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July 24 - 30, 2021

4 pages Free Circulation

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Flats under construction in Doomingkuppam

## Mylapore MLA focussed on three projects – kuppams re-development, temples maintenance and educational facilities

By Our Staff Reporter

Mylapore MLA Dha. Velu has three big issues on his table that he says he is focussed on. Resolving the redevelopment of run-down tenements along the Marina in the kuppams zone, sprucing up all the temples in the area and developing the Chennai Corporation's school in Bheemanapet, the only higher secondary school in this zone.

He says that even as the state rolls out its redevelopment work of residential blocks in the kuppams – from Doomingkuppam to Srinivasapuram off the Marina, these plans are being challenged by residents.

“While the Slum Board plans to erect huge, multi-storeyed blocks so as to accommodate not only those who reside in the tenements but those who live on

encroached patches in the kuppams, people say living in 10 and 12-storeyed blocks pose big problems for access,” says the MLA. “So we are working out a compromise in the plans.”

As far as maintenance of Mylapore temples goes, he says some of them need attention and also a dedicated maintenance team for their upkeep. “I am talking to the HR&CE minister on these plans,” says Velu.

And he is particular about making the Chennai School in Alwarpet a lively, model school – the strength here has fallen badly and though the campus is large and accommodation is sufficient, many upkeep and revival issues remain.

“We must do all we can to draw people to admit their kids here and we must then provide all that is required for teaching and extra-curricular activities,” says the MLA.

## New parish priest at Cathedral has to deal with families affected by the pandemic

By Our Staff Reporter

Father M. Arulraj is not new to the San Thome Cathedral for this Catholic priest has worked for some years at the Bishop's House next door.

But soon after he took charge in early June this year as the Cathedral's parish priest, transferred here from a parish in Porur, he has had a difficult task on his hands – arranging for support for the poor families of his parish whose economic conditions have been ravaged by the pandemic.

“I have got petitions from some 50 families seeking urgent financial assistance,” he says. “Many bread-winners have remained unemployed for months now and many families just don't have the money to pay the fees of their school-going children.”

Last Sunday, the senior priest who has four other priests on his team here appealed to the congregation at Sunday Holy Mass for their support. “I told them that if one well-to-do family can undertake to pay the fees of one child we can surely address this worrying issue,” he says. “I have got some positive response now.”

Earlier this week, he chaired his first meeting with the leaders of the parish anbiyams (small Christian communities). San Thome has some 40 anbiyams whose members belong to this parish.

“Since I am new to this parish I wanted to interact with the leaders of the community,” said the priest on an evening when he celebrated two wedding Masses at the Cathedral.



## Eid celebrations

Eid celebrations on Wednesday ( July 21) were low-key across the Mylapore zone due to the pandemic-time regulations.

A large number of Muslims attended prayers at the mosques in their local areas that morning and dispersed after exchanging greetings. At the small mosque in Dooming kuppam, about 100 people attended the prayers ( this photo was shot at this mosque )

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# Freelance writer Lakshmi Venkataraman has donated her Alwarpet apartment to NGO

By Our Staff Reporter

Lakshmi Venkataraman did not bat her eyelids when she took the decision to donate to a voluntary organisation, an apartment she owned in Alwarpet that would have fetched her at least Rs.2 crores,



Lakshmi handing over the property transfer document to the Sevalaya team in the presence of the then Mylapore MLA, R. Nataraj

In some ways, this was a Christmas-time gift for Sevalaya, a NGO which has, for over three decades, been developing educational and social services on a big scale in the districts of Thiruvallur and Kanchipuram.

"It was time to move on," says Lakshmi, who has been a senior writer on art, music and culture and who ran an art gallery called 'Sri Parvati' (which was also the name of this bungalow) on Eldams Road which was sold recently and is making way now to multi-storeyed building.

"I have known and observed Sevalaya's activities for a decade and found it deserving to receive the property," says Lakshmi who now resides in Royapettah and currently edits an online magazine

called Lak Square (www.laksquare.com)

The NGO had been looking out for space in the city to house its administrative operations and the donation came in handy – Sevalaya's team now operates from this apartment.

Lakshmi's charitable act perhaps flows from similar ones that her family has made since the 19th century.

