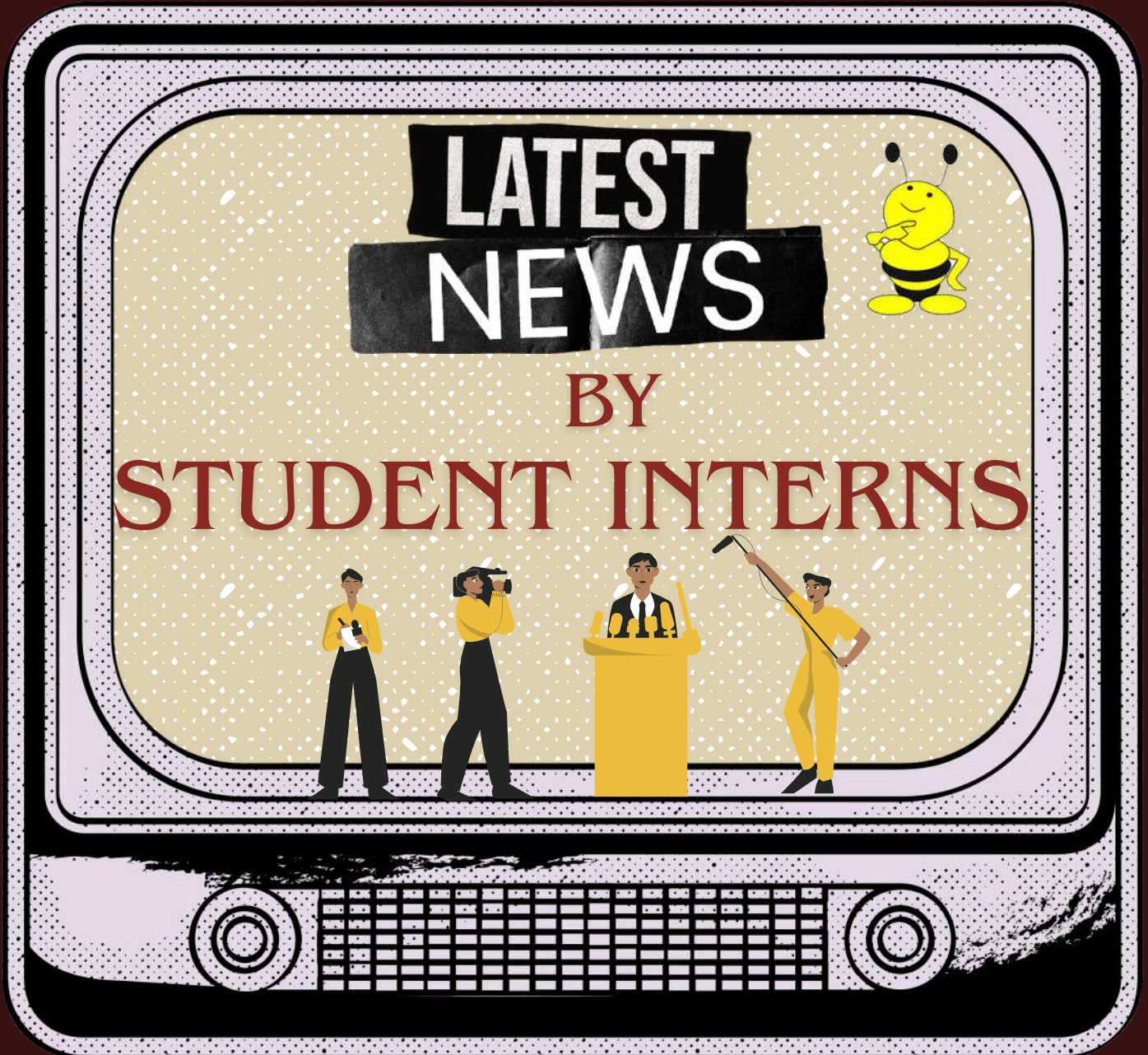


YOCee

The Newsroom of Young People

Summer of 2026

eBook 2



yoceenews



YOCee



yocee.in



yoceenews

OVERVIEW

EDITORS' NOTE



Every neighbourhood has stories waiting to be noticed.

Some take place in classrooms, where students transform old jeans into new ideas or find strength in study groups. Others unfold in parks, libraries, beaches, and community spaces where people slowly build connections, inspire creativity, and protect the environment.

This collection also captures the essence of summer itself: from Chennai's sudden rains and blooming flowers to cherished mangoes and familiar local landmarks that shape our everyday lives.

At YOCee, we believe that young people are not just observers of their communities but active storytellers within them. This edition reflects that spirit, bringing together articles that celebrate curiosity, compassion, and the power of paying attention to the world around us.

What brings these stories together is a shared curiosity about the people and places around us. Each piece reminds us that meaningful elements often exist not with extraordinary moments, but with ordinary individuals choosing to contribute to their communities in ways both big and small.

As editors, it has been a privilege to bring together the voices of young reporters who approached these stories with empathy, observation, and a genuine desire to understand the world around them. We hope this collection encourages you to look a little closer at your own neighbourhood, because every street, every initiative, and every conversation has a story worth telling.

Happy reading!

**RIDA MAHMOOD &
MEENAAKSHI RAJESVARI**





Table of Contents

Inside a STEM Study Group : How teamwork can help combat exam pressure	4
Ten Minutes of Use, Hundred Years of Impact	6
From Old Jeans to New Ideas: Studnets turn Waste into Ideas	8
Art Boxz : A Store That Inspires Creativity	10
Summer Holidays : Big Plans, Tiny Realities	12
Flash Summer Rains in Chennai	13
Sunny With a Chance of Mangoes: Meet the family of the “King of Fruits”	14
Lake Reads Reading Community Turns Two	16
Sea Breeze and Smiles at Besant Nagar Beach	18





Table of Contents

City Blooms: Flowers of Chennai Summers

22

SIPCOT Navalur Lake Eco Park: The Oasis in the Middle of a Corporate Jungle

24

Creating Safe Spaces with Kindness: Rasika's Mission to Protect and Support

26

Evolving Reading Culture at Anna Nagar Tower Park

28

Young Voices on Leadership and Change

30

Internship Offer or Scam? A Warning for College Students

32

Summer Holidays : Big Plans, Tiny Realities

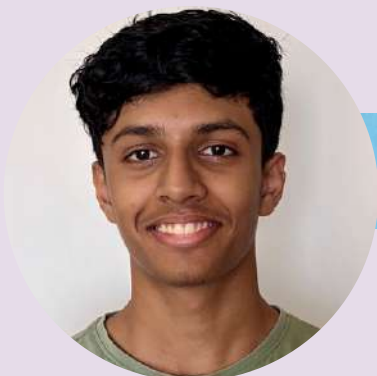
33

Meet Tower Twisters; the Community Running Towards Better Health

35



Inside a STEM Study Group: How teamwork can help combat exam pressure



Harsha Prashanth

The STEM stream requires determination and diligence and demands a lot from its aspirants. A chat with a group of 12th graders aspiring to pursue a career in science reveals the source of their motivation and how the idea of collaboration and teamwork, through a ‘chat group’, supports their exam preparation.

