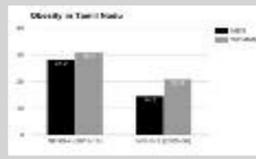




International Women's Day

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More women obese: NFHS

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Few takers for U.S. education

Page 4

Fishermen yet to get relief from Govt

SAMUEL MERIGALA MAHBUBUL A SHOURAV

The interim relief of Rs. 5000 for each fisherman's family, distributed by Chief Minister, E.Palaniswami, on March 6 in RK Nagar has not reached the areas affected by the oil spill.

With no buyers for their catch, the fishermen from Bharathiyar Nagar, Kasi Vishvantha Koiluppam and Kasi Visalachi Puram are forced to work as daily laborers and clean the oil from the rocks on the shore.

In January, two ships collided off the Ennore coast and discharged a huge amount of oil.

The slick spread down the coast and blackened the beaches leading to the death of turtles and fish.

Since then there have been fears

that the fish might be contaminated.

The few who venture into the sea sell their catch in Kasimedu at give-away prices.

The fishing market along the beach in Bharathiyar Nagar which has remained closed since the oil spill is now the makeshift headquarters of Sea Care Marine Services, who have been called to arrest the spread of sludge.

The fishing market is littered with buckets, rubber sheets and nets covered in sludge.

"The faster we clean the rocks and get rid of the specialists, the sooner we can open the market," says Anand Raj, a fisherman from Bharathiyar Nagar.

Sea Care Marine Services say that it will take at least a fortnight for them to end operations in Erna-

voor. Kaliyamurthy and Dharmaraj, two senior fishermen claim that since the oil spill, no monetary assistance has been given to the fishing community of the three villages which collectively have 2500 residents.

Most of the fishermen claim to have seen the telecast of E. Palaniswami distributing the interim relief to each family but say they weren't given any prior intimation of such an event.

Nirmal Dass, a functionary for the local councilor, KP Shankar claims that those fishermen were given "empty envelopes" at the relief distribution event.

He says that the relief money is usually transferred to the accounts of fisherman.

Dass reveals that the move was

to appease larger fishermen associations in Kasimedu and Royapuram.

These fishermen do not fish in shallow waters and but their livelihood has been affected by fears that the fish might be contaminated.

Dass says, "The government doesn't care about the smaller fishing villages."

He also says that the forms which need to be filled up to get the relief have not been issued. Without these forms the relief money cannot be transferred to the accounts of fishermen.

An official from the Fisheries Department said that the relief money would reach the fishermen in two weeks time

Meanwhile the usually crowded Kasimedu fish market in Royapuram does not get many people these

days because there is suspicion over the quality of the fish after the oil spill.

Gandhali, who sells fish by auction, said "The number of buyers in the fish market is very low. Before the oil spill, we used to sell one bucket of Tuna fish within five minutes and got a fair price while now we have to wait for two to three hours for a good price as those who are coming, not offering a fair price in the auction".

Kailash Chandra, aged 52, from Nugambakkam, who has been exporting fish for around 10 years, said "I think the quality of the fish is getting better. But other buyers are still concerned about the quality."

"That's why the price of the fish is low compared to what it was a few months before," he added.



Boats sit idle on the Ennore coast as oil-contaminated fish threaten fishermen livelihood | SAMUEL



Former Chief Minister Paneerselvam outside the Rajarathinam stadium on a day-long hunger strike | LAVANYA

OPS launches a 'holy war'

LAVANYA. R

Tamil Nadu Health Minister Vijayabaskar would be the first one to be caught, were the CBI to conduct an enquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of AIADMK supreme Jayalalithaa, former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam said.

Panneerselvam was speaking near the Rajarathinam Stadium at the completion of the hunger strike carried out by his faction of the AIADMK here.

Referring to AIADMK acting general secretary V.K.Sasikala's family, he said that Tamil Nadu was in a sorry state with a family taking over the party and the government. He declared that he had begun a 'holy war' with the hunger strike and would not rest till he got the answers.

All the speakers at the stadium raised questions on the treatment given to Jayalalithaa at Apollo Hospital.

Former AIADMK spokesperson

Sankaradas wondered if the doctors who came from abroad to treat Jayalalithaa did go inside the ward and check her. He took a jibe at Forest Minister Dindugal Srinivasan for claiming that the late chief minister had sweets when she was in the hospital, for she was diabetes patient.

Velanganni alias Kasturi, District Women Forum Secretary and Councillor, Egmore area, said "This is the first in the series of protests we're going to carry out if a CBI inquiry is not ordered into Amma's death."

N.Boopathi, Deputy Secretary, Anna Nagar area, said "We want to know what happened in Poes garden the day she was admitted. We want to know what happened in all those 73 days she was in the hospital."

He said that OPS was their true leader for he was the one Jayalalithaa chose when she had to step down as chief minister before.

Demonstrations were held also in other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Complaints against overpricing on the rise

B PRADEEP

Consumer complaints against shops selling goods over the maximum retail price are on the rise in the city, according to the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum, Chennai at Park Town.

"Complaints over misuse of MRP in medicines, water bottles, biscuit packs, sugar and milk packets are common. Come summer, consumers file more cases of defects in purchased refrigerators

and RO water systems," says T. Jayaraman, a head clerk at the DCDRF.

According to the Legal Metrology and Standards of Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 overcharging is an unfair trade practice and is a punishable offence.

"Everything I sell is at MRP, but not milk," admits R.Velusamy, who owns a provision store at Kanagam in Taramani. It is not just Velusamy or milk packets, the practice of

selling products for more than the quoted MRP is usually observed in grocery shops, supermarkets and theatres.

"Not only in Kanagam, Avin does not sell milk at MRP to dealers or suppliers in the whole of Chennai. MRP is only for the card holders,"

Velusamy alleges. A. Selvam, cashier at an elite TASMAR store in a mall, says "The extra Rs. 10 on the bottle is for loading and unloading and electricity charges for cooling the bottles."

The DCDRF data for Chennai (South) suggests an increase in the number of cases filed over the years.

While it disposed of 141 cases in 2010, the numbers doubled to 300 in 2014 and rose to 392 in 2016. For the months of January and February 2017 alone, there are 77 cases waiting to be cleared.