Her roots trace back to an illustrious person – her grandfather was the famed judge of the Madras High Court, Justice P. R. Sundaram Iyer.

The family then owned and resided in the sprawling bungalow that was built in the late 19th century called Sri Baugh near Nageswara Rao Park: in the 1930s, this property was sold to the family of Nageswara Rao who started the Amrutanjan balm

business.

Later, the family moved to Eldams Road, settling down in another vast property where Lakshmi's father built the art deco house in 1935 which was pulled down recently.

A freelance writer, Lakshmi has been close to the city's artists, the famous and the young, written on them, on their works and on their careers, curated art shows and closely followed India's art world.

Now, her online magazine keeps her a bit busy. But she is considering shifting to Alwarpet or R. A. Puram if she locates a good apartment in a quiet colony that she can buy. "I grew up and have spent decades in this area and I want to get back to it," she says.

## Admissions on at Vivekananda College: for regular and evening college courses

By Our Staff Reporter

Vivekananda College in Mylapore offers five streams of the B. Com undergraduate course in its evening,

File photo



self-financing stream. Each course has a specialisation – accounting and finance is one option while the other is bank management.

Obviously, these courses are a big draw and will be so this season too as admissions open at the college now.

Admissions are open to the regular, day-college courses as well as the evening college courses. But the application process is fully online – the college gates are closed due to current pandemic time regulations.

All details are at – <https://rkmvc.ac.in/>



Photo: S. Prabhu

## Pradosham: temples continue restrictions, people visiting from afar disappointed

By S. Prabhu

84 year old auditor N. Varadan, who is also a cricket fan having encouraged many young cricketers in the 1980s, believes in the view that one who has a darshan of 120 pradoshams will not have rebirth.

When the lockdown was lifted and temples reopened to devotees, he came all the way from Thiruvallikeni, where he currently resides, to have darshan of the pradosham earlier this month but was saddened when the entrance was shut as the devotees were not allowed to enter the temple during pradosham.

But on Wednesday evening, for pradosham the temple did not allow devotees into the temple. They were allowed in after the event.

Varadan, who had been a guest lecturer at the Vivekananda College for many years, said, "I have had darshan of over 70 pradoshams and am devotionally inclined to complete the 120 pradoshams during my lifetime. I hope the Kappali Temple authorities permit devotees into the temple at least on the next pradosham."

Last Wednesday evening, there was a big crowd present at the eastern rajagopuram. Many of them who had come from afar were disappointed to find that devotees

would not be allowed into the temple till after 6pm and they had to make do with a darshan of Sri Kappaleswarar from outside the entrance.

The temple authorities have now permitted Srikanth and his team members to present Shiva Purana in chorus in front of the Annamalaiyar sanidhi every evening from 8 pm for about half hour.

### At Sri Karaneeswarar Temple

At Sri Karaneeswarar Temple, even the procession did not take place as the authorities took a call not to have the usual pradosham procession inside the temple.

Shanmugham gural told Mylapore Times on Wednesday that the authorities took this call as a safety precaution as they did not want to attract a big crowd on the pradosham evening.

The temple presented a quiet picture with devotees sitting inside the temple to watch the abhisekam. Many other devotees did pradakshinams around the temple complex on the pradosham evening.

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Vignesh Iswar in concert at Raga Sudha hall recently

## At Raga Sudha hall, live music is back but concerts are canned and webcast

By Our Staff Reporter

B. Jayalakshmi, who is the heart and soul of Raga Sudha Hall on Luz Avenue, the hub of music and performing arts concerts is glad a series of Carnatic music concerts are being recorded at this cosy auditorium and webcast to rasikas all over again.

"I'm just hoping that we can have a time when at least, limited audience is allowed at concerts but the state has to relax the rules for this to happen," she says on the day last week, when a vocal concert of Vignesh Ishwar was being recorded here.

Jayalakshmi often gets calls from people who dedicate concerts to their loved ones or to their gurus, asking her to arrange these concerts and paying for them and these calls have continued since the day pandemic-time rules were relaxed some weeks ago.

Partnering Parivadini, a music

promotion body, she arranges for these in-house concerts to be webcast after they are recorded.