When asked about their field of choice, most of these youngsters replied with various types of engineering, from mechanical to chemical to aerospace. Data science was also a STEM career that was mentioned. However, the reasons behind their choice come from various places. Such as the desire to solve pressing global issues.

What drives you to study STEM?

“One big problem in the field is that engines are either not environmentally friendly, or they are but are quite inefficient, and I wish to come up with an alternative to provide the most efficient engine possible”, says Manoj, regarding his interest in ‘Formula 1’. It drives him to address the problem of sustainable fuel, which is critical for this worldwide sports league.

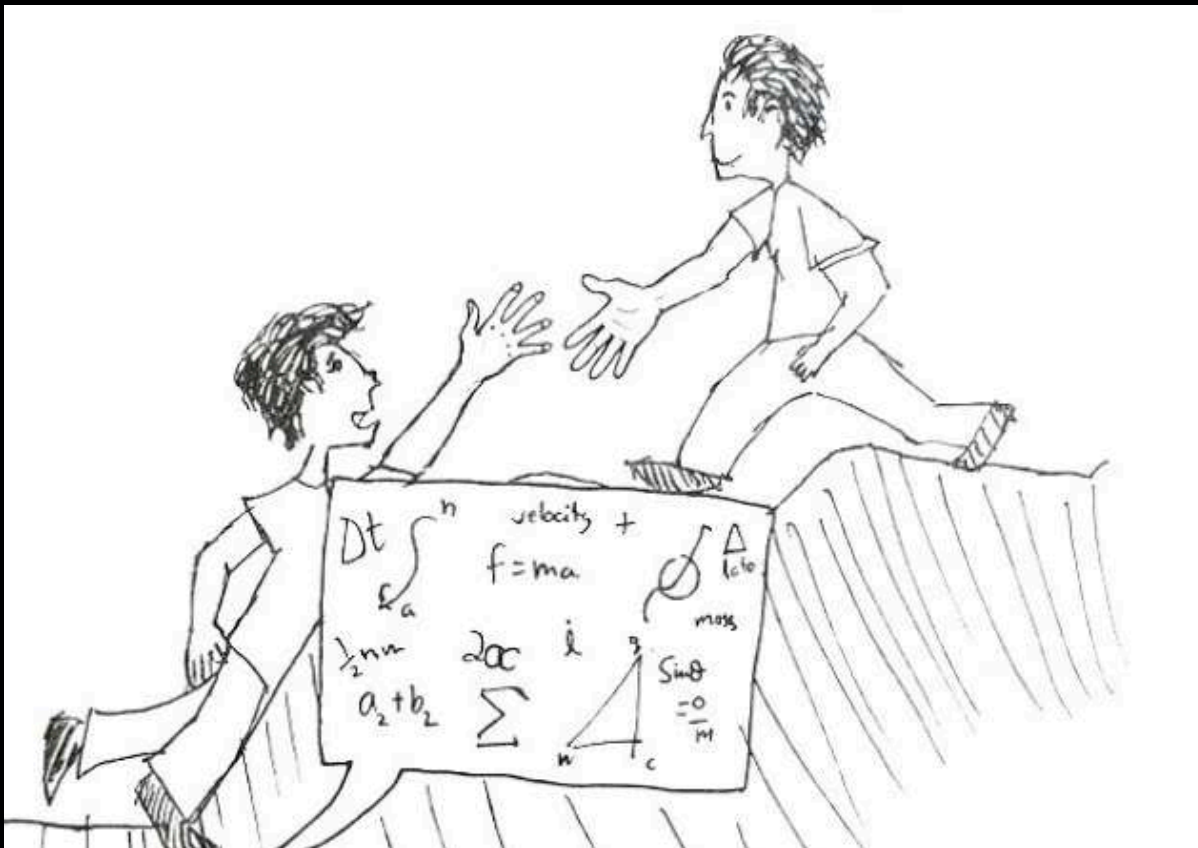
“I also have an interest in nuclear fusion, and I hope we can make advancements in the aspect of utilising renewable items around us to generate humongous amounts of energy, making our world a better place”, he adds. Clearly, addressing the energy crisis seems like an attractive opportunity. Inspiration may come from the cinema as well. “Back when I first watched Interstellar, I had already decided that whatever it is that I’m going to do in the future, it has to involve Physics. I didn’t understand the “why” of any of the concepts of Physics mentioned in the movie, but I really wanted to because I found them fascinating”, says Suresh. Science fiction movies like Interstellar offer a vivid idea of what a career in STEM may look like to young science aspirants.

Another factor that the aspirants considered was the probability of getting into the job market early on. Entering a job early is preferred compared to careers in research. One of the students, Raghav said, “I realised that the path of research demanded a lot more years of long and consistent study before I could earn money, and I really didn’t want to study like that for maybe a decade. Engineering, however, was a lot more connected to real-world applications and hence it is easier to get jobs early on and start getting an income, with much less years of study.”

Does teamwork really make the dream work?

How do these young STEMsters study? They follow the Feynman method – teaching people concepts, reinforces one’s own understanding of the idea. Apart from the various coaching institutes, study groups and online chat rooms are a great place to interact, it would seem. “Groups offer a platform to not just exchange doubts and solutions, but also provide a different perspective as to how we view a situation. It allows everyone to share knowledge, whether or not it is in relation to our syllabus and topics”, says Manoj.

“It definitely does [benefit]. The exams are very challenging, and it helps to have people to help you. It’s also good when you give help to someone else, not only does it help them (the main point), but as a bonus, you refresh your own memory as well,” adds Suresh



Sketch by Harsha Prashanth

Jokes apart, what makes an ideal group study?

The students share that a good group study session is not just pure deep work 24/7. “It’s not just about high focus and productive work. While that is the main goal, it’s also the forum to have a good laugh at anything and everything, allowing everyone to take some time off the subject and have a breather”, says Manoj. In fact, Suresh attributes the practice of banter and jokes to a more productive session.

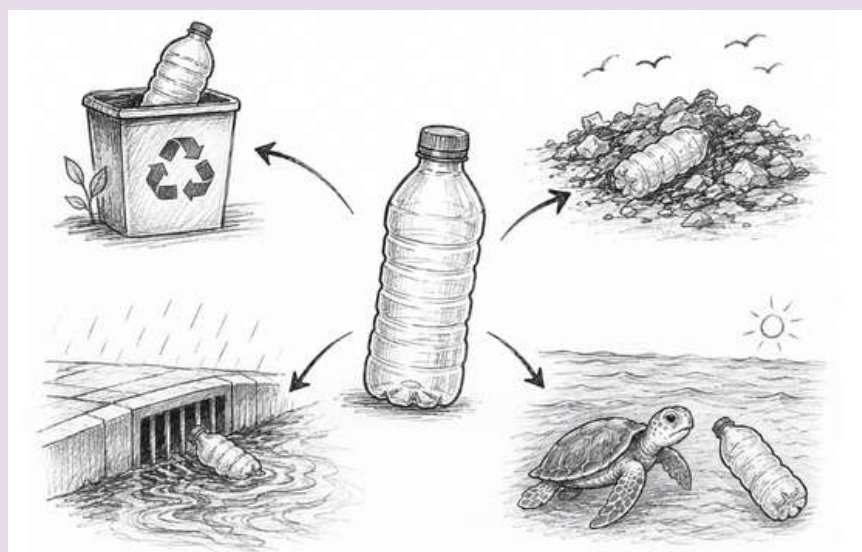
Competitive exams are vast and daunting, but at the end of the day, nothing is impossible with the right ideas and the right set of people, the group says.