"Awareness of consumers in cities is the reason for the rise. It is just a single digit from the districts or towns," says A.Paramaraj, Registrar, State Consumer Disputes

Redressal Commission, Chennai. However, "education of consumers is not the job of this department. It is the CSD's," he says.

The website of the Commission displays 044-28592828 as its helpline service, offering assistance to consumers between 9.30 a.m. and 6 p.m. on working days and a voice response service 24x7 anytime.

Paramaraj says that the reality is, "We too have a helpline but no one picks it, manpower is an issue."

VAT hike pushes oil prices up

PAVNEET SINGH CHADDHA

The Government's decision to revise Value Added Tax (VAT) on fuel has generated a mixed response in the State.

The State Government revised the VAT on petrol from 27 per cent to 34 per cent and on diesel from 21.4 per cent to 25 per cent. Petrol and diesel prices in Tamil Nadu have gone up now by Rs. 3.78 and Rs. 1.70 respectively.

Truck owners have protested against this saying the hike would affect their margins.

"The diesel and petrol price hike will cut into the profits of traders, transporters. This comes on the back of a recent hike in permit fees for loading," said an official from Madras City Lorry Owners Association, Saidapet.

"We are planning a protest next week to demand a roll back. The decision will be taken on March 11 at a meeting with other stakeholders," he said.

Krishna Kumar, manager at Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) run Madhavaram Truck Terminal, said, "Drivers have been complaining about the rise in diesel price hike."

It is not just the truckers who are affected.

Ranjit, a software engineer at Infosys, TIDEL Park, said "It's a double blow. The price of

"I am paid an advance for transportation from UP to Madras. Diesel is responsibility of the owner," said Deepak Yadav, a driver.



Trucks at the Madhavaram truck terminal | PAVNEET

vegetables has also gone up. I travel 22 kms to work. The hike increases my expenditure."

Opposition parties have slammed the Government's decision to increase VAT calling for an immediate roll back of hike.

However, some truck drivers are unaffected by price hike.

Shabbir Ali, a transporter with Haryana-Delhi Roadways, said "The fuel price hike depends on where the loading of goods take place. Most of my business comes from Delhi. For a round trip to Madras, the consumption is 1200 litres. The 21 tonne trucks have two tanks and I ask my drivers to get

both the tanks filled in Delhi."

"It also depends on the contract you have with the stock seller. Some contracts have a pre determined clause for a fixed price for the year, to negate fuel price fluctuations," he added.

Academics have welcomed the move stating that it made sense from a fiscal viewpoint.

"It is a welcome move. After the AIADMK came to power, it announced a series of freebies and welfare schemes. The government needs revenue to finance the subsidies, compensation for drought relief and fishermen package," said Dr. Santosh Kumar Sahu, Assistant Professor at Madras School of Economics.

"It will not substantially burden the consumers in the short term. Only in the long run, it will affect the MSMEs in the State. However, it must not be linked to rise in food prices. Food inflation is seasonal," he added. Crude oil price has come down from \$110 to \$50 a barrel in the last two years, but the price of fuel has steadily increased.

"Ideally, the fall in crude oil prices should be passed on to the people, but in India the Centre and States have a different mechanism of pricing for petroleum products," said a student of MSE..

Children's HIV syrup runs out

NIDHI CHUGH

HIV positive children are unable to get an essential drug because the pharmaceutical company has stopped the supply claiming that government hospitals had not paid their bills.

Cipla Pharmaceuticals has reportedly stopped its supply of Lopinavir syrup, an essential drug for HIV positive children between the age 3 and 19.

Dr. N. Kumarasamy, Chief Medical Officer of YRG CARE Medical Centre, said, "Not only Cipla, but other companies have also stopped supplying to government hospitals. This is because the government hasn't paid their bills for quite some time now."

"Lopinavir syrup is essential to treat children with HIV and this supplement cannot be stopped."

The drug given along with other medicines prevents the HIV virus from multiplying.

"Although the report only mentions Cipla, other pharma-companies have stopped supplying too. I feel Cipla was targeted because it was a major supplier of the drug," he added.

"The children and the staff at the ICH (Institute of Child Health) are suffering because of this lapse. To them, non-payment of dues is not a concern," said Dr. Lata, of the YRG centre.

According to the NACO figures, 21.17 lakh people are living with HIV in India right now and most of them are children.

The ICH and Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital have their list of drugs in short supply.

"The doctors there are preparing a report for the authorities so that they get an immediate supply of the drug. We have even advised them to estimate the number of affected patients and show the authorities that the numbers have increased," Dr. N. Kumarasamy said.

"VHS (Voluntary Health Service) has tied up with US-NIH, Washington DC (National Institute of Health) to fight this disease and give support to as many patients as it can. Our aim is to end this epidemic. Here at VHS, we treat only adolescents and adults," he said.

A coffee shop and an ATM in MRTS stations?

NAVMI KRISHNA. K

Close on the heels of the news of that the city's Metro stations' spaces would be commercialized, commuters on the Velachery-Beach MRTS line are looking forward to a similar treatment.

The Chennai MRTS network has 17 stations, of which nine have over 20 lakh sq ft of space.

Situated in prime locations, stations like Thiruvanniyur and Greenways Road get over 4,00,000 commuters a day, say officials at the stations.

According to a report by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), there were plans to commercialize



Vast empty spaces at the Thiruvanniyur MRTS station | SATSHYA, BEING WITNESS BLOG

the empty spaces in Velachery and Taramani stations, but this was later scrapped citing lack of demand.

The Velachery station alone has about 2.5 lakh sq ft of empty space for commercialization while Taramani has over 1.9 lakh sq.

Commuters welcome the possibility of opening up the stations to business. Shreyas Kumar, a 22-year-old student who commutes daily for over an hour, wants all the MRTS stations to have shops and canteens.

"I have a long commute every day, so if there are snacks, ATMs and such available in the station like they have in Park [station], it'll be helpful," he says.

Many of the commuters, predominantly women, say that another reason why they support commercialization of these spaces is that it would make them "feel safer".

This because the vast empty spaces are often used by anti-socials despite police patrolling. Stella Zachariah who works at a private firm near Mylapore explains.

