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## Postal IDs not a right, but a 'favour' for migrants

DEBAYAN ROY

CHENNAI: "Migrant workers should not claim Postal ID cards as a matter of right, it is just a favour for them," said V. Kumarakrishnan, Assistant Post Master General (Business Development and Marketing), Mount Road Postal Head Quarters.

There is growing discontent among the migrant working class, due to the complex application process to obtain these cards and the non-acceptance of the cards by various service providers.

From LPG cylinders, mobile connections to a ride in the metro, things get difficult for the migrants in the city, who lack a local identity proof.

Sheuj Doha, a student from Yangon studying at B.S. Abdur Rahman University, says, "My landlord does not want to give me a rental agreement, and insists on normal monthly payments. Hence, I requested the postal department to take note of my college letter, but they rejected my application thrice. Surviving in the city without a local proof is very tough."

Officials at the Anna Salai Postal head quarters said that they received around 2000 applications per month out of which almost 50 per cent are from the migrant working class. But most of the important consumer service providers are yet to take note of this identification proof.

M. Nagarjuna, a migrant professional working at a leather unit on Mount Road, said, "This card is not accepted by the Tamil Nadu RTO, passport authorities or ration card offices. Obtaining this card has been nothing but a waste of time."

Further, highlighting an organisational problem, he said, "It only shows the trust deficit existing among the various Civic agencies and the State."

But the officials maintain that such an initiative does not call for any complaints from the migrant working class.

Kumarakrishnan, said, "This scheme was originally intended to serve the ageing population of the state who often do not have identity proof. These migrant workers have recently come into the picture and all the complaints have started pouring in."

He added, "We cannot do anything if the gas providers or others don't accept it. Every organization has its own rules."

He, however agreed that if a nature of permanency had to be rendered to the cards, then a decision from the Central government would be inevitable, and requests have been made for the same.



Migrants wait to get their ID cards at the post office in T. Nagar PHOTO: DEBAYAN ROY

Many professionals are dissatisfied even with the application process which calls for an inspection of the residence by field officers before the card is issued.

Madhulika Rao, from Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh, currently residing in Mylapore, said, "Mostly literate persons can obtain these cards from the head offices. But the irony is the identity of the person must be well established in the locality they are residing and permanent reform will have to reassure the field officers about the identity of the migrants. The migrant workers are often new to localities and hence suffer the most."

But Kumarakrishnan said that the department did not differentiate between skilled and unskilled migrant working class, and hence the question of literacy did not arise.

However, J. Vasugi, Senior Postmaster at the Thyagaraja Nagar Postal Headquarters said that the department was aware of the problem. "We often ask for rental agreements to confirm the current location of the applicant. But landlords do not issue rental agreements to the migrant tenants a lot of times."

The delay in obtaining the cards is also an acute problem plaguing the majority of the applicants.

Sushil Bandhopadhyay, a professional from Guwahati, working with WIPRO, said, "I had applied for the Postal ID card on November 14, 2015 and the verification was over in mid January, but there has been no response from the postal department yet. I don't know whether I will get the card at all."

But S. Muthulekshmi, the customer care officer for Postal ID Cards in the Mylapore Postal headquarters, said, "We have our traditional complaints and suggestions unit in every postal office where you can post your grievance or even resort to the online forum we have created."

Vasugi, further said, "Such delays cannot be avoided and will be there. Even after local inspection is over, such processes usually take some time." She stressed that if an individual wanted the card urgently, then the tatkal option was available for Rs 600.

## New system to detect arms in Central

BRISTIT DEY

CHENNAI: A new system called 'Under Vehicle Scanning System (UVSS)' has been installed recently at two entry points—Moore market complex and Wall Max road—in Chennai Central Railway Station to detect weapons in the vehicles.

After the Mumbai blast, a special team has been formed to prevent bomb blasts in railway stations. The new system has been introduced as a part of the Integrated Security System (ISS), said an inspector of Railway Protection Force (RPF).

He said that the system scanned the under side of the vehicle for any weapon or bomb. The authorities have set up a sturdy weatherproof x-ray system that is able to detect any types of weapons. A higher megapixel camera has been set up to click pictures of the registration number plate. Another camera has been set up in the RPF building situated on the opposite side of the road. The camera takes pictures of the drivers.

A booth also has been erected on the road where an on-duty RPF officer will monitor the situation round the clock and inform the senior officer if he suspects anything in the vehicle, the inspector added.

Another RPF official said the data was being saved automatically in the server and by putting the registration number in the server, the authority can check the vehicle. The record shows

when and how many times the vehicle has entered the railway station. The system is the latest and a part of whole railway security system that includes CCTV camera in all platforms, waiting areas and station premises; luggage scanning and body scanning. After getting complaints from the people, the RPF can check the footage from the server to detain car thieves or other accused in various allegations.

Parikshit Samanta, a businessman from Bardhaman district, West Bengal who came to Chennai for treatment, said "Installing the UVSS system will be beneficial for passengers. They will feel more secure while entering the station premises."

Additional police members had been deployed in the vehicle entry point of the station in the Moore Market complex after setting up the camera.

Niraimathi, a law student, said people now feel more secure in ATM booths at the entry point.

Another UVSS has been installed in Chennai Egmore Railway Station which will be active in 15 days. Station Manager of Southern Railway G. Prabhakar feels that no publicity is needed for the system because if the criminals come to know about the security system they will try to deceive the system.

Asked about crimes at the Egmore Station, the duty officer Vasanth Wilson said that there was no record of a major crime in the last three years.

## Jewel shops open but protests to continue

ASHNA KUMAR

CHENNAI: Protests against the proposed increase in excise duty by 1 per cent on non-silver jewellery have been called off by several stores in the city and other parts of Tamil Nadu. This is because the delay in negotiations and the resultant closure of shops were affecting their business.

The jewellers went on an indefinite strike from March 2 in objection to the Union Budget 2016-17 provisions that increased the excise duty and made PAN card mandatory for purchase of jewels worth above Rs 2 lakh.

This 1 per cent increase in excise duty was likely to lead to loss of jobs among small scale traders and artisans, the jewellers said. The strike was called off on March 17, after the All India Gem and Jewellery Trade Federation among other major trade associations met the Central Board of Excise and Customs in Mumbai

to discuss the issue. Though the outcome of the talks is yet to be communicated to them, the jewellers are optimistic. "Our management told us that the proposed change in excise duty will be rolled back next month," said S. Sohan Babu, Manager of the Saravana Store in T. Nagar. Their store was shut on March 3, 5, 6 and 9 that led to a loss up to Rs 16 crore in sales, he added.