Ten Minutes of Use, Hundreds of Years of Impact



Trilok B

A clear bottle waits on a shop shelf. It is cold, light, cheap, and easy to carry. Someone buys it, drinks from it, and throws it away. For the person, the story is over. For the bottle, the story has just begun. The bottle is thrown to the side of the road. If you're an environmentally aware citizen, you might drop it in the dustbin. Sometimes, people may throw it carelessly by the roadside and it rolls towards a pile of sand. From now on, there are four paths.



PATH-1

Someone notices the bottle and throws it into the dustbin. Later, the bottle is collected and taken to a recycling plant. It is crushed and torn apart. Plastic bottles are sorted, cleaned, and shredded into flakes. The flakes are melted and extruded through spinnerets to create polyester filaments, which are then spun into recycled fibre for textiles. A few months later, it could be part of someone's shirt, a car, or even a toy. It gets new life.

PATH – 2

Even though it is in the dust bin, after it is collected, it doesn't go to the recycling plant; rather, it goes to the local landfill –the retirement home for “expired” plastic. It lies there uselessly, occupying space, slowly deteriorating. Soon, after just a few centuries, it breaks into Microplastics through photo degradation and is swept away as Microplastics. Microplastics are transported through landfills by water, forming landfill leachate. If not properly engineered, this leachate can infiltrate groundwater, surface water, and surrounding soil, bringing toxic additives into the environment.

PATH-3

The bottle, now at the side of the road, rests there for a few weeks. Then a rainstorm happens. Heavy winds and rainwater flow push them toward the drainage system. As it flows, it gets stuck and clogs the entire system, flooding the area. Diseases spread, cars get flood-damaged, and lower-floored shops are ruined.

PATH-4

The bottle, this time, doesn't get stuck. It goes through the system and eventually ends up in the ocean. It slowly goes down towards the floor. A turtle eyes the bottle. It looks so much like food. It comes towards it and gobbles up, but.... It chokes because it cannot digest the plastic and it is too big, killing the turtle.

The bottle that was used for ten minutes may travel for years. It may become a shirt fibre, block a drain, float near a beach, or sleep under a landfill. The important question is not only what the bottle is made of, but what we do with it after use.

Every plastic bottle we use leaves behind a choice; recycle it responsibly, or let nature pay the price.



Images: AI generated

From Old Jeans to New Ideas: Students Turn Waste into Purpose



Rida Mahmood Sait

Old jeans became school bags, aprons and backpacks as students at FIDA The Design School explored how fashion waste could be transformed into useful design.

Project ReJEANerate, a sustainability-focused exhibition was presented during Fashion Revolution Week. Held on May 2, 2026, the event, titled ‘What We Wear, What We Leave Behind’, brought together students, designers, entrepreneurs and community organisations to explore how discarded denim could be transformed into purposeful, everyday design.



Fashion Revolution Week, observed globally during the third week of April, encourages conversations around ethical consumption and the environmental impact of the clothing industry. According to organisers, the exhibition was held as part of ongoing discussions within the institute on responsible fashion design practices and the role young designers can play in reducing textile waste.

“Fashion has done a lot of damage by creating a lot of waste,” said S. Fareeda Khan, who leads the institute, while discussing the need for students to rethink consumption and production practices. “This project was about giving students a purpose through conscious consumption and helping them think about how design can solve real problems.”

Unlike previous conceptual projects, ReJEANerate focused on practical application. Around 18 fashion design students volunteered to participate in workshops and case studies exploring how used jeans and surplus denim could be redesigned into products with longer life cycles and practical value.

The exhibition showcased a variety of prototypes, including reflective backpacks made using denim and repurposed chip packets, dog harnesses, utility aprons, sling bags and multifunctional handbags. “One of the students created an apron with spaces for tools like measuring tape and pins because she kept losing them while working,” Khan explained, describing how many of the designs emerged from solving everyday problems.

Students were encouraged to approach eco-friendly designs through functionality rather than solely through aesthetics. “The designer becomes a bridge between textiles and end uses,” Khan said. “Good design can be sustainable.”

A major aspect of the project focused on community collaboration. Students developed prototypes for school bags that were later produced by women associated with Nandri Trust. This Mamallapuram-based organisation supports women from vulnerable and underprivileged backgrounds through livelihood opportunities and skill development.

More than 30 upcycled denim school bags were produced and distributed to children through Boomi Trust and Madras Seva Sadan. The event also highlighted collaboration between communities, businesses and young creatives. Surplus denim materials were contributed by Vijay Kapoor, founder of Derby Jeans Community, while fabric scraps and additional support came from local suppliers and student-led creative groups.



An installation by Team Dare, a collaborating group, featured denim keychains pinned to a denim board. As visitors removed the keychains to take home as souvenirs, the display gradually emptied, symbolising how collective action can reduce landfill waste through reuse and upcycling.

“We are buying four or five garments every month,” Khan said while reflecting on changing consumer habits. “But what happens after we have used them?”

As conversations around ethical fashion continue to grow globally, Project ReJEANerate highlighted how local initiatives can encourage larger discussions around waste, responsible consumption and the social impact of fashion.

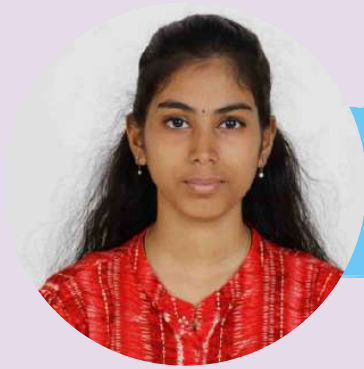
“Let us be a part of the solution, not the problem,” Kapoor said while addressing attendees.

Alongside the exhibition, guests participated in interactive discussions centred on circular economy practices. Organisers intentionally kept the gathering intimate, inviting participants from diverse industries to foster meaningful dialogue on sustainability and responsible design.



Photos by Rida Sait

Art Boxz: A Store That Inspires Creativity



Anusha Vinodhinee

From colourful yarns and glitter papers to plushie-making workshops and art classes, Art Boxz Creative Studio in Mugalivakkam is a place where creativity seems to wait around every corner. The best part is that it is owned and managed by a woman, Priya Ganesh. Each and every item in the store is handpicked. She had even spent two days at a quarry to handpick the pebbles. Unlike other stores this store does not stock the items in bulk and store them on shelves for months. They replenish the stocks every month, so the products here are of high quality and at affordable prices. The stores boasts of everything from glue to yarns.

