

From the Editor's Desk

A newsletter breathes life into an organisation, infusing a certain *joie de vivre* into the otherwise mundane but essential activities that keep the institution running smoothly. **BM Connect** strives to do just that - especially as the New Year ushers in fresh perspectives, new opportunities and renewed commitment.

January brings with it the vibrant four-day festival of Pongal and the children of BM participated in it wholeheartedly, with colourful kolams, tasty treats and harvest dances adding to the celebratory spirit. The 76th anniversary of BM, the Annual Days and the Sports Days celebrated by the schools brought out the vigour, vitality, creativity and enthusiasm of the children.

February marked the cherished annual visit of the Brade-Stiftung members—an occasion that allows us to express our heartfelt gratitude for their continued support and generosity. They were shown around the campus with pride and joy and their keen interest in all the activities was heartwarming.

The education seminar, 'Conversations on Education' honouring the life and work of the late Dr Anandalakshmy was a resounding success, providing insights and inspiration to all those in the field of education. Throughout the quarter, all the units of Bala Mandir were kept busy with a full calendar of events and activities that ensured that all beneficiaries received attention and care.

Do read on and take a peek into the hustle and bustle of life in Bala Mandir. We can assure you there is never a dull moment!

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Bala Mandir's 76th Annual Day, 2025

On March 10, 2025, Bala Mandir celebrated its 76th Anniversary at the Bala Mandir Cultural Centre. It was attended by members, well-wishers, friends of Bala Mandir, staff and children from Classes 3 to 8. 'The Year That Was' encapsulated all the activities of Bala Mandir during the last year as part of the 75-year celebrations, while a special edition of the video on Kinship Care beneficiaries evoked myriad emotions from the audience. This was followed by a cultural programme - songs on nature and love for all living beings by the Vidyalaya Primary School children, a dance on life skills learnt by the Jivikam children of BM MNC, a tableau by the children of the Bala Mandir Home, highlighting the Women of India - culturally and historically, over the ages.



The second half of the programme consisted of recognising exemplary service by some of the employees through the Employee of the Year award, and also giving away awards to four staff members who had completed 25 years and 30 years of service for their respective units. We were happy to have with us as Chief Guest, Mr. Johny Tom Verghese, Director - Child Welfare & Special Services who not only gave away the awards, but also provided an insightful speech focused on care of children in our institution, which was appreciated by all

The second edition of ‘**Celebrating Dr S. Anandalakshmy – Conversations on Education**’, an annual seminar commemorating Dr Anandalakshmy, was held on Saturday, March 22, 2025, at the Bala Mandir Cultural Centre. The topic of this year ‘**Relating to the Young Learner Through Songs, Skits and Stories (3 Ss)**’ focussed on young learners and how to enhance their experiences through creative and innovative activities like sings, skits and stories. During the programme, the ‘**Parenting for the Early Years – 3-6 years**’ booklet was released by Ms. Lakshmi Gopal. The booklet, is a sequel to the ‘**Birth – 3 years**’ booklet, and provides a comprehensive guide to child development from three to six years, featuring simple activities for holistic growth. The three resource persons who played a pivotal role in the creation of these two books - Dr. Indu Balagopal, Ms. Lakshmi Gopal and Ms. Swathantra Sakthivel, were acknowledged.

Dr S. Anandalakshmy was a remarkable person who held fast to a core of justice and humaneness which radiated into her chosen area of work, education; with a focus on children, teachers, educational institutions and the system of education. She headed Vidya Mandir, Chennai, in its early years, as a pioneering child-friendly school that shaped the values and sensibilities of generations of students. Her approach was always open, inclusive, and celebrated diversity in skills and abilities. Dr Anandalakshmy was **Member** and then **President** of **Bala Mandir Research & Resource Centre (BMRRC)** from 1998 – 2017. She guided BMRRC in its early thinking on Parenting, forged several partnerships nation-wide and introduced unique forms of research and project works. From 2016 till 2019, when she passed away in 2019, she served as **Trustee** and **President** of the **Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust**. Bala Mandir continues to honour and recognise the contributions made by her to Bala Mandir through the annual seminar with renowned speakers whose insightful experiences and shared wisdom will benefit teachers and the community at large.

Relating to the Young Learner Through Songs, Skits and Stories

This year, three resource persons who were close associates of Dr Anandalakshmy and experts in their respective fields, shared their views on different aspects of education for children.

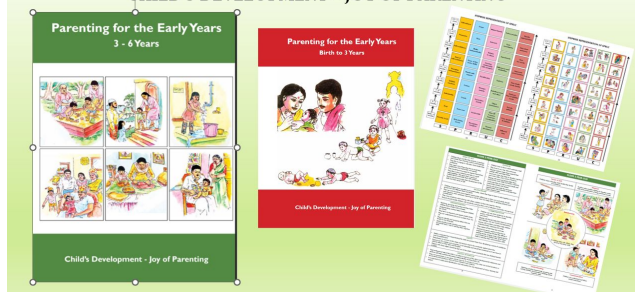
Ms Sumitra M. Gautama, Principal, Palar Centre for Learning and Pathashaala, KFI shared her expertise by exploring theoretically and through enactment with a few students and teachers of her school, some learning contexts and the nature and characteristics of empathetic response. Her topic, *Enacting Empathy* stressed on positive and negative teaching and its impact.

