

No Tasmac privatisation, bars will have better ambience: Min

'Immediate Prohibition Not On Cards'

Yenkaresan.S
@timesofindia.com



The long-term plan is total prohibition. The govt has to first create an environment for it. I hail from a humble background and I've seen the worst effects of alcohol

K VIGNESHWARI | Excise minister

Chennai: Ever since the TVK govt assumed office, the department of prohibition and excise has been all the buzz. Closure of 717 Tasmac shops, MRP violation, lack of variety in retail shops, talks of privatisation, and recreation clubs made headlines.

Yet, the man helming the department, minister K Vigneswari, is treading a clear path, guided by the party's vision of prohibition and chief minister C. Vigneswari's words — "Thappuseyayam and thappu senjavalaya vida matram" (we will not do a wrong, and we will not spare those who did). The minister shares what it takes to manage a portfolio that sits at the intersection of politics, public welfare and one of the state's biggest revenue earners.

Privatisation and prohibition
"Privatisation of Tasmac is definitely not happening in the near future," said Vigneswari. As for total prohibition, he said, state govt has to first create an environment for it. Noting that he hails from a humble background and that he has seen the worst effects

of alcohol, Vigneswari said his macro view was total prohibition. "But as a minister, I need to see the big picture. What might emerge as the alternative if we enforce a total ban? We should not end up creating a much bigger problem. Prohibition will be a long-term plan."

TALKING TO YOU

Cleansing the system
The minister says his focus now is cleansing the system and streamlining the operations. "Our chief minister has been very clear from Day 1 that we need not focus on augmenting revenue through liquor. The state's revenue from liquor will go up automatically if operations are streamlined and leakages plugged. That is why we introduced the privilege fee on distilleries and breweries. This money was previously going to the parties in power. I informed the chief minister about how the system worked so far, and he instructed us to explore ways to divert the money to the govt. The privilege fee will fetch the govt an additional ₹800 crore," he said.

Other measures include revising FL2 (recreational clubs) and FL3 (hotels), and ensuring equal procurement from all distilleries and breweries. Those who exploited this department earlier will pay the price, he said, referring to Wednesday's DVAC raids on former DMK minister V. Senthilbalaji.

Tasmac-attached bars
Vigneswari said his immediate focus is to revamp Tasmac-attached bars. The bars need not be shabby and those who visit them deserve better ambience. The rules are in place, but enforcement is poor as every bar is under the control of some politicians. We have introduced the concept of standalone bars to break this cartel. There are genuine people in the business, and we want to welcome more participants. Also, we are considering safety measures for the bar kitchens and FSSAI standards for the food," he said.

MRP violation and empty bottle collection

MRP violation has been a chronic malpractice plaguing outlets. "We have been taking stringent action on this issue and more deterrence is in the pipeline. As for empty bottle collection, various environment-friendly models are being developed. Tasmac will engage third parties to collect them without disturbing the existing workforce. This will generate more revenue for Tasmac," he said.

Don't let prey to those dropping names
Vigneswari also cautioned of officials against people who drop his name for benefits. "There are complaints that some people misused my name to promise FL2/FL3 licences. If I learn that any licence was secured illegally, it will be cancelled and action will be initiated against those concerned, including those who misused my name. This is a warning to my so-called relatives and friends and those approaching them," he said.

Leaving a mark

"There is no hidden agenda either for me personally or for the state under our CM's leadership. We only want to do what would benefit the public. A lot of thought goes into every new initiative. I have been entrusted with a job, and I want to leave a mark. People should remember that a minister named Vigneswari brought about these changes. This is how I want to repay the trust shown in me by my leadership and the voters," he added.

7 injured as LPG cylinder explodes near Thanjavur

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Thanjavur: Seven people suffered severe burn injuries after an LPG cylinder exploded near a house in Thanjavur district in the early hours of Thursday. The incident took place at the partially thatched house belonging to C. Murugaiyan in Chinna Ammanthi village around 2.30am.

Report is said to have started the fire while the family was asleep. The family woke up to the fire and raised an alarm. As neighbours rushed to put out the flames, the LPG cylinder inside the house exploded, injuring several. Many of them sustained more than 60% burns.

