



SC TO HEAR PLEA FOR TIMELY RELEASE OF VOTER TURNOUT DATA ON FRIDAY

Plea by Association for Democratic Reforms seeks a direction to the poll panel to put out station-wise voter turnout data within 48 hrs of close of voting

SUSPICIONS ABOUT TURNOUT DATA'S ACCURACY

The final voter turnout data for the first two phases were published by the Election Commission on April 30, by which time 11 days had elapsed since the first phase voting and four days since the second phase, the plea said.

'ADDRESS DELAY TO UPHOLD VOTERS' TRUST'

To uphold voters' confidence, the Supreme Court must direct the EC to disclose on its website, scanned legible copies of turnout data of all polling stations within 48 hours of close of polling, the plea said

Form 17C Part-1

HAS DETAILS OF VOTES RECORDED BY EACH POLLING STATION

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLOUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPPATTINAM • THIRISSUR • KALABURAGI



BILLBOARD FALLS OFF IN RAIN-HIT MUMBAI, 8 DEAD

A 100-foot-tall illegal billboard fell over a petrol pump in Ghatkopar area of Mumbai as unseasonal rains accompanied by dust storms lashed the city

Efforts were underway on Monday night to rescue about 100 people feared trapped beneath the hoarding. About 60 people were injured in the incident

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation said the maximum permissible size for hoardings is 40X40 feet. But the one that collapsed was 120X120 feet

Kerala's thumbs-up to NGO's novel forest conservation initiative

K S SREEJITH @T'Puram

IN A NOVEL initiative aimed at nature conservation, a Kolkata-based NGO has purchased four acres of private land along the forest enclosure, with the intention to "re-wild" it and hand it over to the forest department.



Nature Mates Nature Club (NMNC), Kolkata, purchased the land coming under the Sankarankode forest enclosure in Malappuram's Kurali village and approached the department with the request to receive and register it in the department's name.

This is the second such instance. Recently, in Wayanad's Thirunelli, another NGO - Wild Life Trust of India - purchased private land and transferred it to the forest department.

The NMNC approached the department as part of an initiative to shift non-tribal people living or engaged in agriculture inside forest enclosures

to non-forest areas. Following this, the principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife) and chief wildlife warden, through a letter on April 27, requested the government to accord approval for registering the four acres in the forest department's name.

The NGO acquired lands from three persons, Afsar, Assainar and Abdul Kareem. The Sankarankode enclosure has 60 acres of land in the possession of non-tribal inhabitants. The stretch is surrounded by new Amarambalam Reserve Forest, and is part of the Nilambur Elephant Reserve. It is a forest area having good elephant habitat and active human-animal conflict, K Vijay Anand, CCF (Eastern Circle-Palakkad) told TNIE.

More on P4

Axe likely to fall on KIIFB, pension company

ANIL S @T'Puram

THE STATE government is mulling over winding up the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) and Kerala State Social Security Pension Ltd (KSSPL) in the long run, if a report by the state administrative reforms department is anything to go by. The report comes at a time when the government is going through a severe financial crisis and when social security pensions are getting delayed.

the two firms were formed as special purpose vehicles, keeping in mind specific intentions, and will be done away with once their purpose is served. The report that looked into restructuring the workload in the finance department, has been vetted by an expert panel and submitted to the government.

It was at the start of the first Pinarayi government's tenure that KIIFB was floated as a revolutionary concept to facilitate out-of-budget borrowings (OBBs). The KSSPL was later formed to raise funds for social



security pensions. Many point out that winding up the latter will send out the message that the government is trying to dis-

trust itself from social security pensions. Curiously, it was recently that KIIFB invited tenders to set up a new office.

stance itself from social security pensions. Curiously, it was recently that KIIFB invited tenders to set up a new office.

CHADOORA, CHARAR, GANDERBAL SEGMENTS RECORDED MORE THAN 45% VOTES

Highest Srinagar voter turnout in decades; better 4th phase polling

PREETHA NAIR @New Delhi

AFTER registering a dip in voter turnout in the first three phases, the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections saw a 64.09% turnout in 96 seats across 10 states and Union territories. In the 2019 polls, the polling percentage in these 96 seats was 69.12%.

"Polling in the fourth phase of general elections 2024 closed at 6 pm, but a large number of voters were still in the queue at polling stations," the Election Commission said in a statement, adding these were provisional figures.

Voting was also held in Srinagar, one of the three parliamentary constituencies of Kashmir. Polling was brisk by Srinagar's standards — it recorded over 38% voter turnout — the highest in decades. In 2019, it was just 14.43%. Srinagar's highest ever turnout was 40.9% in 1996. This is the first general election in Kashmir after the hollowing out of Article 370 in 2019.



People stand in queues to cast their votes at a polling station in Fakeer Gujri on the outskirts of Srinagar, in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections on Monday | PTI

West Bengal recorded 76.32%, followed by Madhya Pradesh (70.47%), Andhra Pradesh (68.2%), Jharkhand (64.59%), Telangana (62.28%), Odisha (64.4%), UP (57.88%) and Bihar (55.90%). The low voter turnout in the last three phases has been a cause of worry for the Election Commission and political parties.

The fourth round is crucial for the BJP as it

hopes to make considerable gains in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha. In 2019, the BJP and its allies won 47 of these 96 seats.

One of the main highlights of the fourth phase is the simultaneous election to all 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh and 28 in Odisha. The contest in Andhra is keenly watched as the NDA alliance of the BJP, Chandrababu Naidu's TDP and Pawan Kalyan-led Jana



BENGAL VIOLENCE

In this combo, BJP candidate Dilip Ghosh's personal security (left) and a TMC worker (right) got injured after clashes between rival groups in the Susunia area of Bardhaman-Durgapur seat

AAP MP Swati Maliwal alleges assault by PA of Kejriwal

UJWAL JALALI @New Delhi

AAM Aadmi Party's (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal was allegedly physically assaulted at the residence of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday, following which she alerted the Delhi Police but did not file any formal complaint.

Coming as it did in the midst of the general elections and with the AAP refusing to clear the air, the issue soon acquired political overtones.

The police received a PCR call at 9.34 am from Maliwal, who was at Kejriwal's residence, alleging that she had been assaulted by one of the chief minister's staff.

"As per information, the lady is saying that she is at the CM's house and has been assaulted by CM's PA Bibhav Kumar," the note of the PCR call written by a police-man read.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (north) Manoj Meena said the local Station House Officer along with other staff reached the CM's residence but didn't find her there. Maliwal, the former Delhi Commission for Women chief, later visited the Civil Lines police station but did not give any formal complaint.

The National Commission for Women then stepped in and said it will write to the Delhi Police seeking an Action Taken Report within three days.

While no official reaction has come from Maliwal or the AAP, the BJP slammed Kejriwal and demanded accountability. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva sought a thorough investigation into the entire incident.



Lalu factor writ large in daughter's spirited fight in Saran

RAMASHANKAR @Patna

FOR voters of Bihar's Saran Lok Sabha constituency (Chapra before delimitation in 2008), the contest between Rashtriya Janata Dal patriarch Lalu Prasad's family and Bharatiya Janata Party's Rajiv Pratap Rudy is nothing new. In the past two polls, it was a direct fight between Rudy and RJD candidates linked to the Lalu family. In 2014, Rudy trounced Lalu's wife and former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi by 40,000 votes while in 2019, he sent Chandrika Rai, father-in-law of Lalu's son Tej Pratap Yadav, packing, increasing his win-

ning margin to 1.38 lakh votes.

This time, there is a lot of interest in the Saran joust as Lalu's daughter Rohini Acharya is seeking her electoral debut. Rohini is a medical doctor by education and is settled in Singapore. She was in the news in 2022 when she donated one of her kidneys to her ailing father, an act that won her praise even from Lalu's bitter rivals.

Lalu himself is campaigning in Saran, which will go to polls on May 20, to ensure his daughter's win. Despite health issues, he has addressed rallies and held meetings with party workers. Lalu has deeper connect in

the constituency, which he represented four times till he was disqualified in 2013 following his conviction in cases linked to the multi-crore fodder scam. In the 2009 LS poll, the first gen-

eral election after delimitation, the seat went to the RJD with Lalu defeating Rudy by over 50,000 votes. But Rudy won the next two elections.

Rohini has an uphill task to defeat Rudy, a veteran who has worked with both Atal Bihari and Narendra Modi as a Union minister. But the Lalu scion is confident. "I am not a novice. I am aware of what's happening in Bihar. I have been closely watching the day-to-day political developments and giving my views on social media platforms. I have learnt the nuances of politics from my father, who is also my political guru," she told this newspaper.

As for Rudy, he is

showcasing his work for the region in terms of infrastructure and industrial development besides riding on the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who addressed an election rally in Saran on Monday. But Rudy acknowledges the Lalu factor. "It's not Rohini in the fray. The real opponent is Lalu, who is fighting from behind the scenes," Rudy said.

Rohini is relying on RJD's traditional Muslim-Yadav vote bank, besides the extremely backward classes as RJD has given tickets to many EBCs. She has the daunting task of carrying forward her father's political legacy. However, the political landscape of Saran has changed dramatically since the Lalu reign.

Salam may be named to RS seat offered to League

CYNTHIA CHANDRAN @T'Puram

P M A Salam, state general secretary of the IUMML, is slated to be its candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat that falls vacant on July 1. The decision to offer the UDF seat — of the three in Kerala to be vacated that day — to the IUMML was reportedly taken unilaterally by Leader of Opposition V D Sathesan after seat-sharing talks for the Lok Sabha election turned controversial. Sathesan hogged the headlines during the bilateral talks, as the League pressed ahead

with its demand for a third Lok Sabha seat.

This would have been besides its Ponnani and Malappuram seats, where E T Mohammed Basheer and Abdul Samad Samadani, respectively, had tasted success. The two swapped their sitting seats for the 2024 general elections.

The placatory decision to offer the RS seat to the IUMML — made against the backdrop of feelers that it is cosying up to the LDF — invited criticism from leaders of the Congress and other UDF allies.

More on P4



ILLUSTRATION: MANDAR PARDIKAR



KOZHIKODE		MIN	MAX
27°C	37°C	Palakkad	26°C 37°C
FORECAST		Kannur	26°C 35°C
Generally cloudy		Kochi	26°C 35°C
		TPuram	25°C 35°C

BIJU E PAUL @ Alappuzha

HURT BY HEAT, PADDY OUTPUT IN THE STATE TAKES A BEATING

From nearly 7,31,182 MT in 2022-23 season, output fell to 4,99,768 MT in 2023-24, suffers ₹550-cr decline in revenue

PADDY production in the state has dwindled by around 30% due to the scorching conditions. From nearly 7,31,182 metric tonnes (MT) in the 2022-23 season, output fell to 4,99,768 MT in 2023-24. The paddy sector suffered a ₹550-crore decline in revenue in the latest season.

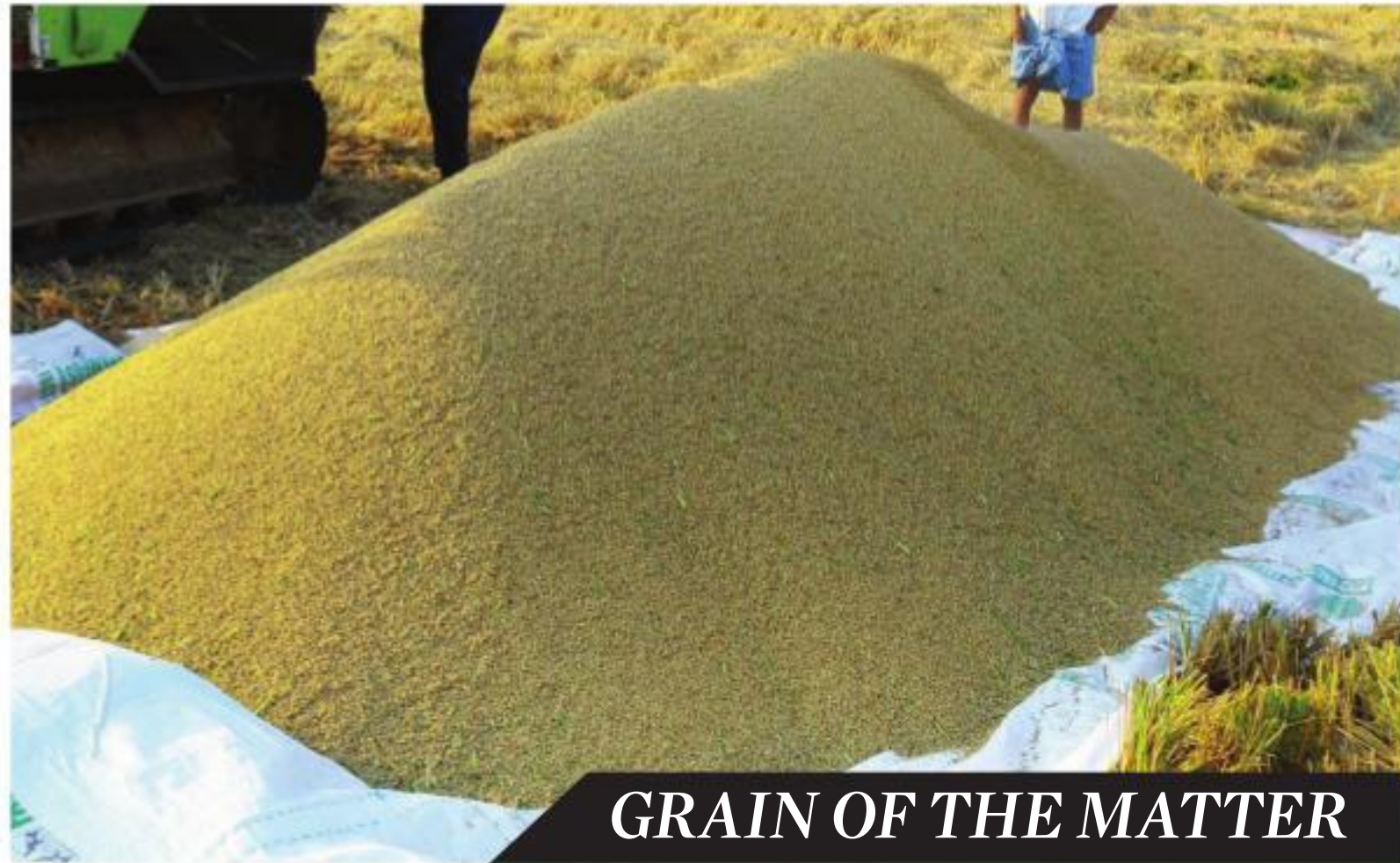
The harvest season in the state is winding to a close. Currently, less than 2,000 hectares of the paddy crop in Kuttanad and Upper Kuttanad regions remain to be reaped.

Agriculture Minister P Prasad convened a meeting on Tuesday of top officials of the department to evaluate the situation.

Output has declined drastically, says Thomaskutty M, who carried out farming in the Vettikkari polder, under Punnappara agriculture office. "I cultivated paddy on four acres. Production was around 15 quintals per acre, which in previous seasons stood around 25 to 30 quintals. Many farmers in the region have suffered losses due to the low production. A yield of at least 20 quintals per acre will allow a farmer to recoup at least production costs. Anything below this results in a loss. For many farmers in Kuttanad, production has been below 20 quintals.

"A good number of farmers in the region carry out cultivation on leased land. The lease on an acre of paddy land is ₹25,000, which adds to their costs," points out Thomaskutty, from Punnappara.

The Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation (Supplyco) procures paddy directly from the fields. "The first crop of the 2022-23 season yielded 2,26,619 MT and the second crop 5,04,563 MT. In 2023-24, first crop season produced 1,53,862 MT and the second crop 3,45,906 MT. The drop in production was brought on by the extreme heat conditions," a Supplyco official said.



GRAIN OF THE MATTER

"In the 2022-23, production in Alappuzha came in at 1,69,106.03 MT. This fell to 1,48,512 MT in 2023-24," the official said. In the latest season, as many as 2,33,465 farmers carried out farming on around 1,47,886 hectares (ha) in the state, of which Alappuzha and Palakkad are major centres. In Alappuzha 44,809 farmers carried out farming on around 35,950 ha. In Palakkad 98,384 farmers carried out farming on nearly 53,203 ha.

"A meeting of agriculture department officials to discuss the drought loss of agriculture will be held at Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. After the meeting a decision will be announced," said minister Prasad.

Dist-level output in 2023-24 (MT)

T'Puram	943.49
Kollam	739.52
P'Thitta	5,306.66
Alappuzha	1,48,512.73
Kottayam	64,618.07
Idukki	131.07
Ernakulam	6,855.08
Thirissur	67,778.02
Palakkad	1,71,131.75
Malappuram	23,081.01
Kozhikode	320.53
Wayanad	8,908.06
Kannur	1,028.84
Kasaragod	414.05

(MT: metric tonnes; ha: hectares)

Statewide paddy production figures for 2023-24 season

2,33,465
Total no. of farmers

1,47,886 ha
Total area under cultivation

No. of paddy farmers in Alappuzha	44,809	No. of paddy farmers in Palakkad	98,384
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Area cultivated in Alappuzha	35,950 ha	Area cultivated in Palakkad	53,203 ha
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₹28.32
Paddy procurement rate per kg

Total production

4,99,768 MT
Production in 2023-24

7,31,182 MT
Production in 2022-23

7,64,885 MT
Production in 2021-22



Farmers packing paddy in sacks after harvesting in Kuttanad to transport it to mills for processing | EXPRESS

Output and quality of crops in Ekm affected

ANN LANET D'SOUZA @ Kochi

DROUGHT-like conditions in Ernakulam district are expected to reduce the yield of various crops, with over 20,000 farmers facing what they describe as one of the toughest summers on record.

Thomas Varghese, president of the Muvattupuzha Kerala Vyapari Vyavasayi Ekopana Samithi (KVVES), voiced concerns about pineapple farming. He lamented the challenges faced this year, highlighting complete drying of the pineapple crop nearing harvest, resulting in significant loss of time, capital and effort.

"Additionally, the scorching heat has compromised the quality of the produce. The projected profit of ₹3 lakh per acre has now turned into a distant dream," he added.

The scorching heat has compromised the quality of the produce. The projected profit of ₹3 lakh per acre has now turned into a distant dream

Thomas Varghese, prez, Muvattupuzha Kerala Vyapari Vyavasayi Ekopana Samithi

on major crops such as banana, nutmeg, pineapple, and pepper.

She added that pineapple yields may only be a quarter of usual output. She emphasised the importance of extending canal irrigation facilities to areas currently without them, which could significantly aid in sustaining agriculture during the summer months.

"While Ernakulam is relatively fortunate due to better irrigation, considerable damage has been reported, especially in regions like Angamaly, Thuravoor, Kalady, Elanji, and Kothamangalam," she added.

Alongside the heat, the plants are also vulnerable to pest infections and virus attacks. Recommendations include using bio-control agents like wasps and adopting shading and intercropping methods.