Ms N. Latha, Director of Govt Examinations, School Education Department, Govt of Tamil Nadu, Formerly - Director of SCERT & ABL Methodology, shared her expertise using the sections based on Foundational Literacy (*Ennum Ezhuththum*), through skit and video presentations. The topic *Melody & Movement*, emphasised the advantages of teaching through songs, presented by the three teachers who accompanied her. The State resource persons expertly demonstrated the manner in which the songs had to be conveyed to the young learners.

Dr V. R. Devika, Founder, The Aseema Trust, Chennai shared her expertise through storytelling as a teaching tool that relates to wisdom of society, teaching skills by example, explaining the mysteries of the universe in a colourful way to amuse and entertain, and offer solutions to problems. Her topic *Spin a Yarn* highlighted teaching through stories, dance and actions. The programme was well-attended by over 128 teachers of 23 schools from different parts of the city, who participated enthusiastically in the interactive sessions. The total number of participants was close to 140.



PARENTING FOR THE EARLY YEARS – B-3 AND 3-6
CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT - JOY OF PARENTING



Celebrating a Bountiful Harvest

Pongal is a harvest festival celebrated with pomp and splendour with great emphasis on cultural and traditional values. Widely celebrated all over Tamil Nadu in particular, the festival is held to thank the Sun, Mother Nature and the farm animals that help to contribute to a bountiful harvest. In urban areas, bereft of farms and farm animals, children find joy in dressing up and revelling in song and dance, while the women of the household prepare Pongal and other delicacies. Sugarcane is a must-have, too.

The main campus of Bala Mandir presented itself with all the paraphernalia meant for a grand Pongal celebration - pretty kolams, sugarcane, and pots on fire bubbling with rice. The Home children were decked in brightly coloured dresses as the cheerful 'Pongalo Pongal' rent the air. As always, the staff and children prepared the traditional Chakkarai Pongal.

The Primary children performed a harvest dance and the boys - both junior and senior - performed Surya Namaskar. Traditional games like Uriadithal, Tug of War, Lemon and Spoon, Sack Race, and water filling games were conducted for the children and staff.

The Home in Nagercoil was no less enthusiastic with the girls getting together to partake in the happy celebrations. They were all given new clothes for the occasion.

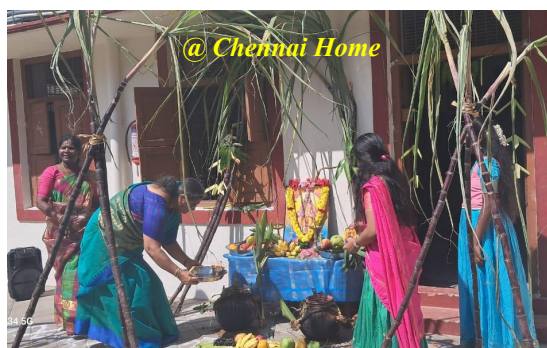
At BM Vidyalaya, Pongal was celebrated with great enthusiasm. In the LKG section, there was a role play and dance by the students marking the significance of the Pongal celebrations. In the UKG class, traditional games like Tug of War and Hitting the Pot were conducted. There was a role play by students in a market ambience which was all set for the Pongal celebration. Children were also involved in a pot colouring activity.

At Satyamurthi School, students from each class delivered speeches in Tamil and English, highlighting the values and cultural significance of this traditional festival. The occasion promoted awareness and fostered a sense of community and cultural pride among the students.

At BM MNC, mothers and staff donned their best silk saris and children came dressed in traditional dhotis and skirts. Pongal was cooked in a traditional way in the front yard. The previous day, the children went on a shopping spree with their family members to buy the mud stove, firewood, ingredients for making Pongal and other essentials like flowers, fruits, and plantain leaves. This process served as an experiential learning for the children to source goods from the market.

At the assembly hall, the children presented a harvest dance and the mothers participated in a 'patti mandram' (debate). The celebration came to a close with a dance by the mothers.

Under the Community Engagement programme, Bala Mandir Research & Resource Centre celebrated Pongal in all the 15 villages under its care. This was conducted with the help of ECCD volunteers, people from the community. Village Panchayat leaders, Ward Members, SHG Members, School Teachers and parents took part in the programme. A kolam competition and fun games were conducted and prizes distributed to the winners. Sakkarai Pongal was cooked by the community at large, and everyone enjoyed the sweet dish.



@ Chennai Home



@ Nagercoil Home



@ BM Vidyalaya



@ SMHS



@ BM MNC



@ BMRRC

Patriotic Fervour on Republic Day

As BM steps into its own 76th year of formation, the 76th Republic Day with all the patriotism that went with the occasion was celebrated. At the Bala Mandir Chennai and Nagercoil Homes the Tricolour was hoisted, and all the formalities were observed.



At Bala Mandir Schools, the Chief Guest, Mr Senthil Kumar (Thondar Wing, Chennai District) hoisted the National Flag and the students presented a patriotic song.



At the Nagercoil Home, the flag was hoisted by Ms. Uma Kannan, a sub-committee member of the Nagercoil Unit. The cultural programme following the flag hoisting, was well-received by all attendees. Prof. Venu Kumar served as the Chief Guest and delivered a wonderful speech about Republic Day and the importance of agriculture. Special Guest Mr. Anil Kumar gave a speech emphasising the importance of following rules and regulations, illustrated through a story.