The injured include Murugaiyan's wife Selvi, 45, and daughter Abi, 18. Veevalyan's wife Kalayaperal, 38, and his sons Kasiavel, 45, and Vempaiyan, 40. Other injured are S. Rajasekhar, 45, and A. Palaniappan, 40. They were all rushed to Thanjavur Medical College Hospital.

The fire and rescue services reached the scene around 2.50am. By the time the fire brigade arrived, the house was reduced to ruins. Thanjavur district collector R. Ravathi and superintendent of police E. Sundaravathnam, along with senior officials, visited the injured at the hospital, and spoke with them. A case has been registered.

HEALTH AWARENESS INITIATIVE DRY EYE DISEASE: THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL LIFE

This condition is becoming increasingly prevalent, fuelled largely by prolonged screen exposure and modern urban lifestyles



DR. K. KAVITHA LAKSHMI, CHIEF CATARACT AND REFRACTIVE SURGEON, DR. K. K. SURESH, AND PADIACAT CENTRE, EAST TAMILNADU



DR. SEEMA PRABHU, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT, CORNEA AND REFRACTIVE SURGERY SERVICES, ASHWINI EYE HOSPITAL, CHENNAI



DR. SUJATHA MOHAN, EXECUTIVE MEDICAL DIRECTOR, PADIACAT CENTRE, CORNEA AND REFRACTIVE SURGERY SERVICES, ASHWINI EYE HOSPITAL, CHENNAI

In today's digital world, dry eye disease (DED) has become an increasingly common yet often overlooked eye condition. Data suggests that between 18.4 per cent and 54.3 per cent of people in India may be affected by dry eye disease, aligning closely with global estimates ranging from five per cent to 50 per cent. With individuals spending longer hours on computers, smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices, coupled with rising levels of air pollution, changing environmental conditions, and modern lifestyle habits, the burden of dry eye disease continues to grow. As a result, it has emerged as a significant public health concern that warrants greater awareness and attention.

The tear film plays a vital role in protecting and nourishing the eye surface, and any imbalance can lead to discomfort and visual disturbances. Dry eye disease occurs when the eyes are unable to maintain a stable and healthy tear film. This may happen due to insufficient tear production, poor tear quality, or excessive tear evaporation. Common symptoms of dry eye disease include dryness, irritation, burning or stinging sensations, redness, fluctuating or blurred vision, excessive watering, eye fatigue, sensitivity to light, and the feeling that a foreign object is present in the eye.

Although symptoms may initially seem mild or occasional, they should not be dismissed as a normal consequence of screen use or ageing. When left untreated, dry eye disease may affect productivity, reading, driving, screen-based work, and other daily activities. It may also reduce overall quality of life and increase the risk of damage to the ocular surface over time.

Awareness is essential because many individuals fail to recognise the condition or seek timely care. Early diagnosis, regular eye examinations, and appropriate treatment may provide lasting relief, improve visual comfort, and help protect long-term eye health and vision. By recognising symptoms early and seeking professional advice, individuals can effectively manage dry eye disease and maintain better ocular health.

Feeling like there's sand in your eyes even when there isn't? Your eyes may be trying to tell you something. It could be dry eye disease. Avoid prolonged screen use and frequent eye rubbing, as these can worsen symptoms. A persistent gritty or burning sensation that doesn't go away is an important warning sign. Listen to your eyes and seek timely care for lasting comfort and healthy vision.

Dry eye disease is a common condition that affects people of all ages and is not caused only by prolonged digital screen use. It may also result from autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis or Sjögren's syndrome, which reduce tear production. Women are especially prone after menopause due to hormonal changes that affect tear quality and quantity. Early recognition and treatment can help maintain good eye health.

I see dry eye disease as a complex, multifactorial condition affecting the ocular surface and tear film. It involves tear deficiency, increased tear evaporation, and underlying inflammation, leading to symptoms such as redness, itching, and intermittent blurred vision. Early intervention can improve both comfort and visual function.



Post-harvest processing of turmeric causes lead contamination: Study

Oppili.P@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Lead concentrations in turmeric powder sold in markets are due to contamination during post-harvest processing, handling, or deliberate adulteration, says a new study by Vigneswari. The study found that lead is a common contaminant in the turmeric powder.

The findings provide important evidence that naturally contaminated turmeric generally contains only background levels of lead. This re-inforces growing scientific evidence that the high levels of lead detected in turmeric powder are more likely introduced during processing and marketing, particularly through adulteration with lead chromate to enhance colour and market value.

