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“Chennai's urban poverty rate is one of the lowest in country”

Staff Reporter

— Photo: A.Muralitharan

Informative: The quiz contest under way at the SOS Children's Village in East Tambaram.

CHENNAI: Calling for a relook at many of the poverty alleviation programmes of the government, M.Satish Kumar, a professor at Queen's University, Belfast, said here on Tuesday that poverty in the urban landscape was treated as if it did not exist.

According to him, Chennai has done reasonably well in comparison to other cities that have a population in excess of a million. Chennai's urban poverty rate, which stands at 8.7 per cent, is one of the lowest in the country. To provide a comparison, Coimbatore's is 21.9 per cent and Madurai's stands at 17 per cent, while the national average is 27 per cent.

Dr.Kumar, however, said that much more needs to be done and local bodies have to be sufficiently empowered. “They need to have a central role in policy planning. Chennai like many cities has a Master Plan, but there is a huge dissonance between regional and national urban policy planning in India,” he added.

He was speaking on ‘Urbanisation of poverty in Chennai: Myths, facts and challenges’, jointly organised by the Association of British Scholars and the TAG Centre as part of the Madras Week celebrations.

Employing the National Sample Survey data to point out to several myths about urban poverty, Dr. Kumar said “Rural migrants no longer constitute the majority of people migrating to Chennai. The trend is moving towards second tier urban cities such as Madurai and Tiruchi.

Also, migrants no longer contribute significantly to the increase in urban population.”

He added that migration itself could become a poverty reduction strategy if urban centres were geared up to act as points of productivity.

In other ‘Madras Week’ related programmes on Tuesday, a debate on ‘Social awareness among students in Chennai’ was organised for NSS cadets at the Women’s Christian College. Of the 11 colleges that participated, the first prize was won by a team from Presidency College.

In a talk ‘Kovil Suvargal Pesinaal’ at the Roja Muthiah Library, Pradeep Chakravarthy spoke about the societal and cultural landscape during the reign of the Cholas.

Earlier in the day, a heritage walk on the Marina beach led by Major (Retd.) V.Raghavan was organised by the Asan Memorial Senior Secondary School.

Quiz on Madras

A quiz on Madras, its history, landmark buildings and food for students of a few schools in Tambaram turned out to be informative and entertaining as well.

It was informative as the children were exposed to notable personalities and importance of landmarks such as Ice House and Ripon Building and entertaining, as children came up with wild guesses that ended up in peels of laughter among their team mates, other students and their teachers as well. SOS Children’s Village commenced its ‘Madras Week’ celebrations at its Chatnath Homes in Professors’s Colony, East Tambaram, from Monday.

The opening day saw a project on Tambaram with models of railway station, educational institutions, Air Force Station, important roads and places of worship on display. On Tuesday,

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R.Jayabalan, Additional Director, SOS Children's Villages welcomed the students of Jaigopal Garodia National Higher Secondary School, Sita Devi Garodia Hindu Vidyalaya, Zion and St. Mary's Higher Secondary Schools who had come to take part in the quiz. There were five teams (two from Jaigopal) and the first three rounds were dedicated to Tambaram.

A total of 55 questions were asked and the team from Zion school won the event followed by St. Mary's and Jaigopal Garodia.