Priyamol, a farmer from Kothamangalam, expressed concerns about the drop in water levels, emphasising the importance of preparing coconut trees for the upcoming summer.

Paul noted that while plants can withstand heat to some extent, drought and water scarcity pose more significant threats due to increased carbon dioxide levels and reduced moisture content.



A wilted pineapple farm at Manjaloor in Muvattupuzha

Intense heat affected paddy cultivation in Kole wetlands, says agri expert

GOPIKA VARRIER @Thirissur

WHILE the farmers in the Thirissur-Ponnani Kole wetlands are urging the state government to compensate them for the crop loss this year and to release the study report jointly conducted by the Kerala Agriculture University and the

agriculture department in this regard, experts have pointed out that intense heat may have caused the low yield.

A Latha, chief of the Agriculture Research Station in Mannuthy, said that the centre has collected samples of soil and crops for detailed lab analysis. "The tests are under way.

Our studies on the field have made it clear that intense heat in the atmosphere affected paddy cultivation. Not just in the Kole wetlands, the phenomenon could cause similar issues

of low yield across the state due to the climatic condition," she said.

In the Kole wetlands, paddy is harvested mainly in March and April. "However, the

scorching heat at the time of the paddy spikes (kathir) formation led to the poor harvest. In some regions, even the pollination process was affected due to the climate," she said.

Latha said that once the detailed analysis reports come out, it would be beneficial to

the farmers to prepare in advance for the future. About 30,000 farmers, through 130 'padasekhara samithis' have taken up paddy farming in the Kole Wetlands in Thirissur and Malappuram districts.

They also paid ₹100 per acre to the government towards its crop insurance scheme.

Our studies have found that intense heat affected paddy cultivation. Not just in the Kole wetlands, the phenomenon could cause similar issues of low yield across the state — A Latha, chief, Agri Research Station

Daily Starscope

PETER VIDAL

14th May: One question people often ask me is whether I can guess their signs! The simple answer is 'no'! Some astrologers do make a good job of guessing signs, but what I find is that I'm so aware that every horoscope contains many different factors that I can't focus on the simple birth sign itself. Many astrologers are like me, so don't expect them to be mind-readers!

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)

Continue to press on with what you know must be done, and don't be put off your stride by people who see it as their divinely-inspired task to get in your way, wind you up and generally drive you to distraction! There are, by the way, big choices in the offing, so get ready.

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)

Although there's still a good deal of background tension in the air, you seem particularly well set up. Your stars are basically favourable, and there seems to be little pressure on you to do anything against your will. If you're facing family arrangements, you can put off the inevitable for another few days.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Throughout every area of life, it's a question of dealing with fundamentals. Everything you do should have a beginning, a middle - and an end. Devi-ate from this regular, order-pattern and you'll run the risk of coming unstuck. But stay as you are and you may miss a major opportunity! You can always leave the final choice for another few months.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

There are decisions to be made, but first there are discussions to be held. You should know by now that the moment you rush ahead without consulting others, conflict invariably follows. It's time you broke this pattern and gave up your tendency to over-react!

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)

When it comes to finance, there are two rules at the moment. Where your own personal money is concerned, pay the most intense attention possible to every single detail. Where joint rearrangements are concerned, place the emphasis on getting on with people and reaching agreements.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)

Your romantic stars are powerful, but partners may have the edge when it comes to a battle of wits. You may soon be obliged to accept an unhelpful situation as a fait accompli. At least, for now. In another couple of months, when circumstances have moved on, you'll be able to correct the situation in your favour.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)

The accent is on pleasure over the coming days, and the best way to personal fulfilment is through devoting extra time to your creative Libran skills. Ideally, you should now be on holiday rather than at work! If you feel a little shaky, you can rely on a partner.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Excellent prospects arise largely from the fact that you're left to pursue your own interests. There's no need to give in to the nine-to-five slog, and every chance to break out of your rut. Yet family pressures may very soon reach bursting point.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)

Sort out your priorities and organise yourself to fit in a useful chat with a friend or someone you look up to. You may receive unsolicited advice which could help you out of a domestic impasse. Yet what is said today may be contradicted tomorrow.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)

Your energy should be high at present but, if you're one of those Capricorns who is feeling under the weather, the reason lies in your unhealthy lifestyle. The solution is to cut out all those bad habits. Public pressures may be easing, but you have to tie up loose ends first.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)

If life has been a little confusing, you're entitled to blame Neptune, ruler of illusion, which has been making a subtle aspect to your sign. However, romantic undercurrents are steadily growing stronger and you should now be much more sure of your feelings.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)

Your short-term plans will soon receive a boost from some unexpected good news, although a slight adjustment will almost certainly be advisable. If you're taking major decisions it's imperative to consider all the angles - and to take whatever time you need.

SU DOKU EVIL

TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

9	2	5	6	3	1	4	8	7
7	4	3	8	9	5	2	1	6
6	8	1	2	7	4	3	5	9
2	3	8	7	5	6	1	9	4
4	7	9	3	1	8	5	6	2
5	1	6	4	2	9	8	7	3
3	5	2	9	8	7	6	4	1
8	6	7	1	4	2	9	3	5
1	9	4	5	6	3	7	2	8

CROSS WORD

ACROSS

- Garble a translation dealing with unknowns (7)
- German play; a plausible tale (5)
- Blow in either direction (4)
- Rousing game (8)
- 100ft creepers found in many gardens (10)
- Fine stuff we drop all over the place (6)
- They're not necessarily cut in pickle making (6)
- Footsore runners on farms (10)
- The actors have to press hard (4-4)
- Governance back in nursery education (4)
- Describing raspberry jam? Not very well (5)
- Gave judgment questionably (7)

DOWN

- It can become grotesque (5)
- For this, proverbially, we have no information (4,4)
- Friends show Capone is untruthful (6)
- City's treasurers rearranged according to plan (10)
- Bird hiding in the hibiscus (4)
- Member finishes the accounts (7)
- It's owner may be self-assured (4,6)
- Extensively used troops (8)
- Goes into new recipes (7)
- Fifty found out in the open (6)
- The rate at which oceans rise (5)
- Is the French word for itself without the s? (4)

JUMBLE UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

May I interest you in some changes? I can't believe our pipe dream came true. We deserve to treat ourselves!

THE WEALTHY COUPLE BOUGHT A PRIVATE JET AND WERE ENJOYING THEIR...

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: SOUPY HASTY GRATIS INFAMY Answer: When Jacob Davis teamed up with Levi Strauss, the result was a pair of - SMARTY PANTS



Two fishers killed as their boat collides with ship

Incident took place 20 nautical miles northwest of Edakkazhiyoor beach

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Malappuram

IN A TRAGIC incident, two fishermen from Ponnani lost their lives when their fishing boat collided with a cargo ship in the sea, approximately 20 nautical miles northwest of Edakkazhiyoor beach, on Sunday night.

The deceased are Gafoor, 47, son of Sidiq, of Pinnkinte, Pallippadi, Ponnani, and Salam, 45, son of Muhammed Kutty, of Kuriyamakkanath, a resident of Azhikkal, Ponnani. The deceased were laid to rest after postmortem on Monday.

Four others on the fishing boat sustained injuries. The injured are Badisha, 40, son of Hasainar, of Thengummaliyekkal, Ponnani, Ayob, 43, son of Ali, Kunjumarakarath house, Pallipadi, Ponnani, Majeed, 43, son of Sidiq, from Kunjumarakkarath, Ponnani, and Mansoor, 36, son of Kabeer, of Asarkuttikanath, Ponnani. They were transported back to Ponnani and given medical treatment.

The six-member fishermen team went out to sea for fishing last Friday. According to the fishermen in Ponnani, the vessel Sagar Yuvaraj collided with the fishing boat as it was returning to the coast around 10 pm on Sunday.



Gafoor(left) and Salam

Upon learning about the accident around 1 pm, fishermen from Ponnani swiftly mobilised towards the scene. Subsequently, they recovered the bodies of Gafoor and Salam

Bilal Ponnani, a fisherman

Following the collision with the ship, the fishing boat broke into two sections and subsequently sank into the sea. Immediately, some members of the ship's crew started rescue operations. Later, the crew members successfully rescued four fishermen from the sea.

"The crew members conducted an extensive two-hour search at sea and managed to rescue four fishermen. These survivors clung to a section of the fishing boat that had broken off, keeping them afloat. Tragically, Gafoor and Salam were not among those found. Upon learning about the accident around 1 pm, fishermen from Ponnani swiftly mobilised towards the scene. Subsequently,

they recovered the bodies of Gafoor and Salam," said Bilal Ponnani, a fisherman close to the survivors of the accident.

The injured were transported to the coast using the rescue boats of the cargo ship and the coastal police.

They received medical care at a private hospital in Chavakkad. The bodies were taken to Ponnani Government Taluk Hospital.

Meanwhile, Munakkakadavu coastal police registered a case against the captain of the Sagar Yuvaraj ship for careless navigation, leading to the collision and subsequent deaths of two fishermen.

The police said that the collision resulted in the destruction of the fishing boat, Islah, IND KL 06 MM 4118. IPC sections 280, 304-A, and 337 were invoked against the captain. The police officers also mentioned that the ship would soon be seized.

Meanwhile, Malappuram DCC president V S Joy called upon the state government to provide financial assistance to the families of the deceased.

Additionally, he urged both the state and central governments to prioritise the safety of fishermen by implementing strict measures against ships operating recklessly at sea, thereby endangering those involved in fishing activities.

CBSE CLASS 10

100% pass for all schools in Koz, Wayanad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Kozhikode

THE CBSE schools in Kozhikode recorded high performance in the Class X and XII examination results announced by the board on Monday. All the schools in the district have secured 100% pass in both the exams. There are 95 CBSE schools in Kozhikode.

In Class X examination, Harideva M G (99.2%, 496/500) of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Perumthiruthi and Nirupama G Nair (99.2%, 496/500) of Spring Valley Public School, Kozhikode, emerged toppers in the district.

In Class XII examination, Joseph George of Alphonsa School, Thamarassery, topped the district with 98.8% (494/500) in science stream. Devika Govind of the same school topped the commerce stream with 98.4% (492/500) and Afrah V of Kodiyathur Wadi Rahma Public School topped the district with 97.2% (486) in humanities stream.

Wayanad also achieved 100% pass in the CBSE X and XII results. Anna Mariya Sudheep of Hill Blooms School Mananthavady and Shreya Manu of Green Hills Public School topped Class X results in the district with 98.4% (492/500) each. Meanwhile, Akash Mathew of Hill Blooms School topped the XII results with 98% (480/500). There are 28 schools in Wayanad.



LAPPING UP NATURE

Children bathing in a canal at Melur in Kozhikode on Monday | E 60KUL

IIM-K, Emylon Business School, France, sign MoU

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Kozhikode

THE INDIAN Institute of Management Kozhikode signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Emylon Business School, Lyon, France to join forces on Academic Collaboration, recently.

The signatories of the MoU are Prof Debashis Chatterjee, Director IIMK and Prof Isabelle Huault, Dean and President of the Executive Board, Emylon Business School, France.

The MoU is intended to promote joint educational, cultural collaboration and research between the two leading global Business Schools.

The proposed areas of collaboration will include joint academic activities and articulated degree programmes that will focus on: Promoting the exchange of qualified students,

enrolled on their respective undergraduate and graduate degree programmes, who were admitted according to the entry regulations of the home institution, award double degree at undergraduate and graduate levels, develop joint new seminars, learning trips, training programmes or degree programmes that fit with the strategy of development of both institutions, promote exchange of faculty and conduct collaborative research in areas of mutual interest with the objective of publishing by joint authorship.

This MoU will be in effect for three years. Speaking on the significant collaboration, Prof Chatterjee said, "Collaborations with Business Schools of repute is always a win-win situation where academic Institutions mutually benefit in terms of sharing knowledge, expertise and skills."

Viral hepatitis: Health dept issues alert in Malappuram

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Malappuram

THE HEALTH department rang the alarm on Monday regarding the spread of viral hepatitis in some parts of the district. The department said that the chances of an increase in viral hepatitis cases are high as the monsoon is around the corner.

District Medical Officer R Renuka said that a total of 4,000 viral hepatitis cases have been recorded in the district this year. She also mentioned that eight people have died due to the disease.

"The situation is alarming. People should maintain personal hygiene. Boiled water should be used for drinking. Wells in the district should be chlorinated," Renuka emphasised.

Individuals who returned to the district after pleasure trips have been identified as having been infected with the virus.

Inmates, officials clash at Koz dist jail

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Kozhikode

A CLASH erupted at the Kozhikode District Jail on Monday resulting in injuries to three prison officers and two inmates. The altercation started between the recently transferred prisoners from the sub-jail and the jail authorities, sparking chaos within the facility.

According to reports, tension escalated when relatives were denied access to the accused beyond visiting hours, leading to unrest among the inmates. Subsequently, a clash erupted between the prisoners and the officers, culminating in injuries to both parties.

Among the injured were jail officials Ranjish, Nitin, and Pradeep, along with inmates Ajit Varghese and Jilshad, all of whom were promptly admitted to Kozhikode General Hospital for medical treatment.

It is learned that additional cases will be registered against the involved prisoners for their alleged assault on prison officials, intensifying the legal ramifications of the incident.

Clarify on RMP leader's remark on Mukkam Umar Faizi: CPM to UDF

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Kozhikode

THE CPM has asked opposition leader V D Satheesan to make his stand clear on the statement made by RMP leader K S Hariharan against Mukkam Umar Faizi at the UDF rally held at Vadakara on Saturday. CPM senior leader and Palestine solidarity rally general convenor K T Kunhikkannan claimed that Hariharan's speech was meant to demoralise Mukkam Umar Faizi and the organizers of the Palestine solidarity rally.

"The Leader of the Opposi-

tion is obliged to explain to the secular community how the prayer offered by a religious scholar in such a venue is objectionable. BJP state president K Surendran had criticised the Palestine solidarity rally held in Kozhikode. UDF is also adopting the same position now," said Kunhikkannan in a press statement.

"K Surendran then insulted the Palestine solidarity rally as a rally of 'bearded' and 'hat-wearers.' In the same tone and style, the RMP leader made fun of 'namaz' and Umar Faizi on the stage where the Leader of Opposition, Muslim League

general secretary and UDF candidate from Vadakara were sitting. It is highly reprehensible that they did not stop it and were having fun on stage," the statement said.

Earlier Hariharan in his controversial speech during the anti-communal rally in Vadakara said that the LDF was trying to impress the minority community by letting Mukkam Umar Faizi offer namaz at the Palestine solidarity rally organised by the CPM.

On November 11, 2023, a huge rally took place at the Kozhikode Trade Centre against the Israeli massacre in Gaza.

EXPRESS READ

Cleanliness drive with public participation in Kozhikode

Kozhikode: The district-level review meeting led by the Suchitwa Mission decided to complete the pre-monsoon cleaning in the district by May 20. As part of this, cleaning work will be done in all the local self-government institutions on May 18 and 19 with massive public participation. The meeting reviewed measures taken as part of cleaning up the hotspots identified by the health department and LSG department.

Awareness class for real estate developers

Kozhikode: The Kerala Real Estate Regulatory Authority (K-RERA) will organise an awareness programme for real estate (flat, villa, plot) developers and consumers. The programme will be held at Gateway Hotel, Kozhikode, on May 18 at 10 am. Members Preeta P Menon and retired DGP Dr B Sandhya will also participate. Phone: 9846780040, 7306389945.

Mission 1000, 'Fees Free' Municipality programme for students a big hit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Malappuram

MALAPPURAM municipality's Mission 1000 and Fees Free Municipality programmes for students have become a big hit. By creating the desired results, the municipality has become a role model for other local bodies in implementing the schemes for students.

The 'Mission 1000' was launched in 2021 to help students in the municipal area to get admissions in educational institutes like All India Institute of Medical Science, Indian Institute of Technology, National Institute of

Technology, National Institute of Design, Indian Institute of Management, Indian Institute of Fashion Technology, Indian Council for Agricultural Research and Central Universities. The Fees Free Municipality programme, launched in the same year, is aimed at helping students achieve various scholarships including Lower Secondary Scholarship (LSS), Upper Secondary Scholarship (USS), and National Means Merit Scholarship Examination (NMMMS), and government jobs by providing coaching free of cost.

Malappuram municipal chairman

Mujeeb Kaderi said as many as 285 students have already been admitted to various educational institutes across the country under the Mission 1000 scheme.

"This year, 112 students qualified for LSS, 62 qualified for USS, and 37 qualified for National Means-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS). All of them are beneficiaries of the Fee Free Municipality scheme. Also, 42 beneficiaries of the scheme have so far got appointed in government service through Kerala Public Service Commission," Kaderi said, adding that the municipality took special permission from the state government to implement the schemes.



Mujeeb Kaderi

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Decision on RS seats set to give LDF a fresh headache

CPM decides to retain its seat, leaving either KC(M) or CPI to give up theirs | Both minor allies stand firm on their claim for different reasons

ABHILASH CHANDRAN @Kottayam

AFTER a bruising Lok Sabha election, the LDF is now facing the challenge of electing members to two of the three Rajya Sabha seats from Kerala that will be vacated on July 1 by CPM's Elamaram Kareem, CPI state secretary Binoy Viswam and Kerala Congress (M) chairman Jose K Mani. Currently, the LDF is in a position to call the shots on two seats, with the UDF getting the remaining seat — to which Jose was elected when his party was part of the Opposition front.

the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) was promised the RS seat to be allotted to the UDF. Within the LDF, however, the CPM has decided to retain its seat, leaving either the KC(M) or the CPI to give up theirs. But with both the minor allies standing firm on their claim, the LDF leadership is facing a difficult situation. While the CPI will discuss the RS seat issue in the soon-to-be held state executive meeting, the KC(M) held a primary discussion in its steering committee meeting on Monday and resolved to stick to its claim. "KC(M) joined LDF with a

POSITIONS UNCLEAR

The CPI state executive will convene soon to discuss the issue, and a decision will be made during the LDF meeting

C K Sasidharan, CPI state executive member

- The RS seat is crucial for KC(M) as it is currently held by party chairman himself. Denying the seat will potentially impact the internal dynamics of the party
- With the question over the second-in-command within the LDF remaining unresolved, the CPI will need a second parliamentary seat to solidify its position

Rajya Sabha seat and we are entitled to retain the seat. We will not back down from asserting our rightful position. Our stance will be made clear during the upcoming LDF meeting.