"I get off work late at night. When I get down at Taramani station, the route from the platform to exit will be completely isolated and eerie.

If there are shops around, it'll at least have less of a graveyard feel," she adds.

What a woman wants

PADMASHREE PANDE

Many shops and gyms in Adyar were decorated with pink and white balloons to celebrate Women's Day on February 8. However, many women who were asked their opinion on the day did not even know when it is celebrated.

A young mother, carrying her baby on her shoulder did not even want to meet eyes when the topic of women's safety came out and said, "I never even thought about it."

A class eight student of MCC School, KP Shivani, on being asked about who should celebrate the day, said, "Women's day should definitely be celebrated as it is our day. More importantly, men should celebrate it before we do. They cannot live without us, and we are far more caring and nurturing than men by nature which we should be proud of. Celebrate this day for each other. I know I'm going to."

"If March 8 is the day allotted to us to celebrate a special day; then we must do it."

There were some who were concerned over the safety women and children. Vani, 23, an employee of Conserve Consultants at Besant Nagar said, "With the number of rape cases increasing day by day, the government has to take a stand and make stringent laws for the perpetrators."

Shreya, 22, also working in the



Different stages in the life of a woman

TECHFACETS.LIVE

same agency added, "Even cases of child molestation and eve-teasing are seen in the news almost every day." Dr R. Vijayalakshmi, an 85-year-old gynaecologist-obstetrician has worked in both rural and urban parts of Tamil Nadu in the long span of her career. She said "We should inculcate proper values in children when they are very young. Promote positivity in society. For doing that, we should catch the children young."

"Toddlers, under the age of five are the most receptive and imitate their parents the most. If then they see you beat your wife or husband,

they will take it to be the natural course of action," she added.

Dr R. Vijayalakshmi said "Educating boys and girls are the same, they both have two eyes and two legs, and we shouldn't differentiate between them. Your generation now should carry forward these moral values to the future generations and provide them with a nice home life."

When she saw a couple of college-going women walking on the street with books clutched close to their chest, she said, "See, this is what I am talking about. Don't be afraid of who you are, walk and

talk freely. It's time for others to be afraid of women."

Most astonishing was the men's reaction. A couple of them straightaway refused to talk about this issue the minute it was mentioned and others did not even stop when approached.

Dr Vijayalakshmi said "Women's day is not about bashing men or uplifting women. It is about a day dedicated to women only. The whole thing gets blown of proportion because of bad reporting. Do your job seriously, but not at the cost of hurting others' sentiments."

Dalit women's role 'being ignored'

Savitribai's contributions recalled

MEDI CHAITANYA

While people across the city celebrated International Women's day today, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Physics at IIT-Madras says celebrating women's day without recognising the contribution of Savitribai Phule shows the hypocrisy of the Indian society.

Manikala, a Dalit research scholar and a coordinator of the Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle (APSC), says that though people commemorate women on this day, the narrative about women's contributions to society is so limited that people fail to acknowledge what Savitribai has accomplished.

Savitribai Phule, born on January 3 1831 in Maharashtra, was India's first female teacher of the first women school in India. She along with her husband, Jyotiba Phule, founded the first women's school in 1948 at Bhide Wada in Pune.

K. Swaminathan, an organiser of the APSC, says "we tried to screen a documentary on women's issues to create awareness about her life and struggles, but the administration refused to give us permission for the auditorium."

He says that Savitribai relentlessly fought against the dominant caste system and worked towards the upliftment of marginalised sections.

Manikala said, "Savitribai not only vouched for education of women but also encouraged widow re-marriages."

She said that during 19th century, child marriage was so prevalent and girls often went on to



Savitribai Phule

ABP MARATHI

become widows before they turned 18. Sati (a widow immolates herself on her husband's pyre) was a common practice and the Phule couple fought against this age-old practice.

Savitribai opened an orphanage home, Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha (Infanticide Prohibition House) for the protection of pregnant widows.

"While it is true that every woman in our society has been discriminated against in some form, a Dalit woman has faced more discrimination than non-Dalit women," says Manjula Pradeep, Executive director of Navsarjan, an NGO working for ensuring human rights.

She said that a non-Dalit woman

faces only gender-discrimination whereas a Dalit woman faces both gender as well as caste discrimination. "It is in this context that Indian feminists lack understanding of what is to be a Dalit woman and we need to break away from this misconceived notion of feminism," she says.

She is also a part of the 'Chalo Nagpur' movement, which is going to take place in Nagpur.

She says "On March 10, the 120th remembrance day of Savitribai Phule, about 5000 women will come together in a massive show of solidarity against the forces of hatred, injustice and dominance."

Kancha Ilaiah, a professor at Maulana Azad National Urdu University in Hyderabad says, "Narratives in our education system reinforces prejudices and excludes the stories of extraordinary figures like Savitribai Phule from the marginalised sections."

He thinks that to understand women issues in our society, it is better to look at it from a Dalit perspective.

It remains to be seen how and when do these views and ideas put forward be implemented.

#SaveShakti campaign kickstarted

MANASA

More mahila courts should be set up to deal with cases of sexual assault against women and help women feel free and safe, said actor Varalakshmi Sarathkumar at the launch of her signature campaign "Save Shakti" here, on International Women's Day.

Save Shakti aims to collect as many signatures as possible, demanding that the State government increase the number of exclusive courts for women to get speedy justice.

"One of the main reasons victims don't go to court is because of the ordeal and the wait that they have to face. If the verdict time is decreased, sex offenders will not escape without conviction," she said.

The announcement of this campaign follows the actor's recent Twitter post about sexual harassment within the film industry.