Saravana Store opened their showrooms despite being told not to by the Madras Jewellers and Diamond Merchant Association that overlooks gold trade in the state.

"We were incurring huge losses and could not afford to remain shut any longer," added Babu.

P. Narayanan, General Manager at the Prince Jewellers showroom in T. Nagar said the shop lost Rs 1 crore to Rs 2 crore in four days.

"We do not plan to close our showroom in future for the protest," he said.

The proposal that PAN card details be got from the customer on

purchase of jewellery worth of Rs 2 lakh and above has also drawn flak. Jewellers said they lost out on customers who prefer going to small scale traders for a hassle free shopping experience.

Nitish Sharma, Manager of Shree Gold Jewellers at the T. Nagar showroom said, "We have lost out on customers in the past, but still we abide by the rule." Officials of the Madras Jewellers and Diamond Merchant's Association confirmed that the strike was leading to heavy losses and that stores had opened. But the protests would continue, he said.

"The strike has been called off yes, but our management is still in talks with the Central Board of Excise and Customs."

However, jewellers in Gujarat are not ready to give up the agitation. "All stores in Gujarat are on an indefinite strike until the increase in excise duty is rolled back; we are expecting a positive outcome," said an official of the Gem and Jewellery Trade Council.

## Saving the Buckingham Canal

BOISHAKHI DUTT

CHENNAI: The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) last week directed the Adyar Zone 14 of the Chennai Corporation to monitor and prevent parties from dumping sewage into the Buckingham Canal in the city.

A part of the 1,078 km stretch of the National Waterway-4, the Adyar section of the Buckingham Canal, near the Kasthubai Nagar MRTS station, is choked with sewage and garbage. With residential and commercial official buildings on both sides, the canal serves as an opening for the drainage of sewage from these institutes, according to residents in the area.

"Dirty water from institutes and hospitals in the area, as well as the drainage from the houses here flow into the canal," said Pushparaj, a shopkeeper on the Adyar side of the Buckingham canal.

According to residents of the area, besides sewage from the surrounding areas, garbage trucks also frequently dump waste into



The Adyar side of the Buckingham Canal near the Kasthubai Nagar MRTS station PHOTO: BOISHAKHI DUTT

the canal.

"Trucks carrying waste come to the area and empty it into the canal," said S. Yashoda, a resident who stays along the canal, adding that the sewage attracted pigs which have to constantly be driven away.

Another resident, Nityanand, said that workers from the corporation sometimes came to clean the canal, but for most of the year

the water was very dirty and filled with garbage.

Since the directive was passed, the Chennai Corporation has begun cleaning projects between Chepauk and Greenways MRTS stations and between Kotturpuram and Muttukkadu stations, covering a total stretch of around 30 km.

S. Subramaniam, Zonal Officer, Zone 14, Adyar said "Sewage pro-

blem is there but after the directive by NGT, we are taking precautions to avoid sewage disposal. We have blocked all the sewage passing lines in our Zone 14 area. Not only industries, but households also deposit garbage, so we have undertaken programmes to educate households to avoid disposal in the Buckingham Canal."

N. Swaminathan, Sanitation Inspector, Greater Chennai Corporation, said "The Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) is taking up the construction of sewage treatment plants to stop untreated sewage from being disposed in the canal."

The NGT directive was welcomed by activists in the city, who have been advocating for the canal to be cleaned up for over a decade.

Sharada, an environment activist said "The Buckingham Canal is like a natural drainage system for the city. Clogging it with garbage is dangerous in case the city were to face another disaster like the floods last year. The corporation has to ensure that the directive is implemented."

## More maternity leave not good news for all

ARPITA RAJ

CHENNAI: The Labour Ministry's decision to increase maternity leave in the private sector from 12 to 26 weeks has not been equally welcomed across all quarters.

Shop managers and owners of small businesses here expressed concern over the proposed move.

Mahesh Jayaprakash, owner of Sakhi Fashions at Spencer's Plaza, employs 20 women in his three stores and says he modifies the rules for leave-taking depending on the need of the girl.

"I don't have a uniform policy. Nobody takes maternity benefits seriously at my level. They are enforced in large organizations. How can

I give a girl six months off? And what about the training of her replacement? Am I supposed to retain both of them when the six months are over? Will the law provide solutions for these questions?" he says.

Other stores claimed complete ignorance that they had to provide maternity leave for all pregnant employees.

"We don't have any such policy. Isn't it just for government offices?" asks Chimma, proprietor of Saree Palace, Spencer's Plaza. He says that it is easier for him to hire another person to replace the pregnant woman.

The fashion consultant at Accessorize, Express Avenue, says that the company stands alone among simi-

lar companies when it comes to the provision of such benefits. "Maternity policy will be on 84 days. It is leave only; not payable. Otherwise we have ESI under which Rs. 200- Rs 300 will be cut every month from our salary from the time we start till we end. ESI means we can cover anything like health insurance. If I take maternity leave, then the cost for that can be claimed through this scheme. Otherwise, it's just 84 days of unpaid leave," says Sumera, a fashion consultant at the store.

Sumera says that since her job is not permanent, there are high chances of her being replaced after she trains her substitute. If not for the ESI policy, which is a self-financing

social security and health insurance scheme for Indian workers in the organized sector, the employees at Accessorize will get nothing.

This stands in contrast to international clothing store Mango, whose employees at Express Avenue, say they are eligible for three months of paid leave as of now.

Zomato has a comprehensive policy on maternity benefits that mandates terms of employment, working conditions and leave available to pregnant employees.

Wahida Suresh, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Apollo Hospital, Kotturpuram, says that the recommendation to enhance maternity leave is unnecessary.

"Frankly, almost all postpartum

problems get resolved within six weeks, even in the worst cases. Of course, it is socially advisable for the mother to be around the child for as much time as possible, but from a physiological perspective, it is not required," she says.

When quizzed about the significance of long-term breastfeeding for the child, she admits that they advise mothers to do it for a year, but that doesn't mean the mother has to stay home for that period. She says that the current three-month leave is ideal with doctor recommended extensions to be applied for special cases.

"The companies can enforce a work-from-home policy to help new mothers," she finishes.