The trending product right now is yarn, because many people are fond of crochet in recent times. The journey of Art Boxz started in a duplex house that was converted into a store and now after five years, she opened a store on a busy main road and the store fills with customers every ten minutes, especially in the evenings.

This is not just a store; they even teach all the trending, unique, peculiar arts and crafts. From drawing to crocheting, most importantly, this class is for special children too, with no separate classroom for them everybody sits in the same space and learns crafts and art. The classes are inclusive.

The store offers summer classes that consist of various arts and crafts at affordable prices for two months. They also conduct workshops and the recent plushie-making workshop was unique. This makes them stand out from other stores.



Priya Ganesh, the owner of Art Boxz mentions, “When people say that they get everything here, and can complete their shopping in one place, it makes me happy and proud. However a very few mention these positive feedbacks in reviews. And if they find that something they want is unavailable, they take time to give negative comments. That makes me feel sad.”

The advice she would give to young entrepreneurs or businesswomen is, “You can start your business even from a small place. It is not necessary that you should have a big store to start. Google and Amazon started from garages.” She says that she experimented with many things in five years and took risks to build this Art Boxz brick by brick. “Now these efforts are paying off” She also mentioned that parents should encourage children in any activities other than studies. “It allows them to think wider and increase their creativity. Parents should help the children to explore themselves,” she adds.



Dharshini, an 18-year-old college student says, “Art Boxz is not just a store, it’s my therapy place. They have every stationery and craft item that makes me excited and heals me.”

Maya Harishkumar, a 27-year-old IT employee and a mother of two kids says, “They have a good collection of art books and stationery items that my kids love.”

Art Boxz is a hub of creativity that people want to explore, irrespective of age.
Visit – <https://www.artboxz.com/> Contact: +91 9176338199.

Photos by Anusha Vinodhinee

Summer Holidays: Big Plans, Tiny Realities



Shirley Jane Manuel

As summer holidays begin, many children and teenagers find themselves spending long hours on mobile phones, tablets and gaming consoles. What starts as a quick check of social media or a short game often turns into hours indoors in front of screens. At the same time, summer offers many other possibilities, from outdoor play and family trips to hobbies and creative activities.



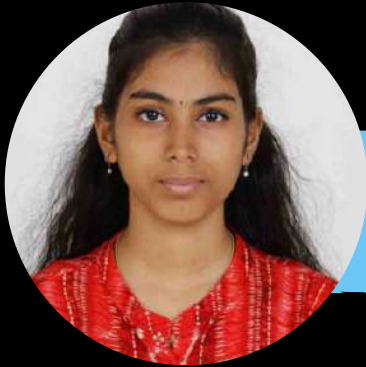
In this summer special report, young people share what they had planned for their vacation and how they are actually spending their time. Through a series of interviews, they talk about their favourite holiday activities, their screen habits and the balance they are trying to maintain between gadgets and other experiences.

Watch the video: <https://youtu.be/Sl6zyt7wg24?si=pTT4Opyr0UvQ8PN>

Scan to view full video >>>



Flash summer rain in Chennai



Anusha Vinodhinee

As political storms were still on and the members of the media were seen reporting from the grounds on May 9, 2026, the sudden heat wave transformed into cool breeze as grey clouds began replacing the bright sun. The weather appeared unpredictable, with the sun playing hide and sick behind the clouds. Usually dry and empty roads became wet, at 12 noon in May feels cool and pleasant.

Roadside tea stalls became crowded as the bikes rushing on the roads are halted for a break due to the drizzles. Some continued their journey wearing raincoats. People adapted quickly to the unexpected showers. Office goers rushed through the streets holding the umbrellas over their formal attire while student enjoyed splashing through puddles. Roadside shops quickly covered their stalls with plastic sheets to protect their goods from the rain.

Saraswati, a road side vendor who opens her shop promptly at dawn said that she opened her shop only at 7.a.m, due to continuous rains and her first sale happened only after an hour.

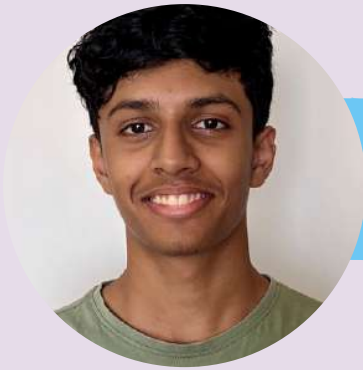


The sudden shower brought both beauty and inconveniences. While many welcome the pleasant relief from heat, waterlogging in certain areas creates difficulties for commuters. Even after the rain stopped, water continued to drip from beneath the bridges, causing inconvenience for bike riders passing through the area. Autos and bikes moved slowed due to slippery roads.

Children enjoyed the rain, but many mothers worried about drying clothes!

The cool breeze after rain encouraged people to sit on their balconies and enjoy the refreshing weather. According to weather forecasts, intermittent showers and cloudy skies are expected to continue over the coming days.

Sunny with a chance of Mangoes: Meet the family of the ‘King of fruits’



Harsha Prashanth

Summer has arrived in Chennai, and with it returns its prodigal yellow fruit that everyone knows and loves. The mango, dubbed ‘king of fruits’, is here to stay for the next few months. Let’s get to know our sweet (not always) summer guest and its cousins.

A short conversation with a mango seller Suresh, in the Navalur area, reveals many hidden facts and stories about these fruits. The stall is set on the side of the OMR, on the main road. It had just rained a brief summer shower, so there was a strange humidity rather than heat in the air. One could assume that mangoes thrive mostly in the heat, but Suresh mentions that these rains, also called ‘mango showers,’ can sweeten the mangoes as well. These rains, accompanied by thunderstorms, are a key factor in mango ripening. For everyone else, it’s a break from the scorching heat that comes with summer.

Among the eight varieties in his stall, Suresh says the Banganapalle becomes “a 100% sweeter while others only by 90%” during these mango showers. This mango, the common man’s favourite, is a butter-yellow colour and is used in making various desserts.

Suresh next introduces the tinier Kalapadi, which he refers to as ‘Kalapani’. Even fruit names can be changed colloquially, it turns out. While the fruit he sourced was from Vellore, this mango originates from the Kalapadi village in the Perambalur district. He mentions that it is grown in areas like Theni and Madurai as well. Do not be fooled by its size; this fruit is packed with intense sweetness.



Photo by Harsha Prashanth

Opposite to the Kalapadi fruit sits a neatly arranged pile of mangoes with a hue of yellow and orange. “Alphonso are grown everywhere these days; they don’t come from a particular place,” says Suresh. “One interesting thing about them is their Impon Suvai (pronounced eye-m-ponn soo-vai), meaning that they have five different tastes, including sweet, tangy, and a tiny hint of spice as well,” he adds. They are well known in the south in this identity, but in North India, the mangoes go by the name Hapos. But this mango was given its exotic name ‘Alphonso’ when a Portuguese general, Afonso de Albuquerque, who interbred many mangoes of Goan origin, created what is now the ‘King of mangoes’.