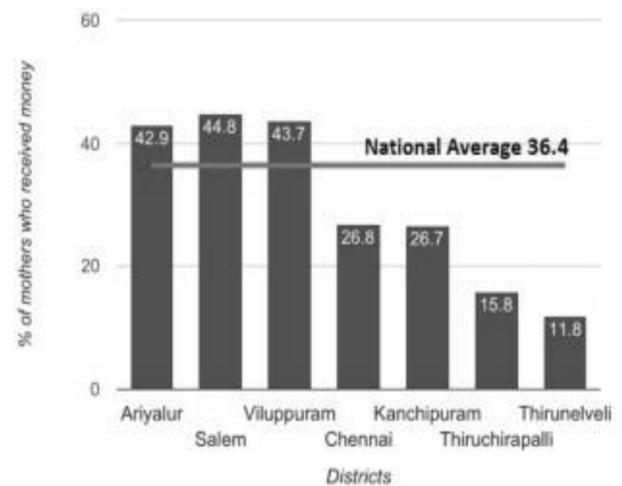
"I just felt this was long overdue. Somebody had to speak up about it," said Ms. Varalakshmi.

Actor Uma Riyaz Khan who had signed the petition along with other industry members said, "I think this is a wonderful initiative. Kudos to Varu... I give her and all women my full support. Keep Safe and Be Safe."

The campaign collected over 2,300 signatures at the end of the day. It is being organized by Thedal, an NGO which creates awareness for social causes.

"This is just the beginning. We will have more participation in the future, with a sustained effort," said Arun Kumar, who works as an editor in the film industry, one of several men who signed the petition. The actor plans on taking the campaign forward to schools, colleges and other institutions. "We are also thinking of an exclusive redressal forum for women in the film industry," she added.

District-wise distribution of women who have received financial assistance under JSY



GRAPH: NAVMI KRISHNA

New mothers yet to get financial aid

NAVMI KRISHNA

Chennai ranks 25 among the 32 districts in Tamil Nadu in terms of percentage of mothers who have received financial assistance under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), says the National Family Health Survey for 2015-16.

A 100 per cent centrally sponsored scheme, JSY aims to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting institutional delivery. As per the scheme, a pregnant woman from the rural area of a High Performing State like Tamil Nadu gets Rs.700 while an ASHA worker gets Rs.600. In the urban area, the sum is Rs.600 and Rs.400 respectively.

However, according to the latest NFHS report, the percentage of mothers who received financial assistance under JSY for births delivered in an institution in Tamil Nadu is 29.5 per cent - a number far below the national average of 36.4 per cent. Within Tamil Nadu, only 26.8 per cent of mothers in Chennai have



NEWSMOBILE.IN

A pregnant mother from a rural area gets Rs.700 and those from urban area get Rs.600

received the promised financial assistance - which means that three-quarters of the mothers in Chennai have not received the money that they are eligible for. A.Saraswathy, mother of a 3-month-old boy, says that she is yet to receive her Rs.1000. "In the 5th

month of pregnancy, I filled out a MPHWS [Multi Purpose Health Worker] certified application form for JSY and submitted it to the Medical Officer. I followed up on it for a while. Finally they said I will get it within this year," she says.

According to a circular issued by the Mission Director of State Health Society in Tamil Nadu, all eligible beneficiaries admitted to Government Health institutions for delivery care should receive JSY benefit before discharge from the institutions - any delay in payment will amount to negligence of duty and will warrant serious disciplinary action.

However, the officials at Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, say that the reason for non-distribution of funds is often out of their hand. They claim that many of the applicants do not have bank accounts in their names or there are discrepancies in the records which makes releasing the funds tricky.

"Agents of change"

KRITVI PALIWAL

Mamtha (24), an orphan, is a successful entrepreneur today. She runs her own tailoring unit where other women like her work to make colourful kurtas for city girls.

Mamtha owes her self-sufficiency to Women's Indian Association, a 100-year-old organization working for the care and upliftment of many underprivileged girls who do not have anybody of their own and are often victims of social abuse and harassment.

There are around half a dozen such associations throughout the city which are working tirelessly to empower young girls with poor backgrounds and difficult pasts.

"Most of our members have seen abject poverty while growing up but were determined to get education and do work to be financially independent and that's how we came together to make this association and fulfill our common aim," said Preethi V. a senior member of the Indira Nagar Women's Association.

These associations believe in collective women empowerment and are a shining example in self-help prophecy. On March 8, the International Women's Day, WIA hosted an annual celebration to mark the iconic day in history for women's rights.

"This day symbolizes a point of change in history for women's fight for equality and justice globally and women's associations like ours are just agents of that change," Geetha Krishna of WIA said.

The WIA also has a working women's hostel in R.A. Puram which serves as a safe abode for women working in the tailoring units, nursing aid training centre, a sanitary napkin making unit and a senior citizens' home; all run by WIA. It also conducts awareness programmes on health issues such as cancer and TB. It got the Rani Meyamma Aachi Award for the best social service organisation in 2009.

"We have limited staff as the capacity to pay has shrunk, but they are all dedicated to their work. We

are also indebted to the committee of volunteers who render free service and do not even claim conveyance charges", said Padma Venkatraman who is associated with the WIA's Leprosy Rehabilitation Project.

Most of the women working in these associations are also part of other non-profit organizations like Asha Niwas and the Nakshatra Foundation, among others. Therefore, they also counsel and train the young women in different life and vocational skills and help them rehabilitate. A large number of college students also come to these centres during the summer break for additional vocational training and home science lessons. This activity also provides employment for 112 women as teachers and helpers in these centres.

Women's associations have thus proved to be a very powerful tool in bringing women to work for their own upliftment and have helped in making women serve other women as well in the process.

No closure to Amma death rumours

MANASA

A day after former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalithaa's health report was made public, rumours and speculation surrounding her death continue to remain. "What caused Amma's death? Who deceived her? What do we know about any of this?" asked Kannamma, 70, unconvinced about the contents of the report.

Referring to the 12-page discharge summary from Apollo Hospitals and the AIIMS doctor's report, which stated that Jayalithaa had died of natural causes, Shanti, a

Perambur resident said, "All lies! They [the authorities] are hoodwinking the people."

"What are those four dots on Amma's face? The report doesn't say anything about it. She was beaten up... those are the marks of that," claimed Shanti.

"Whatever they had been telling us is false. We were told that Amma ate, Amma talked... That UK doctor said she can get up and leave when she wants. And now, the report says something else," she added.

Thenmozhi Kalaichelvam, a

resident of Ashok Nagar, felt this case resembled a Pandora's box. "It is just getting worse by the day. The hospital is also lying - they are all on Sasikala's side... too scared to tell the truth," she alleged.