Mid-level shops still continue to be ignorant about maternity leave PHOTO: ARPITA RAJ

# City records 62,000 child brides this year

JOICEY ANTON

**CHENNAI:** City records a high number of child marriages in Tamil Nadu, and it is quite common in slums where people are unaware of the toll free child help line 1098, sources said.

Azhgarsami, an advocate of the Madras High Court said, "The media can play a major role in preventing child marriage. None of the children are forced to marry by their parents; the children fall in love and decide to marry. Since the media is the easiest way to reach people, awareness could be created to change the mindset of the children".

Chrissonayagam, Commissioner of Social Welfare said, "All the root causes can be eliminated with proper mechanism. Due to the absence of male members in the family, girls are getting married early. In a male-dominated society, women are forced to listen to men. Whatever the circumstances, whether it is poverty or caste-related issues, the root cause has to be unearthed to stop child



PHOTO CREDIT: IBITIMES.COM

marriages."

Legal action would be taken against those involved in the marriage of girls those below the permissible age. Recently, a 16 year-old girl was forced marry, but her neighbors informed the police, he added.

In Chennai, 30 child marriages have been stopped by social welfare department, whereas in in

Dharmapuri and Nilgiris 332 and 336 child marriages have been stopped.

"We are giving instructions to the authorities of marriage halls to verify the couple's age. However few people report to us and in that case we can not do anything," said Chrissonayagam.

Since 2008, as many as 2,789 child marriages have been stopped

in Tamil Nadu out of which 1,246 were stopped from January 2014 to March 2015 alone.

In 2011, Tamil Nadu had 2.15 lakh child brides; however, it dropped into 62,500 by 2016. The city is home to 29,432 married children, including 16,343 child brides.

Dispelling the commonly held notion that child marriages are rampant in the backward districts of Perambalur, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri, the data reveals the dark secrets of high prevalence of the age-old practice in the highly urbanised districts of Chennai, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur which together accounts for 20 per cent of 3.79 lakh child brides in the state, sources said.

"We are conducting awareness programmes in slums; now most of them are aware of child protection. But we need cooperation from media and general public," said P.Rajenderan, a police official at North Beach Police Station.

Amidst such strong stand against child marriage, this report is a smear on progressive ideology.

# Police draws flak for harassing residents

BRISTI DEY

**CHENNAI:** At least 17 children were fled from a juvenile home at in Chengalpet in July in 2015 when a drunken police officer of the home beaten up the children. A case was filed against the accused but no justice has come yet.

Emi, a social activist and researcher, said every government organization had loopholes. Some of the officials who are supposed to maintain the law and order break the rules.

Emi said there were many incidents of police harassment in Chennai where there was no action taken after cases were filed. But the law should be equal for all citizens where the affected people get justice and the accused get punished.

There was another incident of police harassment where a police officer detained a 15-year-old boy suspecting that he was trying to steal a bike. The boy was kept in jail for two day and was not allowed to meet his family. The police action strongly violated the child rights by putting him with other accused in jail.

To prevent the police harassment, people should know about their rights enshrined in the constitution and law approved

several acts for implementing children's rights.

The social activist stated that, in October last year, around 50 transgender community members of Chennai filed a petition with the City Police Commissioner's office in Vepery alleging harassment by police personnel.

A Narayana, founder of the Chennai-based organization 'Change India' said most of the time the migrant people, dalits, women and children, became the victim of police harassment because they have limited power to raise their voices against the authority.

Narayana said that the recruitment and training system of the police should be modernized so that they understood the psychological norms of the society.

What the city needs is a mechanism like that put in by the Karnataka Police. The citizens can file complaints against police personnel on grounds of misconduct, detention among other issues plaguing them, the committee's name is Karnataka Police Complaints Authority (KPCA).

*The Central gov't has passed many acts to protect the rights of children, but still they face harassment at the hands of police in petty cases.*

several acts to ensure security for all specially for children and women, he further said.

As the no action had been taken against the police, such incidents are happening again. A week ago, the city police detained and beaten up a 17-year-old boy from Kannagi Nagar and later released that he was the wrong person.

Police think that the children have no rights because they are vulnerable section of the society but the Central Government passed



Keeping the heat away with an umbrella



You can stay cool with water melons

## Stay protected this summer

ASHNA KUMAR

**CHENNAI:** With the rise in temperature, concerns over heat stroke and exhaustion are also mounting in the city as hospitals see more and more patients battling the scorching heat.

According to an official of the Meteorological Department the city has recorded temperatures five times above normal in the past few days and it will only rise in the coming days.

To keep the heat at bay, people are advised to stay indoors or be in shade if outside and keep themselves hydrated.

"Drink water half-hourly and increase intake of electrolyte rich liquids like buttermilk, coconut water and lemonade," said Dr. Jayashree Soundarajan, Consultant at Apollo Hospital, Alwarpet.

She added that the hospital

received 10 patients on an average every week, mostly suffering from heat exhaustion or dehydration.

Excessive sweating, inadequate intake of fluids and irregular eating habits often result in loss of key minerals in body like potassium, carbohydrates and magnesium therefore people are advised to have four square meals a day and include fruits in diet like bananas, oranges, watermelon and strawberries.

"Oily and spicy food should be avoided because they are warming foods and increase the body temperature, caffeine and alcohol too," advised Dr. Soundarajan.

One mistake that doctors and nutritionists warn against is 'voluntary thirst'; do not wait until you are thirsty, our body sweats at a much faster rate than we realise.

"Loss of water in body can result in muscle cramps, dry skin, nausea and headache and if not treated soon

it might turn into a heat stroke, which can be fatal," said Dr. R. Sujith, General Physician/Dietician.

Heat or sun stroke is a condition when the body fails to regulate the body temperature due to over exposure in sun accompanied by dehydration.

Heat exhaustion and sun stroke should not be confused as same, heat exhaustion is a minor condition due to excessive sweating but it can turn into a stroke if there is over exposure to heat and the body is not given a chance to recuperate.

Tight, figure hugging clothes should be avoided; instead loose, light coloured clothes should be worn to combat heat. Also people are advised to carry umbrellas.

Athletes or those performing high-intensity workouts should keep a sports drink handy as it contains the right mix of water, sodium, carbohydrates, sugar and potassium.

"Consuming sports drink helps energize muscles and in turn results in better performance," said Dr. Sujith.

But, it is not ideal for those who workout for less than an hour every day. "Anything in excess too is harmful for health," he added.

