



The members of Nimirvu Kalaiyagam performing at Thirumangalam Metro Station in Chennai on Sunday morning | EXPRESS

Different tune, but same energy: Parai on a Covid awareness trail

OMJASVIN M D @Chennai

THE sound of the drum beat and the music of their *salangai* (ghungroo) as they tapped their feet in an energetic dance reverberated on the platform of the Thirumangalam metro station on Sunday morning. This was not a flash mob, but artists of Paraiattam (a folk art form of Tamil Nadu) who were singing a different tune this time.

These artists in masks drummed up songs on Covid awareness and safety measures one needs to take, especially in the wake of the festive season. Talking about this initiative by the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) to bring in Parai artists for the awareness campaign, an official said, "From elders to youngsters, many stop by and watch the performance. They may later tell their friends and relatives to wear masks and practice social distancing. That's the idea behind this arrangement," an official said.

A group of youngsters from Nimirvu Kalaiyagam, a platform that teaches Parai and organises performances, drum the message to the passengers and explain on a microphone the importance of wearing a mask and following social distancing. The Kalaiyagam members teach and perform the instrument across Tamil Nadu and the world.

Muthamil Bharathi, Organiser and Trainer at the Kalaiyagam, said they have performed for CMRL on various occasions. "There were a lot of people at Thirumangalam station, and apart from Covid safety, people also learnt about Parai," he said. Bharathi said the performers included IT engineers, doctors and government servants. "This is a collective effort to push the idea of Covid safety among people."

Bharathi said the CMRL, too, has shared about the event on social media to ensure it reaches more people. "We will perform in the coming days in other stations too," he said.