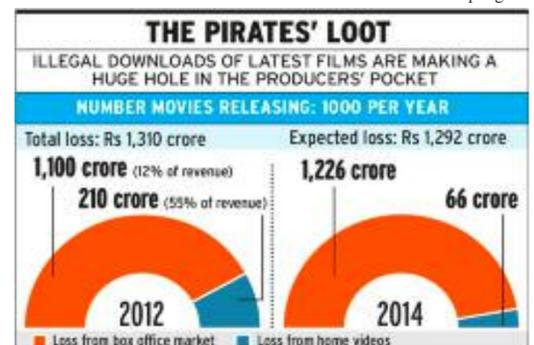
"We have new elected members in Nadigar Sangam. Vishal, who was elected General Secretary this year, has himself in the past conducted raids in shops that sell pirated CDs and DVDs. We are hoping he

of the leak to a studio owned by director Priyadarshan in Chennai.

"Kamal Hassan and other big stars have voice. He met with the producers after his film was leaked. So when someone like him so raises his voice things change," Siva said.

CDs and DVDs are no longer the only mode used. Films are now leaked online, due to which web portals like Herotalkies.com have become savious. A number of Tamil directors are now choosing to release films directly online to save their work from the ambush of Piracy.

"Both the Malayalam and Telugu film councils are willing to cooperate with us. While I can't give you the data because we have to release our yearly statements next month [March-April], I can tell you 2015 was the worst year as far as losses due to piracy are concerned. We are now in talks with the government to set up a special cell [anti-piracy] in Chennai as well," Siva said.



**THE PIRATES' LOOT**
ILLEGAL DOWNLOADS OF LATEST FILMS ARE MAKING A HUGE HOLE IN THE PRODUCERS' POCKET

**NUMBER MOVIES RELEASING: 1000 PER YEAR**

| | |
|---|---|
| Total loss: Rs 1,310 crore | Expected loss: Rs 1,292 crore |
| 1,100 crore (12% of revenue) | 1,226 crore |
| 210 crore (55% of revenue) | 66 crore |
| 2012 | 2014 |

■ Loss from box office market   ■ Loss from home videos

**Producers suffer as Piracy of movies are on a high**

Siva said that under the banner of the South Indian Films Chamber of Commerce and the artist's association Nadigar Sangam, the Film fraternity of the four South Indian states was hoping to curb Piracy by attacking at its roots.

In August, 2015, Kamal Hassan starrer Papanasam was leaked days before it hit theatres. A police investigation followed and traced the roots

and other superstars can come forward in helping producers save money," Siva added.