Sasikala, who is the AIADMK General Secretary and is in jail on corruption charges, was Jayalithaa's aide for decades. The report revealed that the cause of Jayalithaa's death was 'ventricular fibrillation, infective endocarditis and acute respiratory distress syndrome', and that she had been suffering from diabetes,

hypertension, asthmatic bronchitis and hypothyroidism.

Reacting to this, Thenmozhi who had camped outside Apollo Hospital during the entire period of Jayalithaa's hospitalization said, "Our Amma had no disease. She only had sugar problem. Her enemies made it become worse." Said Kannamma, "It is a fabricated report. These are fabricated illnesses. If she was really so sick, why did they not take her abroad to treat her? Was she a beggar?" "Amma gave us food. Laptops. We are illiterates, but we don't trust

these reports. Where is her domestic servant? Her driver? Her security guards? Bring them out they will tell what actually happened," demanded Thenmozhi. Bhargavi Chandrasekharan, an advocate at the Madras High Court, said "I am so bored of this case... it keeps going on and on. Something's not right about these reports. They are contradictory." Shanti added, "We are waiting for the CBI inquiry. This is 'dharmauddham' It will take a long time but we must know the truth."



Shanti selling Amma memorabilia

MANASA

Obesity up in TN

MEDI CHAITANYA

More than one in three urban women and one in four urban men in Tamil Nadu are obese according to the fourth National Health Family Survey (NFHS-4) released on last week.

The survey defines obesity as having a Body Mass Index (the weight-to-height ratio) of more than or equal to 25 kg per metre square.

According to the survey, 30.9 per cent of people in the State are obese. It also observed that more women are obese than men. Over 36.2 per cent of women and 30.6 per cent of men in urban areas are obese.

"An increase in the intake of junk food, a decrease in physical activity and uncontrollable eating are mostly to blame," says K. Narayanasamy, Dean of the Rajiv Gandhi General Hospital.

Obesity is the main reason for people developing different types of diabetes mellitus. Around 80 per cent of obese people also prone to developing type-2 diabetes, says V. Mohan, Chairman, Dr V. Mohan's Diabetes Specialties Centre.

Diabetes is the result of the body not creating enough insulin to keep blood glucose (sugar) levels in the normal range. In type 2 diabetes, either the body doesn't produce enough insulin, or the cells in the body don't recognise the insulin that is present.

Dr Mohan points out that the increase in diabetes cases in the Chennai is the result of the increase in obesity.

A paediatrician at the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital and Women says that obesity in children is increasing rampantly in the State.

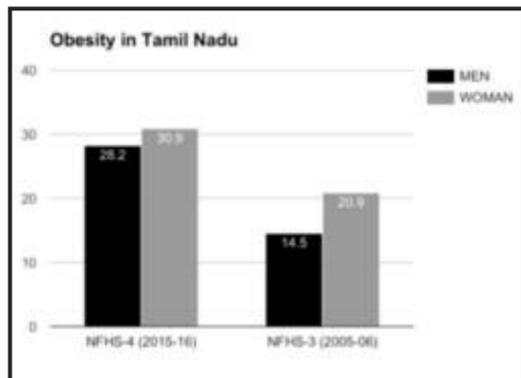
"I see 2 or 3 in every ten children are overweight," he says.

The doctor says "Lack of playgrounds in most of the schools in the city makes children prone to developing obesity problem due to lack of physical activity."

However, the NFHS-4 didn't

report of the obese people are from the affluent section of the city, now this problem is also slowly creeping into the less affluent section also.

An article published in the Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research in 2011 on the overweight and obesity among woman in Chennai slums found that 27.7 are overweight and 19.8 are obese. The



INFOGRAPHIC: Obesity in Tamil Nadu |

MEDI C

talk about the obesity in children.

Dr Mohan says "A survey we conducted on 25,000 government and private school children in Chennai a few years ago, revealed that 8 to 10 per cent of children in government schools and 25 to 30 per cent of children in private schools were either overweight or obese."

Dr. Mohan adds that while most

intake, increased duration of television viewing and lack of proper sleep as prominent reasons.

Apart from Tamil Nadu, there are only four other States which have more than 30 per cent, obese people. There is also a clear rural and urban division in terms of numbers - 33.4 per cent of the urban and 25.5 rural population are obese according to the NFHS-4 data.



DEMONSTRATION: Doctors and medical students protest against NEET | MANIKUNTALA D

Docs demand NEET exemption in TN

MANIKUNTALA DAS

The Doctor's Association for Social Equality (DASE) held a protest against the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical students in Tamil Nadu near the District Collector's Office on Tuesday evening. Students of various medical colleges from Chennai also took part in the protest.

Dr. G.R. Ravindranath, DASE General Secretary, said, "The Tamil Nadu State-controlled undergraduate, postgraduate and super specialty medical seats should be exempted from NEET. The Central Government should take steps to get President's Assent

for the Acts that have been passed by Tamil Nadu Assembly to get exemption from NEET."

Under the present law, 15 per cent of the MBBS seats in the State goes to the Central Government while 50 per cent of the postgraduate seats are allotted for the Central Government.

DASE demanded a higher number of seats for the postgraduate students from Tamil Nadu. Apart from that, it also wants to increase the PG seats based on the new professor-student ratio as the state has got only 145 seats instead of 450 seats.

The NEET follows the CBSE curriculum which makes it difficult

for the State Board students, especially the students coming from rural areas. The other demands include having a single window common counselling for undergraduate and postgraduate medical examinations.

The doctors also want that institutions like All India Institute of Medical Science, Delhi and Jawaharlal Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research, Puducherry to come under the administration of NEET.

Commenting on the financial aspect of the medical courses, Ravindranath said, "Proper action needs to be taken to fix the fees for management seats in the private

medical colleges and other deemed universities."

He also demanded that the fees of students whose family income is less than Rs 12 lakhs a year should be paid by the government concerned.

Arvindh Santhosh, a final year student of Madras Medical College, said "Since professional education comes under the concurrent list, one cannot force a state government to conduct an exam without understanding the issues... Moreover, fully paid study leave should be allowed for the Tamil Nadu State Government doctors, who take postgraduate seats across India," he added.