Recently, Ramapriya Arts Foundation, which is made up of a small team of people which curates concerts hosted three in a row at this hall, which included one by the Mambalam Sisters (all these concerts are available on the Parivadini Music YouTube channel).

Meanwhile, Jayalakshmi has been digging into the music archives of 'Naada Inbam', the arts promotion organisation, her late father S. V. Krishnan founded here even as he built this auditorium in the shadow of the verdant Nageswara Rao Park.

"We have begun posting online some unique music concerts of the past," she says. "We put out one by Dr. Ritha Rajan and lots of people have listened to it."

These too will be featured on the Parivadini channel.

## San Thome's Tasneem launches web site to document Bohras of Chennai

By Our Staff Reporter

Freelance writer and San Thome resident Tasneem Akbari Kutubuddin has launched a new project and it is online – it is named BohrasOfMadras.com (this is the URL of the web site).



File photo used here is of Tasneem leading a Heritage Walk in George Town themed on the Bohras in Madras.

Tasneem says that she has been documenting the history of her community for some years and now feels it must all come to be in one digital space.

This web space will feature the rich history of the Dawoodi Bohra Muslims in Chennai and also narrate interesting tales of the pioneers and those who have contributed immensely.

Tasneem invites Dawoodi Bohra Muslims to share their own life stories.

Tasneem is supported in this venture by Zehra Aliakbar, Sarrah Jawed, Abbas Akbari and Batul Safder Hussain.

"We welcome pictures, tributes, snippets and biographies that may add value to our documentation," says Tasneem, whose family has deep roots in George Town.

You can mail to – bohrasofmadras@gmail.com.

The social media platforms are – <https://www.instagram.com/bohrasofmadras/> and <https://www.facebook.com/bohrasofmadras786>



## 107 years of Queen Mary's College: a simple campus event

By Our Staff Reporter

This was a snappy, simple and symbolic event held on July 14 - the commemoration of 107 years of Queen Mary's College, located off the Marina.

The college faculty, staff and some students who were around gathered around the bust of Queen Mary, and placed flowers, lit candles and greeting cards on the floor and in this space.

Started in 1914, QMC was the third women's college in India at that time.

Today, managed by the state and autonomous, this college educates mostly economically-weak students and girls from rural areas.

Though the campus boasts of a host of magnificent heritage blocks, almost all have been left to decay, crumble and collapse over recent times and the campus is hardly maintained, with shrubs and vegetation growing wild, private parties using some open spaces for events like sport and leaving behind a mess and the state using its halls and rooms to count ballots after elections.

## Carnatic vocal music course: applications invited. This school is run by Narada Gana Sabha.

By Our Staff Reporter

Swami Haridhos Giri School of Music which is promoted by Narada Gana Sabha Trust, Alwarpet is now accepting applications from students of Carnatic music for the School's Intermediate and Advanced course of three years in Carnatic vocal music.

After completion of the three years course, successful students will be eligible to join the post-graduate course of M. A. (Music) of the Madras University, states a note from the School.

Classes start in the second week of August.

In-person classes are conducted in the evenings at the sabha premises. Currently, classes are conducted on-line due to the pandemic condition.

Applicants must be between the age of 12 and 35 years and should know a minimum of 5 varnams.

Applications available at the sabha's office or on e-mail request. Contact

Sabha office for further details.

Prof. Dr. R. S. Jayalakshmi and vidwan C. R. Vaidyanathan head the faculty at the School.

Phone: 2499 3201, 2499 0850:

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# Born and raised in R. A. Puram, this Catholic priest is to become Bishop of diocese of Andamans

By Our Staff Reporter

A Catholic priest who was born and brought up in Raja Annamalaipuram has now been appointed Bishop of Port Blair diocese which oversees all the churches in Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal.

55-year-old Fr. Visuvasam Selvaraj was appointed bishop by Pope Francis – the papal order was issued on June 29. The priest will be ordained on August 21 at a grand religious ceremony.

Fr. Visuvasam Selvaraj was born on January 4, 1966 at the Andhra Mahila Sabha-

managed Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital in R. A. Puram. His parents, hailing from Madurai had moved to Chennai, living in Adyar first and then moving to a small house in a colony located off Greenways Road. His father managed a wholesale business in aval (beaten rice).