Sports - Fostering Unity Among Students

Team competitiveness and individual excellence that brings to the fore a healthy environment of fitness and friendship - that's what sports is all about.

Both our educational institutions **Bala Mandir Vidyalaya Primary and Nursery School** and **Bala Mandir Satyamurthi School**, jointly organised their Annual Sports Day on January 25 at the Vidyalaya School playground. The event was graced by the presence of the Chief Guest, Mr. Pugalendhi, HR Head of Saint Gobain.

The day began with a warm welcome to the guests, parents, and students by the Scouts and Guides and RSP students, with a grand March Past, where students from both schools marched together, led by their captains carrying flags. The Chief Guest hoisted the sports flag and started off the event. The Primary students then showcased their energetic drill display, while the High School students impressed with their synchronised yoga performance and silambam display. The event also included a Parents' Competition - a Lucky Corner game, which added to the excitement of the day.

The students were awarded with certificates and medals for their achievements in various sports categories by the Chief Guest. Special prizes were also given to the best performing students in each category in sports. The teachers' team who had won the throw ball match conducted by the school was also awarded with a prize.

The highlight of the event was the awarding of the Overall Rolling Trophy to the Cock House. It ended with the lowering of the sports flag and our captains received the same and slow-marched to hand it over to the Guest of Honour.



Sports - Fostering Unity Among Students (Contd...)

Unity in Diversity

The Vidyalyaya Kindergarten celebrated their Sports Day on January 24 with a themed festival embracing the motto 'Unity in Diversity'. This vibrant event showcased the rich tapestry of our diverse culture highlighting the unique strengths and traditions that make our nation special. Through a series of engaging activities, performances and exhibits, our young learners demonstrated their understanding of the importance of unity, inclusivity, and mutual respect. The festival served as a wonderful opportunity for our students, teachers, and parents to bond, share experiences, and celebrate the beauty of diversity.



Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children (BM MNC) celebrated its 22nd Annual Sports Day on February 7. As a part of Physical Education, BM MNC organises their Annual Sports Day every February. Sports Day brings a sense of pride to the children and their parents. The criteria of the competitions are planned in such a way that participating is deemed important and mere completion of the activity within the given time determines the winners.

The Chief Guest for the day was Mr. K. L. Rao, Chief of Social Policy, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, UNICEF. Mr. Rao was surprised at the competitions lined up for the children, taking into consideration their condition and capacity. He enquired about the criteria for every competition and the area of development it impacts. For example, for many of the competitions, the child had to use his fingers and hands which improve the fine motor and gross motor skills of the child. He cheered the children on and his presence was an encouragement for both the mothers and the children.

Inter-school competitions saw the mobile children participating in the 50-metres dash while the non-mobile children participated in games from the sitting position. Medals were distributed to winners and certificates to all the participants.



@ Creche
At this annual fun-filled event, our special guests, Mr Lars Pettersen, Chairman, and Mr Ole Korva, Vice-Chairman, respectively of Braade-Stiftung Trust graced the occasion.



Kids performed fun games like weaving beads, arranging blocks, sorting colours, matching vegetables, and some activities depicting getting ready for school.

A Lifelong Bond - The Braade-Stiftung Trust & Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust

What started as a passionate involvement with Bala Mandir in 1963 by Paul-Helge Mortensen (P-HM), the then GM of ECC, and his wife Gerda Mortensen, thanks to an introduction by V Y Gaitonde, a civil engineer with L & T, has blossomed into a lifelong association which, till date, continues through the Braade-Stiftung Trust set up by the former.

Convinced of the stellar work being done by Bala Mandir, P-H M had bequeathed his entire estate for the benefit of the Bala Mandir children, through the Braade-Stiftung Trust (B-ST). Over the decades, the Braade-Stiftung Trust has funded the construction of several buildings within the Bala Mandir campus for residential homes for the children - both at Chennai and Nagercoil, schools and other facilities. These continue, as expansion plans are afoot for the school and other infrastructural facilities both at Chennai and Nagercoil.

Presently, the Board of the Trust consists of P-H M's daughter, Ingelise Andersen, Gerda Mortensen's niece Jeannie Gaden, Lars-Odd Pettersen as the Chairman and Ole Korva (Vice-Chairman). During the years the spouses of the Board members, Bent Andersen, Dr Wolfram Gaden, Marianne Pettersen and Eva Rasmussen have occasionally joined the visits to Bala Mandir. Right from the days of P-H M, the family members and other trustees have been making yearly visits, to assess the continuous needs of BM and to ensure that the existing facilities are maintained and functioning well. Recently, we were honoured by yet another visit by Lars-Odd Pettersen and Ole Korva. *BM Connect* caught up with them for a fireside chat.



Mr Korva, as the Vice-Chairman of the Trust, what is your vision for the Braade-Stiftung Trust - Bala Mandir association for the next 25 years?

"When I talk to Maya and PN, we are talking about the last forty years of collaboration and the next forty years of what we have to do. I have understood a lot about the journey so far and it seems quite exciting to look forward to the next forty years. My strategic task is to ensure that the friendship and collaboration continue unhindered for the next forty years. Since my visit, I have seen the professionalisation of the running of the Trust and with Maya being far-sighted enough to bring in professionals to take Bala Mandir forward, is a great idea. She has put together a team that complements each other very well, a little bit like a football team!"