Understanding pedophilia

B PRADEEP

Being sexually attracted to children, Pedophilia, is a medical condition and an assessment followed by appropriate clinical intervention can reduce sexual offences against children, said Dr. Klaus M. Beier, Director, Institute of Sexology and Sexual Medicine at the Charite University, Berlin.

Delivering the 8th annual Tulir-CPHCSA lecture, titled 'Pedophilia and Sexual Offending against Children: How to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and the Use of Child Abusive Images?' here, Beier said, assessing sexual fantasies was the key to assessing one's sexual preferences to prevent abuse.

"Sexual fantasies are 'free' and such unconscious decisions should not be condemned," he added.

Sharing his research findings from 'German Dunkelfeld Project', a pilot study conducted in 2015 in Germany to understand risk factors for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), he said pharmacological options such as anti-depressants and deprivation therapy could control the impulses of a pedophile. "A change of the pedophile preference is not possible," he said and added that however self-motivated behavior could help the pedophile restrain himself or herself.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) Chairperson, Stuti

Kacker, who delivered the presidential address, said that Child Sexual Abuse the 'mother of all crimes against children' was a major concern as it violated the fundamental rights of a child to protection and development.

According to Kacker, many families did not report child abuses

According to the 'Crime in India 2015' statistics released by the NCRB, there have been 14, 913 cases reported under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) in 2015, an increase from 8,904 in 2014. Referring to online safety of children, a concern owing to dark and anonymous side

Kacker said, 'POCSO e-box', an online complaint management system for reporting sexual offences against children had received more than 200 cases till now. One of the issues that cropped up was the protection of minors during judicial proceedings.

As of now, such cases are heard



AC sales cool down despite city heating up/

GOOGLE IMAGES

AC sales take a hit

KRITVI PALIWAL

The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) has blamed the rampant use of air-conditioners as the main cause of power cuts in the city. And with hotter days ahead, Chennai stares at a big power shortage.

Though cyclone Vardah damaged the city's power supply three months ago, power cuts continue to plague the residents.

K.V. Ramachandran, Assistant Engineer (Distribution- South), said, "Summers are harsh in Chennai and with the rise in air conditioner use, the demand for power has gone up considerably but we are committed to providing adequate supply to each and every household."

However, air-conditioner sales haven't increased much in the city. In fact, retailers of electronics like air conditioners and inverters complain about sales having reached a stagnation point.

M.Vijay, director of Ratna Electricals, rued that sales of air-conditioners had come down by a minimum of 15 per cent and that of inverters by more than 25 per cent. He said that there were very few new consumers for ACs.

Murali of M.T. Fan House said, "Customers mainly call for service of inverter or replacement of batteries, rather than for making a new purchase."

According to the data released by them, currently TANGEDCO has a consumer base of 4.3 lakhs to about 264.67 lakhs within the city where its number of distribution transformers range from 3773 to 2,46,748 in number. The peak demand is anywhere from 172 MW to 13,775 MW per day whereas the per capita consumption ranges from 21 units to 1,228 units of power daily.

To meet the energy needs of the State, TANGEDCO has an installed capacity of 13231.44 MW which

includes State projects, Central share and Private Power Projects.

Other than this, it has installations in renewable energy sources like wind mill, solar, biomass and cogeneration up to 8470.16 MW. Also, to meet the ever-increasing energy demand in the coming years, it has proposed a new generation plan for the next 5 years.

However, to balance the excess power available during off peak hours and to tide over the peak hour shortage, a pumped storage scheme in Kundah for 500 MW has been proposed.

Presently, TANGEDCO has four major coal based Thermal Power Stations with a total capacity of 4060 MW and four gas based power plants with a total capacity of 516 MW. It has also proposed to establish small hydroelectric projects of capacity less than 25 MW in the run-of-river scheme with a total capacity of 110 MW.



Illegal constructions in Sowcarpet/

GOOGLE IMAGES

Checks on building violations soon

MANIKUNTALA DAS

Most buildings in North Chennai, especially in George Town, are constructed in violation of the rules laid down by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority.

Some of the buildings are totally unauthorized, while some violate rules on usage, building profile, floor space index, dimension and plot extent.

Some of the ongoing constructions do not have proper planning

permission from CMDA.

M. Ashok, a shopkeeper in Sowcarpet, complained about his neighbours,

Ashok said, "The building right next to my shop is constructed illegally as they have not kept even a little space on any of the sides and it is sticking to the walls of our building."

There is no space between many buildings in Sowcarpet. Houses lack proper ventilation and lighting. There are several cracks on most

buildings, as well.

S. Indira, a resident of Sowcarpet, said, "We have been staying in this manner for many years now and we are used to it."

"We are afraid of talking to the officials as they would take actions against us."

C.S. Murugan, Senior Planner, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, said "People are given a notice period to empty the buildings, failing which the buildings are locked and sealed."

"The Madras High Court has also directed the authorities to stop electricity and water connections to these buildings."

Recently, the Tamil Nadu State government informed the Madras High Court that a new Additional Secretary (Technical) post had been created under the Housing and Urban Development, to regularise illegal constructions in the city.

"Earlier, the duties related to the appeals under Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act were ful-

filled by the Secretary," said Shiva Mani, Deputy Secretary, Housing and Urban Development Department, Government of Tamil Nadu.

"The new post will have a Chief Planner from Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority," he said.

"Being from the technical background, the person can detect any violations easily. People who need to regularise their buildings will also be given chances to file their appeals to the Additional Secretary," he added.

Anxiety over US hate crime

LAVANYA RAMAKRISHNAN

The number of students applying for higher studies in universities in the US has gone down after the election of Donald Trump as President, say Chennai-based education consultants.

"If it [the applicant percentage] was 100 per cent [last year], this year, in 2017, it is only 60 per cent," said S. Shalini, a counsellor at IDP Education. The intake for Canadian universities had increased, she added.

"Before, the ratio [US: Canada] was very less, because in the US, you have plenty of job opportunities. Now because of Trump rule, most of the students [approaching us] are moving toward Canada," she said.

The counsellor observed that parents of students were getting anxious in the light of the recent 'hate crimes' there. However, IDP still got students who had the U.S.