Satish Shilpa, associate director, Toxics Link, said: "Our findings indicate that turmeric powder sold in markets across six Indian states, including TN, to check that lead in turmeric is well within the maximum permissible limit. The report, 'Lead in Turmeric', analysed 13 raw turmeric rhizome samples. All samples were tested at an NABL-accredited laboratory. Lead concentrations

varied from below the limit of quantification (LOQ) of 0.05 mg/kg to 1.87 mg/kg, significantly below the FSSAI limit of 10mg/kg for turmeric. The findings provide important evidence that naturally contaminated turmeric generally contains only background levels of lead. This re-inforces growing scientific evidence that the high levels of lead detected in turmeric powder are more likely introduced during processing and marketing, particularly through adulteration with lead chromate to enhance colour and market value.

Satish Shilpa, associate director, Toxics Link, said: "Our findings indicate that turmeric powder sold in markets across six Indian states, including TN, to check that lead in turmeric is well within the maximum permissible limit. The report, 'Lead in Turmeric', analysed 13 raw turmeric rhizome samples. All samples were tested at an NABL-accredited laboratory. Lead concentrations

Sacked employee held for robbing manager of ₹18.5L

Chennai: A 40-year-old man who was sacked from a private firm was arrested for robbing his former manager of ₹18.5 lakh in Korattur. Police are searching for his three accomplices. The suspect, identified as Satish of Thanjavur, worked at a private company. He was recently dismissed from

the firm by manager Umar Farooq over his conduct, police said. Angered by this, Satish, who was a sales executive, laid him off and robbed the manager of ₹18.5 lakh on July 25. Based on Farooq's complaint, Korattur police examined CCTV footage from the locality and arrested Satish. The

FROM NEAR-DROUGHT TO FLOOD

A. Ravi Shankar



BOUNDARY: Several waterfalls in Courtallam remained dry till Tuesday night due to below-par monsoon rainfall in the district this year. However, sudden showers revived the local tourists and bringing business back to nearby shops, but the cheer was short-lived as water levels surged on Thursday, forcing authorities to ban bathing at Five Falls and Main Falls

AI Express to launch direct flights between Madurai & Mumbai, Delhi

kam.sundaram
@timesofindia.com



Madurai: Come Sept, passengers can fly from Madurai to Chennai at cheaper fares, as Air India Express, a subsidiary of Air India, is set to launch direct low-cost flights connecting the two cities. The airline will start non-stop flights from Madurai to Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi from Sept 1. Bookings have opened on one of these routes.

"The Chennai service is expected to bring competition to a route now dominated by IndiGo, said Malendran, an aviation enthusiast. Their airline operates a seat ATR aircraft and fares rise during festivals and periods of high demand. Ticket prices have touched ₹20,000 to ₹25,000 per passenger on

some days. Air India Express operates flights from Trichy to Bengaluru and Hyderabad at fares ranging between ₹2,000 and ₹2,500 during normal periods. "A similar fare can be expected on the Madurai-Chennai route. More seats and competition should also prevent fares from rising sharply during festive periods," he said.

Air India now operates one premium-category flight from Madurai to Mumbai through Chennai. The one-stop service includes business-class seats and is priced higher than low-cost flights. Air India will close bookings for this service from Sept 1. While Air India operates an Airbus A320 with around 140 to 150 seats, including premium seats, Air India Express will deploy aircraft with more than 180 economy seats. Airports Authority of India (AAI) officials said.

The airline plans to increase its Madurai departures to five by Jan 2027. The next phase will include a direct flight to Bengaluru and an international service to a Gulf destination. At present, the airport, despite carrying an international tag, operates only one flight to Sri Lanka. Other services to Gulf and Singapore remain suspended. A total of 36-37 domestic flights are operated from the airport every day.

FARES TO GET CHEAPER
some days. Air India Express operates flights from Trichy to Bengaluru and Hyderabad at fares ranging between ₹2,000 and ₹2,500 during normal periods. "A similar fare can be expected on the Madurai-Chennai route. More seats and competition should also prevent fares from rising sharply during festive periods," he said.