There is now a pile of mangoes that looks about the same size as the Alphonso. Suresh picks one up and indicates the blaring shade of crimson above the usual yellow and green. “This is the Sindhura, and it derives its name from the ‘sind’ part, which shows the bright vermilion colour of the mango”. He says. This mango is a Tamil local, known to have a very tender pulp, making it ideal for icecreams, milkshakes and juices.

Suresh now shows a shapely mango. “Javadhu”, he declares. “Straight from the Javadu Hills, it is known for its sweet aroma”. Indeed, the mango got its name from an aromatic perfume, made from herbs that also grow in the hills, which has a fragrant and intense profile. Suresh has three other mango varieties apart from these. The malgova, he says, while holding a nearly round fruit, is grown primarily in Salem.

“The best-selling fruit I have is the Imam Pasand right here.” This fruit goes way back to the era when it was the favourite of Mughal emperor Humayun, hence its royal name. “This fruit is also well known in Tamil Nadu due to the Thathachariar Gardens”, Suresh says, referring to the famous family-run orchard of Imam Pasand Mangoes in Srirangam, Trichy.

On top of this, Suresh also has a stock of mangoes of the Thailand variety, the NRI cousin of Indian Mangoes! He clarifies, “These fruits are of Thai variety, but they are actually grown here only, in Puthupakkam”. He also adds, “The climate is pretty suitable for this fruit, like in Thailand. I would say it’s even better”

A mango seller like Suresh not only knows his products well but also how they are taken care of. “During the month of Aadi (July-August 17th), natural fertilisers such as cow and goat dung are used before the flowering process begins,” he says. “And during the month of Thai (January 14th-February 12th), government-authorized fertilisers are used to ensure all plants flower at the same time,” adds Suresh. Additionally, the uniform flowering helps in business as well, as he can start selling all his mangoes.

Behind their vibrant exterior, mangoes hide various flavour profiles and unique characters, from the sweet personality of the Kalapadito the jack-of-all-trades Alphonso. So next time you sip on a mango milkshake, savour some mango ice-cream, or bite into the fruit itself, ask yourself– which mango am I eating?

***If you would like to bulk order mangoes from Suresh’s stall, here is his contact number–
9962236503***



Lake Reads Reading Community Turns Two



Varnika A

On a Saturday morning at 10 am at Kannadi cupboard – West Tambaram, stood 42 avid book readers celebrating the book reading club Lake Reads' second anniversary with enthusiasm and happiness with one another. The event took place on April 24, 2026, in this cozy art gallery with a series of heartwarming segments that brought the neighbourhood's literary community together.

The event began with two members serving cool drinks and samosa to treat the guests before the show. Once all of them settled down and authors Latha, Naran and Jeyarani, the chief guests of the day took the stage, the show unfolded.



Arvind – the founder and curator of Chitlapakkam Lake Reads, started off by introducing the chief guests and addressed the audience with gratitude towards the people he met through the years. Later on, Gowri Raman – a retired Tamil teacher who is part of Lake Reads since its beginning days, shared her experience of being in the club through a Tamil formal speech which gave goose bumps to many.

Elamparithi – an avid reader and a person who introduces debut writers to the forefront spoke about how Lake Reads has changed him into the person he is today.

Vidya, who is a Carnatic singer presented Thiruvalluvar's Thirukural with a modern touch of musical notes which engrossed everyone in the melody.

A group of five book readers did a play-read from S.M.A Ram nadagangal – மணிமேகலையின்கண்ணீர். This “stay play thogupu” focused on progressive thoughts and experiences by casting Kannagi, Manimegalai and Dhroupadhi as the characters in the play-read. It was a gripping 20 minutes with many variations. Later on the guests were asked questions about their writing journey which took place for an hour.

A panel discussion and reader’s Q and A session took place. That conversation with a lot of information for the audience and book lovers created a positive impact to one another. “Romba jolly aa irundhuchu,” (It was a lot of fun) said Diya a 6th grader and a book lover, who came to the art gallery as an audience.

The highlight of the afternoon was the unveiling of their curated anthology of debut writers and poets, titled “reader’s lakelet” by Muthuvel – a member of lake reads and unveiled by the chief guest authors.



The organisers provided the authors with goodies and stickers as a gift to elevate the surroundings. Once the event got over everyone took pictures with the authors and a group photo was taken to capture the memories. Everyone bade Goodbyes and the event ended in a smooth manner.

Want to read by the lake?

Just show up at the Chitlapakkam Lake on Saturdays from 6.30 am to 8.30 am!

Sea Breeze and Smiles at Besant Nagar Beach

Capturing the heart of Besant Nagar through the lens of a beach lover



Shirley Jane Manuel

Peak summer and nothing better than a relaxing day at the beach. Where waves meet the sand that's where happiness occurs. The sudden change in weather made us wonder it's summer or monsoon. Amidst the political scenario, the mood of Chennai was transformed by the pleasant breeze and the spell of rain during the May 9-10, 2026 weekend. People came out of their homes to enjoy the blessing of a pleasant weather. People of different ages could not resist but enjoy the gentle rain showers besides the sea. This photo essay captures the many moods of the Elliots Beach in Besant Nagar from the seas to the people.

Elliot's Beach isn't just a place in Chennai, it's an emotion and a feeling, say the Chennaites.

A place filled with calm waves and fresh air and a lot more activities, Elliot's Beach earns regards as one of the busiest beaches in Chennai after the Marina Beach. This beach not only is fun but also is clean. Beach cleanliness has been one of the main objectives of the city administrators. Today we see a host of people of different age groups enjoying the beach and vendors selling different types of items.

Through the lens we were able to capture the details but only if visited will you understand the beauty of Elliot's Beach. May this beach forever be filled with laughter, water splashing and loads and loads of fun!

The next two pages feature a photo album of all the scenes at the Elliots beach :



Chasing Bubbles

A child enjoying with bubbles trying to pop them



Chill while it is hot

An icecream stand in the outside of the beach



Golu on the sea

A stand selling golu dolls



Riding through the waves

Children going on a horse ride



Tangy Evenings

A vendor selling bhelpuri, spicy mango, watermelon and Panipuri



Karl Schmidt Memorial

The important site of Elliot's Beach which is a photographic sight



Sweetness by the waves

A cart selling Soan Papdi



Ball and the shore

A group of boys playing throwball



Swallow the Waste
A fish shaped bottle bin



More photos on <https://yocee.in>

All photos captured by Shirley Jane Manuel

City Blooms: Flowers of Chennai Summers



Samyuktha Chandrashekar

From roadside explosions of yellow to temple garlands of whites and pinks, how often do we pause to notice the flowers that mark the iconic summers of Chennai? Are these just everyday flowers we pass by, or silent markers of Chennai's changing seasons and traditions?

This summer calls for an appreciation of the long-standing blooms of Chennai city, which is home to a rich combination of indigenous and domesticated trees and flowers.