During this visit we have come to learn a lot about the expansion plans of Bala Mandir, schools and MNC. PN has told us a lot about the progress Kinship Care has made in the last few years, about the success of crowdfunding, etc. These areas seem to be the growth potentials for increasing the footprint of what Bala Mandir is doing. For us at Braade-Stiftung Trust, it is very exciting to be so closely connected with Bala Mandir. For me personally, the reward for all the work I do in the Board of Braade Stiftung is when I see the smiles and joy in the eyes of all the children and the rest of the Bala Mandir Family"

Mr Pettersen, you took over as Chairman of the Trust, a little after the passing of Mr Mortensen. What has been your experience with Bala Mandir over the last few decades?

"I have been Chairman from 1997 after I took over from Mr Finn Moefelt, Director of Bankinvest in Denmark. I first came to Bala Mandir in January 1998. I came to understand quite a lot about childcare and child welfare and how Bala Mandir was going about this activity with the key people involved in running the units voluntarily, without taking any salary. I learned that the key people were all professionals in their earlier tenures and they brought in a lot of systems and processes for the Trust to run efficiently.

Whatever I have been learning from Bala Mandir ever since my first visit, I would like to pass onto the next generation, not just here but in the other activities that I am involved in. I find there is a lot of positive energy in this place that creates a great sense of joy and happiness in whatever we do for the children of Bala Mandir. I have been coming here every year since 1998, except for the Covid years. The energy levels of someone like Maya is amazing. She is always brimming with ideas which get adapted to reality by the likes of PN and his team and colleagues".

BM Schools - Striding Ahead with Confidence

Bala Mandir Vidyalaya and Satyamurthi Schools had a spate of activities during January, February and March. The highlights were the visits of a group of German students and the Chairman and Vice- Chairman from Braade-Stiftung Trust.

@BM Vidyalaya

Just For Kicks (JFK) League Match

BM Whales, Team A & Team B, participated in the League football matches organised by JFK at Nehru Park, Egmore, on January 8. Both teams exhibited good performances, won all the matches and qualified for the semi-finals. On January 9, nine students from Vidyalaya who are in the JFK team, escorted the players of the Chennaiyin FC team to the Indian Super League match played at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Chennai.

LIBAZAAR Competition

On February 2, Students of Classes I to V participated in the LIBAZAAR competition which featured various exciting talent competitions including colouring, drawing, spelling bee and craft. Their hard work and effort were evident in their enthusiastic participation.

Field trip to Birla Planetarium

On February 7, students of Classes I to V were taken on an educational trip to the Birla Planetarium. The visit aimed to enhance their understanding of astronomy and space science through interactive exhibits and immersive experiences.

The highlight of the visit was the dome-shaped sky theatre, where an engaging 3D show provided insights into the solar system, constellations, and the latest advancements in space exploration.

It provided students with a broader perspective on the wonders of the universe and left them with a sense of awe and curiosity about the cosmos.

German students' visit

On February 19, a group of German students visited the school to observe and engage with the students. They observed the Montessori environment, classroom activities in the Primary section, Art & Craft classes and a Yoga session. Finally, they had a very interactive session with the teachers also. It was a memorable and enriching experience for strengthening international friendship and encouraging future collaborations.

Braade-Stiftung Trust visitors

On February 20, Mr Lars Odd Pettersen and Mr Ole Korva of the Braade-Stiftung Trust visited the school. Later, they were taken on a guided tour of the campus, where they observed classrooms, Lab, and various facilities, especially the solar panel. They interacted with the students and teachers, gaining insight into the innovative teaching methods and extracurricular activities that enrich student learning.

Kindergarten Sports Day

BM Vidyalaya celebrated the Kindergarten Sports Day on February 22, in our campus. Mrs Nancy Ramesh, Senior Headmistress - Maharishi Vidya Mandir Balabhavan, was the Chief Guest. The children dressed up colourfully and took part in a variety of age-appropriate events that challenged their agility, coordination, and teamwork. It was a vibrant and exciting event that showcased the energy and enthusiasm of our youngest students.

School-In-A-Box

School-In-A-Box, recently installed in the Vidyalaya Lab, provides a comprehensive, pre-packaged educational solution, particularly for unreached and underserved areas. It addresses challenges such as limited resources in local languages, underutilised ICT infrastructure, and no internet connectivity. Being offline, it provides a completely safe and secure learning environment, especially beneficial for remote areas.

Apart from its effective use in schools as part of ICT labs and smart classrooms, School-In-A-Box can also be successfully used as an e-library for students beyond school hours, serving children in nearby areas if access is provided. Learning through hands-on activities enhances children's curiosity and helps them build skills such as logical reasoning, problem-solving, scientific temperament, basic coding, typing, DIY science model-making, and language enhancement through storytelling.

Children Empowerment

Kavin Alex, representing the students of the BBA department from Loyola College, organised a drawing competition on March 13 for Classes KG to II and fun activities for the Classes III to V on March 17, a voluntary activity as part of the children empowerment programme. The programme aimed to foster creativity and confidence among children through engaging and interactive sessions and making the event both educational and enjoyable.



Vidyalaya FC Team

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LIBAZAAR Competitions



A field trip to the Birla Planetarium



With the German Students



Children Empowerment Activities



Cyber Safety session



School-In-A-Box



Vidyalaya Sports Day

Thirukural Recitation Competition

Kalibari, West Mambalam, conducted a Thirukural recitation competition which saw participation from 40 schools. Over 600 students from these schools took part in the competition. Four students from BM Satyamurthi School participated with great enthusiasm and zeal to showcase their skills.