It is worth noting that when the CPI had taken a seat the previous time, we did not make any claims," a KC(M) leader said on condition of anonymity. Meanwhile, Jose skipped

questions saying the LDF would discuss the issue and take the appropriate decision. Apart from ensuring a national presence, the RS seat is crucial for KC(M) as it is currently held by party chairman himself. Denying the seat will potentially impact the internal dynamics of the party. The seat held by Binoy Viswam is also significant for the CPI. With the question over the second-in-command within the LDF remaining unresolved, the party will need a second parliamentary seat to solidify its position. During a similar crisis over the Kanjirappally

assembly seat held by the CPI, then state secretary Kanam Rajendran had resolved the issue by relinquishing the seat to the KC(M). However, such a compromise may not be feasible now. CPI state executive member C K Sasidharan expressed optimism of reaching an agreement at the LDF meeting. Currently, CPM's A A Rahim, V Sivadasan, and John Brittas and CPI's Sandosh Kumar are the other LDF members of the Rajya Sabha. Congress' Jeby Mather and IUML's P V Abdul Wahab are the UDF nominees to the Upper House.

Further CBI probe must in Sidharthan's murder: Mom

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

THE mother of J S Sidharthan, a victim of a mob trial at the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Pookode, Wayanad, has approached the Kerala High Court stating that further investigation by CBI can only bring to light the reason that led to the death of his son. The final report filed by the CBI revealed that all the accused were actively involved in the assault, and mob lynching led to serious injury all over the body of the deceased.



The statement was made by Sidharthan's mother, Sheeba M R, in a petition filed by her opposing the bail plea of the accused. The petition stated that she seriously disputed the finding in the final report of CBI to the extent it agrees with the version of the police that Sidharthan had died by suicide. The parents residing almost 500 km away at Nedumangad were informed about the incident at 2.20 pm, while the police authorities, who were just a few kilometres away, were informed only at 4.29 pm, after destroying all possible evidence that could shed light on the crime and accused. The students were not prepared to speak the truth to the police since they apprehended that they would face similar treatment as that of Sidharthan in case they revealed the truth. Hence, further investigation by CBI is needed to unearth the truth in this regard, said the mother.

League yet to take call, says Salam

CONTINUED FROM P1

CYNTHIA CHANDRAN @TPuram

A SENIOR League MLA said that the party has more or less decided to give the RS ticket to Salam. "For quite some time the party had been trying to accommodate 71-year-old Salam in a key post. The decision on RS candidature will be taken after the LS election results are announced early next month," he told TNIE.

When IUML turned its focus on the RS seat, Satheesan informed its party leaders that P V Abdul Wahab's seat, which falls vacant on April 23, 2027, will be taken back by the Congress. Despite severe criticism within the Congress, Satheesan remained firm on his stand, claiming that the decision to part with the RS seat was taken with the approval of the Congress high command.

A senior Congress leader said that there will be no rethink in the party on the decision to hand the second RS seat to the IUML. On his part, Salam said the League is yet to take up the RS seat discussion. "We are holding a party meeting on May 18 to evaluate the Lok Sabha election performance. Also, we are in no hurry to decide on the RS seat at this juncture. Let the RS poll outcome come. After that the party will take a call on RS candidature," Salam told TNIE.

No new Plus-I batches in state this year: Govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @TPuram

THE government has ruled out sanctioning new Plus-I batches in the state amid concerns that districts in northern Kerala would face shortage of Plus one seats as the admission process begins later this week. General Education Minister V Sivankutty told reporters that there was no need to create new batches. He assured that all students who were declared eligible for higher studies in the SSLC exam will be given admission. Demands for creation of new Plus One batches, especially in Malappuram district, were politically motivated, he said.

To address shortage of seats, the government has effected 30% marginal increase of seats in government schools in Thiruvananthapuram, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod. Also, another 20% seat increase was made in all schools in these districts, with the provision of an additional 10% seat increase for aided schools that require it.

In Kollam, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Ambalappuzha and Cherthala taluks in Alappuzha, the government has effected 20% marginal increase of seats in government and aided schools. A total of 61,759 seats have been created through marginal increase, the Minister said.

EDUCATION CONCLAVE

An education conclave will be held on May 28 to discuss various proposals including implementation of minimum pass requirement of 30% marks for the written component of the SSLC exam. It will be attended by representatives of teachers associations and education experts. This was decided at a meeting between General Education Minister V Sivankutty and teachers association representatives here on Monday.

The government had created 81 new Plus-I batches (77 new and four shifted from southern districts) in 2022-23 and 97 batches in 2023-24. All these batches will continue this year as well taking the overall seats in these batches to 11,965.

The Minister said there were 4.33 lakh seats in higher secondary and 33,030 seats in vocational higher secondary sector. Taking into account 61,429 seats in ITIs and 9,990 seats in Polytechnics, the total number of Plus Two seats would add up to 4.25 lakh.

Malappuram district has 79,730 students who passed the SSLC examination and the district has 70,976 higher secondary seats. If the 9,214 seats in VHSE, ITIs and Polytechnics are taken into account, the total number of seats available for higher studies is 80,190, the Minister said.



WITH HIGH HOPES

After a brief summer shower, a team of fishermen carry their equipment and make way to the sea in Poonthura, Thiruvananthapuram, hoping for a good catch | B P DEEPU

RMP leader booked for sexist remarks against Shailaja

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kozhikode

VADAKARA police have registered a case against RMP leader K S Hariharan for his sexist remarks against former health minister K K Shailaja and actor Manju Warrior. The case was registered under various sections related to insulting womanhood and attempted rioting. The action was taken on a complaint filed by Democratic Women's Association leader K Pushpaja. The police have also registered a case against unidentified individuals for attacking Hariharan's house on Sunday night.

According to the police, CPM and DYFI workers have been named in the FIR. The FIR states that the police are yet to

identify the culprits behind the attack. The initial conclusion of the police is that only low-intensity explosives were used in the attack.

Meanwhile, Hariharan's sexist remarks are snowballing into a major controversy. RMP secretary N Venu alleged that the attack on Hariharan's house was with the knowledge of the CPM leadership. "Kannur model intervention is going on in

Vadakara now. The attack took place after CPM district secretary P Mohanan said that the issue would not end with a pardon. CPM's agenda is to silence those speaking against it," Venu said at a press meet in Kozhikode. He said that the CPM is using a slip of the tongue as a political weapon in Vadakara. "Hariharan's statement was unfortunate. He has already expressed regret on

the issue. CPM should have shown the political courtesy to leave the issue there. Instead, it is using the situation to create problems in Vadakara," Venu added.

Meanwhile, DYFI has dismissed allegations against it in connection with the attack on Hariharan's house. The propaganda against K K Shailaja is being spread with the connivance of the UDF leadership. Congress will use profanity to win elections. They will use communal polarisation during election time. The Congress has become a party that promotes people with sexist attitudes," said DYFI state president V V Vaseef. Vaseef also added that Youth Congress workers will face severe consequences if they continue to abuse women.

CBSE T'PURAM REGION TOPS FOR 10TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR



Father Xavier Ambat, principal, Christ Nagar Central School, Kowdiar, distributes sweets to the students following exemplary results in Class X and XII CBSE examination | VINCENT PULLICKAL

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @TPuram

FOR yet another year since its formation in 2014, the Thiruvananthapuram region of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) registered the highest success rate in the country in the Class X and XII examinations, the results of which were declared on Monday.

The region, comprising schools from Kerala and Lakshadweep, posted success rates of 99.75% and 99.91% in the Class X and Class XII exams, respectively, the best among the 16 CBSE regions. The all-India pass percentages were 93.60 and 87.98 in Class X and XII, respectively.

In the Class X exam, 60,424 students, including 30,145 boys and 30,279 girls, appeared from 1,345 schools in Thiruvanan-

		HONOUR ROLL T'PURAM REGION			
	Category	Registered	Appeared	Passed	Pass%
CLASS X	Boys	30,191	30,145	30,043	99.66
	Girls	30,312	30,279	30,229	99.83
	Total	60,503	60,424	60,272	99.75
CLASS XII	Boys	19,609	19,573	19,548	99.87
	Girls	20,303	20,264	20,254	99.95
	Total	39,912	39,837	39,802	99.91

thapuram region. Of them, 60,272 students, including 30,043 boys and 30,229 girls, passed, registering an overall success rate of 99.75%.

In the Class XII exam, 39,912 students, including 19,609 boys and 20,303 girls, appeared from 655 schools in the region. Of them, 39,837 became eligible for higher studies. They included 19,573 boys and 20,264

girls. The overall success rate was 99.91%. National Council of CBSE Schools secretary general Indira Rajan said the outstanding results being achieved consistently by the Thiruvananthapuram region for the past decade was the outcome of the collective efforts of the entire school community in raising educational standards.

KIIFB, KSSPL have become irrelevant, says UDF

CONTINUED FROM P1

ANIL S @TPuram

THE UDF said with the provision for OBB gone, the two companies have become irrelevant and are as good as wound up.

"KSSPL was formed for out-of-budget borrowing, without bringing it under public account. That trick failed. Now, it has no relevance. Same is the case with KIIFB, which is currently not taking on another project, after having completing projects worth nearly ₹28,000 crore. It has turned a monitoring company. In effect, the two firms are de-facto defunct," said CMP general secretary CP John, ex-planning board member.

The state government had faced criticism from CAG for its OBB strategy through KIIFB. The government's move to stand guarantee for the KSSPL too hadn't gone down well with the auditor. In 2022, the government had distanced itself from the KSSPL by withdrawing all monetary support to the firm.

Life term for Shyamjith in Vishnupriya murder

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kannur

THE Thalassery Additional District Court on Monday sentenced M Shyamjith, 28, to life imprisonment in the Vishnupriya murder case. In addition to this, the culprit will have to undergo 10 years of imprisonment and pay a penalty of Rs two lakh for barging into Vishnupriya's house with the intention to kill her.

Vishnupriya's family and the prosecution expressed their satisfaction with the quantum of punishment. "The prosecution sought maximum punishment for Shyamjith. According to the verdict, the culprit should serve life imprisonment for the murder and 10 years of imprisonment for trespassing into the victim's house. Both sentences will run concurrently," said public prosecutor Ajith Kumar. The prosecutor said that the verdict upholds freedom and security of women in society. "Shyamjith has not shown any repentance after the murder. Even after hearing the verdict he was emotionless. His atti-

tude shows that he was aware of the consequences even before he committed the crime," Ajith added.

The murder was committed on October 22, 2022, at Vally in Panur. Vishnupriya's family had gone to attend a posthumous ceremony.

Vishnupriya was on a video call with her male friend when the accused entered her home. Shyamjith hit Vishnupriya on the head with a hammer and then slit her throat. He also inflicted 29 wounds on her body.

The motive behind the murder stemmed from Vishnupriya's decision to end her relationship with the accused. Shyamjith was also irritated by the victim's intimacy with her friend Vivin Raj, a resident of Ponnani. The crucial evidence in the case, a 13-second video clip capturing the accused's intrusion into Vishnupriya's residence and the CCTV camera visuals presented by the prosecution depicting Shyamjith purchasing the murder weapon (hammer) solidified the case against him.



Move to help bring down human-animal conflicts

CONTINUED FROM P1

K S SREEJITH @TPuram

THE Amarambalam Reserve and Nilambur Reserve are an important habitat of a variety of flora and fauna, including elephant, tiger, leopard, and sambar deer. As per the forest department, the area is situated in the corridor connecting the Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary, Silent Valley National Park in Kerala and the Mukkurty National Park in Tamil Nadu, having high conservation value.

"The NGO informed us of its willingness to purchase and transfer private land inside the forest enclosure. That's how we went ahead with the initiative. The 60 acres have no human habitation. These are agricultural land, and fences are used to prevent entry of wild animals. This is the main reason for conflicts," Vijay said.

After considering the NGO's proposal, the department observed that the move will be beneficial in ensuring continuity of elephant habitat and reducing the impact of human-animal conflicts in the surrounding landscape.

H D Revanna granted bail in kidnap case

MLA to be released on execution of ₹5L bond, directed not to leave country, shouldn't influence victim or other parties

PTI @Bengaluru

A SPECIAL Court for Elected Representatives on Monday granted bail to JD(S) MLA **H D Revanna** in connection with a kidnap case.

The 66-year-old former minister was arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in an alleged case of abduction of a woman, linked to the allegations of sexual abuse of women by his son and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, on May 4.

The special court judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat heard the

matter and granted conditional bail to Revanna.

While granting the bail, the court invoked conditions, as per which Revanna will be given bail upon executing ₹5 lakh bond, he shouldn't be allowed to leave the country, and he should not try to influence the victim or other related parties to the case.

According to sources, he is likely to be released from prison on Tuesday. Revanna's three-day police custody ended on May 8, following which he was produced in the XVII Additional

IN A NUTSHELL

Revanna was arrested by the SIT in an alleged case of abduction of a woman, linked to the allegations of sexual abuse of women by his son Prajwal Revanna, on May 4. The woman was allegedly abducted to prevent her from testifying against Prajwal

allowing a complaint by the woman's son, who alleged that his mother was sexually abused by Revanna's son Prajwal.

The woman was allegedly abducted to prevent her from testifying against Prajwal, police sources have said.

The SIT has also secured the custody of Revanna's confidant Sathish Babanna in connection with the case.

The SIT arrested Babanna on May 3 and subsequently rescued the woman allegedly from a farmhouse in Mysuru's Hunsur taluk on May 4, hours before the arrest of Revanna from his father and former PM H D

Deve Gowda's residence in Bengaluru's Padmanabhanagar.

Revanna's 33-year-old MP son Prajwal Revanna, who is also the grandson of JD(S) patriarch Deve Gowda, is facing charges of multiple instances of sexually abusing women. The scandal has raised a political storm with the ruling Congress and BJP-JD(S) engaged in a slugfest.

Prajwal Revanna reportedly left the country on April 27, a day after the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka was held. An Interpol Blue Corner Notice has been issued against him to bring him back.



Dog squad and bomb squad at the blast site at Chakkarakkal in Kannur

Bomb explosion near police patrolling vehicle in Kannur, no casualties

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kannur

TWO ice cream bombs exploded in front of a police patrolling vehicle in Kannur in the wee hours of Monday. The incident took place at 4am in Bavode near Chakkarakkal after two bombs were hurled near the vehicle. No casualties have been reported.

The police patrolling was intensified in the region after a clash regarding a temple festival in Chakkarakkal erupted between the workers of the CPM and the BJP on Sunday. The bombs were hurled near a house just 50m away from the patrolling vehicle. The political

tension between the two parties further escalated after their flags were vandalised, following which the police stepped in and mitigated the situation.

Meanwhile, the Chakkarakkal police told *TNIE* that the culprits behind the blasts are yet to be traced, adding that a probe has been initiated into the incident.

"Patrolling was beefed up in the area following the clash. Two bombs were hurled near the police vehicle on Monday morning. The bomb squad accompanied by a dog squad searched the area. However, the culprits were not identified," the police said.

EXPRESS READ Doctor held for sexually assaulting nurse

Dindigul: A doctor working in Viraliapatti Primary Health Centre was arrested for sexually assaulting a female nurse working in another PHC. The doctor was also booked under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act for verbally abusing the nurse using her caste name. The accused, Srinivasan, of Kumarapalayam in Namakkal, has been working at the PHC in Viraliapatti for three months. He allegedly developed a relationship with a 31-year-old married nurse, who works at a PHC in Thummalapatti. Recently, the nurse ended the relationship. Angered by this, the doctor attempted to sexually assault her and also hurled caste abuses.

Newly wed assaulted in Kozhikode, husband booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kozhikode

IN a case of domestic violence reported from Pantheerankavu in Kozhikode district, a woman from Paravur was subjected to a vicious attack, allegedly by her husband, leaving her with severe injuries just days after tying the knot.

The woman, currently undergoing treatment at the Paravur Taluk Hospital, detailed the harrowing ordeal. She described her husband, **Rahul P Gopal**, as having trust issues, exacerbated by alcohol consumption, leading to the brutal assault. The attack reportedly involved attempted strangulation with a mobile charging cable, among other forms of physical abuse.

According to the woman, tensions escalated post-wedding when Rahul, an aeronautical engineer based in Germany, began exhibiting controlling behaviour, including blocking her from contacting male acquaintances including colleagues. The assault unfolded during a post-wedding ceremony at Rahul's residence, where the woman's family members observed signs of abuse and intervened, prompting her to file a police complaint.

Her father, Haridas, expressed dismay over the initial response from the authorities and the indifference shown by the husband's family despite being informed about the abuse. He said the family has decided to seek legal recourse and relocate the case to Pantheerankavu, underscoring their daughter's refusal to continue living with her alleged assailant.

Haridas told *TNIE*, "We visited the house of our daughter's in-laws as part of traditional customs, but we were welcomed with the shocking sight of our daughter bearing bruise marks, swelling on her nose, and other injuries."

Despite informing her husband and in-laws about their arrival, they were made to wait for an hour before seeing the newly wed, he said. "Our daughter was stopped from communicating with us as her phone was confiscated by her husband," Haridas said. He lamented the indifference displayed by the in-laws despite his daughter's pleas for help.

Pantheerankavu police have registered a case under various Sections of IPC, including 324 and 498(A), against Rahul. "We will move ahead with the investigation after receiving the report from the doctor who examined the victim," said a police officer.



COMING DOWN IN SHEETS

Passengers run to board the KSRTC bus parked at Ernakulam bus station as summer rain lashes the city | A SANESH

Farmer sets fire to self over land dispute in TN

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Tirunelveli

A 36-YEAR-OLD farmer self-immolated on the district collectorate premises, allegedly over a land dispute here on Monday. The farmer, Sankara Subbu, of Maruthakulam village, set himself on fire on the banks of the Thamarabarani and ran into the collectorate. He was admitted to the Tirunelveli MCH with severe burn injuries.

"Subbu had a dispute regarding a 1.5-acre parcel of land with his cousins for one year. He had filed a complaint with the Moonrappa police. However, the officials allegedly asked him to approach the court to solve the dispute. Meanwhile, a quarrel erupted between Subbu and his cousins on Sunday. Police asked both parties to visit the station on Monday. However, Subbu reached Tirunelveli and tried to die by suicide," said sources.

Palakkad rly division refutes closure allegations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

ATTEMPTING to put to rest the rumours regarding Southern Railways' alleged decision to close the Palakkad division in favour of Coimbatore, the spokesperson for the division issued a letter calling the reports speculative and devoid of factual basis.

Arun Kumar Chaturvedi, divisional railway manager, said there have been no discussions or plans regarding the closure of the Palakkad division or the establishment

of a new one. "The assertions made in the reports are entirely unfounded and have caused unnecessary confusion among the public," he said. The division expressed concern over the misinformation.

The division's rebuttal comes in the wake of the strong protest registered by the Kerala government against the Centre's move to shut down the Palakkad division. Railway Minister V. Aburrahman had sent a letter to his counterpart at the Centre requesting to withdraw from the decision. He highlighted how the state has been continuously neglected when it comes to railway development.

TTE assaulted on Mangalore-T'Puram Maveli Exp

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kozhikode

A Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) hailing from Rajasthan was subjected to assault by a passenger on board Mangalore-Thiruvananthapuram Maveli Express on Sunday. The incident took place near Tirur around 10pm when TTE Vikram Kumar Mee-

na questioned the passenger sans ticket on a reserved coach. Stalin Bose of Kanyakumari, who was travelling with a general compartment ticket, assaulted Meena after the latter asked him to vacate the coach. The TTE suffered a blow to his nose in the incident.