According to specialists, swimming, yoga and walking are the best workouts for this season.

The soaring temperature poses not only a problem for people but for animals too, animal right activists suggest that water bowls should be kept in streets, outside homes and offices; wherever one finds it suitable to help animals quench thirst. Dehydration can have serious health consequences, therefore take it seriously, don't forget to keep yourself hydrated this summer.

Brace yourself as the heat is bound to increase, so stay indoors this season.

## Compensation reduced for victims of bike accidents

AVANTIKA MANU

**CHENNAI:** The Madras High Court has reduced the compensation awarded to a victim of a motorcycle accident by Rs.50,000 citing contributory negligence for not wearing a helmet while riding the two wheeler.

The court passed the order on an appeal from National Insurance Company against the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal's compensation by reducing Rs 50,000 from the total compensation of Rs.35.50 lakh.

Wearing helmets was made mandatory by the Madras High Court on July 1, 2015 under Section 129 of the Motor Vehicles Act 1988, and non compliance would result in the driver's documents and licence being impounded. It had also ordered the installation of CCTV cameras in junctions to monitor the implementation of the order.

However, the rule failed to create the desired effect, as many two wheel riders still drive around the city without wearing a helmet.

Caroline Joseph a resident of Nungabakkam said, "I don't own a helmet, if I ever get caught by the traffic police I always cry or shout my way out of it."

While giving the order to strictly enforce the helmet rule, the court had mentioned that women and children could not be exempted from the rule for any reason.

P.S Kothandaraman, a Madras High Court lawyer, said, "The High Court has reduced the compensation to ensure safety."

## Life-savers on two wheels

GAYLE SEQUEIRA

**CHENNAI,** March 23: Responder bikes (wrongly called two-wheeler ambulances) have benefited 650 citizens since their launch on February 8, according to Prabhudoss, Head of Marketing and Hospital Relations, GVK-EMRI.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa launched 41 first responder two-wheeler bikes, of which ten are Scootys, five Avenger bikes and the rest, Yamaha vehicles. Of the 650 citizens helped, 175 were victims of road accidents, while the rest suffered from non-vehicular traumas such as dehydration and pregnancy-related ailments," he added.

"Though the bikes have been referred to as "motorbike ambulances", this is a misnomer. The bikes do not transport patients at all, which is the function of an ambulance. They are simply responder bikes," said Prabhudoss.

The organization, which runs '108' ambulances, has a 1:4 ratio for ambulances and responder bikes. "We currently have ten bikes and 40 ambulances operational in Chennai," he said.

According to Prabhudoss, the major advantage provided by these motorbikes is that they can be used in different terrains. "A second advantage is that female paramedics find it easier to drive

bikes as opposed to four-wheelers," he added.

Prabhudoss also said that unlike ambulances, it was easier for the bikes to weave their way swiftly through the city even during periods of high-traffic, reaching victims faster. He added that at night, when the traffic is low, these bikes are not used.

These bikes contain first-aid supplies and medicines, an oxygen cylinder, a pulse oximeter, apparatus to measure blood pressure, a glucometer, fluids and splints.

The moment the GVK EMRI 108 Ambulance Head Office receives a call, the staff try to ascertain whether a regular ambulance or a motorbike responder is closer. Usually, a motorbike ambulance is sent first to assess the situation, perform first-aid and then call the ambulance in case of an emergency. Prabhudoss said that the office received an average of five calls a day.

Prabhudoss credited motorbike responders with extending the window period for saving a life and lending a helping hand to ambulances in the city "The first woman to drive a responder bike in Tamil Nadu drives one of our bikes in Chennai," he said.

The bike rider can give CPR and help patients whose blood pressure is down.

## TN registers 450 cases of missing children

JOICEY ANTON

**CHENNAI:** Five children go missing in Tamil Nadu every day and this year so far, 450 children have gone missing across the state. However, almost one third of the missing children have been rescued.

Two days ago a nine month old boy was missing from the pavements of Rattan Bazar in Chennai.

"The child was sleeping with his mother; she fed the baby around 3.30 am but when she awoke in the morning she found that the child was not with her. The parents complained immediately to the police station," said Vasu, sub inspector of police from B2 Esplanade police station.

"We have given his details to the media, and we hope we will rescue him soon. Meanwhile, we are investigating many angles, we will not close the case file until and unless we find him," he added. Manjula, caretaker of an observation home for girls, said "Rescued children, whose parents cannot be located, will be sent to observation homes under the social defence department in Puraivakkam, where they are provided opportunities to study till 18 years of age after they will be transferred to Vellore."

Shanthini, an advocate from the Madras HC, said "There are various reasons behind children going missing. They get away to earn a living, escape from domestic violence and elope with a loved one. Some are sold to labour contractors and some are kidnapped for ransoms."

Parents can call the child helpline which is a 24-hour emergency phone service for children in distress. The service is available in 75 cities across India. The service has received over 11 million calls from children and worked with 3 million children in need of care and protection. 32 percent of these interventions have been for missing children. Successful restoration of children to their families amounts to only 10.82 percent.

## Ban on Fixed drug combinations, boon?

DARSHANA DAGA

**CHENNAI:** While wholesalers and retailers have demanded more transparency and time to implement the government's decision to ban Fixed Drug Combinations (FDC's), health activists and doctors supported the government when it urged the Delhi High Court to lift its stay on the banned drugs.

"There are thousands of companies manufacturing these combinations. It is very difficult to collect them from retailers who keep a strip or two of these different companies," said Prakash Jain of Jain Pharma and Surgical, a wholesale shop in Park Town.

"The Government should give us at least three months. It is impossible to collect them all from retailers and show the record to drug inspector instantaneously."

"We have paid Value Added Tax on these products and now companies will not reimburse us," When asked about whether

wholesalers were informed by the government about the banned drugs Prakash Jain said that they had not been informed by the government or by the Madras Wholesale Pharmaceutical Association.

On March 10, the Central Drug Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) - an Indian drug regulator - banned 344 drugs for the reason that they are likely to involve risk to human beings and found to have no therapeutic justification.

These are fixed dose combination medicines which are made by mixing two or more drugs. Some of the popular brands affected by the ban includes Vicks Action 500 tablet, Corex cough syrup, Nimesulide, D'Cold and Benadryl. India is a world leader in FDC drugs and around 45 per cent of India's Pharmaceutical market comprises of FDC drugs.