Air India now operates one premium-category flight from Madurai to Mumbai through Chennai. The one-stop service includes business-class seats and is priced higher than low-cost flights. Air India will close bookings for this service from Sept 1. While Air India operates an Airbus A320 with around 140 to 150 seats, including premium seats, Air India Express will deploy aircraft with more than 180 economy seats. Airports Authority of India (AAI) officials said.

The airline plans to increase its Madurai departures to five by Jan 2027. The next phase will include a direct flight to Bengaluru and an international service to a Gulf destination. At present, the airport, despite carrying an international tag, operates only one flight to Sri Lanka. Other services to Gulf and Singapore remain suspended. A total of 36-37 domestic flights are operated from the airport every day.

No promotion, no pay rise: TN's super specialty seats go begging

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Govt doctors in Tamil Nadu are shunning super specialty training because the admission process does not bring in assured promotion, salary increase or posting in whichever field they train in, doctors' associations said, leaving the seats with hundreds of unfilled seats in disciplines critical to public hospitals.

Supreme Court this week directed Tamil Nadu to surrender 151 unfilled super specialty seats to the Directorate General of Health Services, triggering a political tug-of-war. While DMK accused the govt of failing to defend the seats, the ruling BJP said the order protects the state's claim if cut-offs are lowered. But doctors' bodies say the deeper question remains unanswered: why would a govt doctor spend years in advanced training if the job that follows does not change?

Records show that 119 seats in 2024 and 146 seats in 2025 were surrendered by doctors. The quota during the previous regime. "We are an army of more than 20,000 doctors. If seats are vacant, it is because the govt has failed to expend specialist

WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW

► TN has 415 super specialty seats, 50% (215) were reserved for in-service govt doctors

► Selection committee received 170 applications, 101 eligible candidates appeared in rank list

► 64 JOINED | After two rounds of counselling in March and April, 64 candidates joined, 151 seats were unfilled

CUT-OFF RANGE
225 to 389 | NEET-SS qualifying scores ranged from 225 to 389 out of 600

COURT ORDER
► Court ordered TN to surrender seats to DGHS by July 29

► RIDER | If percentile is reduced after second round, 50% of affected seats must be returned to TN

care in govt hospitals," said Service Doctors and Post Graduate Association general secretary A. Ramalingam.

Doctors who complete a DM or MCh course say the state does not consistently reward that training through promotions, adequate pay rises or appointments in their specialty.

Tamil Nadu Govt Doctors Association, welcoming SC judgment, said the govt must increase at least 350 super specialty seats if it wants to place doctors where they are needed. "We must have a wide range of specialists in all medical colleges. Without opportunities, it will be difficult to encourage govt doctors to stay

far further," said association state president A. Srinivasan.

Beyond pay and postings, mid-career doctors are also bowled over by service rules mandating that they remain in govt employment until retirement.

Specialists in some branches say the workload is high, the risks are greater, and the incentives are too modest. TN Medical Officers Association said the loss of seats would eventually weaken public hospitals. "These posts and facilities are created by the state with taxpayers' money. The quota exists because service doctors will serve in govt hospitals until superannuation," said general secretary M. Akilan.

Chest surgery restores breathing in crash survivor

Chennai: A 42-year-old man who suffered multiple rib fractures, a fractured breastbone and a severe chest injury in a road accident recovered after doctors at SRM Global Hospitals performed a life-saving chest wall reconstruction. The advanced surgery restored the stability of his chest, allowing him to breathe normally again. The accident left the man with a flail chest, a life-threatening condition in which a section of the rib cage moves abnormally during breathing, making it difficult for the lungs to expand. Dr. Vijayan, who led the Trauma and Acute Care Surgery team along with Dr. Abdul Hakeem and Dr. Vishnu, said such injuries can rapidly become fatal as the unstable chest wall severely affects breathing.

Nepali man, 34, found dead with injuries

Chennai: A 34-year-old Nepali national was found dead with severe head injuries in Thalambar, near Thirupurur, on Thursday morning. The man, identified as Bahadur, was employed at a private firm at Thirupurur and stayed in a rented house in Thalambar. Police said Bahadur had argued with a woman living nearby on July 28. Later, the woman's relatives confronted him over an allegation that Bahadur had misbehaved with the woman.

Bahadur, who suffered minor injuries, received treatment at a private hospital. He did not report for work the following day. On Thursday morning, Bahadur was found dead in a bushy area near his house with serious injuries to his head. The body was sent to the Chirumoot Caste Hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered and a probe is on.