The Kozhikode Railway Police ar-

rested Bose on Monday. He was charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The incident follows the tragic demise of TTE K Vinod, who lost his life under similar circumstances last month. The Railway staff urged the authorities concerned to take strict measures and ensure their safety on board trains.

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - E-TENDER NOTICE
 O/o the Project Manager, Chembukadavu III & Maripuzha SHEPs, Kozhikode
 E-tender ID: 2024_KSEB_672550_1 PAC: Rs. 1,87,01,027/- Last Date: 23.05.2024 03.00pm
 O/o the Deputy Chief Engineer, Electrical Circle, Nilambur, Malappuram
 E-tender ID: 2024_KSEB_672489_1 PAC: 17,25,88,667/- Last Date: 25.05.2024 04.00pm
 O/o the Executive Engineer, PMU, Electrical Circle, Nilambur, Malappuram
 E-tender ID: 2024_KSEB_672485_1 PAC: 4,45,93,604/- Last Date: 25.05.2024 04.00pm
Re-Tender Notice
 O/o the Executive Engineer, PMU, Electrical Circle, Alappuzha
 E-tender ID: 2024_KSEB_672453_1 PAC: Rs. 1,39,49,14,885/- Last Date: 27.05.2024 05.00pm
 O/o the Deputy Chief Engineer, Electrical Circle, Alappuzha
 E-tender ID: 2024_KSEB_672492_1 PAC: Rs. 1,52,42,42,42,42/- Last Date: 28.05.2024 05.00pm
 Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.ksebi.in Ref: PR/MC/VE/489/E-tender/2024

Government of India
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre
Advertisement No. 02/2024 (R-V)
BRIEF NOTICE
 BARC invites applications for the following training course being conducted under the aegis of Homi Bhabha National Institute (HBNI), which is deemed to be University.
One-year post - M.Sc Diploma in Radiological Physics (Dip.R.P)
 Duration of Course: 1 year (August 2024 to July 2025)
 No. of seats: 30 (including upto 5 sponsored)
 Age limit (Age as on 01/08/2024): (a) General Category - 26 years (b) OBC - 29 years (c) SC/ST - 31 years
Persons with Benchmark Disabilities are eligible for age relaxation of maximum up to 10 years. The candidates with physical disabilities limited to the lower extremities, but permitting to stand, move and physically able to carry out the course requirement only will be considered. For the sponsored candidates the age limit as on 01/08/2024 is 40 years.
 Educational Qualification: Master Degree in Physics (M.Sc Physics) with not less than 60% marks in aggregate and BSc Degree (with Physics as main subject) with not less than 60% marks in aggregate. Candidates with Integrated M.Sc (Physics) with not less than 60% marks in aggregate are also eligible. In case of grade system, grade to percentage of marks conversion scheme obtained from University should be presented at the time of document verification/ interview. Those, whose final results of M.Sc (Physics) degree are awaited, but are otherwise eligible, can also apply. In addition to the above qualification, the sponsored candidates should have at least one-year working experience in radiotherapy department of Government Institution in India (supported by Personal monitoring services).
 Stipend: Rs. 25,000/- per month (for non-sponsored candidate)
 Closing Date for receipt of application: 04.06.2024 (Tuesday)
 Tentative date of Written Test: 30/06/2024 (Sunday)
 Applications will be accepted On-Line ONLY. Facility for On-line application will be available from 14/05/2024 to 04/06/2024.
 Conspicuous/ Addendum, if any, pertaining to this advertisement will be published only on BARC website.
 For General conditions and online submission of application please visit the website recruit.barc.gov.in / www.barc.gov.in.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE BANGALORE
ADMISSION NOTICE 2024
B.Tech Program in Mathematics and Computing
 The Indian Institute of Science offers an interdisciplinary four-year B.Tech program in Mathematics and Computing. Students have the option of continuing for another year and obtaining a M.Tech degree subject to fulfilling CGPA, course credits and project requirements.
VISION
 The aim of the program is to produce leaders who will be at the forefront of research, development, and innovation in futuristic disciplines and next-generation technologies that require deep use of mathematics, computer science and data science.
ELIGIBILITY
 Selection will be based on the JEE Advanced 2024 Ranks.
APPLICATION PROCEDURE
 Applications must be submitted online via the IISc Admissions Portal <https://admissions.iisc.ac.in/>. The Portal opens on May 15, 2024.
PROGRAM WEBSITE
<https://btech-ug.iisc.ac.in/MathandComputing/>
IMPORTANT DEADLINES
 Application portal will close on June 17, 2024. Those who have applied before the declaration of results must log in and update their applications before the application portal closes.
 Registrar

TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
 Registered Address: 11th Floor, Tower A, Peninsula Business Park, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400013. Branch Address: TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED, Ground Floor, Jain Tower - II, NH-17, Near Lulu Mall, Edappally, Cochin 682024, Kerala.
NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
 (Under Rule 8(6) read with Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002)
E-Auction Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002
 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the below Borrower and/ Co-Borrower, or their legal heirs/representatives (Borrowers) in particular that the below described immovable property mortgaged to Tata Capital Housing Finance Ltd. (TCHFL), the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of TCHFL, will be sold on 30-05-2024 on "As is where is" & "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" and without any recourse basis", for recovery of outstanding dues from below mentioned Borrower and Co-Borrowers. The Reserve Price and the Earnest Money Deposit is mentioned below. Notice is hereby given that, in the absence of any postponement/ discontinuance of the sale, the said secured asset / property shall be sold by E-Auction at 2.00 P.M. on the said 30-05-2024. The sealed envelope containing Demand Draft of EMD for participating in E-Auction shall be submitted to the Authorised Officer of the TCHFL on or before 29-05-2024 till 5.00 PM at Branch address "TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED, Ground Floor, Jain Tower - II, NH-17, Near Lulu Mall, Edappally, Cochin 682024, Kerala.. The sale of the Secured Asset/ Immovable Property will be on "as is where condition is" as per brief particulars described herein below

Sr. No.	Loan A/c. No. & Branch	Name of Borrower(s) / Co-borrower(s)/Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative/ Guarantor(s)	Amount as per Demand Notice	Reserve Price	Earnest Money	Possession Types
1.	9624678 & 9624362	MR. NARAKATH THIRISSERY SUIJITH (BORROWER) . MRS. RAJEESHA SUJITH (CO-BORROWER), M/S. GAYATHRI FABRICS	Rs. 1,13,31,857/- is due and payable by you under Agreement No. 9624678 and an amount of Rs. 29,17,355/-is due and payable by you under Agreement No. 9624362 totalling to Rs. 1,42,49,212/- & 22-11-2019	Rs. 75,00,000/- (Rupees Seventy Five Lakh Only)	Rs. 7,50,000/- (Rupees Seven Lakh Fifty Thousand Only)	Physical
2.	TCHHF04040 & 9506904	MRS. BEENA ANILKUMAR. MR. ANILKUMAR V. M/S. LAKSHMI TEXTILES	Rs. 69,93,208/- is due and payable by you under loan account No. TCHHF0404000100084769 and an amount of Rs. 52,48,35/- is due and payable by you under loan account No. 9506904 totalling to Rs. 66,18,043/- & 30-01-2023	Rs. 89,00,000/- (Rupees Eighty Nine Lakh Only)	Rs. 8,90,000/- (Rupees Eight Lakh Ninety Thousand Only)	Physical

Description of the Immovable Property: All that piece and parcel of the SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY Basic Description District: Kozhikode Sub District: Mukkam Taluk: Kozhikode, Village: Thazhakkode, Limit: Mukkam Panchayath, S. No.: 300/1, 2, Re.Sy.No.: 243/1, Block No.: Nil, Extent(Ares) : 08.09.
Legal Description: All part and parcel of land having an extent of 08.09 Ares in R.S. No. 243/1 together with building bearing No. 1/687A situated at Thazhakkode Village, Kozhikode Taluk, lying in Sub Registration District of Mukkam in the Registration District of Kozhikode and is bounded by:- East: Property of Gopalan North; High school North; Property of Rajan, Prakashan South; Road.
At the Auction, the public generally is invited to submit their bid(s) personally. The Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower (s) are hereby given last chance to pay the total dues with further interest within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the Immovable Property will be sold as per schedule. The E auction will be stopped if, amount due as aforesaid, with interest and costs (including the cost of the sale) are tendered to the Authorised Officer or proof is given to his satisfaction that the amount of such secured debt, interest and costs has been paid before the date of the auction.
 No officer or other person, having any duty to perform in connection with this sale shall, however, directly or indirectly bid for, acquire or attempt to acquire any interest in the Immovable Property sold.
The sale shall be subject to the conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and to the following further conditions:
NOTE: The E-auction of the properties will take place through portal <http://bankauctions.in/> on 30-05-2024 between 2.00 PM to 3.00 PM with limited extension of 10 minutes each.
TERMS AND CONDITION: 1. The particulars specified in the Schedule herein below have been stated to the best of the information of the undersigned, but the undersigned shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. In the event of any dispute arising as to the amount bid, or as to the bidder, the Immovable Property shall at once again be put up to auction subject to the discretion of the Authorised Officer. 2. The Immovable Property shall not be sold below the Reserve Price. 3. Bid Increment Amount will be: Rs.10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only) 4. All the Bids submitted for the purchase of the property shall be accompanied by Earnest Money as mentioned above by way of a Demand Draft favouring the "TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LTD." Payable at Branch address. The Demand Drafts will be returned to the unsuccessful bidders after auction. For payment of EMD through NEFT/RTGS/IMPS, kindly contact Authorised Officer. 5. The highest bidder shall be declared as successful bidder provided always that he/she is legally qualified to bid and provided further that the bid amount is not less than the reserve price. It shall be in the discretion of the Authorised Officer to decline acceptance of the highest bid when the price offered appears so clearly inadequate as to make it inadvisable to do so. 6. For reasons recorded, it shall be in the discretion of the Authorised Officer to adjourn/discontinue the sale. 7. Inspection of the immovable property can be done on 22-05-2024 between 11 AM to 5.00 PM with prior appointment. 8. The person declared as a successful bidder shall, immediately after such declaration, deposit twenty-five per cent of the amount of purchase money/bid which would include EMD amount to the Authorised Officer within 24Hrs and in default of such deposit, the property shall forthwith be put to fresh auction/Sale by private treaty. 9. In case the initial deposit is made as above, the balance amount of the purchase money payable shall be paid by the purchaser to the Authorised Officer on or before the 15th day from the date of confirmation of the sale of the property, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day is a Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office day after the 15th day. 10. In the event of default of any payment within the period mentioned above, the property shall be put to fresh auction/Sale by private treaty. The deposit including EMD shall stand forfeited by TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LTD and the defaulting purchaser shall lose all claims to the property. 11. Details of all encumbrances, known to the TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LTD, to which the property is liable: as per table above. Claims, if any, which have been put forward to the property and any other known particulars bearing on its nature and value: as per table above. The Intending Bidder is advised to make their own independent inquiries regarding encumbrances on the property including statutory liabilities areas of property tax, electricity etc. 12. For any other details or for procedure online training on e-auction the prospective bidders may contact the Service Provider, M/s. 4Closures, Block No.605 A, 6th Floor, Maltrivanna Commercial Complex, Amertpet, Hyderabad - 500038 through its coordinators Mr. Arjit Kumar Das, 8142000725, 8142000666, 8142000662 Email :- arjit@bankauctions.in and Email :- info@bankauctions.in or Manish Bansal, Email id Manish.Bansal@tatacapital.com Authorised Officer Mobile No 8588983696. Please send your query on WhatsApp Number - 999078669 13. TDS of 1% will be applicable and payable by the highest bidder over the highest declared bid amount. The payment terms to be deposited by highest bidder in the PAN of the owner/ borrower(s) and the copy of the challan shall be submitted to our company 14. Please refer to the below link provided in secured creditor's website <http://url.li/tttwg> for the above details. 15. Kindly also visit the link: <https://www.tatacapital.com/property-disposal.html>
Please Note - TCHFL has not engaged any broker/agent apart from the mentioned auctioning partner for sale/auction of this property. Interested parties should only contact the undersigned or the Authorised Officer for all queries and enquiry in this matter.
 Place: KOZHIKODE
 Date: 14-05-2024
 Sd/- Authorized Officer,
 Tata Capital Housing Finance Ltd.



RAJESH ABRAHAM @Kochi

LAST week, the Kerala Water Authority stopped pumping water from Thazhathangadi, disrupting the supply of water to the panchayats of Kumarakom and Thiruvappu in Kottayam district, after the salinity in the Meenachil river increased beyond the prescribed levels.

When the Thanneermukkam bund in Kuttanad was opened, there were no temporary shutters at Thazhathangadi, leading to an inflow of salt water near the Thazhathangadi pump house, the KWA said.

Meanwhile, in Kochi, saltwater is frequently entering fresh-water areas like Chellanam, rendering water unusable and forcing local residents to depend on water supplied by tankers.

These are not isolated incidents. According to experts, this phenomenon of saline water intrusion into Kerala's rivers will increase in the coming years unless immediate steps are taken. While climate change and rising sea levels play only a meagre role, the main cause is the unscientific management of our regulators and bunds, they pointed out.

"Many of the riverbeds in the state are below sea level. In fact, many riverbeds are lying in the minus territory because of the sand mining from our rivers over the past 40-50 years," said C G Madhusoodhanan, hydrologist and CEO of Kochi-based Equinot, a non-profit organisation providing science-based solutions to address the impact of climate change.

"Right now, our midlands are secure because there are regulators downstream to stop the ingress of salt water," he added.

According to Madhusoodhanan, many people are under the impression that riverbeds have risen following the 2018 flood, leading to the accumulation of silt. There have also been instances of more dredging in the riverbeds after the flood.

"But the fact remains that what we have dredged over the past 40 years is the deposits of



SALINE WATER INTRUSION THREAT LOOMS LARGE

While climate change, rising sea levels play a meagre role, the main cause is the unscientific management of regulators and bunds

millions of years. Over all those years, several floods have come and gone. The mining that we have carried out cannot be filled with just one flood," he said.

Several decades back, regulators were constructed in the state mostly to control the intrusion of saline water.

Bijoy Nandan, dean, faculty of marine sciences, Cusat, said it is time to revisit these regulators as most of them are in ruins or in a dilapidated state.

While the Thottappally spillway-cum-regulator was constructed in 1955 to prevent saline water entering Kuttanad, the Thanneermukkom bund - built as part of the Kuttanad Development Scheme in 1974 - was then considered the

largest mud regulator in the country. It has since been reconstructed.

"While our regulators were constructed as a salinity barrier, no proper maintenance and regulation are done there, and they aren't managed scientifically either," said Nandan, adding that salinity is prevalent in most of the rivers in the state.

"It is not only affecting the geo-chemistry but the fauna and flora too. During summer, salinity becomes high."

According to Nandan, the Vembanad regulator, the oldest regulator in the state, is in a dilapidated state.

"The larger role of Thanneermukkam bund has not been defined yet," he said. Madhusoodhanan pointed

out that if something happens to the shutters or the regulators, all the rivers will be filled with saline water the next day, and the water pumped from the rivers to all the drinking water projects will contain salt water.

"The water supplied to the irrigation schemes will also contain salt water, causing huge losses to the agriculture sector," he said.

This has happened several times in the past, albeit in a small manner. "But the severity of the problem becomes heightened in the low-lying areas as the water requirement in the midlands rises," he said. In 2017, about 2,800 hectares of paddy in the coastal areas of Alappuzha were damaged after saline water seeped into the fields.



Experts say..

● The phenomenon of saline water intrusion into Kerala's rivers will increase in the coming years unless immediate steps are taken

● Regulators should be revisited as most of them are now in ruins or in dilapidated state. While the Thottappally spillway-cum-regulator was constructed in 1955, the Thanneermukkom bund was built in 1974



While our regulators were constructed as a salinity barrier, no proper maintenance and regulation are done there, and they aren't managed scientifically either

Bijoy Nandan, dean, faculty of marine sciences, Cusat



Many of the riverbeds in the state are below sea level. In fact, many riverbeds are lying in the minus territory because of the sand mining from our rivers over the past 40-50 years

C G Madhusoodhanan, hydrologist

Colleges take new gen route; use shorts, reels to pull elusive students

ANU KURUVILLA @Kochi

WITH colleges in the state witnessing a downward trend in new admissions, the institutions are adopting the new gen route of reels and videos to attract students.

A short video of a woman placed with KPMG, a multinational professional service, thanking her alma mater at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences in Ernakulam and another one in which an MSC student is seen singing to the strums of the guitar to show how the college is also helping students embrace their extra-curricular skills have been posted on the FB pages of Rajagiri College.

Similar videos of other educational institutions are also doing the rounds on social media. Even as the colleges are struggling to fill the seats in traditional courses due to the migration of students to foreign countries, the confusion among parents and students regarding the new format of a four-year degree course has added to their woes.

Regarding the decision to shoot shorts and reels, Ernakulam St Teresa's College vice-principal Dr Kala M S said, "They are being used to attract students. Every department in the college has been asked to prepare shorts or reels besides giving out brochures to acquaint prospective students with the courses and the excellent facilities being provided by our college. We had adopted this mode of advertising two years ago."

She said another reason for going the digital way is to clear the general confusion about the four-year UG courses. "We wanted to show how the four-year UG courses that we are providing are more skill-orient-



ed. We want to tell the public that the courses they are searching for in colleges or universities outside the state or on foreign soil are available here also," Dr Kala said.

Agreeing with Dr Kala, an assistant professor of Sacred Heart College in Thevara said, "There was a time when just the name of the college was enough to attract students. It was all the advertisement needed. Can you believe that even a premier institution like Cusat has been forced to bring out posters?" SH College has also started social media publicity and appointed special faculty advisors (SFAs) to guide students applying to the institution in selecting courses.

"If this is the situation of big names in the higher education sector in Kerala, one can only imagine the plight of colleges in rural areas. SH College, which used to get over 25,000 applications every year, has received only around 9,000 applications," he added.

Meanwhile, Rajagiri College principal Fr Saju MD, CMI said the college has not faced the issue of vacant seats but the campaign is only to attract more students. "This initiative is driven by our commitment to excellence. But we want more bright students to join us. By leveraging various social media platforms, we aim to showcase our programmes' unique features," he said.

Q We want to tell the public that the courses they are searching for in colleges or universities outside the state or on foreign soil are available here also

Dr Kala M S, vice-principal, St Teresa's College

College withdraws promo video after charges of encouraging 'campus love'

EXPRESS NEW SERVICE @Kochi

A prominent college based in Muvattupuzha has been forced to withdraw its promotional video days after its release on social media as the institution found itself at the centre of a raging controversy with critics accusing it of promoting "campus love" to draw new admissions.

The promotional video by Nirmala College (autonomous), which surfaced on the institution's social media platform last week, aimed to appeal to prospective students to take admissions in the college for the upcoming academic year.