"Since the last two decades we are pressuring the government for the formulation of a rational use



Some have welcomed the ban on combination drugs

policy. All single ingredient drugs are under price control mechanism, but most of the combination drugs are out of the purview of this mechanism.

Pharmaceutical companies promote combination drugs as they fetch more price than the single ingredient drugs. We

support the government's move in banning these irrational combination drugs," said Dr. Mira Siva member of All India Drug Action Network, an independent network of several non-government organisations working to improve rational use of essential medicines.

Dr. George Thomas, an Orthopedist in Mylapore, said "There is a difference between rational combinations and irrational combinations."

"The Government has banned irrational combinations. Aciclofenac drug should be taken after food and Rabepazole drug should be taken before food and therefore when you take these two drugs as a combination drug it becomes an irrational drug and causes some side effects."

"In some rational drug combination, especially some anti-diabetic drugs, the combination drugs work together in a best form."

Dr. Sunny Gugale, an

Orthopedic Surgeon, at Apollo Hospital, said "Apart from having different side effects, irrational antibiotic combinations contribute to antibiotic resistance."

"It is difficult to examine which ingredient is causing adverse effects on patient in the case of combination drugs. There are alternative and single ingredient drugs available and doctors should promote them."

On whether the ban on these combination drugs will make alternative or single ingredient drugs costly Dr. Arjun Rajagopalan, Medical Director of Sundaram Medical Foundation, said, "Fixed drug combinations are a long-standing method of circumventing price controls. Individual drug prices are fixed, but paradoxically, combinations can be registered as new formulas and sold at any price."

Anand Kadkol, a media person said, "The issue is very complex, we cannot comment on anything as the matter is still pending."

# 'We shouldn't romanticise Maoists'

BOISHAKHI DUTT

CHENNAI: "We should not romanticise Maoists as the saviours and protectors of the Adivasis," said author and sociologist Ramachandra Guha, speaking about 'The Tragedy of the Adivasis in Independent India' at the 36th J. P. Memorial Lecture in the city today.

Tracing the history of the Adivasis since independence, Guha said that there had been Adivasi rebellions from the 1830s, when the British first started taking away their lands to build railways. The railroads, along with bringing greater connectivity, also slowly gave rise to a class of exploitative landlords.

Guha talked about 1946 giving rise to a new chapter in the Adivasi narrative, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then the head of the interim government, moved the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly of India that proclaimed that the soon-to-be nation would be

an Independent Sovereign Republic.

The resolution also said 'adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes...'

Guha argued "Seventy years have passed since the resolution was passed but the tribals in India have in the last seven decades been the victims of India's democratic development. They have continuously been exploited and dispossessed, and most often their deprivation is much more severe in comparison to other disadvantaged groups like Dalits and Muslims."

Guha said when industrial development planning began in the 1950s, it was the tribals who had to make way for dams, factories, irrigation systems and mines. In 1966, there was a major Adivasi uprising in Bastar in Chhattisgarh, a militant movement in Bihar in the 1970s, demanding the creation of the separate state of Jharkhand. The 1980s to the present day has seen



Ramachandra Guha delivers the JP Narayan Memorial Lecture, 2016, organised by PUCL

PHOTO: DEBAYAN ROY

movements such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan and others that highlight the plight of the Adivasis in India, said Guha.

Guha, drawing parallels between the situation of Dalits and Adivasis, spoke of two broad reasons why Dalits have fared better in

independent India. The first reason he spoke of was the historical reason. "There has never been and unlikely to ever be an Adivasi B. R. Ambedkar," he said. The second reason, he said, is geographic. "The Adivasis sit on the most valuable mineral resources in the country.

While Dalits have become pan-Indian, Adivasis are regional, and their regions are also Maoist disturbed areas."

Dalits in India have also been grievously exploited, but they, unlike the Adivasis, have chosen constitutional ways to voice their

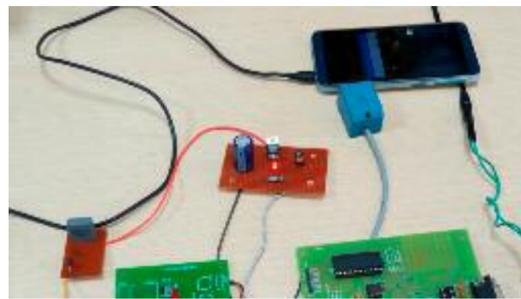
struggles, Guha said, also mentioning the exclusion of the Adivasis not just from mainstream media but any kind of coverage. Guha went on to talk of two possible solutions that could be undertaken by the Indian state to tackle the issue. One was efficient

police action, which would isolate rebels and force them to surrender. While the second Guha said, was to "bring the fruits of development to the Adivasis and make them a part of the economic development. Salwa Judum is not the answer."

Emphasising the need to find a solution to the Maoist disturbance, Guha said that it was wrong to romanticise them as the liberators of the poor and the saviours of the Adivasis.

Guha, concluding his talk, said that the title of his lecture was misleading, as there was no tragedy of the Adivasis, there were only tragedies, and he did not see their situation getting any better, at least in the short-term.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former Governor of West Bengal, and a number of senior journalists were among those present at the memorial lecture which took place at Vidyalaya School in T. Nagar in the city. The talk witnessed a surge of students, mostly IAS aspirants.



Engg Students display a mobile charger which works on radiation energy

PHOTO: DEBAYAN ROY

## Innovation gets a boost

DEBAYAN ROY

CHENNAI: The Pan IIT Alumni Association has organised an innovation based project competition, InnoWathon, at IIT Madras Research Park in an attempt to bring the lesser known engineering college students into the mainstream by introducing their innovative projects to key industry players.

The event, which witnessed a footfall of around 5000 people including academicians, company representatives and students, revolved around the theme of 'Conservation of Natural Resources' which included primarily air and water resources.

Mr. Krishnamurthy Rao, member of the Pan IIT Alumni Leadership Series (PAILS), said, "This event is primarily aimed to help the students from the lesser known engineering colleges catapult themselves into the mainstream. We try to bridge the gap between the students and the companies who are always on the lookout for research ideas."

The event witnessed participation from eight engineering institutes. Some of them were, Pratyusha Engineering College, Agni College of Engineering, Vellore Institute of Technology, among others. Each college was represented by a batch of three students who had

developed a prototype project spanning over a period of six months with the help of guides and professors.