Mr. Karthik Navaneethasundaram, an Electronics Engineering Manager by profession and a nature enthusiast by passion, has been volunteering with the NGO, Nizhal for over 10 years at Chitlapakkam Lake. Drawing from his years of field observation and environmental work, this report captures his insights on the must-notice flora and fauna of Namma Chennai, shedding light on the ecological, cultural, and seasonal significance of the city's trees and flowers that often go unnoticed amidst urban life.

Chennai is not confined only to native trees, but is also home to domesticated trees that have thrived for over a hundred years, originating from regions of South Africa and South America. Each tree boasts its own speciality, whether through its attractiveness or the unique properties it possesses. One such unique association that can be witnessed is the deep connection between flowers and the festivals of Chennai.

An absolutely unmissable yet underrated flower in festive use that blooms during the Chennai summers is the yellow 'Sarakondrai' flower (*Cassia fistula*), which is widely used during Vishu and traditional New Year celebrations. 'Punnai' flowers (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), which bloom from an indigenous tree, commonly flower during the month of March in summer, as well as in September, and are adorned to Lord Krishna during festivities such as Janmashtami.

Similarly, the popular 'Neem' flowers (*Azadirachta indica*) are non-negotiable during Tamil and Telugu New Year celebrations in the month of April. Neem flowers play a major role in elevating traditional New Year dishes and are also valued for their healing properties.

While on the topic of healing properties, it is crucial to appreciate the 'Pungam' flower (*Millettia pinnata*), which grows on avenue trees planted in linear rows along pathways to create shade and enhance environmental conditions. This tree and its flowers aid in controlling atmospheric temperature by lowering it by two to three degrees, serving as an effective cooling agent during the tropical summer.



Also, as the flowers possess nourishing properties, they are collected and spread across infertile soils or around minimally flowering plants to enhance plant growth and improve flowering. While visually striking flowers are often lauded, photographed, and adorned by the public, flowers like neem and Pungam remain underrated despite deserving far greater attention.

Beyond festivals and healing properties, certain flowers occupy a distinguished place in history. Since the Sangam Era, the Vaagai (*Albizia lebbek*) flower has been revered as a symbol of victory, with warriors and kings traditionally adorned with Vaagai garlands following triumphs in battle. This legacy further gave rise to the popular Tamil phrase “Vaagai Soodi Vaa” or “Vetri Vaagai Sooda Vaa”, meaning “Come, wear the crown of victory.”



Conversations surrounding the significance of the Vaagai flower have recently resurfaced with the emergence of the flag of the Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), which prominently features the Vaagai flower at its centre as an emblem of victory.

Similarly, the underrated ‘Poomarudhu’ flower (*Lagerstroemia speciosa*), popularly known as the ‘Pride of India’ and originating from Maharashtra, stands out as a striking presence in Chennai’s landscape while carrying a rich historical association. The flower is linked to the legendary 18th-century Maruthu Pandiyar freedom fighter brothers, whose legacy continues through the tradition of worshipping paired marudhu trees as enduring symbols of brotherhood and victory.



While these flowers have remained an inseparable part of the city, changing climatic and environmental conditions have begun to affect their growth and seasonal patterns. Factors such as shifting monsoon cycles, rapid urbanisation, and increasing water scarcity have significantly influenced the availability and flourishing of these blooms. For instance, the previous year’s monsoon largely determines the flowering cycle of many plants, and in recent years, neem trees have been observed flowering nearly a week later than usual during summer.

Moreover, a gradual decline of several flowers that were once abundant across the cityscape is prevalent. Native blooms such as the Erukkam flower and Thumbai are now on the verge of disappearing entirely from Chennai’s environment. Their decline serves as a pressing reminder of the urgent need for greater public awareness and collective environmental responsibility.

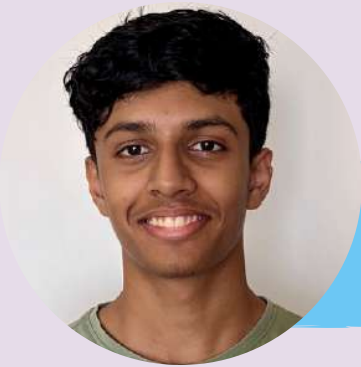


Everyone can contribute towards environmental responsibility through small yet meaningful steps, such as cultivating low-maintenance plants like ‘Arali’ flowers (*Nerium oleander*), which can also be used for daily purposes and are less likely to be damaged by passersby or animals. Similarly, ‘Nithyakalyani’ (Madagascar periwinkle or *Catharanthus roseus*), a compact and resilient shrub, can be easily nurtured in small tubs or balconies, making it an ideal plant for urban households with limited space.

Do you see these trees and flowers in your neighbourhood this summer?

Photos by Samyuktha Chandrashekar

SIPCOT Navalur Lake Eco Park: The Oasis in the Middle of a Corporate Jungle



Harsha Prashanth

The SIPCOT Eco Park, recently opened on April 3, 2026, aimed at restoring the previously polluted Navalur Lake into a clear and beautiful waterbody, surrounded by an eco-park, with facilities ranging from viewing points to playgrounds. There are a few other practical aspects that make this place an ideal spot for recreational activities.

At the time of writing this report, the south (Navalur) entrance had been under construction, so the park was accessible only through the north (Siruseri) gate. The entrance area reveals a vast space for hassle-free car parking and a seamless entry process with a nominal fee.

In addition to photography, the viewpoints can also serve as good birdwatching spots; birds such as the pied kingfisher, Indian Spot-billed Duck, and cinnamon bittern were spotted passing by the lake and are easily viewable from the designated birdwatching viewpoint, as well as the mountain view area. Additionally, the park is one of the perfect spots for a peaceful morning walk, run or cycle. One could even access the outdoor gym area. Cyclists and fitness enthusiasts will surely benefit from adding this park to their list!



Other intricate details that make the Navalur Eco park stand out include:

- The fact that there are dustbins as well as clean and well-ventilated restrooms thoughtfully placed around the park. This helps maintain the hygiene and prevent littering.
- The presence of streetlights and friendly security guards contributes to safety.
- The use of solar panels to power part of the functions of the park.
- The not-too-technical maps that added to the vibrancy of the area give visitors a sense of direction.

Whether it's a brisk walk, a fun family outing, or a solo escape to find peace, the Navalur Lake Eco Park caters to all of these at once!



For more information on the park timings, be sure to visit the well-designed website—nammanavalur.com

Creating Safe Spaces with Kindness: Rasika's Mission to Protect and Support



Rohini Sridharan

“If you can’t be a part of the change, then don’t complain about it”, this is what Rasika’s parents told her while growing up and is still something she instills in herself. Rasika Sundaram is the founder of Imaara foundation, an NGO running for survivors of gender-based violence.

Imaara Foundation focuses and works towards preventing and ultimately ending sexual and gender-based violence in the Indian context. It runs on three particular projects, number one is survivor’s support, where they help survivors get right information about where and how to seek help. Imaara’s website gives information about various facets of gender-based violence. They also conduct workshops and guest lectures that make the community aware of this issue and enable them to be socially responsible, so that they can intervene if they see violence and not be a passive by-stander. The project tell-tale they host, invite survivors to share their stories anonymously via blogs or podcasts.