The 1.22-minute video depicted a dream sequence unfolding on the campus, featuring a young couple holding hands against the backdrop of a popular romantic Malayalam film song, 'Poomaname.'

It also showcased the cover of 'Inapravukal' authored by Muttathu Varkey, accompanied by a message emphasising the value of reading in broadening the mind and sparking imagination.

The video concluded with an invitation to apply online.

Fr. Pius Malekandathil, the college manager, expressed profound regret over the dissemination of a video that seemingly contradicted the institution's professed values.

In a signed statement dated May 12, he said, "The Muvattupuzha Nirmala College, in its 70 years of existence, has consistently endeavoured to uphold virtuous, humanistic, and cultural principles."

Q The Muvattupuzha Nirmala College, in its 70 years of existence, has consistently endeavoured to uphold virtuous, humanistic, and cultural principles - Fr Pius Malekandathil, college manager

He further clarified that the video was produced by an advertising agency as part of a promotional campaign and that the college authorities were instructed to conduct an inquiry and submit a report promptly.

The college administration also appealed to refrain from circulating the video with any bias or ill intent.

In the meantime, a senior college official said on the condition of anonymity that the video featured actual students on campus and was overseen by a former student.



Dweep set to tackle sexual abuse with school-level awareness

P RAMDAS @Kochi

AGAINST the backdrop of the rollout of recent development plans and the attention garnered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, the Lakshadweep administration is set to adopt another landmark measure. It has decided to incorporate lessons on imparting awareness of sexual abuse into the school curriculum and train staff to deal with such issues, marking a significant step forward in educational reform.

Lakshadweep's department of education currently follows the CBSE and Kerala board curricula for schools. This exposes it to the Kerala government's decision to introduce new textbooks for standards I, III, V, VII and IX with several portions aimed at creating awareness of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act. In a statement before the Kerala High Court, the



island administration said any modification to CBSE and Kerala board curricula will be adopted by schools on the isles. It further said that teachers and other school personnel will be imparted regular training as part of new initiatives by the boards.

The statement was filed in response to a petition for including prevention-oriented pro-

grammes on sexual abuse as part of the school curriculum. V Sajith Kumar, standing counsel for the administration, submitted that comprehensive training programmes have already been conducted to equip teaching faculty with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively carry out prevention programmes and identify signs of abuse among students.

Soldiers struggle to admit wards in KVs

POOJA NAIR @Kozhikode

NITHISH (name changed), an armyman hailing from Kozhikode, was jubilant when he was recently transferred to Uttarakhand from Himachal Pradesh, as he would be able to send his family to his hometown.

Nithish's joy was short-lived. He had a tough time securing admission for his two children in Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) in Kozhikode, courtesy a recent amendment in the admission criteria, which reduced the number of seats per division from 40 to 32.

Being a member of the Armed Forces, Nithish belongs to the first priority group for KV admissions. Despite it being so, he faced

several hurdles in securing admissions for his wards in KV. And when he managed to get it, his kids got admitted to KVs in two different districts.

Nithish is not alone. Twenty other parents face the same ordeal. With the schools set to reopen on May 27, they have been left to lurch by the authorities who lack clarity on the issue.

Santhosh Kumar N, Deputy Commissioner of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, said, "We'd like to assure them that efforts are underway to facilitate admissions for students falling under the first priority category."

M K Raghavan, MP, has brought the issue to the notice of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Avail KeLSA resources: HC

The Kerala High Court directed the Lakshadweep administration to avail the services of resource persons of the Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KeLSA) for imparting training to teachers on sexual-awareness programmes developed by Kerala's department of general education for schools following the state syllabus in the Union territory.

The Nishtha (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement) training programme, initiated at the instance of NCERT and the ministry of education, offered training on the Pocso Act and on effectively dealing with issues faced by children. The island's education department launched extensive awareness campaigns target-

ing students, parents and school staff to foster a culture of open communication and vigilance against sexual abuse. Headmasters have been sensitised about the legal obligations of reporting cases of child abuse to authorities. The statement pointed out that protocols for reporting incidents of sexual abuse and consequential actions have been established, ensuring swift action and maintaining the confidentiality of cases to protect the rights and well-being of victims. Complaint boxes have been installed in all schools, it said.

As part of the policy adopted by the department, all schools exhibited 'Komal', a film on child sexual abuse. Faculties are given regular training for building up capacity for guidance and counselling. Recently, 10 teachers from different schools were sent for five days of training at the regional institution of education in Mysuru, Karnataka.



SPIRIT OF INDIA

Long queues of voters – from West Bengal to Maharashtra and from Srinagar to Andhra Pradesh – were out since morning, to get inked as a mark of democracy.



(1) Women wait in a long queue to cast their votes at a polling booth in Jhabua district, Jharkhand on Monday (2) Tharu tribals dressed up in traditional attire pose for group photos after casting their vote in Sohni Balaigaon village of Bahraich (3) People stand in queues to cast their votes at a polling station at Fakir Gujri on the outskirts of Srinagar (4) A woman shows her ink-marked finger after casting her vote in Bardhaman (5) Farooq Abdullah gets his finger marked with indelible ink as he arrives to cast his vote in Srinagar (6) A security personnel keeps vigil as people wait to cast their votes in Birbhum district (7) An elderly voter shows her finger marked with indelible ink after casting her vote in Tirupati district (8) People wait to cast their vote in Tirupati (9) Voters show their fingers marked with indelible ink after casting votes in Bardhaman (10) People wait in queues to cast their votes at a polling station in Bardhaman (11) A security personnel keeps vigil as people wait to cast their vote in Khunti district

FOCUS ON PURVANCHAL

NAMITA BAJPAI & RAMASHANKAR @ Lucknow/Muzaffarpur

PM turns roadshow into Varanasi carnival

It all appeared more of a carnival than a roadshow of a politician. On the eve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nomination for Lok Sabha election in Varanasi, the city was opulently embellished. As the PM took out a 5-km roadshow, which is expected to have a fall-out in many eastern UP constituencies, the focus of the election has clearly shifted from western UP to Purvanchal, passing through the central region after four-phase voting on Monday.

Commencing from the BHU crossing with garlanding of the statue of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya, the PM's caravan hit Kashi's streets even as the scorching sun showed no signs of mellowing. It culminated at Kashi Vishwanath temple around 8pm.

The PM was flanked by CM Yogi Adityanath atop a four-wheeler painted in saffron. As the evening descended, the weather became a bit milder with Varanasi glittering in with thousands of colours. People lined-up on both sides of the roads as the Modi Rath inched on. The chariot was showered with flower petals and amid chants of 'Har Har Mahadev' and 'Jai Shree Ram.' The PM is seeking a third term from the holy city.



The over 3-hour roadshow began with the beating of 'damrus,' blowing of conch shells, and chanting of mantras. It reverberated with the sound of 'shehna' played on by the family members of Ustad Bismillah Khan, the recipient of Bharat Ratna. Schoolgirls attired as 'Bharat Mata' were seen standing along the route. Youths dressed as Lord Shiva also stood along the route while the crowd was continuously chanting 'Har Har Mahadev'.

The roadshow followed the route that is said to have been taken by Aadi Shankaracharya 1,200 years ago.

Earlier in the day, the PM launched a broadside against the opposition INDIA bloc, calling its leaders "cowards" who were "scared of Pakistan's nuclear power".

Addressing a rally in Muzaffarpur, the PM said: "If Pakistan is not wearing bangles, we will make them wear bangles. They do not have flour, they do not have electricity, now I have come to know that they even have scarcity of bangles." "We must look carefully at the opposition, which is full of cowards and timid people, who give a clean chit to Pakistan on terrorism," he remarked.

“If Pakistan is not wearing bangles, we will make them wear bangles. They do not have flour, they do not have electricity...”

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Shehna played

The over 3-hr roadshow in Varanasi began with beating of 'damrus,' blowing of conch shells, and chanting of mantras. It reverberated with the sound of 'shehna' played on by the family members of Bismillah Khan

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

IN his first campaign rally in the family stronghold of Rae Bareilly, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, now a candidate there, revealed on Monday why he chose this seat over his traditional Amethi constituency.

He cited the Nehru-Gandhi family's century-long association with Rae Bareilly, referring to it as the 'karmabhoomi' of his two mothers—Sonia Gandhi and Indira Gandhi.

During an emotionally charged speech in Maharajganj, Rae Bareilly, flanked by his sister and AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi, he said, "We have a century-long relationship with Rae Bareilly. A few days ago, while speaking with my mother in a video, I mentioned that I have two mothers — Sonia Ji and Indira Ji. Initially, my mother disapproved, but I explained that a mother is someone who guides and protects her child, which both Sonia Ji and Indira Ji have done for me."

He continued, "This is the 'karmabhoomi' of both my mothers, which is why I have come to contest from Rae Bareilly. For the first time in our country's history, BJP-RSS factions are aiming to dismantle our Constitution. Their leaders have explicitly stated that if they gain power, they intend to alter the

KARMABHOOMI

Rahul plays emotional card in Rae Bareilly rally



“This is the 'karmabhoomi' of my mothers (Sonia & Indira Gandhi), which is why I have come to contest from Rae Bareilly

Rahul Gandhi

Constitution." Rae Bareilly is scheduled for polling on May 20, during the fifth phase of the Uttar Pradesh Lok Sabha Election 2024. In his speech, Rahul Gandhi launched a fierce critique of the BJP, accusing them of attempting to "destroy" the Constitution—a first in Indian history.

"If the Congress-INDIA bloc comes to power, my first act will be to cancel the debts of poor farmers," he affirmed, also reiterating his campaign promise to deposit Rs 1 lakh annually into the accounts of

impoverished women. He assured the youth of a guaranteed one-year apprenticeship to equip them with necessary skills and make them job-ready should his government come to power after June 4.

Rahul Gandhi will face off against BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh, a Congress defector and three-time MLC in Rae Bareilly.

AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who has been closely managing Rahul's campaign, gave a brief speech before handing the stage over to her brother.

Long association

Rahul Gandhi cited the Nehru-Gandhi family's century-long association with Rae Bareilly. Rae Bareilly is scheduled for polling on May 20, during the fifth phase of the UP Lok Sabha Election 2024.

Thakur files nomination, says BJP will sweep Himachal

PARVEZ SULTAN/HARPREET BAJWA @ New Delhi/Chandigarh

UNION minister of information and broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur, BJP's Preneet Kaur and Harshimrat Badal of SAD, among others, on Monday filed their nominations for Lok Sabha elections. Their constituencies will go to polls on the last phase on June 1.

Thakur, seeking his fifth term from Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh, said, "The BJP has taken the pledge of 'Viksit Bharat' and to achieve this, stability and continuity of this Modi government is imperative."



Filing her nomination for Patiala seat in Punjab, Preneet, wife of former CM Capt Amarinder Singh, said, "This election is not merely about politics; it's about renewal of 'rishta' between me and the people of Patiala. I will ensure that I will do more work in the next 5 years than in the previ-

ous 20 years."

Harsimrat, MP and former union minister, filed her nomination from Bathinda seat in the presence of her husband and Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal and senior party leadership.

Sukhbir Badal said repeated rounds of voting had made it clear that the Bharatiya Janata Party would not form the next government. He claimed that the BJP was crashing in North India and had been wiped out in Maharashtra and Bihar.

"Prime Minister's speeches are also indicating that the party is in panic mode. He is

now attacking a particular community openly and even stating that the 'mangalsutras' will be taken away and given to others. This never happened in the last 70 years and will never happen," he said, adding that in the new scenario, regional parties would emerge stronger.

Balbir Singh of AAP filed his papers from Patiala and AAP's Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal from Amritsar.

BJP candidate Arvind Khanna filed his papers from Sangrur while SAD nominee Virsa Singh Valtaha submitted his nomination for Khadoor Sahib seat in Tarn Taran district.

Ex-minister Jayant Sinha's son joins Cong in Kharge presence

MUKESH NANJAN @ Ranchi

FORMER Union Minister Jayant Sinha's son, Aashir Sinha, joined the Congress party amid the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. The BJP MP from Hazaribagh and former Union Minister in the Narendra Modi Government witnessed his son's decision during a program attended by party chief Mallikarjun Kharge.

Jayant Sinha was replaced by Hazaribagh (Sadar) MLA Manish Jaiswal as the BJP candidate from Hazaribagh in the current Lok Sabha polls.

Jayant Sinha, who previously served as Union Minister of State (Finance) in the Narendra Modi Government, reportedly had a strained relationship with the BJP due to repeated attacks made by his father, Yashwant Sinha, also a former Union Minister in the BJP government.

Jayant Sinha expressed his desire not to contest the 2024 elections, aiming to shift his focus toward combating climate change in India and globally. Meanwhile, Aashir Sinha made his first appearance wearing a Congress scarf at Barhi rally.



Don't give people any slippery stuff like philosophy or sociology to tie things up with. That way lies melancholy

Ray Bradbury

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Rammath Goenka

INCENTIVISE PARENTS TO KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL, AVOID CHILD MARRIAGES

In a horrific incident, a 32-year-old man allegedly beheaded a minor girl in Kodagu, Karnataka after their wedding was called off as local authorities became aware of it. The wedding had reportedly been arranged as the couple was "in love", but both families agreed to postpone the marriage till the girl turned 18 in two years. This angered the groom, who is alleged to have beheaded the girl and made off with the severed head. The incident shines a light on the social acceptance of child marriage and the entitlement bred into some Indian men, which can have fatal consequences for women and girls. It also illuminates the treacherous path trod by social workers in convincing families not to marry off a child while also ensuring the child's safety.

A great deal of awareness has been raised against child marriage in India, and there has been progress. A study of the latest National Family Health Survey shows that the prevalence of child marriage has halved since 1993, when 49.4 percent of the respondents reported they had been married before the age of 18. However, the progress has not been uniform. At present, five states alone—West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh—account for over half the child marriages in the country.

It is clear that economic stress has a clear role to play in exacerbating the crisis. Migration, poverty and even social concerns about children exploring relationships intersect with patriarchal norms to make underage marriage appear to be the best way of ensuring a girl child's safety. However, child marriage is fraught with risk for the girl—it takes a toll on her health and that of her children, as well as on her own education and economic wellbeing. New research suggests that by intensifying poverty and other oppressive conditions, climate-related stressors such as heat waves can also push parents to marry off their daughters young. A holistic approach is essential, one that targets the economic concerns of parents by incentivising them to keep their girls in school, as has been attempted in a few states. It also needs to address structural issues such as the perilous lack of girls' and women's safety, bonded labour and forced migration, which might force the parents towards an unfortunate choice.

INDIA WILL NEED ROHIT, HARDIK TO FLOURISH

MASTER and Commander: The Far Side of the World. The content of the film may not be remotely associated with Indian cricket, but the title does evoke some similarity with the two most talked-about persons in Indian cricket now. As Team India embarks on a journey to the far side of the world to erase the bitter memories of loss at the final of the 50-over World Cup at home last year, the duo will remain the talking point. The captain and his deputy are struggling with form, which doesn't augur well for the team. As we approach the business end of the Indian Premier League and with the first set of players and coaching staff set to leave for the T20 World Cup in the US and the West Indies, things seem to be unstable at the top—literally and figuratively.

Captain Rohit Sharma does not look to be in good touch. After the quickfire starts he gave early in the season, the Mumbai Indians opener has struggled as the IPL has progressed. For an explosive and skilled batter like him, a string of low scores usually reflects poorly on form. His last five scores are less than 20, including three in single digits. And Rohit's deputy Hardik Pandya's all-round miss-hit during the IPL adds to the woes. Pandya has had a forgettable season as Mumbai captain. He averages 18 with the bat and 32 with the ball while going for 10.58 runs per over. What is more disconcerting are the reports of negativity creeping into the camp. Though there were reports that Rohit suggested Hardik as his deputy in the national team, there have been multiple reports suggesting not all was well between the two during the IPL. However, this remains unverified.

What's heartening is that Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav and Suryakumar Yadav seem to be in good touch. Yet, to end India's trophy drought, they will need their captain and vice-captain to flourish. India head coach Rahul Dravid might be on his last leg. With very little time between the IPL and the World Cup, the captain, vice-captain and the coach must focus on the future. The captain and vice-captain must start afresh—for India to succeed, all machines must be strong and well-oiled. For we will depend on the two to steer the ship home.

QUICK TAKE

LET IT BE A SOLID PLAN

CALLING the mountains of untreated solid waste in Delhi "horrifying", the Supreme Court on Monday asked the central urban affairs ministry to meet with the capital territory's municipal bodies and formulate a plan to tackle the problem at the earliest. We hope this will be a plan that other city and state governments, who are facing the same challenge, can learn from. In another indication of its evolving climate jurisprudence, the court also reiterated that such a condition directly affected the fundamental right to live in a clean environment. The judiciary's pressure on the legislature and the executive on this front is not showing any sign of abating.

ON the 25th anniversary of the commencement of Operation Vijay, I feel it's time to energise the national conscience and institutionalise memories of the eventful time. We are referring to the year 1999, when the Pakistani Army's ambitions, out of sync with reality and lacking any sense of military clarity, led it to a catastrophic military operation. This was an attempt to capture some Indian territory in the high-altitude district of Kargil to pressure the Indian Army to vacate Siachen glacier. It resulted in horrific casualties for both armies.

Such events tend to be forgotten by the following generations. Till an emotional connection exists, relatives and associates revel in the heroism of our resistance, the tenacious fight-back and unwillingness to give up an inch of national territory. Yet, we are notorious for harbouring convenient memories. A quarter century later, not many will recall the events of May to July 1999 and how India turned the tide after being initially surprised by the rogue Pakistani action.

There are lessons from Kargil and other such Pakistani misadventures that need to be enshrined in such a way that Pakistan never risks them again. Understanding our adversaries is the key. There are some characteristics which the Pakistan Army and its leadership possess that may never change; the Indian public needs to be aware of these. The Pakistan Army is an entity independent of civilian control. The generals govern without being in government, thus remaining shorn of responsibility for their actions. These actions may never be in consonance with national interests. They are often executed to satisfy personal ego and without 'thinking through' the full impact and implications of their actions.

To take an example from the current situation, any intelligence analysis that takes Pakistan's ongoing economic woes and impact of climate change to draw conclusions on the near impossibility of it triggering something of a tactical, operational or strategic nature to gain some advantage over India would be unrealistic. Options drawn with application of rational military thinking fly in the face of historical irrationality, which has usually been the nature of the Pakistani military doctrine. Yet, it may also be incorrect to imagine intrusions and occupations that are given the imaginary colour of 'Second Kargils'. This became an obsession with some senior commanders of the Indian Army for many years, but is thankfully well behind us. We just need to be alert and

There is a need to document the Pakistani Army's misadventures along the Line of Control. Even today, it tells Pakistan's citizens that it controls Siachen glacier

LESSONS FROM KARGIL, A QUARTER CENTURY LATER

LT GEN SYED ATA HASNAIN (RETD)



Former Commander, Srinagar-based 15 Corps. Now Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir



SOURAV ROY

our vigil needs to be professional at all times, not only in campaigning seasons.

