

Singapore doctor, kin vacation in city slums

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DC | CHENNAI

May 25: While many families go on leisure trips or for pilgrimage during summer, a Tamil family from Singapore comes down to India to conduct 10-day camps for slum children.

Twelve members of a family, including 89-year-old Saminathan, have been going around different cities in India to celebrate their summer holidays with kids, spending \$ 14,000 every year.

In their fifth year of these extraordinary excursions, these Singaporeans landed in the slums of north Chennai to mingle with under-privileged children and to hone their craft skills. "I always wanted to visit Tamil



The family dresses up a child for a fashion show.

—DC

Nadu. My dentist-son Vijayan went around different countries along with his friends to serve deprived people. Gradually, we also imbibed the spirit.

We formed 'Family Affairs' group and brought

in our family members and relatives under this umbrella to help others," he said. The family has opened a separate bank account and saves money throughout the year for this service-cum-summer holiday trip. Dr Vijay's neighbours and friends sometimes join him. Sripriya, a government schoolteacher in Chennai, accompanied the Singapore family around the city and identified kids from poor families.

"We saw the movie *Rio*. We enjoyed water games in theme parks, had lots of food and learnt many moral lessons," said A. Meena, 7, a participant. Shakunthala Devi, 62, who works with Singapore Police Force, said Chennai kids have gifted a 120-page handwritten book to her family.