Rasika Sundaram
Founder of Imaara foundation

Imaara was born out of Rasika’s personal experience with gender-based violence. “You are not taught that this is a problem in society. It is something you grab along the way if you are attuned to it,” she says. Gender based violence is more common than many people think and Rasika started noticing this issue a lot more when she started college. Upon meeting lots of people with disorders and mental health issues, she realised that the issues often pointed to abuse. Seeing how people turned a blind-eye to abuse and how survivors suffered because of it, is what led Rasika to start Imaara as a support system for them.

When asked about intersectionality, Rasika said “My personal experience with regards to intersectionality, it honestly humbled me more. I need to remind myself that I, being in a potential position of power, should not misuse it”. She constantly reminds herself that she is here for them and not the other way around. Rasika understands the importance of being open-minded when interacting with survivors because for many people, their background makes it inaccessible for them to seek help and support.

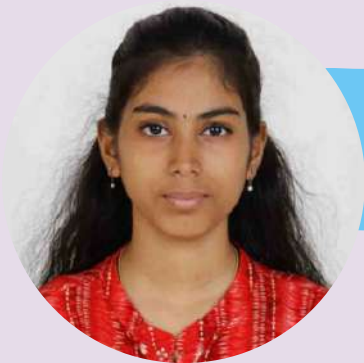
Rasika wants people to understand that it is not men vs women vs any other gender, it is everyone being affected by a problem, so everyone should come together to find a solution and be better for ourselves and for others. Rasika always believed in the Tamil phrase, “Anbe Sivam” which means that love is God. She insists on believing in love and kindness no matter what god you believe in or even if you don’t believe in God at all.

Rasika says “Humanity and love is what matters at the end of the day, so just be kind. Everyone’s going through a lot, and let’s do our part to be kind and be empathetic. That itself will help, especially today’s society with so much war going on.” Rasika hopes that these initiatives would one day result in systematic, policy, legal changes for gender-based violence, but her first and foremost goal is always to create a safe space for survivors.



○
○ **Read all the articles by**
○ **the Summer Interns**
○ **online at**
○ **<https://yocee.in>** 
○
○

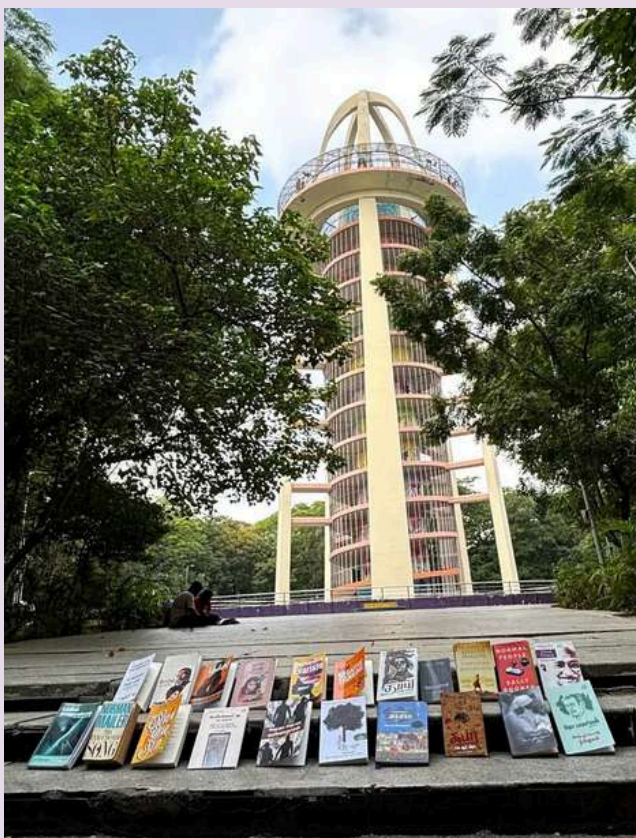
Evolving Reading Culture at Anna Nagar Tower Park



Anusha Vinodhinee

Every Saturday, a group of people with a shared interest in reading books gathers at Anna Nagar Tower Park from 6:30 am to 9:30 a.m to discuss books and connect with each other through meaningful conversations.

The community was started by Krishnakumar A.S after observing that many reading communities mostly function outside the city and on only on Sundays. To make it accessible within the city, he started a community that meets every Saturday at Anna Nagar Tower Park. His Instagram page [Tower Reads](#) brings people together and helps expand the community. For the past three years, these weekly meetups have been taking place at the Tower Park.



This community has also conducted a book launch ceremony for a Tamil author Imaiyam’s book ‘Thandakaaranyathil seethai’ earlier during Dec 2025. Members described author Imaiyam as one of the most celebrated authors in Tamil literature. Krishnakumar personally recommended author Imaiyam’s book ‘Sellatha Panam,’ a Sahitya Akademi award-winning novel to many readers.

One of their regular meetups was held on Saturday, May 09, 2026. This session also had many avid readers enjoying their favourite books. Priya, who is a MNC employee said that she came to know about the community through a friend and has since become a regular participant in the meetups. She shared that attending the meetups serves as an escape from her regular 9-5 job and helps her feel relaxed. According to her, the community encouraged her to read more books. Speaking about her favourite book, The Kite Runner, she said she connected emotionally to the characters Hassan and Amir.

Praveen, a newcomer to Chennai, explained how this community helped him connect with different people and explore the city. He also mentioned that initially he joined the community with the motive of improving his English reading habit, especially through self-help books, but eventually started reading more Tamil books and began enjoying them. He shared that his favourite book is *Thaai Paal* (Tamil). He also felt that the book *Magizhchi Malargal* (Tamil) should have had a different ending, at least to make the readers feel happy.

Tamil, another member of the community shared that his favourite book is *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. He said the book emotionally moved him despite not belonging to that culture. He also mentioned that his favourite author is Albert Camus, the French writer.

Monish, the youngest member of the community has recently completed his class 12 and planning to pursue studies related to media. He explained how the community introduced him to new perspectives and ideas through interaction with people belonging to different age groups.

Sylvester, another member of this community shared that he started exploring books beyond his usual interests after joining this community and felt enriched by reading different genres. He mentioned that his favourite book is *The Social Life of Animals*, saying that the book begins with the life of a fish, contains several interesting facts, and eventually connects them to human life, which made him curious about the world and the life around him.

Several members said the community helped them build reading habits, meet new people and explore different perspectives of life and writing. Arun is one among the regular readers at the meetups now. Like Praveen, he had recently moved to Chennai. He said that his favourite book is *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

Sathya joined the community in an unexpected way. During her jogging in the park, he noticed people discussing books which sparked his interest. Later, he joined the community and started reading regularly. He mentioned that his favourite book is *Kutty Ilavarasan* (Tamil).

Akila, a new member of the community said that it has been only two weeks since she joined the community. Like Arun, she also said that engaging with new people and learning about their perspectives is a new experience for her and she enjoys it.