By creating shadows of intrusions and mass infiltration on the LoC, what Pakistani military commanders managed to temporarily achieve was a defensive approach in some Indian military minds. Even Jamaat-ud-Dawah leader Hafiz Saeed borrowed a leaf from Pakistan's disinformation when, in 2011, he directed his cadres to attempt mass infiltration into Kashmir in suicide mode, in an effort to impose caution on us and cow us down. Fortunately, this was quickly overcome, but it's a trend that can always return if irrationality is applied by the Pakistan Army once again. *Quid pro quo* of higher intensity against Pakistan Army action is what quiets the Pakistan Army,

and the Indian Army must always cater to that. Lower levels of creeping calibration as response rarely help.

As a practice, the Pakistan Army does not realistically document challenges at the LoC and lessons from Indian response, because it would reveal the reality of its own irrational adventurism, the lack of professionalism and also unnecessary bravado that ends in no achievement. In the absence of information, there is thus a propensity for future generations remaining ill informed, misled by misinformation relating to such bravado. The flip side is that it is also to our advantage, as subsequent generations of Pakistani officers and soldiers will rarely be aware of the ferocity of Indian responses at the LoC. Nothing, of all that has happened on

CAN RATIONALITY CURE HUMAN ILLS?

LARS von Trier is one of the great auteurs of this century. His *Melancholia* (2011) is dedicated to Andrei Tarkovsky. It tells the story of Justine (Kirsten Dunst), a young woman suffering from acute mood swings and depression. She walks out of her marriage with a 'nice' young man before the wedding party is over. Through the party, Justine refuses to play the game. She makes love to a stranger, insults her boss—the head of an advertising firm who has just given her a promotion—estranges her loving sister, and generally busts the game.

All of it happens in one night. But it is a rather special night because a rogue planet, *Melancholia*, hitherto hiding behind the sun, is approaching Earth and may collide with it. Until the last moment though, we are given to understand it might just drift by.

Watching Trier's movies is a visceral experience. Nothing is left to the imagination in his *Antichrist* or *Nymphomaniac*, which along with *Melancholia* form a loose trilogy that tries to plumb the female unconscious. At the bottom, Trier appears to say that the female unconscious is as chaotic as the male one. His characters are proof that he does not believe in game theory.

Game theory is a great invention of the mentally troubled mathematician John Nash. In application to social and political situations, it provides conceptual tools for the players, all of whom are interdependent. The theory seeks to facilitate proportionate payoffs to every player. As a result of this interdependence, each player has to formulate his moves according to his/her payoffs. This probably works in a sporting event like football or even in a dire situation like war: a group working towards a goal. This is one reason Narendra Modi would like to forge his dream game of One Nation, One Race.

In a new book—*Reason To Be Happy: Why Logical Thinking is the Key to a Better Life*—which I have been reading in spells when Trier gets a bit too trying, economist Kaushik Basu makes the case for a wider application of game theory. Basu writes: "An exciting research agenda is to create a more sophisticated game theory where each player's payoff function depends on other people's payoff functions. In such a 'sophisticated

game', an equilibrium will require first locating a vector of payoff functions, one for each player, such that they are mutually compatible... This is a research problem that can... be fully solved and, if that is done, it... will also help open up scope for research and analysis for creating agreements and conventions for a better, kinder world."



Lars von Trier's movie *Melancholia* suggests the female unconscious can be as chaotic as the male one. In contrast, economist Kaushik Basu's latest book, *Reason to Be Happy*, suggests using game theory to improve human lives. Trier might be winning the argument on rationality

Basu's entire book rather endearingly rests on the hope that *homo sapiens* is a rational animal species. Trier would not agree. But the very first chapter of Basu's book has a subsection called *Melancholia*, a title Trier would approve. In it, Basu talks about a dark period when he was 18, which lasted for over a year, never to return. He jells in with the world.

Basu believes that collective behavior can be organised for the better if game theory is sophisticated enough, and everybody gets their payoffs. On the other hand, Trier's movies are about the rogue individual, the planet *Melancholia*. An individual who will not play by the rules of the game, and so threatens the order. In the movie, the planet finally crashes

into Earth. On a literal dimension, Trier is saying our entire existence, a blue speck spinning in a universe spanning 93 billion light years across, is endangered. On another level, he is saying the melancholic (or the misfit true only to herself) will wreck the system as well as herself. Either way, game theory will not work for Trier, because insanity is the essence of human brilliance.

If we look around, Trier seems to be winning the argument. A few weeks ago the irrepressible Sam Pitroda mentioned the possibility of bringing back an inheritance law to redistribute wealth. He was pilloried. The 'invisible hand' of the collective of all persuasions was immediately at work. In a world intelligently designed by, say, a Basu, the thing to do would be to come up with a game model of inheritance and see if the payoffs contribute to everyone's happiness. But instead of debating the issue, we dismissed it with the violence characteristic of *homo sapiens*, most of it directed personally against Pitroda, the equivalent of Justine in the Trier movie.

The system cannot co-opt such radical ideas because it cannot survive them. The group, always amorally survivalist, must always sacrifice the individual. It is not as if the world does not have the resources to solve the basic problems of humanity; it is just that the system becomes meaningless in its present intentions.

The reason why Basu's model of the world will not work is that humans are not rational. In groups, they obsessively look for order in systems as a kind of guarantee. Often, destruction in the form of a war is the result. You see, the order itself is not necessarily rational. Or ethical. It is only what it is.

Melancholia is not a planet. It is Justine. The Justines among us. The system will always penalise her. Which is why she is on a collision course. Either way, in the long run, the game itself is programmed to self-destruct.

(Views are personal) (cpsurendran@gmail.com)

MAIL BAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Political considerations

Ref: *SC levels the playing field with interim bail to Kejriwal* (May 13). On the face of it, the release of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal as head of a party on interim bail for electioneering looks like the SC is carrying out natural justice. There cannot be two opinions that the government has bungled in arresting him when polls were round the corner. But in the absence of any point of law, the SC's enthusiasm in releasing him could also be seen as smacking of a political partisanship. **P Mangalachandran, Kannur**

Correct decision

The editorial is a befitting reply to the politicians who created confusion among the public. Even Home Minister Amit Shah twisted the matter and said Kejriwal asked for bail, which was not the case. The SC gave the correct decision to create a level playing field. **V O Harindranathan, Chennai**

Villainous qualities

Ref: *The most beloved villain among Indian epics* (May 13). The character of Ravana is a mix of valour, devotion and obdurate viciousness, with womanising on the side. He didn't learn anything from his defeats at the hands of Vali, the Vanara king. He inherited more qualities of an asura from his mother's side. **Ramalingeswara Rao, email**

Mental battleground

The article brings out the adorable qualities of Ravana. His devotion to Lord Shiva was incomparable. In the same person there are both *devas*, the good aspect, and *asuras*, the bad one. Sigmund Freud, a German psychologist, said ego is the battleground where the superego and the id constantly fight. **P Prema, Thanjavur**

Market tremors

Ref: *Don't read too much into market volatility* (May 13). The stock market is so sensitive that a statement from a politician can create tremors. The PM not talking about economic policies and focusing merely on an individual, his party and family in the background of the opposition talking more about employment and wealth redistribution is definitely a concern. **A G Rajmohan, Chennai**

Merging Kashmir

Ref: *Protests in Pok, posters demand merger with India* (May 13). If East Germany and West Germany could be united in 1989 by destroying the Berlin Wall after a peaceful revolution, why can't Pakistan-occupied Kashmir be united with India by breaking the Line of Control? Obviously it cannot be done just like that since Pakistan won't easily allow this proposal. **P Victor Selvaraj, Palayamkottai**

India makes its position clear amid raging protests in PoK. After months of friction, Maldives thanks India for aid

Won't take long for PoK to integrate with India: EAM

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

A great achievement was the abrogation of Article 370 in J&K. The NDA thought that Kashmir should be integrated with India. There is a talk of PoK, some protests are taking place there.

S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister

Non-trade issues

On the Free Trade Agreement, Jaishankar said that such a pact between EU-India is complex as there are non-trade issues. "We will try to take it forward. We are serious about pushing it," he said.

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said Pakistan occupied Kashmir was always a part of India and will always be so. It won't be long before India will be able to integrate it, he said.

"A great achievement was the abrogation of Article 370 in J&K. The NDA thought that Kashmir should be integrated with India. There is a talk of PoK, some protests are taking place there. A parliament resolution is that PoK is a part of India; it was a part of India and will be a part. Our intention is to get back PoK and integrate it with India," said Jaishankar in Mumbai.

PoK has been marked by protests since May 10 where people are demanding independence and some even integration with India. Jaishankar also said that the opposition thought otherwise, as Dr Farooq Abdullah said that Pakistan has nuclear weapons so we should not talk of PoK.

On Pakistan, it is clear that it is a country whose past actions have come to haunt them - economic situations, terrorism - has rebounded on them, he said. "We will also continue with CAA, as it is in the India's interest. Anything that is in the interest of security, we will implement. Minorities from neighbouring countries have to be protected but earlier governments paid no heed," he added.



On the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Jaishankar said that such a pact between EU-India is complex as there are non-trade issues. "We will try to take it forward. We are serious about pushing it. Going into the next terms, it would be a priority," he said adding that the Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal did a lot to give a push to other trade agreements.

He spoke about pushing for trade settlements in rupee. "In many countries, there is a shortage of hard currencies. They are willing to buy goods but currency has become an obstacle. We need to give countries more options. Settlements in each other's currencies are a sensible idea," he said.

On Khalistani supporters in Canada, Jaishankar said, "We have issues with the US and Canada as they give latitude with what they call freedom of speech."

Delhi grants budgetary support of \$50 mn to Male

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

I thank the Indian government for extending the vital budgetary support to Maldives with the rollover of \$50 million treasury bill. This signifies the longstanding friendship between Maldives and India

Moosa Zameer, Maldives Foreign Minister

Budgetary support

The Maldivian government is appreciative of the generous support of the Indian government that has been providing in the form of budgetary support.

INDIA extended \$50 million budgetary support to the Maldives on Monday. This was in the form of a rollover of a \$50 million treasury bill for an additional year through the State Bank of India, Male.

"I thank External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and the Indian government for extending the vital budgetary support to Maldives with the rollover of \$50 million treasury bill. This is a true gesture of goodwill which signifies the longstanding friendship between Maldives and India," said Maldivian Foreign Minister **Moosa Zameer**. He was in India last week and the rollover was among the issues he discussed with India.

"The Indian government's decision to roll over the treasury bill came following a request made by Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer to Jaishankar during his visit last week (May 8-10)," according to the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Maldivian government is appreciative of the generous support of the Indian government that has been providing in the form of budgetary support. Many infrastructure and development projects are underway with New Delhi's assistance.

"The Maldivian government looks forward to continuing this collaborative partnership for the mutual benefit



and prosperity of their people," said Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Indian government made the rollover decision despite bilateral ties experiencing turbulence since Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu assumed office six months back.

These government treasury bills are subscribed by the SBI under government-to-government, a unique arrangement at zero cost (interest-free) to the government of Maldives.

President Muizzu assumed office in November and immediately asked India to withdraw some 89 Indian military personnel from the country by May 10. The Indian military personnel were operating three aviation platforms in the island nation.

Zameer said 76 Indian military personnel were replaced by civilian employees of the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited which manufactured the two helicopters gifted by India.

7-member team formed to review House security

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has constituted a seven-member team under the chairmanship of DIG CISF Ajay Kumar to re-survey the security requirement of the Parliament House Complex, officials said on Monday.

The re-survey is being done to assess the additional requirement of security personnel to make the arrangement full proof, as the Central Industrial Security Force has taken over duties of Parliament Security Service (PSS), they said.

More than 3,200 CISF personnel have been deployed at the complex and other emergency services replacing the Delhi police, the officials said, adding, "Communication, anti-sabotage, command and control wing are being replaced by the CISF".

The committee was formed last week through a letter undersigned by a deputy secretary in the MHA with the responsibility to coordinate with the other agencies and submit a report on security requirements, the officials said.

The panel has been mandated to scrutinise and examine the proposal of the CISF taking over all 16 duties of PSS such as access regulations for MPs, VIPs, regulation of VIP movement, among others.

SC seeks ED reply on Soren's plea challenging his arrest

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Monday issued notice and sought the Central probe agency, Enforcement Directorate's (ED) reply by May 17, after hearing an appeal filed by the former Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Hemant Soren, challenging his arrest in a money laundering case arising out of an alleged land scam case.

Soren, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader, had moved the apex court challenging the rejection of his plea challenging the arrest by the ED in the case by the Jharkhand High Court.

A two-judge bench of the top court, led by Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta, asked the ED to file its reply on Soren's appeal and fixed the matter for further hearing to May 17.

During the course of the hearing on Monday, Justice Khanna asked Kapil Sibal, senior lawyer for Soren, whether he (Soren) was in possession of the land. To this Sibal replied no. "I (Soren) have never been. It is nothing to do with the land. If they say forcible possession, it is not even a scheduled offence," Sibal said and claimed innocence in the case.

But the top court observed that everybody, including the person in actual occupation of the land had made a statement that Soren had possession.

The apex court today, which

ALSO IN TOP COURT

Plea seeks review of EVM, VVPAT verdict

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking review of its April 26 judgement by which it had rejected the demand for reverting to the old paper ballot system and the complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). The review petition was filed by Arun Kumar.

'Vehicles to comply with PUC norms'

The Supreme Court on Monday said prima facie a right balance will have to be struck for ensuring that vehicles remain compliant with pollution under control (PUC) norms and, at the same time, have third party insurance. The observation by a bench of Justices A S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan.

was initially wanted to list the matter on May 20, had to change the date to May 17, after Sibal said polls would be over by then and he would be prejudiced if the long date is given in the matter.

In a similar development in the same case, a Special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Ranchi on Monday rejected his bail plea in the matter. The former CM, Soren had filed a petition for bail in the PMLA court on April 15.

In the course of the hearing today at the top court, the judges before fixing May 17, even expressed their inclination to list the matter someday in July or might be during the summer vacation. But Sibal vehemently denied it and pleaded for a short date for the hearing keeping in view the ongoing Lok

Sabha elections.

Sibal also told Justice Khanna, who heard Arvind Kejriwal case and granted him interim bail till June 1, that "Arvind Kejriwal order covers me."

The Jharkhand HC bench, led by, Acting Chief Justice S Chandrashekhar, who heard the matter, had reserved its verdict on February 28. It pronounced the same on May 3, Friday and rejected his plea.

Soren, was in jail, since he was arrested by the ED on January 31 in connection with his alleged involvement in a money laundering case. He, however claimed innocence in the case and said that he was neither involved in money laundering case nor in "any illegal act."

Soren is at present lodged in judicial custody at the Birsa Munda Central Jail in Ranchi.

Himachal HC told to furnish report on judges

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court issued a notice on Monday to the Registrar General of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, requesting a comprehensive report regarding the reconsideration of two senior District Judicial Officers. This follows the Supreme Court Collegium's recommendation on January 4 to elevate them as High Court judges.

The two-judge bench led by Justice Hrishikesh Roy and Justice Prashant Kumar Misra, directed the Himachal Pradesh HC Registrar General to respond to a petition filed by senior district judges Chirag Bhanu Singh and Arvind Malhotra.

Emphasising the importance of examining the matter thoroughly, the court noted the need to review both the facts and the information assessed by the HC collegium. It stated that upon receiving the necessary information from the RG of HP HC, it would be further deliberated in July, without specifying an exact date.

In their petition, the two district court judges argued that the HP High Court's collegium had overlooked their merit and seniority, contrary to the Supreme Court collegium's recommendation led by CJI D Y Chandrachud for their elevation from the service quota to the High Court.

Senior advocate Arvind Datar, representing the petitioners, highlighted a collegium resolution from January 4, 2024, and subsequent communication from the Union Ministry of Law and Justice to the Himachal Pradesh HC.

He urged the court to issue appropriate directions or orders in response. Datar pointed out that according to these guidelines, the HC collegium should have considered the names of the petitioner judicial officers for elevation as HC Judges, given their suitability and seniority. Ignoring these factors could prejudice his clients if other, recently accommodated judicial officers are considered for elevation.

Two members of Meiti militant group arrested for abduction of 4 cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guwahati

MANIPUR police arrested two members of Meitei radical group Arambai Tenggol for their alleged involvement in the recent abduction and assault of four police personnel. The police said search operations were underway to arrest some others involved in the case.

"Manipur Police arrested two miscreants belonging to Arambai Tenggol who were involved in the abduction and physical assault of four Manipur Police Personnel. The arrested individuals have been identified as Taibanganba Sanoujam (25) and Moirangthem Bobo (40)," the police said. The four personnel, who were assaulted, do not belong to the warring Meitei and Kuki communities. Three are from the Gorkha community while one is a Muslim.

Ram Bahadur Karki, Ramesh Budhathoki, Manoj Khatiwoda and Md Taj Khan were abducted when they were travelling from Meitei-majority Imphal valley to Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district where they are posted.

The miscreants intercepted the vehicle of the personnel at Koirengi in Imphal East dis-

24-hour shutdown

The Committee on Tribal Unity had called for a 24-hour shutdown in Kangpokpi district from Saturday midnight. The Kuki Students' Union, Sadar Hills had also condemned the incident. The victims were admitted to the Kangpokpi district hospital and later, shifted to the Kangpokpi Christian Hospital.

When the personnel, who were on duty, were heading towards Imphal, they were reportedly alerted about a threat to their lives. So, they decided to drive back but were nabbed by the miscreants on the way.

Condemning the incident, the Committee on Tribal Unity had called for a 24-hour shutdown in Kangpokpi district from Saturday midnight. The Kuki Students' Union, Sadar Hills had also condemned the incident.

On 2008 blast anniversary, panic grips Jaipur as 6 schools receive bomb threat

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

SIX schools in Jaipur received bomb threats via email on Monday, triggering panic among students and their parents. However, no explosive or anything suspicious has been found in these schools, police officials said.

The emails to schools in Jaipur came on the 16th anniversary of the serial bomb blasts in the Rajasthan capital. A series of blasts had rocked the city on this day on May 13, 2008 claiming 71 lives and injuring 180 people.

The threatening emails came days after a similar scare in Delhi-NCR where 150 schools received bomb threat emails on May 1, prompting massive evacuations and searches. On Sunday, at least eight hospitals in Delhi and IGI Airport received similar emails. Authorities declared the incidents as hoax. Jaipur Airport also fell victim to a bomb threat on Sunday. Police said six schools in



Jaipur received emails stating explosives were planted on their premises. No suspicious objects were found after checks. "The locations have been sanitised," a police officer said. The first information about the threat was reported from a private school in Tilak Nagar followed by other schools in different localities.

"Students and staff members were evacuated from the schools. Police teams and bomb and dog squads were rushed to these schools," Police Commissioner Biju George Joseph said.