'Now because of Trump rule, most students are moving toward Canada'

universities as their first choice.

Srinivas Sambandam, counsellor at Galaxy Education Consultants agreed that many students were looking to pursue higher studies in other countries.

"Not only Canada, even other countries are picking up. Ireland has come up with a two-year stay back option. Even France is picking up as a destination for higher education," he said.

Sambandam also remarked that the intake would be low this year. "It will be definitely low this year but [we] can't say the percentage just yet," he said.

Manya Group, an overseas education training institute, has also been seeing a decrease in the number of candidates applying for US universities.

Lavanya Babu, Senior Admission Counsellor, Manya, said "There is a reduced flow, maybe about 5%. Some students are clear that they want to study there while the parents are worried. In those cases where students show concern about visa, we make them understand that student visas haven't been affected. This is a great business for their country. The flow is increasing for Ireland and Germany."

A consultant at Janboree Education also said that the number of students applying for the US universities had gone down slightly. Students heading there for their Masters this spring however felt that many were getting anxious unnecessarily.

Ashwin Balachander who got admission for an M.S. in Management & Information Technology at New York

University said that the media was creating a sensation.

"Hate crimes happen everywhere. I've worked in Hawant, a town in England and have seen hate crimes in front of my eyes there. Even in the US, it has happened in the Obama period as well. It's not new," he said.

However, his parents were worried too.

"I got another opportunity in Ireland to study. My parents feel it'd be safer for me to go there to study. I want to go to the US though. It has a lot of opportunities for internships."

Sindhu Venugopal, a student heading to Pace University, New York to pursue a course in Management Information System, also felt that the fear was 'overrated'.

"It [crimes] has been happening all the time. Now, it is explicitly shown," she said. She added that her counsellor at Edwise Consultancy informed her of the decrease in the number of candidates approaching them for American universities.



A St. Bernard in Switzerland |

MARY BLOOM

Dogs feel the heat

PARTH KHATAU

Dog lovers who import exotic breeds from countries with cold climates are spending more on their maintenance in the hot Chennai weather.

Ranjith Kumar, a dog trainer and groomer who works with these dogs on a day-to-day basis, feels pampering and keeping the dogs in an air-conditioned environment is not enough.

"In the past year and a half I have a lot of exotic breeds such as the St. Bernard, Siberian Husky and Caucasian Shepherd Dog visiting me for training and grooming purposes. The more an owner spends on purchasing the pet the more he or she has to spend on maintaining it in terms of its grooming, diet and environment," he says.

The St. Bernard, a breed originating in the Swiss Alps, is used to help rescue people from snow during an avalanche. Bringing such a dog into the humid 30 degrees weather of Chennai and most of India is going to have health consequences for the pet.

Veterinarian Dr. Chaitanya feels such dog breeds should be banned and that keeping them in different



Collie Breed dog | PARTH K

climates borders on animal cruelty.

"These dogs have extremely thick fur and are not suited to the climatic pattern here in India. This leads to them getting chronic skin and breathing problems, stomach ailments such as indigestion and also a loss of appetite which leads to nutritional deficiency," he says.

Chaitanya went on to add that

owners often grew fed up of maintaining such dogs and gave them away to animal shelters or just abandoned them.

The availability of such breeds in the market is due to growing demand, according to dog breeder Eby Edhose.

"Buyers often want to flex their financial muscle by purchasing the rarest breed or the most unique looking dog in the neighborhood, so much so that breeds like the Siberian Husky are not even considered 'exotic' anymore," he says.

"The price of an average three month old husky pup is anywhere between Rs 60,000 and Rs 5 lakhs depending on the pedigree and lineage," he adds.

Edhose also feels that keeping such breeds in an air-conditioned environment is a must.

Kowshika.M, an owner of a Siberian Husky and a resident of Boat Club Road, says that she takes all the necessary measures to take care of her pet.

"I am completely aware of the climate these dogs are accustomed to and make sure my dog is in an enclosed room with a certain temperature. I provide him the best medical and nutritional care," she said.

OLA, UBER go on strike

SAMUEL MERIGALA

Around 200 Ola and Uber drivers went on a three-day strike protesting against unfair compensation and long working hours. They demanded government intervention in ensuring a standard tariff for taxi drivers and scrapping of certain corporate policies adversely affecting drivers.

The three-day strike from March 6 to March 8 organized by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) included a protest at the CITU office on the first day, a black flag rally around Chennai on the second and a protest outside the Police Commissioner's office on the third.

This is the 9th strike organized by the CITU in the course of the

last year.

The drivers allege that Ola and Uber enforce kilometer targets which take 16-17 hours to meet and expect flawless customer reviews, no cancellations and 24/7 availability.

"We are paid only Rs.4.5 for each kilometre," says Shankar, a Ola sedan driver.

In comparison, the government tariff for autos is Rs. 12 a km.

The drivers reveal that when Ola first began operations in Chennai, the company gave a 50 per cent incentive and charged a 25 per cent commission on each ride.

Now Ola has scrapped the 50 per cent incentive but still charges the 25 percent commission.

"Initially ride money of Rs.2,500 was considered as Rs. 5,000 and then the 25% commission was

charged," Shankar explains.

Currently, Ola and Uber together have a fleet of 25,000 cars. Increase in the number of Ola and Uber cabs reduces the number of rides each driver is assigned.

In addition to that drivers who fail to get 'five star' rating more than thrice a day, get their driver app locked and have to go to the regional offices to get them unlocked.

One of Ola's policies to ensure seamless bookings is a Rs.250 fine which is invoked on a driver refusing to respond to a ride call.

Most of the driver-owned cars are purchased on down payment plans. Down payments range from Rs.10,000 to Rs.15,000 while drivers working 16 hours a day make just about Rs.20,000

"Car service costs us Rs.5,000

each month and we also have to pay for the phone internet for navigation," says Ganesh, an Uber driver.

The drivers have demanded the following: A revised and standard taxi tariff structure from the government; Reduction of OLA commission for each ride from 25 per cent to 7 per cent; Roll back of cancellation fine and no more user-rating based locks

"Trying to be user friendly and to control the taxi market, OLA and Uber have let the drivers face the brunt of their marketing policies", says Anbazhagan, Secretary of CITU.