The reading community at Anna Nagar Tower Park not only promotes the habit of reading books, it builds friendships through exchange of ideas, exploring literature and meaningful conversations. As the members dispersed after their customary cup of tea at a simple tea stall closeby, they carried with them not just books, but new ideas, friendships and perspectives.



Photos by Anusha Vinodhinee

A Small Tag, A Big Difference



Kavini Madhukai

Have you ever wondered whether your pet needs an official ID? Many pet owners know about vaccinations and regular check-ups, but not everyone knows that pets in Chennai should also be licensed.

Pet, the furry or not so furry creatures carve out a piece of themselves into our lives, seamlessly becoming an irreplaceable part of family. But ownership comes with many responsibilities.

As a pet owner, one of the most responsible things you can do for your pets in Chennai is registering them with the local municipal corporation or government authority. This is where mandatory pet licensing comes in. Mandatory pet licensing is when pet owners must officially register their pets with the local municipal corporation or government authority. This gives pets an identification number/tag and helps track vaccinations and ownership.

But why is this so important?

It is important for several reasons: it helps prevent rabies, keeps track of important vaccines, helps lost pets return home and prevents abandonment by ensuring that every pet can be linked back to their owners.

Pet licensing is also connected to the issue of stray animals. When pets are abandoned or lost, they may end up on the streets and struggle to find food, shelter and medical care. Many people assume that stray animals are always aggressive, but animal welfare groups say they often react defensively when frightened, injured or threatened. Proper licensing and vaccination can help reduce abandonment and improve animal welfare.



Photo: [Artem Beliaikin](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Want to know how to register and get the license for your pet?

Visit the [Greater Chennai Corporation website](#) and complete the online registration process. Keep your pet's anti-rabies vaccination certificate, a recent photograph of your pet, and proof of identity and address ready before applying. Once the documents are verified, the owner is required to pay a licensing fee. The pet license number or tag will be issued which needs to be attached to the pet's collar.

If you have a pet at home, do you know whether it is licensed? It may be a small tag, but it can make a big difference for pets, owners and the community.

GET YOUR PET LICENSED TODAY

How to Register?

- 1 VISIT THE GCC PET LICENSE PORTAL
- 2 FILL IN THE PET DETAILS
- 3 SUBMIT TO GET YOUR PET'S LICENSE!



Scan to visit the website

Be a responsible pet parent!

Young Voices on Leadership and Change



Meenaakshi Rajesvari

In a democracy, young people are often regarded as the leaders of tomorrow. While they may have different political opinions and perspectives, these differences are an important part of what makes democracy work.

The Tamil Nadu elections are over. However, the youth of today include both young voters and future voters who will be casting their votes in the years to come and in a few years, the nation will be seeing an election for the Lok Sabha, the lower House of the Indian parliament.

Speaking to a few young people reveals that they share a strong interest in the issues that shape society and the future they hope to see.

Harsha Pradha, 19, a law student, says she keeps herself regularly updated on current affairs through platforms such as LiveLaw, Twitter and YouTube. She also makes it a point to cross-check information whenever she suspects it may be false. Harsha says she understands many of the key issues affecting society and is particularly interested in how legal decisions impact people's lives. Looking ahead, she hopes to see improvements in areas such as infrastructure, government colleges, employment opportunities, roads and footpaths.

Among future voters, Sanchana, 17, feels that her political opinions are largely free from family or peer influence and that she often has views that differ from those around her. As someone who looks forward to casting her vote in the future, she expects leaders to present sensible and realistic manifestos along with clear strategies to achieve their goals.

Uttra, 17, says that while family and friends may have some influence on her opinions, she still forms her own views independently. She believes that leaders should make effective use of available resources and public funds. More importantly, she hopes to see leaders who deliver on the promises they make.

Though their views differ in some ways, all three young people shared a common expectation — better planning, stronger execution and meaningful progress in the areas that matter most to citizens.



Photo: GettyImages

Internship Offer or Scam? A Warning for College Students



Ravi Raja Chakravarthy TR

As students begin applying for internships and job opportunities, scammers are finding new ways to target them online. In Chennai, fraudsters have reportedly been posing as college placement cells and internship providers to trick students into sharing personal information and making payments. These scams often appear convincing at first glance.

Students may receive emails that look like they have been sent by official college departments or placement teams. The messages may use college logos, professional language and urgent deadlines to appear genuine.

In many cases, students are asked to fill out online forms requesting details such as register numbers, mobile phone numbers and academic information.

Scammers often create a sense of urgency by claiming that only a few positions are available or that applications will close within a short time. This pressure can make students act quickly without verifying the information.

Students may then be asked to pay a “registration fee” through a personal UPI ID or QR code in order to secure their internship opportunity.



How Students Can Stay Safe

- Verify internship offers with your department, placement cell or Head of Department before responding.
- Be cautious when sharing personal or academic information on unfamiliar websites or forms.
- Avoid making payments through personal UPI IDs or QR codes for internship opportunities.
- Check email addresses carefully for spelling errors or suspicious variations of official college domains.

Reporting a Scam

If you receive a suspicious message or believe you have been targeted by a scam, report it immediately.

National Cyber Crime Helpline: 1930

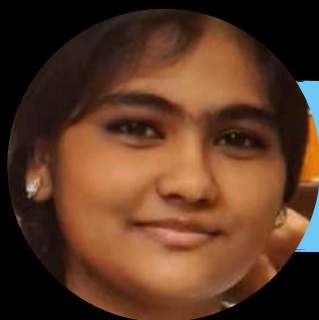
Staying alert and verifying information before taking action can help students protect themselves from online fraud. Remember, genuine internships never charge candidates for offer letters, training or onboarding.

Watch a first-hand account by this reporter on how these scam calls work and how he survived: https://youtu.be/T4OMXN7mlmg?si=olwtYXxgld_MB962

◆ ◆ ◆

Want to be a Guest Reporter?
Mail your reports to editor@yocee.in

Meet Tower Twisters; the Community Running Towards Better Health



Meenaakshi Rajesvari

With fitness communities coming into vogue, Tower Twisters is one such community. Initially set up by a small group of five fitness enthusiasts on April 2, 2014, it has now grown into an active community of over 300 members.

Every week, members combine community runs and strength training sessions. They assemble on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for runs, and on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays for strength training.

While speaking to two of the coordinators, Mr Shaji and Ms Priya, this reporter learned that the group participates in and follows all Chennai Runners events, with the Freshworks Chennai Marathon being their flagship event.

People assemble at 5 a.m. every day at Bougainvillea Park, Anna Nagar, to begin their runs and prepare themselves for upcoming marathons and running events. Meanwhile, the strength training sessions typically take place at Tower Park (Lake Point View).

Accessible to all, interested individuals only need to visit the community's official Instagram page to register and become a part of the group. Accommodating people aged 18 and above, the community caters to all fitness levels.

With the rise of communities such as these, where members motivate each other while embracing diversity, it becomes easier to make fitness a daily habit and prioritise personal well-being.

Photo: Tower Twisters official Instagram page





**Enjoyed reading the stories
by young interns?**

**Share your comments
on the website.**

We value your feedback!