Students from Pratyusha Engineering College attempted to target the problem of vehicular emissions and help car companies avoid paying millions for illegal carbon emissions. One of the students said, "We have developed special chemicals which will be added in a device with multiple layers fit to the carbon emission pipe in a vehicle. This would help in carbon absorption at those levels and result in significantly less carbon emissions."

The students have priced their prototype to give a realistic estimate "Our project would be built at a cost of Rs. 7,500, with an added Rs. 300 as monthly maintenance costs," said Raja, one of the students.

S. Subramanian, another member of PAILS, said, "There is an urgent need for the industry to sponsor ideas on which the students can work on. Often the project students work on dies with their graduation, but if industries step in, then it could be taken forward to achieve a true 'Make in India' atmosphere."

Lakshmi, a second year electrical engineering student, says, "The USP of our project is that it seeks to curb the need for expensive power banks."

# Lankan refugees caught between two 'homes'

DIVYA GROVER

CHENNAI: Despite the improving situation in Sri Lanka and the easy repatriation program offered by India, Sri Lankan refugees living in the Gummidipundi Camp of Tamil Nadu are in a dilemma; they are unable to choose between the two nations – their hometown and the country which provided them with asylum in the hour of need.

The Gummidipundi camp, situated in the Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu is home to nearly 2500 Sri Lankan refugees.

Shanthini (35), who came to India in 2006 along with her husband and three kids, has been living in the Gummidipundi refugee camp for past 8 years. Living in the constant fear of being harassed for being a Tamil in Sri Lanka, Shanthini felt safe while in India.

She said, "We (she and her

family) left the military camp in Sri Lanka because of the persistent fear that the LTTE will recruit my kids in their baby brigade. In India, there is no such fear. There are no problems here as such. We feel safe. I can't risk our lives."

K. Jayamalar (50) has been living in the Gummidipundi camp since 1998, teaches in the refugee camp school for past 16 years.

"My kids do not want to go back. We have everything here – a fine home, food, clothing, good education," she said. "There are no job opportunities for us (refugees) in India. One can easily get a job, as much as a government job in Sri Lanka," she added.

Satha Mathy (45) is waiting for her children to complete their free education in India before leaving for Sri Lanka. "Education is good here (in India) and job prospects are great in Sri Lanka. I'll leave with my kids once they complete their education," she said.

Satchithananda Valan Michael, Associate Repatriation Officer, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said, "Nobody has an answer for what these refugees actually want – to stay in India or move back to Sri Lanka. They themselves are confused. But, if we go with the general trend, 60 per cent of the refugees might leave in the years to come." Nandhini Devi (52) said, "We cannot decide whether we should go back or not. If we are provided with Indian citizenship, our job prospects will open up. But the government is not doing that. On the other hand, we might get good government jobs in Sri Lanka but the government is not stable there."

V. Krishnamoorthy, Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, stated that with great education and wider employment market in India, the younger generation saw enormous potential in India.



A Sri Lankan refugee, Shanthini, stands by her hut in the Gummidipundi Camp

PHOTO: DIVYA GROVER

"Even though the conditions in Sri Lanka have improved and peace has been restored, the younger people have accepted India as their home. They are completely disinterested in the idea of leaving this nation."

Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu is home to 1293 families of the Sri Lankan refugees living in – the Gummidipundi and Puzhal camps – accounting for 4143 persons in total, as given in the UNHCR Report 2016.

# Agitation continues at Modern Bakery

DARSHANA DAGA

CHENNAI: Workers of the Modern Bakery factory here are on a protracted agitation since February 29 and said the agitation will continue till the Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) management accepted their demand.

In September 2015 Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) had sold its bread and bakery business under 'Modern' brand to Everstone Group's Nimman Food's Private Lmt. But HUL and Everstone are still working on the necessary approvals to complete the transaction. The factory is currently under HUL management and will remain under it till all transaction is

complete.

"HUL has sold Modern factory to Everstone Group at a huge price. They earned a huge profit from the deal. They should share some amount of the deal with us. Our other major demand is not to lay off workers once Everstone Group's management takes over," said T. Srinivasan, General Secretary of the Modern Bakery Employees Union.

The demands by workers also include permanent job to temporary workers, health insurance cover, full compensation for accident at workplace and increment in housing, clothing and rent allowances. The Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU) has backed the Modern Bakery Employees



Workers protesting for seven key demands

PHOTO: TNLABOUR.IN

Union's agitation. The HUL management denied that any agitation was going on and said that the production was on as usual.

"The agitation is being held across India in all the six branches of Modern factory. The HUL General Manager has assured us that company will look into the workers' demand and will come with some decision soon. Till then they had asked us to continue production peacefully," said Srinivasan.

He said that the Chennai Bakery Unit is the most profitable of the units in India of Modern Bread, and that the workers here must be compensated in accordance to the quantum of production of the plant is

undertaking. "The majority is the temporary and contract workers here. The company is not disclosing all the details of its agreement with the Everstone Group. We are not clear on how much protection is given to temporary workers in the signed agreement," he added.

"The prices of all the essential commodities are rising but for years company has not increased our wages," said K. Savan a temporary worker of the factory.

"Every Sunday I buy bread from the Modern Bakery outlet. The outlet has fresh supply of breads as it is situated just next to the factory. If the factory is closed I will miss my Sunday breakfast bread," said S. Rajesh, resident of Taramani.

# Tiger shooting creates a stir

GAYLE SEQUEIRA

CHENNAI: The shooting of a tiger near Gudalur town in the Nilgiris by a Special Task Force (STF) has elicited strong reactions from animal welfare organizations in the city.

"On such occasions, the focus should be on diffusing the situation by first catching the tiger and then rehabilitating it. Killing it should be a last resort," according to Vinod Kumar, Assistant Secretary of the Animal Welfare Board of India.

He added that tigers entering residential areas in search of food was a common issue today. "When tigers become old, they find it difficult to hunt and feed. So they look for easy prey such as cattle," he said.

Citing a 2013 letter from the Ministry of Environment and Forests to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forestry Force and the Chief Wildlife Wardens, he said that the use of tranquilisers and trap-cages into which tigers can be lured were the most



The tiger which was shot near Gudalur by STF

PHOTO: NDTV

appropriate measures for dealing with tigers in such situations.

He added that under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, unless a tiger was habituated to causing human death and was confirmed as a 'man-eater', it should not

be eliminated. C. Padmavathy, Managing Trustee of the Animal Welfare and Protection Trust, an organisation that deals with the rescue of old and injured animals condemned the shooting of the tiger. "The use of tranquilisers should have been employed as a more humane measure," she said.