Bizman gets five-year jail over death of boy in drunk driving case

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: A Chennai sessions court on Wednesday sentenced businessman Shaji Purushothaman to five years of rigorous imprisonment for causing death of a 13-year-old boy after he drove a car under the influence of alcohol and ran over people sleeping on a pavement near Egmore in 2013. Shaji Purushothaman, director of BMPEL group of companies, on May 22, 2023, drove his car drunk. He lost control of the vehicle near the Govt Maternity Hospital, Egmore and ran over people sleeping on the pavement. Muniraj, 13, was critically injured. Later, K. Raju Mohideen, Subarechhi and Mani sustained grievous injuries. Muniraj succumbed to his in-

juries later that night. Following the incident, the Anna Square traffic investigation police registered a case. Through the VI additional sessions judge P. Sri Kumar found him guilty of culpable homicide not amounting to murder on June 30, the punishment was not awarded since Purushothaman failed to appear before the court citing ill health. A non-bailable warrant was issued against him. On Thursday as per the directions of the Supreme Court, Purushothaman was removed before the IV additional sessions judge K. P. Tamilarasi, who pronounced the sentence. During the investigation, police arrested Shaji on July 30 after he was declared a proclaimed offender.

Velachery residents seek relief from marsh zone tag

Sweetha.Radhakrishnan
@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Residents of five Velachery neighbourhoods have urged National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) to exclude their areas from the Pali karani Marsh influence zone, which was designated a Ramsar site. They said homeowners are unable to obtain building plan approvals to rebuild old houses, sell their properties or secure bank loans, despite living in CMDA-approved layouts with valid patta and property records for more than 40 years. The demand comes amid ongoing efforts to protect the ecologically sensitive Pallikarai Marsh. NCSCM is tasked with scientifically validating the boundaries and determining the ecological zone of influence for Chennai's Pallikarai



IN A FIX: Homeowners are unable to obtain plan approvals to rebuild old houses, sell their properties or secure bank loans

Marsh Ramsar site. Residents of Tansi Nagar, VGP, Selva Nagar, Balaramnagar, Annai Indira Nagar and Vijayanagar have urged NCSCM to conduct a field inspection, verify the ground situation and exclude the five residential layouts from the influence zone so that the canal before draining into the B-Canal. "It has been several years since the canal has been desilted. As a result, water overflows into areas such as Tansi Nagar and Sit-

hind records. We are not encroachers. Yet we are unable to rebuild our homes or even sell our properties," said M. Balakrishnan, secretary of Tansi Nagar Residents Welfare Association.

Residents also say banks have stopped sanctioning housing loans for properties in these areas. Many families also fear their homes could face demolition in the future. "Our neighbourhoods do not contain marshland and have not affected the ecological character of the wetland. We urge NCSCM to conduct a field inspection, verify the ground situation and exclude the five residential layouts from the influence zone so that the canal before draining into the B-Canal. "It has been several years since the canal has been desilted. As a result, water overflows into areas such as Tansi Nagar and Sit-

'Desilt 3.5km canal along Velachery rd before monsoon'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Residents of Velachery's Tansi Nagar have called for desilting the 3.5-km long canal along the Velachery-Taramani link road to prevent flooding during this monsoon. The canal, built nearly a decade ago, extends from Vijayanagar bus stand to SRP Tools on the OMR and drains into the Buckingham Canal, carrying water overflowing from the Velachery lake. Excess rainwater from low-lying areas around Velachery, Taramani, Adambakkam, and Dhundeeswaram also enters the canal before draining into the B-Canal. "It has been several years since the canal has been desilted. As a result, water overflows into areas such as Tansi Nagar and Sit-

hapathi Nagar, affecting several families during monsoon. Further, roads and obstructions have also been constructed at inlet points, and several encroachments have cropped up. The works have to be completed before monsoon," said M. Balakrishnan, general secretary of Tansi Nagar Residents Welfare Association.

The residents have also submitted the demand to Velachery MLA and minister R. Kumar at a meeting held last week. K. Nagaraj, EDC engineer, Janaki were unavailable for comment. "The minister has asked both departments to coordinate for desilting. We will remove obstructions at inlet points. But the desilting work will be taken up by WRD," a road inspector from highways department said.