TATA Class Edge's Second Set

The Rotary Club of Madras, in association with TATA Class Edge, donated a second set of Class Edge materials to SMHS. The materials include audio-visual content aligned with the Samacheer curriculum. This donation aims to enhance classroom teaching and learning experiences. A team from the Rotary Club of Madras, comprising Mr Yadav Murthy, Mr Sharma, and Mr Subramaniam, accompanied by Mr Albert from TATA Class Edge visited the SMHS campus, during this event.

Parents-Career Orientation

A parent orientation on career guidance was conducted jointly with the PTA for parents of students from Classes 10, 11, and 12. The session provided insights into various career options available to students after completing Class 10 and Class 12. The orientation also highlighted the employability prospects of each option, enabling parents to make informed decisions.

Astral Nights

Vikalpa Lab organised Astral Nights on March 13 and 14, on the BM Tuition Centre terrace. This event was a continuation of the Science Day celebrations held on February 28. During the event, students were given the opportunity to explore the wonders of the sky. They were able to observe the moon through a telescope and gain knowledge about the different phases of the moon. Additionally, students learned how to identify constellations using a mobile app on a tablet, and they also participated in a quiz related to astronomy, answering questions and testing their newfound knowledge.

Aerodynamics Session

As a continuation of Women's Day celebrations, Boeing volunteers conducted an engaging and interactive session with students from Classes 6, 7 and 8. The highlight of the session was an aerodynamics workshop, where students were given the opportunity to design and build their own model planes. Under the guidance of the Boeing volunteers, the students successfully assembled their planes and took them to the playground for a thrilling flying session, witnessing their creations soar through the air.

Farewell and Pooja for Class 10 & 12 Students

A pooja was held on February 12 in Rajagopalan Hall for the students of Class 10 and 12. Following this, hall tickets and stationery kits were distributed to the students. Additionally, Class 12 students organised a farewell party with fun activities and games for Class 12. The event was well-attended, with all Higher Secondary staff and students present.

Science Fair

On February 28, National Science Day, the SMHS students showcased various science projects and displays as part of the 'Vigyan Fest' themed around 'Science in Daily Living'. The event featured projects from the Vikalpa Lab, highlighting automation, as well as innovative ideas. Ms Meena Suresh, an educationist and member of the BM Education Sub-Committee, inaugurated the Fest by cutting a ribbon with the message 'Cutting the wastage of water on the campus', a yearly tradition that began last year with 'Cutting wastage of food'.

Engineering Day

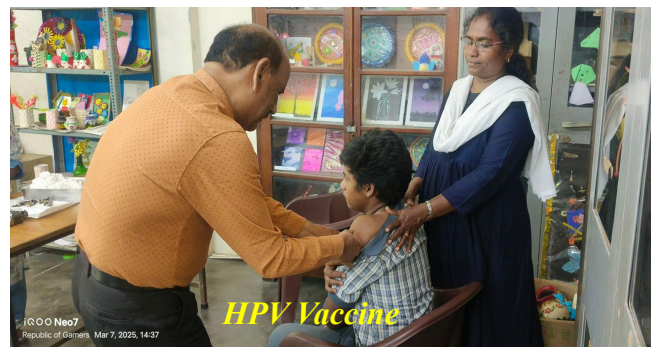
On Engineering Day, February 15, Boeing volunteers organised an engaging event for students at the Boeing-Vikalpa Lab. The event included competitions, a quiz programme, and a bridge-building contest. Ms Parul, Senior Manager from Boeing, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour.

HPV Vaccine

The last dosage of HPV vaccine was administered to students of SMHS on March 7 by the Inner Wheel Club of Madras.

Cyber Safety Programme

On March 1, the Inner Wheel Club of Madras conducted an informative Cyber Safety workshop for students of Classes 6 - 9. The interactive workshop was the need of the hour programme that educated both students and Staff on essential online safety measures.



BM Kinship Care - Giving Hope and Confidence

Crowdfunding Volunteer's Meet

The Kinship Care programme benefits over 1,500 children. Through this programme, many children have their school fees paid, while others receive support for tuition fees and auto rickshaw fares. Additionally, some children are provided with mobile recharges for participating in online classes based on their needs. The required funds for these services come from corporate donors and individual philanthropists. However, due to the increasing demand for these services, Kinship Care has been organising an annual crowdfunding campaign for the past two years to raise necessary funds. The most recent crowdfunding campaign was held in December 2024. In this campaign, numerous volunteers reached out to their networks to collect donations. More than 50 volunteers participated in this initiative, which lasted for three weeks. This campaign allows Kinship Care to extend its support to many more children. To express gratitude to the participants, a small event was organised at the Bala Mandir on January 21, 2025.

Counselling Session – Facing the Board Exams

On January 26, a motivational session was organised for Class 10 students to help them prepare for their upcoming exams. The session was conducted by Counsellor Ms Sujatha, and students from various locations within the Chennai hub attended. During the session, Ms Sujatha shared effective study techniques and emphasised the importance of balancing study with play and taking regular breaks to excel academically. She also discussed various stress management strategies to help students cope with exam-related pressure.