Arivazhagan, Managing Trustee of the Indo-American Wildlife Society said that the organisation held tiger conservation awareness programs for schoolchildren across the city. "The tiger is an endangered species. The best bet for capturing a tiger is triangulation – surrounding the animal slowly and then capturing it. The entrapped tiger should then be sent to a local zoo," he said.

The eight-year-old male tiger was shot by the STF on March 19 after it was suspected of having killed an estate worker earlier that week. The STF was not to employ the use of tranquilisers successfully due to low-visibility, and so resorted to shooting the tiger.

AVANTIKA M

CHENNAI: As much as 80 per cent of the engineering graduates are unemployable, according to the fifth edition of National Employability report 2015.

Sreenath who passed out from the Hindustan University in 2014 said, "Our college never exposed us to the practical field. The whole system of exams was a facade, it held no importance, and our professors always subtly told us the questions that will come in the internals."

Sreenath added that it was easy to pass exams if one sat with previous years question paper and mugged up the answers. The colleges did not test the students' knowledge or skill, their main aim was to have as many students clear the exams.

Many mechanical and automobile engineering students from private colleges complained that they hardly had

two or three practical classes, it was mostly theoretical.

Jithin who was a topper at Hindustan University said, "I passed out in 2014 and still am struggling to secure a job."

Mithun Mohan Vettah, India's superbike racing champion, is an automobile engineering dropout from Hindustan University. He said, "Studying at that college was a waste of time and money. I thought the curriculum would be less of classroom study."

Venkat, a mechanical engineering professor at Jeppiaur College, said "Practical knowledge is less in B.Tech, which is not a drawback if you have the patience to pursue your M.Tech and try to gain practical knowledge through internships."

Venkat also said, "Our society doesn't realize the value of education, it is all about getting a degree. The number of engineering seats is much more than the number of students who want to pursue

it. In today's day and age anybody can become an engineer."

Kunal Kamble, Lakshmi Kant and Paul Alex from NIT Calicut, were the first ones before IIT Mumbai to make a Qwadopter (multirotor helicopter that is lifted and propelled by four rotors). But it took them six years to pass their engineering.

Tharun John Joseph, a research student at IIT Madras, said, "Most of the students that pass out of engineering colleges do not have their concepts clear. The fault lies in the schooling system which gives importance to marks, conceptual part is not necessary."

Many of the engineering colleges in Chennai, like the College of Engineering, Guindy, have a system of cut off where admission is given on the basis of twelfth board results.

According to Tharun, this however, places the CBSE and ICSE students at a disadvantage, since even an average student in state board scores 95 percent.



Riot of colours during the festival which is celebrated with much gusto in the north

## Non- 'Holi' day for city

BHAGYASHREE NAIR

CHENNAI: "Rang De! The War of Colours!" read the Facebook poster of a Holi party being hosted inviting youngsters from the city to celebrate the festival in grand style. The poster showcased a bevy of purple and pink-bodied scarcely dressed teenagers, screaming in mirth, apparently in great enjoyment. This poster has been touted it as one of the biggest Holi parties being hosted in the city.

The city seems to be having a normal week, with everyone going about their jobs like any other day, while North Indians earnestly looks forward to their beloved festival of

colours.

Most residents of Chennai don't seem very keen about the festival.

Bhaskar Balaji (59) who has lived in Chennai all his life says that he knows the festival exists but it's a normal day like any other. "I have never played Holi in my life. It's not even a holiday here. I go to work like any other day. And plus, it's more for kids and I personally don't like the idea of slobbering each other with colours and dousing water like hooligans," he said.

His wife, Alli Bhaskar (51) had other concerns. "Chennai has a massive water shortage. We cannot afford to waste water like this," she

said.

Prateek Damodaren (20), a student at the Madras Christian College says he gets invited to Holi parties in the city. "I haven't played Holi, but I do get invitations by my friends who are from the North to play Holi. It looks fun, but I haven't attended any of them yet. It's a normal day for me."

Roshan Behl from Delhi has been staying in Chennai for three years and said he misses home but has played the festival with the same vigor and zeal here with his friends. "We host parties and celebrate the same way just like back home. Why stop celebrating a festival if you live in a state where it isn't important?" he said.

ARJIT DABAS

CHENNAI: When you look or talk to 22 year-old Tenzin Dalha, you won't realize that you're talking to an upcoming Bollywood actor. First thing that strikes you is how comfortable he is with the Hindi language, despite being of Tibetan origin.

"I have learnt the language till class 6 and I also used to talk to all my friends in Hindi. So I can properly understand and talk in Hindi" he says. This is also one of his biggest advantage as an actor and he proudly admits it, "Of course it's a big advantage, but I need to be careful about not being stereotyped in only one role (North eastern guy)" he adds.

He hates it when someone calls him North Eastern. "I'm a Tibetan born in India. I have been born and bought up in Delhi, so calling me a North Eastern just because of my appearance wouldn't be fair to either the people of North East nor me," he adds.

Talking about his Tibetan identity, which has even got him in trouble, Tenzin says "I'm proud of being a Tibetan and would love to visit the country once. But I know that if I go there, I would probably be arrested by the Chinese authorities"

He recounts the incident when



Tenzin Dalha talks about career plans PHOTO: ARJIT DABAS

his Tibetan identity was enforced upon him in school. "I didn't used to think about it much, until class 9, when Chinese president Wen Jiabao visited my school but I wasn't allowed to meet him and was asked not to come to school at all because of my Tibetan identity. My only form of protest to this was I wrote free Tibet on one of the posters that was placed at the entrance to welcome the Chinese president."

Tenzin was also arrested when he was 14 years old for showing solidarity to the Tibetan cause at India Gate.

Coming back to acting, Tenzin

thanks his school theatre teacher Stephen Marazzi for encouraging him to take it up as something more than just a hobby. Apart from just educating about theatre, he spoke to him about life and also the importance of doing something you love. His classes made a big impact on Tenzin and after working with him in three stage productions- The Lion King, Les Miserables and Macbeth, Tenzin realized that Marazzi indeed puts his words into action. "His commitment towards work has to be seen to be believed. I'm not really sure words can describe the passion he feels towards his work" Tenzin adds.

Tenzin was also active in theatre in his college, Ramjas College, Delhi University. "Our theatre society was good and we won a lot of competitions. Working with people from different backgrounds also taught me a lot."