That business has remained with the family for years, though it has scaled down – the priest's brother, Bhaskar now runs a shop in Mandaveli's Devanathan Street which sells among other products, aval.

"I was baptised at saint Lazarus Church, was an altar boy there and attended Holy Mass at this church for years," said the priest while talking from Ranchi where he was attending meetings.

He first attended Rajah Muthiah School, did his final two years of schooling at San Thome Hr. Secondary School, joined the Catholic diocese's minor seminary in San Thome ( then located opposite the Cathedral) and moved to the Sacred Heart seminary in Poonamallee.



**"I was baptised at saint Lazarus Church. I served as an altar boy there and have attended Holy Mass at this church for many years,"**

So how did the Chennai-based seminarian find a calling in the Andamans?

"I wanted to serve outside my home state and I was keen to go to the missions in Africa. But one unexpected turn took me to the Andamans," says Fr. Selvaraj.

The then bishop of Port Blair was passing through Chennai and while in the city, casually told local senior priests who were hosting him that he would be happy to have young priests serve in his diocese. This invitation was shared with Fr. Selvaraj who was yet to be ordained a priest,

and the young man took the earliest flight to the island.

He was ordained priest in May 1994 for the diocese of Port Blair and after serving in many a local parish, went on to hold key posts in the diocese.

"Since I worked closely with the bishop at Bishop's House I was involved in many policy-making decisions," says the priest. And since the time the previous bishop retired and moved out to Goa, Fr. Selvaraj has been administering the diocese.

His record in the Andamans diocese must have made it easy for the Pope to choose him as the new bishop.

Fr Selvaraj says that it is the laity that drives all the activities of the Catholic Church in the Andamans and that he is keen to respect that tradition and even encourage it further after he takes charge as bishop.

"It is the people who decided on the date of my episcopal ordination in August and told me they would make all the arrangements for this grand event," he says.

His brother ( *seen at his Mandaveli godown store in the photo here*), Bhaskar's family now resides near the Mandaveli store and they are members of the parish of Our Lady of Visitation Church on St. Mary's Road, Abiramapuram.

"When I am in Chennai I often visit that church and have also said Holy Mass there. This time, I will also drop in at saint Lazarus Church," says the bishop-elect.



People seated in a classroom, awaiting their turn to get vaccinated

## Steady stream of people at GCC's Alwarpet centre to get the jab

By Our Staff Reporter

It looks like Chennai Corporation has, at least in the Mylapore zone, chosen to focus the vaccination process for the community at its Alwarpet centre and relieve the GCC health centres elsewhere in the zone of this work.

Reason why, while the Alwarpet operations which have been in operation for many weeks now at the GCC school in Bheemanapet are always on stream and the place remains busy, people seeking the jab in the GCC health centre on Appu Street in San Thome area are told to head to the Alwarpet centre.

However, the demand for the jab is still very good – in fact, everyday, tokens issued to people who walk-in to get the jab at the Alwarpet campus are exhausted in less than an hour ( this centre is on Bheemana Street, off

C. P. Ramaswamy Road.)

On one recent morning, some 100 people were on campus to get the jab. 20 doses of Covaxin and 200 doses of Covishield were supplied that morning and there were people seated in three classrooms, awaiting their turn at the two counters where nurses give you the jab.

A GCC staff here said that they get a steady stream of people and have their hands full on all mornings.

Tokens are issued after about 8.30 a.m. and the vaccination starts after 9.30 a.m.

## Vedic teacher offers homam and shraddam ceremony services

By S. Prabhu

Nandakumar Ganapadigal, who has been a Vedic teacher at the Adyayana Patshala on Pichupillai Street for the last two decades, is offering homam and shraddam services in a traditional way.

He has a team of Vedic pundits who will help perform different kinds of homam as well as the shraddam services.

He says that in the recent past, people have come up to him and said that they were not able to perform the shraddam ceremony as many of the facilities in Mylapore were always booked and rooms were not available.

"I have taken up a place on rent and put together a team that will offer these services."

To avail of the services contact: 94444 66484 / 91713 40604.