Grief Counselling Session for Mothers

A grief counselling session was organised in Coimbatore by Social Worker Ms Suganya, with Counsellor Ms Vanathi Arjun facilitating a safe and supportive environment for mothers to express and process their emotions. During the session, the mothers shared their traumatic experiences of coping with the loss of their husbands and how they found the strength to overcome their grief. Ms Vanathi provided professional guidance and support through counselling, helping them work through their sorrow. Through this session, the mothers found solace in connecting with one another. With the help of a non-judgmental platform, they were able to explore and analyse various coping mechanisms. All emotions were validated, and the session aimed to facilitate healing, supporting each mother as she navigated her grief. Kinship Care's counselling services have proven to be a guiding light for mothers who are still burdened by the weight of their past.

A Day Out for Kanchipuram Kids

A picnic is an enjoyable experience for people of all ages. Understanding this, our Social Worker Mr Benjamin from Kanchipuram organised a picnic for children from 26 families to visit the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial in Sriperumbudur. During the trip, he provided a detailed explanation about former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, discussing his contributions to the nation and the circumstances surrounding his assassination. He also gave an in-depth overview of the memorial itself.

KC Meet @ Krishnagiri

On February 23, a Kinship Care Meet was organised in Krishnagiri, with 111 children from 60 families enthusiastically participating in the event. The event took place at Adhiyamaan College of Engineering, Hosur. Mr D Saravanan, the District Child Protection Officer, graced the occasion and appreciated the programme. In his speech, he highlighted the importance of spending quality time with children and commended the efforts of Bala Mandir in supporting both the children and their families.



Dr Nalini Keshavraj from the Association for Rural Community Development was the Guest of Honour. With her engaging approach, she addressed the beneficiaries on the challenges faced by parents and children in today's society and offered insights into overcoming these challenges. Through play and interactive activities, sensitive topics such as safety, acceptance, and bullying were openly discussed. The mothers actively participated, raising valuable topics for discussion. The event received an overwhelming response from all the beneficiaries, making it a truly impactful and enriching experience.

BM Home - for the benefit of our children

The Bala Mandir Home in Chennai and Nagercoil had a series of interesting events and programmes for the benefit of the children who reside there. It makes them enjoy and enhance their learning through fun.

@Nagercoil Home

Yathum Oore

On New Year's Day, January 1, the children visited the Sivan temple located near the Home in Nagercoil. As per instructions from the DCP, a New Year programme themed, 'Yathum Oore', was organised. Tree saplings were planted and a fence was erected around the area.

Peer Group Session

Alumni Harini and Ashika conducted a peer group counselling session on January 12. They shared their current experiences and motivated the children to study well, respect their elders, and follow the rules.

Adolescent Counselling

Ms Jinitha from the DCPU led a special session for the children studying in Classes 6 - 12. She discussed the challenges faced by adolescents through real-life examples and emphasised the importance of education.

Motivation Session on Goal Setting

A motivation session was held for the students in Classes 7 - 12 on February 9, designed to empower and inspire them in their journey towards achieving their dreams. The session was led by Ms Krishnaveni, a passionate social activist.

Visit by Mr L V Rav

Mr L V Rav from Sambodhi Research & Communications, an organisation that works with NITI Aayog, visited the Nagercoil Home on February 28 to conduct an in-depth key interview with the Superintendent. He also facilitated an interactive session with the Class 12 girls.

One-Day Picnic

The students and staff embarked on a one-day picnic to Trivandrum on February 16. The itinerary included a visit to the serene Azhi Malai Sivan Temple, followed by an exploration of the fascinating planetarium and the lively zoo.

Memorial Prayer

Special prayers were held in memory of the Nagercoil Home's founder-member, Sarala Amma on March 5.

Motivation Session

Staff members from Ayyappa Women's College, Nagercoil, conducted a motivation session on March 17, for children who are preparing for their public exams.



New Year's Eve Celebration

The children celebrated New Year's Eve by creating special rangolis, wearing new clothes, visiting the Bala Mandir temple and wishing each other.

Thiruppavai Thiruvizha Competition

The 23rd Anniversary of Thiruppavai Thiruvizha chanting competition was held at the Vidyalaya School on January 5. Mr Venmani Kumar and the team from Gokula Bhakta Bajanai Sabha conducted the event. The competition included Thiruppavai and Thirukural contests, with participation from around 20 schools.

State-level Zonal Sports Meet

Children from Classes 6 - 9 attended the prize distribution function for the State-level Zonal Sports Meet held at Nehru Stadium on February 12. High School children participated in a throwball match at the same event, organised by the Social Defence and Special Services Department. The Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Udhayanidhi Stalin, was the Chief Guest.

Visit by Braade Stiftung

Mr Lars-Odd Peterson and Mr Ole Korva from Braade-Stiftung Trust, Denmark, visited the Children's Home on February 21. They spent quality time with the younger children, singing rhymes. The guests also interacted with the Primary children at the tuition centre, engaging in an interesting question and answer session. The children introduced themselves in English, and the first and second-grade students performed a small dance. The children warmly welcomed the visitors with greeting cards, celebrating the occasion as 'Friendship Day'. The Braade-Stiftung visitors had a fun-filled time when the I&T children performed fun games like weaving beads, arranging blocks, sorting colours, matching vegetables, and some activities depicting getting ready for school.