'Single source of mails'

Police said efforts are on to identify the sender of the emails, adding that all the messages were generated from a single source. The police commissioner said the strictest action would be taken against those involved in the matter. As soon as the news of the bomb threats spread, parents rushed to the schools in panic to pick their children.

"Several schools received threats via email that explosives were there in the schools. Checking in most of the schools has been completed and no explosive was found," he said.

Joseph said efforts are on to identify the sender of the emails, adding that all the messages were generated from a single source. They said the strictest action would be taken against those involved in the matter. As soon as the news spread, parents rushed to the schools in panic to pick up their children.

Crusader who fought against witchhunt dies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Guwahati

ASSAM'S anti-witch hunting crusader Birubala Rabha passed away on Monday after battling with cancer.

The 70-yr-old, a Padma Shri awardee, breathed her last at the State Cancer Hospital in Guwahati where she was admitted a few days ago. The last rites were performed with state honours.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "I am distressed to learn about the passing away of Birubala Rabha. Through her untiring efforts to end social evils, she illuminated the paths of scores of women with hope. Rising through a challenging life, she epitomised courage against all odds. Assam will forever remain grateful for her leadership in serving society," Sarma said.

Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal said Rabha battled against superstitions and prejudices entrenched in the society, exemplifying the strength of women.

India hotspot of land degradation; bigger farms burgeoning: Report

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

INDIA'S top 10% land owners possess 45% of farmland though average farm sizes remain lowest in the world, according to a report on land inequality that also shows that land degradation has increased in the country.

The report, 'Land Squeeze: What is Driving Land Inequality' by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food), underlines that 70% of India's arable land is undergoing land degradation of one form or the other. The report, released on Monday, states that bigger farms are burgeoning in Asia and Africa through grabbing of lands of small holders, a phenomenon called "green grab".

In Asia, overall land inequality has risen by 11% since 1980. Top 10% of land owners in China account for 50% of land (in value terms), while about 50% account for only 11% of the land value. Globally 1% of the



largest farms control 70% of the farmland.

The report points out that India is a hotspot for land degradation in Asia. "Lands are facing increasing threat of desertification leading to biodiversity loss and groundwater depletion, with detrimental impacts for agricultural productivity and livelihoods of pastoralists and other communities," the report added.

The report says financial in-

stitutions fund projects that convert large forests to crop land, so the ownership is concentrated to a few people. It also exposes land grabs in various forms in regions of high biodiversity. Land grabs have led to doubling of land prices globally since 2008, and tripling in Central Europe, placing "unprecedented strain" on farmers and rural communities.

The report also states that land around twice the size of Germany has been snatched in transnational deals since 2000, with 87% of land grabs occurring in regions of high biodiversity. It also highlights rising pressure of 'green grab' of land through green credit marketing mechanisms.

"Pressures (of green grab) are exploding, including for carbon and biodiversity offsetting and clean fuel schemes, leading to huge swathes of farmland being purchased by governments, corporations, and investors, threatening food production," the report said.



INDIA	Max	Min	Mumbai	Max	Min
Ahmedabad	39	24	Panaji	33	26
Bhopal	36	22	Patna	33	25
Bhubaneswar	37	24	Port Blair	37	26
Chennai	34	18	Shillong	29	18
Delhi	34	28	Srinagar	36	18
Kolkata	31	25			
Lucknow	31	08			
Thiruvananthapuram	23	08			

Charges & counter-charges fly thick and fast in 8 constituencies

SULAGNA SENGUPTA @ Kolkata

SPORADIC clashes marred the fourth phase of voting for the eight Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal on Monday with a high voter turnout of 75.66%, election officials said. The Bolpur (SC) constituency from where Asit Kumar Mal from Trinamool Congress, Shyamali Pradhan from CPM, and Priya Saha from BJP are the key contestants, polled the highest vote percentage at 77.77.

Around 1,700 complaints of EVM malfunction and obstruction of agents entering booths were recorded, the EC said, adding the TMC, Congress, and BJP filed hundreds of complaints related to poll violence, voter intimidation, and assaults on agents.

In voter percentage, Bolpur (SC) was followed by Ranaghat (77.46%), Bardhaman-Purba (77.36%), Krishnanagar (77.29%), Birbhum (75.45%), Baharampur (75.36%), Bardhaman-Durgapur (75.02%) and Asansol (69.46%), an official said. Out of the eight seats, Bolpur, Bardhaman-Purba, Birbhum and Krishnanagar were won by the Trinamool in 2019, whereas Bardhaman-Durgapur, Ranaghat and Asansol were bagged by the BJP. The Baharampur seat was retained by the Congress.

Clashes broke out between supporters of TMC and BJP in Monteswar's Susunia area of Bardhaman-Durgapur Lok Sabha seat around noon, as BJP candidate Dilip Ghosh was on his way to a polling booth following complaints of booth jamming.

TMC supporters allegedly blocked Ghosh's convoy and squatted in front of his vehicle, starting a protest against him. Stones were hurled at his convoy, following which some of the cars of the security personnel tailing his convoy were damaged.

Ghosh was also heckled by the TMC activists, sources said. "The police are mute spectators. The TMC has let loose a reign of terror. TMC goons have beaten up our polling agents and are not allowing polling to be free and fair," Ghosh told the media.

EVM SNAGS, VIOLENCE IN BENGAL



ists, sources said. "The police are mute spectators. The TMC has let loose a reign of terror. TMC goons have beaten up our polling agents and are not allowing polling to be free and fair," Ghosh told the media.

The TMC, however, denied the charges and said Ghosh was "trying to vitiate the atmosphere sensing defeat." In Durgapur area of the same constituency, clashes broke out between the TMC and the BJP, following which saffron activists staged a sit-in.

An incident of stone-pelting on CISF protectee and attack on his vehicle occurred at Bardhaman in which 2 personnel got injuries..

CISF on X

Party clash

In Birbhum, the BJP workers clashed with TMC men in Nanoor after BJP's agents were stopped from entering booths.

This is for the first time in over three decades that people are coming out and voting. There is no intimidation

Abdur Rehmana, voter



Voters out

In area of Pulwama, which used to be the hub of separatist politics, people were waiting for their turn to cast their votes.

In 1st major poll after Art 370, no fear factor in Valley poll stations

HIGHEST TURNOUT IN 30 YRS



FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

IN the first electoral exercise since Article 370 abrogation, the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat recorded 36% voting, which is the highest voter turnout since 1996 (when 40.94% voting was recorded), and two-and-a-half times more than the 2019 polls when the turnout was a mere 14.43%.

Although 24 candidates are in the fray, the main contest is between NC's Aga Ruhullah,

PDP's Wahid Parra and Apni Party's Mohammad Ashraf Mir. The election authorities set up 2,135 polling stations across 18 assembly segments in five districts.

Chief electoral officer PK Pole said the Srinagar constituency recorded 36% polling and not even a single polling booth recorded a zero percent voting.

The polls in Srinagar sprang a surprise with people, including men and women, coming out to vote in the previously known no-go areas of south Kashmir, including the Tral area. It was for the first time in over three decades that people in the most sensitive areas of south Kashmir's Pulwama district, which was known as militancy and separatist hub, exercised their right to vote.

In many Tral areas, including Namchabal, Amlar, Tral Bala, Tral Payeen and other adjoining areas in south Kashmir's Pulwama district, where a near-zero voter turnout was witnessed during the previous polls, people came out to vote.

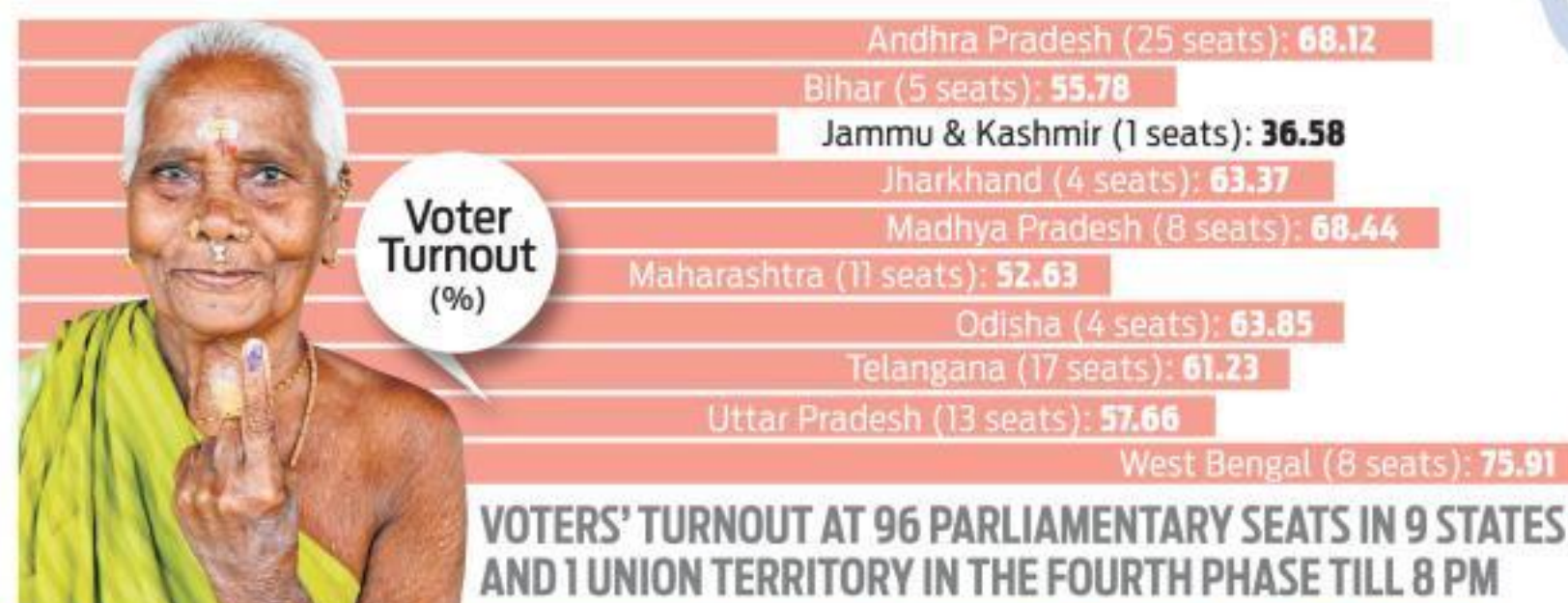
In a polling station at Tral Payeen, out of the total 820 votes, 108 were polled till 9.53 am. "This is for the first time in over three decades that people are coming out and voting. There is no intimidation and people are coming out on their own," said a voter Abdur Rehmana.

"We are voting for change and hope our vote will bring about change," he said.

In the Padgampora area of Pulwama, which used to be the hub of separatist politics, people were waiting for their turn to cast their votes. "The abrogation of Article 370, rising unemployment and growing inflation are the issues that prompted us to come out and vote. We are voting to keep BJP away and for a better future," said a young woman voter Kousar Jan

After elections to 96 constituencies spread across 10 states and Union Territories in the 4th phase, polling to 381 seats is over. West Bengal recorded a turnout at 75.94%, the highest among states/UTs in this phase. This newspaper takes a look...

4 DONE, 3 MORE ROUNDS TO GO



VOTERS' TURNOUT AT 96 PARLIAMENTARY SEATS IN 9 STATES AND 1 UNION TERRITORY IN THE FOURTH PHASE TILL 8 PM

OVERALL TURNOUT 62.84%

8.97 CR MEN VOTERS

8.73 CR WOMEN VOTERS

1,717 CANDIDATES in the fray in the fourth phase

1.92 L Polling Stations

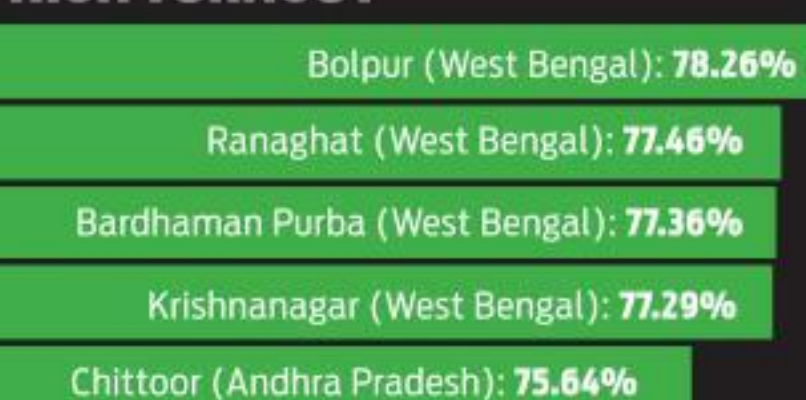
23 STATES 379 PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES are done with polling with the conclusion of Phase-4

In an unfortunate incident, a polling official in Champapet, Telangana passed away while on duty. Taking swift cognisance of the tragic demise, the ECI has directed the CEO Telangana for immediate disbursement of ex-gratia payment to the family of the deceased polling officer, says a senior poll panel official.

TOTAL VOTERS 17.7 crore



TOP FIVE SEATS WITH HIGH TURNOUT



UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh, politically the most crucial and population-wise the largest state of the country, recorded a voter turnout of nearly 58% during phase 4 voting across 13 Lok Sabha constituencies on Monday. The polling in this phase in 2019 was close to 58.9%. Lakhimpur Kheri, Dhaurahra, and Sitapur were among the seats with the highest turnout with 63.07%, 63.19%, and 61.17% polling, respectively. Kanpur remained at the bottom with 52.49%. Union minister Ajay Mishra Teni, whose son is an accused in the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, is eyeing a hat-trick from Kheri. Moreover, the high-profile seat of Kannauj, from where Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav trying his luck, recorded nearly 59% polling till 5 pm. Akbarpur recorded 57.28% polling, Bahraich 57.57%, Etawah 56.19%, Farrukhabad 58.90%, Hardoi 57.51%, Mirsih 55.65%, Shahjahanpur 53.08%, and Unnao 55.32%, according to EC data. Kanpur remained at the bottom of tally with lowest turnout. The SP, a key member of the opposition INDIA bloc, has fielded candidates on 11 Lok Sabha seats in this phase, and the Congress on two seats. In the previous election, the SP-BSP-RLD grand alliance had failed to win a single seat in this phase.

MAHARASHTRA

In the fourth phase of Maharashtra's Lok Sabha elections, eleven seats were up for contention, with an overall voter turnout of approximately 52.63%. Nandurbar saw the highest participation at 60.60%, while Pune, a metro and IT hub, had the lowest turnout at 44%. The INDIA alliance, representing the Opposition, released several purported videos on Monday, alleging that the ruling BJP engaged in vote-buying during the Maharashtra Lok Sabha elections. Rohit Pawar, an NCP (SP) MLA, shared a series of videos on social media, accusing the ruling coalition of splurging money to secure victory against Opposition candidates in constituencies like Ahmednagar, Shirur, Beed, and Jalna. Pawar remarked, "Envelopes containing cash were offered in exchange for votes in the Ahmednagar Lok Sabha constituency. However, individuals with self-respect not only rejected the cash and associated materials but also returned them. Voting and self-respect go hand in hand." Pawar drew attention to a video where CCTV footage from the EVM strong room in Baramati mysteriously became blurry, fueling suspicions of deliberate tampering. In response, BJP minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, whose son contested the Ahmednagar seat against NCP (SP)'s Nilesh Lanke, dismissed the accusations as unfounded.

MADHYA PRADESH

Eight Lok Sabha seats on Monday clocked around 72% polling, 3.5% less than that of 2019 elections, marking the conclusion of voting for the 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh. Male voters (75.01%) outnumbered the female voters (68.45%) by more than 6.5%. In seven seats in Malwa-Nimar region, maximum 75.79% voting was reported in Khargone (ST), followed by 74.86% in Dewas (SC), 74.50% in Mandsaur, 73.03% in Ujjain (SC), 72.86% in Ratlam (ST), 71.50% in Dhar (ST) and 70.72% in Khandwa, according to turnout figures till 6 pm. Indore constituency reported lowest 60.53% voting against 69.31% in 2019. With the battle for Indore ending up as a contest between BJP MP Shankar Lalwani and NDA (after withdrawal of papers by Congress nominee Akshay Kanti Bam), the voting percentage dropped, particularly in all five urban assembly segments. Lowest 56.54% voting was reported in Indore-3, 57.19% in Indore-5, 58.03% in Indore-2, 59.84% in Indore-1 and 61.89% in Indore-4.

BIHAR

The fourth phase of polling for five Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar concluded peacefully on Monday under tight security. The overall voter turnout was 56.85% across the constituencies of Darbhanga, Ujjarpur, Samastipur (SC), Begusarai, and Munger. Begusarai recorded the highest turnout at 58.40%, followed by Samastipur at 58.10%, Darbhanga at 56.63%, Ujjarpur at 56%, and Munger at 55%. In comparison, the 2019 Lok Sabha polls saw a 59.20% voter turnout. The electoral fate of 55 candidates, including two Union Ministers—Giriraj Singh from Begusarai and Nityanand Rai from Ujjarpur—has been sealed in the EVMs. JD(U)'s former president, Rajiv Rajan Singh, also known as Lalan Singh, is contesting from Munger. The CEO's office received 62 complaints, all of which were resolved promptly. Tragically, a polling officer named Onkar Kumar Choudhary passed away at a polling station in Munger before the mock poll began. No other untoward incidents were reported.

JHARKHAND

As the polling for the first round of elections in Jharkhand concluded on Monday, Singhbhum recorded the highest voting percentage at 63.14 per cent, followed by Khunti with 65.82 per cent, Lohardaga with 62.60 per cent, and Palamu with 59.99 per cent. Interestingly, three villages—Tirilposi, Rengdahatu, and Boroi under the Singhbhum Lok Sabha seat—witnessed polling for the first time in the last 20 years. Notably, since the region was Maoist-infested for the last 20 years, the district administration in Singhbhum used to relocate the polling booths of these villages to safer zones. But, after the police launched an intensive campaign against the Maoists by setting up CRPF camps in the area, the red rebels were compelled to go on the back foot. According to the police, Singhbhum had a maximum of 524 vulnerable booths, and hence adequate deployment of security personnel was made during the polling on Monday.

ANDHRA PRADESH

A ruling YSRCP MLA on Monday slapped a man waiting to cast his vote at a polling booth Amaravati only to receive it back himself. The MLA had hit the man who questioned him for jumping the queue. Not pleased at the MLA being slapped, his supporters vented out their anger on the man. Further, Tenali police in Guntur district registered a case under relevant sections in connection with a scuffle that broke between YSRCP MLA A Siva Kumar and a voter at Tenali in Guntur district. Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena took serious note of clashes reported between ruling YSRCP and opposition parties in Tenali, Macherla and Anantapur, and directed officials to enforce house arrests wherever required, including registering cases. The TDP and YSRCP traded violence allegations against each other's supporters and cadres at multiple locations in the state, especially in Palnadu, Kadapa and Annamayya districts

TELANGANA

The Collector of Hyderabad district said on 'X' that a case is registered in Malakpet Police Station against BJP candidate Madhavi Latha under different sections of the IPC and the Representation of the People Act. This follows an allegation that she checked the identity of burqa-clad women voters by asking them to show their faces. In Telangana's Kodangal, a polling officer welcomed people with roses at a wedding-themed poll station. Women-managed pink booths were seen across all constituencies. Prominent faces also stepped out to vote; former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi, film actors Chiranjeevi, Allu Arjun and Junior NTR were among the prominent persons who voted. Polling was also held at the Secunderabad Cantonment assembly constituency. The bypoll was necessitated due to the death of sitting BRS MLA G Lasya Nanditha in a road accident few months ago.

