

CHENNAI DIGEST



Convocation at Hindustan Univ

Hindustan University conducted its 8th convocation ceremony recently where more than 1,000 students received their degree certificates. The chief guest, S Christopher, secretary, Department of Defence (R&D) and chairman, DRDO, was presented with the honorary doctorate. The guests of honour were Mecca Rafeeqe Ahammed, chairman, Farida Group of Companies, Alex Jacob, structural engineer, United Consultant, and Narain Karthikeyan, Formula One Racer.



TCS wins Air India quiz

The 17th Air India Tourism Quiz was held recently at Hotel Radisson Blu Resort, Temple Bay, Mamallapuram. Jayakanthan R and Vikram Ravi from TCS won the first prize of two free air tickets to Washington DC. MV Joshi, regional sirector (coordinator) Southern Region Air India, A Rambabu, general manager (commercial) Southern Region, R Srinivasan, regional sales manager, and Air India officials/other sponsors were present.



First executive programme

The School of Policy and Governance conducted its first series of executive programme in partnership with the University of New South Wales recently in the city. Political experts, communications strategists and digital communications experts participated. Matthew Ipcar, former design director, Obama-Biden Presidential team, Preethi Herman, head, Change.org Foundation, Richard Mills, former head, Corporate Communications, World Bank, and Manu Sundaram, committee member, School of Policy and Governance, were present.



Fusion fest at Phoenix

The fourth edition of the October fusion festival was hosted at Phoenix MarketCity with Indo-western fusion music performances by Miguel Czachowski, Ghatam Gridhar Udupa, Ranjan, Arun, Josy John, Amith Nadig and Allwyn Jeya Paul. Murugan Rajan, centre director, Phoenix MarketCity, was present.



Cycles parked at a metro station in the city

You ride their two wheels free of cost

- Now, cycle every day to your office from the metro station at Vadapalani, Shenoy Nagar and Nehru Park
- Kochi-based Athi's Bicycle Club recently launched its services in Chennai, and is planning to expand to all metro stations

Anushree Madhavan

While CMRL connects people from one end of the city to another, an issue everyone faces is the commute from the station to their workplace. To solve this, Athirup MS of Kochi-based Athi's Bicycle Club, a free SMS-based club, has now installed 10 cycles each at Nehru Park, Shenoy Nagar and Vadapalani metro stations as a pilot project in the city.

"I started this project in 2011 by providing a cycling rack for commuters in Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram and got tremendous response. I then expanded the project to Kochi Metro too," he shares. For the last two years he has conducted a lot of projects in various metro stations on trial basis.

Introduced with his work for the Kochi Metro stations, the director of Kochi Metro introduced Athirup to the CMRL team. "According to my proposal to CMRL, they will not have to pay me anything. Instead I will be paying rental to CMRL through the project," he explains. The racks, which are portable, have advertorial space through which they get their revenue. "That's our only source of revenue. In the other two cities, companies like HDFC, LIC and others MNCs have used our space," he adds.

Introduced on Vijaya Dasami (September 30), the project has 10-15 daily users. You don't have to pay a paisa to use the cycle. "We have a very simple mechanism. The user will have to send the station code via SMS to us and we will give them a confirmation call. Then we send them the cycle code. Each cycle has a number lock, and the particular number will be sent in the SMS," he says.

The registration is done through the first SMS after which the user is told all the rules. "We have three main conditions. Firstly, they should return it within 24 hours. Secondly, they should lock it after return and lastly, they must restrict themselves to using the cycles only 100 hours a month," he explains and emphasises that they are mainly for short commutes of 3-5 km only.

Athirup does not have or need a full-fledged team. In every city he needs three local groups of people - software, customer care and ground team, which he has set up before introducing the concept. "In Chennai, we have two people at the customer care desk at Saidapet," he says.

The ground team involves mechanics who

look after maintenance of the cycle. "The mechanics are right next to the station. In fact, it is one of the major factor for me to set up the rack in any station," he says adding that they are looking at Alandur, Koyambedu and St Thomas Mount stations next for installing the racks, for which he has ordered more cycles. "We are looking at making the total number of cycles in Chennai to 60."

As per the norms for bicycle sharing, it has to be a unisex cycle. "The seats are adjustable. Only five cycles are kept outside whereas the other five are in a storeroom in the station. It comes out in circulation," he shares.

Athirup seems unfazed by defaulters. "The cause is bigger and the expenses are minimal. Among 100 users, there will be a few defaulters and we cannot avoid it. When a user delays in giving back the cycle we call and talk to them. We also change the number on the locks frequently to avoid misuse."

Compared to other cities, metro users in Chennai are fewer, and yes, he was concerned about it too, initially. "But I also realised that metro was introduced for car users, to reduce the number of cars on the roads. And Chennai has a good public transport system like local trains and buses," he points out. "The CMRL had plans of introducing cycles, but commuters were vary of paying a registration and rental fee. That was one reason we got approved. Our main aim is to make people switch to cycles as a common mode of transport. With this introduction, I am sure that will happen."