Maha Shivaratri Celebration

Maha Shivaratri was celebrated on February 26 with a special prayer session. The Shiva Ashtothram was chanted, followed by bhajans on Lord Shiva.



BMRRC - Reaching Out to the Rural Community

Women's Day Celebrations at the Villages

The Village ECCD Committee (VEC) organised their first direct community event/programme celebrating Women's Day with the support of the Michelin project team. The event, held from March 7 to 13 was a great success and saw maximum involvement from the community as well as the village leaders from 15 villages. Village panchayat leaders, ward members, self-help group leaders, members, AWC & Non-AWC parents participated in the programme.

A skit was performed by the VEC group members in Lachivakkam village on the importance of education. It was well received by the audience and the school children, and the village women participated in singing songs, delivering speeches on women's achievements and empowerment.

One-Day Awareness

A One-Day Awareness, conducted on January 23, focussed on introducing ECCD, holistic parenting, brain development, child development, importance of play, SPRUC and school readiness. This was conducted by Ms Nirmala for 40 newly-recruited field staff and three field supervisors, as part of the Ellapuram Expansion Project which covers another 40 villages.

IEC Craft Training

A craft training workshop was conducted on March 4 for 14 staff members/Anganwadi workers from different districts of Tamil Nadu. The goal of the workshop was to spark creativity, engage sensory, kinesthetic and affective experience, while using materials that are locally available. These include natural materials such as leaves, flowers, seeds, stones, pebbles and twigs; and household supplies such as bottle caps, newspaper, pencil, toothpick, paper, etc. Completely based on experiential learning, participants were introduced to various techniques to transform simple materials into creative objects. They were encouraged to think of different characters and stories which they presented at the end of the workshop. Participants were expected to impart these information to other Anganwadi workers who will then utilise the methods with children between the ages of Birth-6 years.

This training was given by Ms Gayathri Sriram who is a fibre artist and designer from Chennai. At Bala Mandir, she works as an art therapist-in-training with children with disabilities, focusing on the therapeutic benefits of art-making. Craft Training has been given to AWC parents by our field staff on March 25 as part of the 4th IEC implementation. Palavakkam A2, Perandur, Lachivakkam and Thandalam villages were covered as part of the above IEC implementation.



Innovative Initiatives @ Bala Mandir Creche

Blue Day

Blue Day was celebrated to teach children about colours in a fun way. The teachers had arranged all the items and toys in blue colour, and it was enjoyed by one and all.

POCSO Act Awareness

Ms Mathangi from Safe School conducted a session on the POCSO Act and the critical issue of sexual abuse, on March 1. She highlighted that sexual abuse can happen not only to adults but also to children, regardless of their age. A person who engages in any form of physical or sexual abuse towards a child or an adult can be immediately taken action against under the POCSO Act.

The teachers usually focus on teaching kids about the general parts of the body. This is a vital step in helping children understand their bodies and what is appropriate. One of the most important lessons was the distinction between 'good touch' and 'bad touch'. However, it is important to specifically teach children the names of their private parts. It is essential to teach children that no one, not even a parent, relative, or stranger, should touch these parts without permission. The session was both engaging and helpful.

Helpers Day

As part of the syllabus, Helpers Day was celebrated at the Creche, when a policeman, security officer, doctor, teacher, caregiver and chef were introduced to the children. As a new initiative, police personnel were introduced to the children.

Chef Day

Chef Day was celebrated with activities like fireless cooking, making sandwiches, and fruit salads, which not only kept the Creche children entertained but also taught them basic cooking skills and healthy eating habits.

Art Therapy for the Teachers

Ms Gayathri took an Art Therapy session which was interesting and a relaxation for teachers. It was understood that even Art is a form of therapy to express one's inner feelings, and an aid to control the mind. Each person was given a chart and asked to draw a rectangle with the left hand. Then, they were made to close eyes and draw a rectangle with the right hand. The next exercise was to outline one's palm on a sheet of paper and write within it, what makes one happy and outside the palm to write about people who are supportive in one's lives. It was an interesting session.



Our Helper - Policeman

Art Therapy Session



18th Nutrifest: Healthy Foods, Healthy Kids

Children with special needs require well-planned and well-executed nutritious food, to keep them healthy and active, even as they are educated and trained in specific skills for their well-being. Bala Mandir Madhuram Narayanan Centre (BMMNC) had started their Annapoorna Nutrition Project back in 2004, to address the concerns of nutrition and health for the special children as well the parents.

Children needing intervention in nutrition are identified/screened, and assessed to benefit from this intervention. An interdisciplinary team of experts carry out a detailed assessment of children to identify the specific feeding challenges and other clinical conditions that hinder feeding. The areas assessed include feeding practices, meal patterns, dietary intake, position while feeding, and clinical and physical parameters. A suitable need-based age-appropriate nutritional intervention programme is developed and incorporated in the daily activities for the child. Clinical blood tests are carried out on the child before and after intervention to study the haemoglobin levels. Other physical parameters such as height and weight are also evaluated. BMMNC provides children in the project with a supplementary diet.