Anbazhagan claims that officials from the transport department have already set into motion a proposal for standard tariff plans for Taxis.

9 authors write a book in 100 days

NIDHI CHUGH

Nine authors who took up a challenge to write a book in 100 days launched their tomes at IIT Madras Research Park here.

TIECON Chennai launched nine books even though 16 authors had taken up the challenge.

Praveen Shekhar, Head of TIECON Chennai, started off the second edition of their 100-day book authoring challenge in collaboration with Kiruba Shankar, an author and social entrepreneur, to reiterate their motto – "fostering entrepreneurship."

The 100-day challenge was open to all and children of all ages were encouraged to join.

A 100-day workshop guided first-time writers to overcome their inner-most fears of writing a book.

Among the nine authors, the youngest is an eight-year old girl, Shambavi Sairam, who has



Authors launching their books at IIT Madras Research Park | TIECON CHENNAI/FACEBOOK

illustrated her book herself. She said that she was inspired by Praveen Shekhar's daughter, Sharada.

Sharada, a 11-year-old girl has

written one book which she has illustrated and her second book is getting published now.

Abhinav Sairam, a 12-year-old student, said that his inspiration

was his friend Raghu and his book was entirely about him.

Mrs. Bhanu Aiyer, an engineer-turned-author, said, "I always wanted to write a book. But I didn't

get the time. I always found reasons not to write. The 100-day challenge helped me break my shell."

The event started with an unconference where Kiruba Shankar, who was also the host, described an unconference as a "conversation over a coffee-break." Kiruba Shanker also held an ice-breaking session where ideas were exchanged on why people should write and how it is important for each one of us to write.

All the participants were enthusiastic and showcased their passion for writing and reading. After an hour, the book launch was held where the authors read their favourite part of their book.

R.K. Raghavan, former CBI Director who was the chief guest, said that he was delighted with such a step being taken and urged Praveen Shekhar to keep taking such initiatives.

Performance hatchbacks flood market

PARTH KHATAU

Maruti Suzuki has entered the fray with the launch of their latest offering, the Baleno RS, in a market already flooded with a host of similar cars.

"This is a niche market for youngsters between the age of 18 and 25 who depend on their father's income to buy these cars," said automobile expert and ex-rally driver Kamlesh Patel.

"Car manufacturers want to show off what they are capable of in order to woo customers into their showrooms for starters. The customer may walk out with a lower variant but the trick has worked for the company. These cars are an image building exercise," he added.

However Mihir Dayal, Director of Sales for BMW, India felt these cars were not targeting mass markets. "The Indian automobile sector is extremely price sensitive and these cars all cost upwards of Rs 10 lakh on-road," he said.

Also these cars were high-performance variants and consumed a lot of fuel whereas the big factor that people took into consideration was the fuel-efficiency of the car, he added

Dayal felt petrol powered cars were picking up in terms of sales due to the gap between the prices of petrol and diesel,



Honda Jazz on display |

"This is a niche market for youngsters between the age of 18 and 25 who depend on their father's income to buy these cars."

narrowing day by day.



Maruti Suzuki Baleno (R) is the latest hatchback to enter the market | PARTH K

Bipin Bhatia, who owns a Volkswagen Polo Gt Tsi said the car was not his daily use vehicle and that he used it mostly on his weekend drives on the ECR.

"The car is a joy to drive but it is not the smartest decision financially to do so on a daily basis due to high running costs," said Bhatia. S. Muralidhar, an automobile journalist for the Business Line, felt that the Indian car buyers were very grounded in what they demanded. "Buyers want everything- more power, more mileage,

cheap maintenance costs at a competitive price. However that does not stop them from dreaming. The cars we get here are a toned down version of the same car abroad. What we call a performance car in our market is a regular car in the global market," he said. The performance hatchbacks on offer in our market today are The Maruti Suzuki Baleno RS, The Volkswagen Polo Gt, Fiat Abarth Punto, Honda Jazz and Hyundai Elite i20. All these cars cost around Rs 11 lakh, on-road in Chennai.



Customers buying jewellery at C.P. Arts Centre SHOURAV M

A platform for art entrepreneurs

MAHBUBUL ALAM SHOURAV

A wide range of jewellery, handicrafts, glass paintings, textiles and organic food made by entrepreneurs were on display at the C.P. Arts Centre here.

Anuradha Sankaran, a 35-year-old IT employee, who was admiring an ear ring, said she was amazed to see the creative work at the exhibition.

Anuradha Sankaran said, "I like handicrafts and jewellery products a lot. I usually buy these products from different shops in big shopping malls. But after coming here, I am really surprised to see the creative art and design. The quality of the products is also very good as I can easily compare the products I bought before."

Like Anuradha, others were thrilled to see the design and quality of sarees and jewellery.

Anita Susan Bharanidharan, a jewellery designer, said "I usually customize products, specially those made with fabric, bead and paper."

When asked what had brought her to this business, she said, "I studied botany and industrial biology and later switched and involved myself in making jewellery as it is my passion."

Talking about the initial journey as an entrepreneur, she said "I did a short course in jewellery making but later improved my products by hard work."

Another entrepreneur Rukumani, aged 60, who has been in the handicrafts business for 18 years, said "I love drawing. After my children grew up I started doing this. Now I have three workers who are helping me to make these products. So far I have been getting very good response from the customers."

"I usually make jewel boxes, paintings and block prints. It is not a highly profitable business but anyone can get a moderate profit. At least I am not dependent on anyone. I earn on my own and that gives me strength," she added.

Jennifer, owner of Aabarana Creations, who had come from Anna Nagar to participate in the exhibition, said "I have a factory where nine people work. At this exhibition, many customers are taking our contact details so that they can order our products that are available online."

Talking about the raw materials of the jewellery products, she said, "Handmade rings and churis are made from 70 per cent silver, 30 per cent copper and one gram gold."

K Shanta, executive officer of C.P. Arts Centre, said "Every year we organize the exhibition. This year 55 exhibitors are showcasing their homemade crafts. We are providing a platform for entrepreneurs to showcase their products and increase their business."