For details, visit: www.abcpbs.in or call 9744011777



To know about the club: abc to 9645511155

To join the club: name*address*e-mail id*profession to 9645511155

To take a bicycle: rack code< space >bicycle-ID to 9645511155 (e.g. npk 3600)

To return a bicycle: rack code< space >bicycle-ID to 9746361166 (e.g. snr 3600)



Founder of the club Athirup MS

Exaggeration & a bit of absurdity...his new recipe for laughter

Roshne Balasubramanian

To get a good platform, stage time and audiences who appreciate his/her work is the dream of every standup comic. Karthi Durai, a city based standup comic-cum-social media strategist, who was recently part of the second edition of Kaaipi Chronicles, a performance evening, concurs. "It doesn't matter how many people you perform for, it's the stage time that matters the most!" claims the 23-year-old who hails from the 'sub-continent' Avadi. "By the time I finish my work, open mic events in the city, head back home and knock the door, it's 2 am already and my father mistakes me for the milkman," chuckles the engineering graduate. In a tete-a-tete with Karthi, we find out about his love for observational comedy, taking digs at dog aficionados and his dream to make a career out of standup comedy.

Just like a majority of engineering graduates, Karthi was jobless for about eight months. "Then I joined 'Small Wall', a digital marketing firm, run by Chennai Memes," he shares. A YouTube video of standup comic Kenny Sebastian, which he stumbled upon about a year ago, paved way for Karthi to try his hands in the art. "I am a very humorous person by nature. When I saw that video of Kenny, I was amazed and amused. The premise of the comedy was very relatable and humorous and that's when I decided to try it," he recalls.

Since then Karthi has been a regular at open mics and has done over eight shows, including two in Alliance Francais of Madras. "The initial shows bombed and no body cracked at my jokes. It made me wonder what I was doing wrong and that's when I began figuring out the base of the art. Incidentally, 'Tanglish Comedy' organised a workshop for newbie standup comics and it helped me develop a premise for my routines," he explains.

He loves taking digs at anything and everything and it all comes from observation says Karthi who also likes to write. "I wanted to become a director. You know that boy who is a part of every cultural activity in school and college? I was that boy! I used to write and direct plays in school and college," he narrates. "But one can become a director even at the age of 40 da", said Karthi's father and he took up to a conventional job. "His concern was genuine and he wanted me to have a steady job. So, I did what's best. But, standup comedy is my passion and I do it to my fullest potential," he says.

Talking about his love for observational comedy, he shares, "Any standup comic who has been an engineer will start with a set about engineering. For example, if Mike Tyson was in Chennai, and he wouldn't go to boxing class; he will only go to a special class!" quips Karthi.

But his recent observation is about his equation with dogs. "If I see a dog anywhere in the vicinity, I will not walk. I will take an Ola Share and go around the city! This realisation has become my new idea and I am working on developing different routines from it, with a mix of my absurdity and a pinch of exaggeration," says Karthi whose favourite city based standup comic is Jagan Krishnan. "He solves comedy like math and knows how to work it out. I love his style!" he adds.

Ask him about the open mic scene in Chennai and he says that having a dedicated club for all the standup comic artists is the need of the hour. "Almost a year back, the open mic scene used to be very irregular. Now we have many platforms coming up."

He dreams of making a career out of standup comedy someday, but clarifies that it's not a definite long term goal. "But, it depends on how the scene turns out to be. For now I want to explore new things and get better every day. If my jokes/comedy today is better than yesterday, that'll be my biggest take away," he adds.



I observe, see and then add my absurdity to the premise. There's so much that happens around us from which we can take cue
—Karthi Durai, Stand-up comic

Eat, bathe in smart mommy's organic products

Thushara Ann Mathew

After quitting her job in the finance sector and while thinking about what to do next, Vaishnavi Krishnamoorthi came up with the idea of making use of her simple home-made products and turning it into a small business. Organic products that she would generally make at home for her daughter and other members of her family were soon shared on social media. "I started around a month back. I used to grind the herbal bath powder and health mix for my daughter and I thought why

not do it and give others as well. I just posted it on Facebook — I am a part of this group called 'smart mommies'. And when I put my product out there, a couple of people bought it and I got really good feedback. So that pushed me to go further and that is how it all started," smiles Vaishnavi.

Both her products — the health mix (Nithya Poshak) and the body bath (Nithya Soundaryam) are completely organic. The materials are also procured from organic farms and shops.

Since the health drink is also made for children, she adds a lot of dry fruits so that it tastes good. "Kids can get fussy about food at times. So this will be tasty and healthy for them. Apart from

kids, this drink is healthy for pregnant women and also old people. You can make a thick porridge out of this and have it for breakfast. It makes you full and at the same time it's healthy too," she adds.

Today, there are so many organic shops in and around the city and also most people prefer to eat organic and lead a healthy lifestyle. So how organic are her products? "My product is authentic, because the main ingredient that I use is the ragi. And this is procured from my village, which is close to Vellore. And the rest I source from a friend's farm in Pattur, a village close to Chennai — they grow the green grams and other millets, etc."

The produce grown in these farms are completely pesticide-free as they use only a mix made with chilli, garlic and onion to keep pests away.

For details call 8123275375

- ₹100 Nithya Poshak: 200 gm
- ₹80 Nithya Soundaryam: 100 gm



There are almost 17 ingredients we use. The correct compositions are added and are ground in a proper mill, where only organic products are ground

—Vaishnavi Krishnamoorthy, Founder