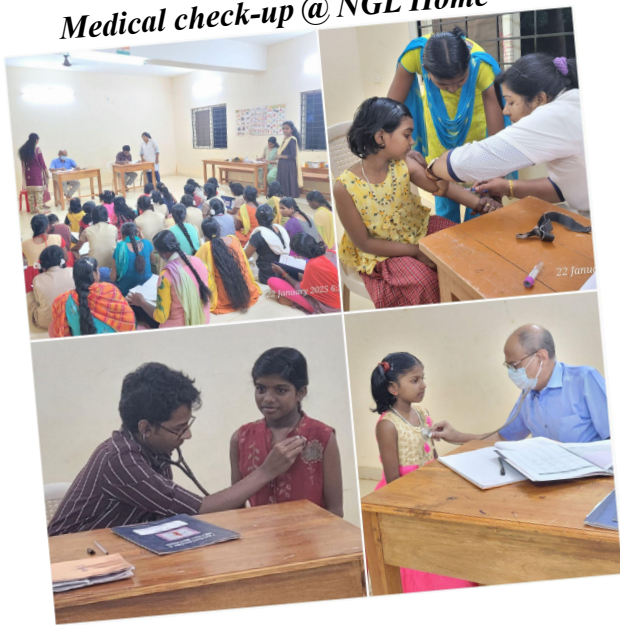
As a part of the Annapoorna project, the centre conducts **Nutrifest**, annually. Nutrifest is an event for nutritional awareness on the importance of a right and balanced diet for growing children. It is specially designed to focus on the importance of nutritional intervention for children with disabilities. The parents participate in the event, where a theme is selected every year for a cookery competition. This year it was celebrated on the March 14, 2025 and the topic was ‘**Recipes with Healthy Substitute Ingredients**’.

The mothers who prepared snacks with substitute ingredients received the rolling trophy. The substitute ingredients used were white corn, whole black gram dhal, all types of millets, and different kinds of rice like *mapillai samba* rice, *karuppu kavuni* rice. The *navadhaniyam* comprising wheat, paddy, pigeon pea, hyacinth bean, chickpea, whole moong bean, sesame, horse gram were all used. *Kozhukattai* made out of dates, and crispies made out of *ragi* or finger millet, and salads made of sprouts, were popular in this edition. The above items are high in protein and less in carbohydrates, that keep the child lean and healthy for a fit life. Charts denoting the calorific value of each dish was prepared and displayed so that awareness for the nutritive value of the dish was created. This kindled the curiosity and they mentally made a note to try them later. The purpose of the Nutrifest to create awareness of alternate foods available for use, rather than sticking to the usual and monotonous ingredients that are normally used, was well-served.



Vignettes from Bala Mandir...

Medical check-up @ NGL Home



@ NGL - New year on a pious note



Empowerment programme @ Vidyalaya



Pooja & farewell @ SMHS



German students' visit



A training session @ BMRRC



Making BM greener with kitchen gardens



Posing with BM's harvest



Other News from Bala Mandir

A huge thanks to our Volunteers

At BMKT, we have had volunteers from all walks of life, taking on various responsibilities and projects to ensure the success of each of them. Right from Members-in-Charge of the various verticals, to people who give their time for specific projects, volunteers at BMKT come from varied backgrounds - corporate leaders, educationists, professionals and students. None of our projects would be successful if not for the passionate involvement of the volunteers. BM takes this opportunity to thank them profusely for being an integral part of the organisation and for breathing life into the several projects involving the core activities, to realise the dream that **Every Child Matters**.



Greening of Bala Mandir campuses - BM entered into an arrangement with Chennai Resilience Centre (CRC) for setting up kitchen gardens at the BM main campus and the BM MNC premises. CRC has provided entire kits and expertise for the project at their own cost. Select vegetables and greens meant for consumption by the Home children and the students at BM MNC, were planted in kits brought by CRC and implemented with the help of our gardeners and staff. At BM MNC, some of the children are very involved in the running of the garden. In a recent harvest, more than 5 kgs of various varieties of spinach were gathered from the BM MNC garden for their kitchen. Similarly, more than 3 kgs of spinach were harvested from the BM garden.

Obituary

BMKT deeply regrets the passing away of Ms Premilla Shanmugam, EC member on April 8, 2025. She was a long time member of the Bala Mandir family, who was deeply committed to the cause of children.



HPV Vaccination Drive @ BM - The staff and children in the Bala Mandir units were recipients of the third dose of HPV Vaccine during a drive conducted by Inner Wheel Club of Madras District 323.



News from the HR Desk

Recipients of the Employee of the Year Awards

The following Employees were recognised for the exceptional work done by them during the year 2024-25

<i>Ms Meenakshi N</i>	<i>Mr Anand Prabhakar E</i>	<i>Ms Gandhimathi Kalidass</i>	<i>Dr Bindu R</i>
<i>Ms Mala Sankar</i>	<i>Ms Valli R</i>	<i>Ms Hema Sundarraj</i>	<i>Ms Varalakshmi B</i>
<i>Ms Punitha D</i>	<i>Ms Thenmozhi C</i>	<i>Ms Sangeetha S</i>	<i>Ms Sumathi M</i>
<i>Ms Vijayalakshmi R J</i>	<i>Ms Sulochana R</i>	<i>Ms Vanathi S</i>	
<i>Ms Umalakshmi Srimantharajan</i>		<i>Ms Padmashree S</i>	

Recipients of the Long Service Awards

The following employees were honoured for their long service to Bala Mandir

- Lokasundari KM - 25 years*
- Valli R - 25 years*
- Kanchana S - 25 years*
- Hemalatha A - 30 years*