One of his proudest moments came, when he directed a self-scripted play called Al-Gaav (the separated) inspired by QTP's play -So Many Socks. Al-Gaav is a story about a woman who was imprisoned for 27 years for carrying the picture of Dalai Lama with her, which is a punishable offence in Tibet. The play deals with the personal struggles and problems faced by three generations of Tibetan refugees.

His big break came when he was selected to play the role of Nima, opposite Kalki Koechlin in the film Margarita With A Straw. The film was critically acclaimed and Tenzin's performance was appreciated by the audiences. "It was a meeting of a cultural and physical minority and how they connect through music. They overcame their cultural-political oppression," he explains.

After that, he did a few advertisements and now he's looking forward to "99 Songs" which is his next film. It will also be AR Rahman's first film production.



A Kathakali performance at Guruvayoor Temple

## Keeping Kerala art forms

BHAGYASHREE NAIR

CHENNAI: Uthareeyam, a non-profit organisation based in Chennai is dedicated to promoting the classical art forms of Kerala, its motto being 'enrichment through aesthetic experience'. It was founded in 2012 by Chairman A. Vaidhyathan and Rajesh Warrior.

"We were people who moved around in the circle of such art forms and knew about the fight to exist. There were many issues concerning these performing artists and we thought to do something about it," said Warrior.

"It started out really small, but now we organise bi-monthly programmes of Kathakali, Koodiyattam, Chakyar Koothu, Mohiniyattam etc. These are all complimented by lecture-demos. We have done 180 shows in the past two years which included 250 artists from Kerala. That was a big milestone," said Shyam Kumar, a Chakyar Koothu exponent, disciple of Panikulam Narayanana Chakyar.

Shyam Kumar also described some of the most popular shows they had organised and these included 'Kirmeeravadhan', 'Dakshyagan', 'Kamsavadham', 'Kuchelavritam, and 'Ravanolbhavam'.

"These productions have been performed

everywhere and have a big fan following. We perform in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Chennai primarily. We've been invited to various temples in Kerala specially Guruvayoor which is a favourite stage for us. We've performed some great pieces there," he said.

The founders look forward to taking the organisation a notch up by performing internationally this year. "We have been getting invites from all over, but nothing seemed to fit into place. A number of new pieces are being directed and some of our classic pieces are being worked on," said Warrior.

## Serving tea, happiness

ARPITA RAJ

CHENNAI: Renuka's smiling face is the first thing that greets you when you walk into the all-purpose shop she runs with her husband. Initially she sold tea, coffee, pound cake and other edibles. Now the store has since expanded to include quick fixes like bread-omelette, different kinds of milky drinks, a wider assortment of snacks as well as aerated beverages.

"Most of the people who come to the shop are college-goers. They all kept asking for Coke, Fanta. Finally we purchased two coolers to sell soft drinks. We're happy because the sales are good," she says.

Renuka, who hails from Cheyyar, which is three hours away by bus, has been running the stall for the past ten years. Her husband has been in the business for the past 30 years. They say that they manage to make ends meet but would like to earn a little more.

"Our daily investment in the stall is Rs. 5,000 that goes towards buying bread, eggs, tea, milk etc. At the end of the day, we have a profit of about Rs. 1,000. Some days it's less and some days more. There are things that we can't do

of the surrounding colleges are out of session. They have to make do -with the few customers who turn up. Their monthly expenditure is Rs. 6,000. Rs. 5, 500 goes towards rent while electricity and water charges make up the remaining Rs. 500. "We make about Rs. 15, 000 less than what we make otherwise because there is no business. Those months are very tough," says Renuka's husband. They have been married for the past 14 years and share a small home, five minutes away from the shop.

Though she was only educated till the ninth standard, she is keen that her children study well, especially Gomti, her

eldest. "She can be anything she wants. We just want her to be successful. It'll be her choice to make," she says. Renuka feels bad that her children have almost no friends among their neighbours. After being in school from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon, they spend all their time at the stall with their parents. "I used to worry that all they had was each other but they are happy playing here. They learn about the shop also. All their friends are youngsters like you!" she says.

whom are regulars of the tiny establishment. The teashop can seat 15 people while functioning at full capacity. The couple says that their fastest moving items are cigarettes. "People come to smoke and buy a tea or coffee to go along with it. College students, delivery boys and old men all come here to buy cigarettes and beedis. Initially girls never used to smoke at the shop. When we started seeing them smoke we were surprised. But now, it's all the same who purchases the cigarettes," she explains. Their problem months are May, June and July, which is when most



Renuka with her children

PHOTO: ARPITA RAJ



The Sunshine Orchestra during a rehearsal

PHOTO: GOOGLE

## Bringing sunshine to their lives

ARJIT DABAS

CHENNAI: Jayamalini is a 22 year-old cello player who has played in front of global audiences; six years ago she didn't even know what a cello was. She was picked up by AR Rahman's Sunshine Orchestra, which funded her training and made her the musician that she is today.

Sunshine Orchestra is AR Rahman Foundation's philanthropic initiative where they pick up young underprivileged children and teach them different instruments.

"Rahman felt that quality ins-

trumentalists were hard to find and something needed to be done to fill that gap and also this is his way of giving back --to society," says Srinivasa Murthy, conductor of the Sunshine Orchestra.

Murthy started conducting and teaching for the Orchestra in 2013, four years after its inception in 2009. "Rahman brought me in as he was disappointed with what the kids had learnt, he felt there was a communication gap as most of the teachers were foreign. It also took me 6-7 months to get close to these children, after that it became easier," Murthy adds.

Now the Orchestra has come a long way, it has performed abroad and has also given music for Tamil films including Rajnikanth's Lingaa.

The AR Rahman Foundation provides the money for the instruments given to these children along with providing for food and lodging. All of them have also been given a laptop and a smart phone. "Children also have an option to study further through correspondence if they wish to after class 12" says Murthy.

But when you ask these children what they wish to pursue in future,

most of them wish to be musicians. Karthik Balaji, who is one of the academically bright students says "I don't want to be an engineer or a doctor. I want to make the most out of this opportunity and be a good musician. Even my parents are supporting me"

Few of the challenges for the Orchestra have been retaining the talent. "Since it's a long term project, many students drop out in between. We had one girl who was the part of the first batch; she was extremely talented but dropped out as she wanted to go to a regular college," says Murthy.