

# Rameswaram temple precinct gets a clean-up

B Sivakumar | TNN

**Chennai:** A trip to Rameswaram, a famous pilgrim destination on Tamil Nadu's southeastern coast, is usually a memorable one. The Pamban bridge, which connects the island to mainland, the rows of fishing boats bobbing near the shore and the village on the edge of the sea present a breathtaking picture. But, as tourists near the Rameswaram temple, they are assailed by an unbearable stench.

The garbage heaps makes it one of the worst-maintained pilgrim destinations in the state. With no government effort forthcoming to spruce up the area which attracts thousands of pilgrims every day, Vivekananda Kendra, a Kanyakumari-based NGO has launched an initiative to clean up the temple town.

While hordes of pilgrims visit TN for its temples, local municipalities pay little attention to conservancy and hygiene. Rameswaram's sea-front is littered with garbage generated from rituals, and the temple premises are in need of an elaborate sprucing up.

For the Kendra volunteers, it has proved a huge challenge. While removing garbage from the wells, they even found empty liquor bottles. Inspired by the volunteers' commitment, locals have joined in.

"We took up this project as a tribute to Swami Vivekananda on his 150th birth anniversary, celebrated in February," Kendra secretary G Vasudeo told TOI. "We start-



A Kanyakumari-based NGO, Vivekananda Kendra, and locals began the initiative in February to celebrate Swami Vivekananda's 150th birthday

ed with 10 volunteers. After a while, many locals joined us. Now, they are cleaning several wells, some of which even the locals are not aware of. Funds are a problem, which is delaying our project. But, we are collecting donations," he said.

District collector K Nanthkumar said the administration had teamed up with Kendra volunteers in the clean-up mission. "The administration will appoint several more people to collect garbage from houses. We have issued tenders for this," he said. With the wells being cleaned up and restored, they are being used by locals for day-to-day use and rituals. Besides getting a scrubbed look, the temple clean-up is also creating an awareness among the locals about the available water resources as well as the town's heritage value.

## REGION DIGEST

### 4 held for abducting minor

**F**our people, including two women, were arrested on Tuesday night for allegedly abducting a minor girl from a village near Manapparai in Trichy district. The 17-year-old said she was forced into prostitution after being made to marry. The issue came to light after the girl deposed before the Madurai bench of Madras HC on October 30 that she was abducted to Tirunelveli and tortured.

### TN invites applications

**for award:** Tamil Nadu government has invited applications for the Anna Medal and Kabir Puraskar awards for the year 2013-14 which will be given out during Republic Day celebrations. Applications have to be sent to the principal secretary, secretariat. Kabir Puraskar is given to those who promote communal harmony while Anna Medal is for acts of bravery during riots.

### Election advocacy campaign:

CRY (Child Rights and You) launched a nationwide "Vote for Child Rights" election advocacy campaign on Wednesday. It is an attempt to remind politicians to protect and promote child rights. CRY has also outlined 10 suggestions in the manifesto to make children top priority in policy and government decisions.

## WEATHER

Maximum

31.0°

Minimum

23.0°

Thursday's Sunrise (IST) 06:08

Thursday's Sunset (IST) 17:40

Thursday's Moonrise (IST) 15:18

Thursday's Moonset (IST) 03:05

**Forecast:** Generally cloudy sky. Surface winds will be strong and gusty at times