ODISHA

Lok Sabha and assembly elections are being held simultaneously in Odisha. Official said Dubagum assembly segment in Nabarangpur district reported the highest turnout of 71.30 per cent while only 47.90 per cent of electors cast their votes in Berhampur assembly seat in Ganjam district. Chief Electoral Officer N K Dhal said EVM glitches were detected in several places and the machines were replaced within 30 minutes. Dhal said there was brisk voting in Swabhimana Anchal, once a Maoist hotbed in Malkangiri district. The CEO said the Election Commission received reports of poll boycott from some places over local issues. A report from Ganjam district said at least two persons were injured in a clash between rival groups during polling in Chikiti assembly segment. Meanwhile, the EC suspended three polling officials and directed police to arrest two of them for 'serious dereliction' of duty. So far, five polling officials have been suspended for misconduct during the election.



\$4.3 BN
Microsoft pledges investments in France towards AI



Beijing	30	14	SNY	Los Angeles	21	14	SNY
Colombo	32	26	SNY	Melbourne	16	7	SNY
Dhaka	35	28	SNY	Moscow	12	4	SNY
Dubai	36	31	SNY	New York	23	14	SNY
Houston	32	21	SNY	Singapore	32	28	LR
Istanbul	18	20	SNY	Toronto	17	12	LC
London	17	12	LR	Washington	21	11	SNY

Gazans flee again as fresh fighting breaks out in north, central areas

Over 1,000 Hamas fighters taking treatment in Turkish hospitals, says President Erdogan



Palestinians carry their belongings as they flee Gaza Strip on May 13 | AFP

GAZA CITY

ISRAEL battled Hamas in Gaza on Monday, including in far-southern Rafah, despite US warnings against a full-scale invasion of the crowded city and of the threat of post-war "anarchy" across the Palestinian territory.

Clashes also raged in northern and central Gaza as Israel marked a sombre Memorial Day, which is followed by Independence Day from Monday night, more than seven months into the war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack.

Israelis marked a moment's silence and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that "our war of independence is not over yet. It continues even today... We are determined to win this struggle."

Thousands fled northern Gaza on Monday as renewed shelling pounded areas where Israel says Hamas militants

have regrouped, despite having announced they cleared months ago.

"The army dropped leaflets and sent a message on mobile phones warning everyone to leave Jabalia," said Umm Odai Nassar, after reaching Gaza City from nearby Jabalia refugee camp in the far north of the Gaza Strip.

She is one among many Palestinians who had remained in northern Gaza despite the vast devastation to civilian infrastructure inflicted during the early months of Israel's military campaign against Hamas in the territory.

In Ankara, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that "more than 1,000 members" of Hamas were being treated in Turkish hospitals. "So many Hamas members have been killed. The whole of the West is attacking them with all sorts of arms and munitions," he said. "Calling Hamas

... a terrorist organisation would be cruel," he said.

Israel said on Saturday it was operating again in the Jabalia camp to counter Hamas attempts to reestablish its military capabilities in the area. The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said its latest estimate showed about 250,000 people living in north Gaza.

"This is not the first time we have been displaced. Every time we try to return and settle, there is an invasion operation, and the army with its airplanes and tanks bombards the houses and kills people," Nassar said.

The return to intense fighting in the north comes at the same time as Israel presses its military campaign in the south, in the eastern section of Rafah city. Mahmud al-Barsh, a 33-year-old from Jabalia, said he feels the lives of Gazans "have become like that of cat and mouse." **AFP**

WAR WATCH



ISRAEL-GAZA: DAY: 220
TOLL SO FAR
36,728

Israel marks memorial day

Israel commemorated Memorial Day on Monday, a usually somber holiday that this year was almost entirely absorbed by the ongoing war in Gaza. At 11 am, sirens announced two minutes of silence, four fighter planes flew over **AP**

Hezbollah strike injures 4 Israelis

Israel's military said that four of its troops were injured in missile fire from southern Lebanon, as cross-border exchanges of fire with Hezbollah militants continue. Hezbollah acknowledged the strike, saying its forces struck and destroyed an Israeli tank in the Yitfah area, northern Israel, around a km from the Lebanese border. **AP**

ASIA MATTERS



SINGAPORE

PILLAI NAMED MINISTER IN NEW CABINET

Indian-origin Member of Parliament Murali Pillai will be appointed the Minister of State for Law and Transport in the new incoming cabinet of Singapore's new Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, it was announced on Monday. Pillai, 56, will be appointed and sworn in on July 1. Pillai, a member of the ruling People's Action Party, is a lawyer. Among other Indian-origin politicians, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan will remain as Foreign Affairs Minister, K Shanmugam will continue as Minister of Home Affairs and Law, and Indraneel Rajah as the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office. **PTI**

THAILAND

NEW OMICRON SUB-VARIANTS

Experts are concerned about the worsening Covid-19 situation over the past weeks, with authorities issuing warnings on the spread of the new Omicron sub-variants, *Bangkok Post* reported. Dr Yong Poovorawan, a virologist, posted a warning on his FB page on Monday about the HK2 sub-variant currently spreading, saying it is contagious.

MALAYSIA

'POOR WORSE OFF NOW THAN DURING COVID'

A United Nations report on low-income households found that eight in 10 families living in low-cost flats in the capital city struggling to generate adequate income to meet their basic needs. The report released by the Unicef polled 755 houses from Oct 14 to Nov 16, 2023, *The Straits Times* reported. The report also found that 90% of these families are grappling with the impact of the soaring cost of living, especially food prices. In comparison, Unicef's 2020 report during the pandemic found 7 out of 10 houses in the same category faced these difficulties.

Ukraine locked in fierce battles in 2 areas: Zelenskyy



Andrei Belousov

KYIV

UKRAINIAN troops are locked in intense battles with the advancing Russian army in two border areas, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, while the death toll from a Russian apartment building collapse blamed on Ukrainian shelling rose to 15.

Zelenskyy said 'fierce battles' are taking place near the border in eastern and north-eastern Ukraine as outgunned and outnumbered Ukrainian soldiers try to push back a significant Russian ground offensive. "Defensive battles are ongoing, fierce battles, on a large part of our border area," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address on Sunday.

The Kremlin's forces are aiming to exploit Ukrainian weaknesses before a big batch of new military aid for Kyiv from the US and European partners arrives on the battlefield in the coming weeks and months, analysts said. That makes this period a window of opportunity for Moscow and one of the most dangerous for Kyiv in the two-year war, they said. The new

Russian push in the northeastern Kharkiv region, along with the ongoing drive into the eastern Donetsk region, come after months when the about 1,000-km frontline barely budged.

In the meantime, both sides have used long-range strikes in what largely became a war of attrition. The Kharkiv incursion may be an attempt to create a 'buffer zone' to protect Belgorod, an adjacent Russian border region battered by Ukrainian attacks.

Russian emergency services on Monday finished clearing the rubble in the region's capital city of Belgorod, where a section of a residential building collapsed following what authorities said was Ukrainian shelling. Fifteen bodies were pulled from the rubble, Belgorod regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said, and 27 other people were wounded.

Another three people in the city of Belgorod were killed by shelling late Sunday, he said. Zelenskyy said fighting in the Donetsk area is 'no less intense' than in Kharkiv. He described the area around Pokrovsk, as 'the most difficult'. **AP**



People sit in a bus after evacuation from Vovchansk, Ukraine | AP

Belousov new Russian def min as Putin sacks Shoigu

MOSCOW

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin has replaced Sergei Shoigu as defence minister in a Cabinet shakeup that comes as he begins his fifth term in office. In line with Russian law, the entire Russian Cabinet resigned on Tuesday following Putin's glittering inauguration in the Kremlin, and most members have been widely expected to keep their jobs, while Shoigu's fate had appeared uncertain. Putin signed a decree on Sunday appointing Shoigu as secretary of Russia's Security Council, the Kremlin said.

The appointment was announced shortly after Putin proposed Andrei Belousov to become the country's defence minister in place of Shoigu. Belousov's candidacy will need to be approved by Russia's upper house in parliament, the Federation Council. It reported Sunday that Putin introduced proposals for other Cabinet positions as well but Shoigu is the only minister on that list who is being replaced.

Several other new candidates for federal ministers were proposed Saturday by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, reappointed by Putin on Friday.

Belousov, 65, held leading positions in the finances and economic department of the prime minister's office and the Ministry of Economic Development. **AP**

Robotaxi unit of Amazon probed after injuring two motorists

DETROIT

Amazon's self-driving robotaxi unit is being investigated by the US government's highway safety agency after two of its vehicles braked suddenly and were rear-ended by motorcyclists. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said in documents posted on its website Monday it will evaluate the automated driving system developed by Zoox.

Both crashes involved Toyota Highlander SUVs with autonomous driving technology. They happened during the daytime hours, and the motorcyclists suffered minor injuries. In both cases, the agency confirmed that each of the Amazon vehicles was operating in autonomous mode leading up to the crashes. The agency said the probe will focus on the performance of the company's automated driving system during the crashes, as well as how it behaves in crosswalks around pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

In a statement, Zoox said it is committed to working with NHTSA to answer its questions. "Transparency and collaboration with regulators is of utmost importance," the company said.

Zoox said the vehicles had human safety drivers on board. Zoox reported the crashes under an order to automated vehicle companies issued in 2021.

Amazon acquired Zoox in June of 2020 for a price that analysts pegged at over \$1 billion. In 2023 the Foster City, California, company said one of its funky-looking four-person shuttles autonomously carried employees on public roads on a 1.6 km route between two Zoox buildings.

The company has launched a shuttle service exclusively for its employees. Analysts say they expect Amazon to use the Zoox system for deliveries. Zoox shuttles don't have a steering wheel or pedals. **AP**

Total PoK strike over soaring prices enters fourth day, govt allocates fund

ISLAMABAD

THE situation remained tense in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the total strike against high prices of wheat flour and inflated electricity bills and taxes entered its fourth day on Monday, forcing the Pakistan government to allocate Rs 23 billion for immediate release to the region to quell a simmering unrest.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who said he was "deeply concerned" about the situation, on Monday approved Rs 23 billion for immediate release to the region after the protesters and the regional government ended in a deadlock.

Ruffled by the unexpected protest and its sensitivity, Prime Minister Sharif chaired a special meeting here on Monday which was attended by PoK "prime minister" Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, local ministers,

and top political leadership, the PM's Office said in a statement. The region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement, leaving at least one police officer dead and injuring over 100 people, mostly policemen. A complete strike has also been observed in the territory since Friday, bringing life to a halt. PoK "prime minister" Haq announced a reduction in electricity tariff soon after the meeting chaired by Sharif concluded. The residents have been advocating for affordable electricity and flour subsidies for the past few days, Haq said, adding that no one can ignore the necessity of accessible electricity and affordable bread.

He also announced a reduction in bread prices. The protest is led by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), which has traders at the forefront in most parts of the region, who have

been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class. A long march led by the JAAC left for Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, on Monday.

The movement announced its march on Muzaffarabad after the talks between the JAAC core committee and Chief Secretary of the region Dawood Bareach ended in a stalemate.

A protest leader from Rawalakot accused the government of resorting to evasive tactics.

Protestors have already staged sit-ins, closing Kohala Muzaffarabad Road at several locations, the *Dawn* newspaper reported. The road stretches 40 km and links Kohala town with Muzaffarabad in PoK. Contingents of police have been posted at roundabouts and sensitive locations. **PTI**

EXPRESS READ

Bangla growth hinges on good ties with India

Bangladesh's development is not possible without good relations with India as both countries share a common border, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said on Monday. Hasan made the remarks while responding to a question regarding a failed campaign by some groups on social media asking people to boycott Indian products. **PTI**

Sunak sounds warning if Labour comes to power

British PM Rishi Sunak warned of a dangerous future for the UK in a pitch to voters on Monday as he fights to hang on to power ahead of a national election that could see Conservatives ousted after 14 years. Sunak's speech swung from ominous warning to optimistic projections as he repeatedly attacked Labour leader Keir Starmer, saying he lacked a plan for dealing with rogue states. **AP**

Indonesian floods toll 44 as rescuers recover more bodies in Sumatra island

PADANG

RESCUERS recovered more bodies Monday after monsoon rains triggered flash floods on Indonesia's Sumatra Island over the weekend, bringing down torrents of cold lava and mud that left at least 44 people dead and another 15 missing.

The heavy rains, along with a landslide of mud and cold lava from Mount Marapi, caused a river to breach its banks. The deluge tore through mountainside villages along four districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight Saturday. The floods swept away people and submerged hundreds of houses and buildings, while forcing more than 3,100 to flee to temporary government shelters in Agam and Tanah Datar districts, said National Disaster Management



A man walks among the rubble near a house damaged by a flash flood in Agam | AP

Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari. Cold lava, also known as lahar, is a mixture of volcanic material and pebbles swept by rainwater down a volcano's

slopes. Additional bodies were recovered Monday, bringing the death toll to 44, Muhari said in a news conference.

At least 19 others were injured in the flash floods and rescuers were searching for 15 villagers, he said.

Television reports showed relatives wailing as they watched rescuers pull a mud-caked body from a devastated hamlet. Authorities struggled to get tractors and other heavy equipment to the area over washed-out roads after flash floods covered the hilly hamlets with mud and rocks, said Abdul Malik, who heads the search and rescue office in Padang, the provincial capital.

Hundreds dug through the debris with their hands, shovels and hoes as rain, damaged roads and thick mud hampered their progress. **AP**



Shriram sells 85% in housing biz to Warburg

Proceeds from the sale will go to Shriram Finance and will be used to augment the company's growth capital

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

COUNTRY'S largest auto-focused non-bank lender Shriram Finance has decided to exit the housing finance vertical and has agreed to sell its entire 85% stake to US private equity major Warburg Pincus for a consideration of ₹4,630 crore after 13 years of operations.

The Chennai-based group, began way back in 1974, had been in discussions with many prospective bidders for the sale of Shriram Housing Finance for a few months now and was also in dialogue with the UAE sovereign wealth fund Mubadala and another private equity major Bain Capital and BPEA EQT, but the talks did not proceed.

The Shriram Group, founded by industry veterans Ramamurthy Thyagarajan, AVS Raja



Proceeds from sale will go to Shriram Finance and will be used to augment our growth capital. We're completely exiting the vertical with this sale and so is our long-time partner Valiant Capital

Umesh Revankar, executive vice-chairman of Shriram Finance

Entire 3K employees to continue under new owner

Umesh Revankar said entire 3,000 plus employees along with the management will continue with the new owners and Ravi Subramian, who has been with the company from the beginning will continue to lead the firm under Warburg. In a statement, Shriram Housing Finance and parent Shriram Finance said Warburg Pincus will acquire entire stakes from Shriram group

capital. Yes we're completely exiting the vertical with this sale and so is our long-time partner Valiant Capital which came on board from the very beginning of our operations in early 2011," Umesh Revankar, the executive vice-chairman of Shriram Finance told The New Indian Express this evening.

Shriram Housing had a loan book of ₹13,762 crore for the year ending March 2024 and its net income stood at ₹24 217 crore.

Revankar further said the entire 3,000 plus employees along with the management will continue with the new owners and Ravi Subramian, who has been with the company from the beginning will continue to lead the firm under Warburg.

In the joint statement, Shriram Housing Finance and the parent Shriram Finance said

Warburg Pincus will acquire the complete stakes from Shriram group and the external investor Valiant Capital Management through its affiliate Mango Crest Investment and the transaction is subject to regulatory approvals.

The transaction value of ₹4,630 crore is for equity and convertible instruments of the company, which provides loans to purchase or construct residential units and also loans against property, being sold, the statement added.

The parent Shriram Finance, which is mainly into commercial vehicle financing, owns 84.82% in the housing finance arm, while 14.94% stake is held by the San Francisco-based private equity player Valiant, which will also completely exit the group and Warburg will snap them up.

Retail inflation slightly dips to 4.83% in April

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

CONSUMER price based-inflation (CPI) moderated to 4.83% in April from 4.85% in March, mainly driven by petroleum-related commodity groups like fuel and light, transport and communication services, as per the data shared by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation.

However, food inflation remained a concern as it stood elevated at 8.7% in April in comparison with 8.5% in March. On year-on-year basis, inflation is higher in April 2024 as it stood at 4.7% with food inflation being much lower at 3.84%. Meanwhile, core inflation has also fallen to 3.2%, the lowest in the 2012 base CPI series.

CPI inflation in April 2024 continues its downward trend since December 2023, marking the second consecutive month with inflation below 5%. "If this trend continues, CPI inflation in the first quarter of FY25 may turn out to be marginally lower than the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) projection of 4.9%," said DK Srivastava, Chief Policy Advisor, EY India. According to Madhavi Arora, Lead Economist with Emkay Global, the April print was no surprise and inflation will likely tick up to 5.0-5.1% in the next month. "We see more of the FY24 trends continuing in



FY25. Considerable uncertainty prevails in the food price outlook. Despite healthy progress in Rabi production, uneven seasonality in vegetable prices together with increasing incidence of climate shocks warrant careful monitoring," Arora said.

"Upside risks to inflation also emanate from geopolitical developments and their impact on supply chains as well as uncertainty around volatility in commodity prices in global financial markets and the FX space. However, percolation of monetary policy will continue to put downward pressure on core inflation."

"We see FY25E inflation at 4.6% (RBI: 4.5%), with core inflation again undershooting headline inflation, by 90 bps at 3.7% (4.4% in FY24). There is likely to be further easing of headline inflation in coming months, before the unfavourable base effects kick-in in 2HFY25," Arora stated.

INVESTMENT

MF assets in NE states up 145% in 3 yrs to ₹40K cr

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Mumbai

LED by Assam with a share of 73%, the average mutual funds assets under management from the Northeastern states has grown by nearly 145% from ₹16,446 crore in March 2020 lows to touch ₹40,324 crore in March 2024, indicating the growing appetite among small town for this passive investment avenue.

Share of the seven states rose to 0.73% of the industry AUM of ₹55.01 trillion in March 2024, up from ₹24.71 trillion in March 2020. The AUM crossed ₹57.3 trillion last month, according to a tabulation of state-wise data by Ica Ratings.

Assam leads the region with an Aum of ₹29,268 crore accounting for 73% of the AUM of ₹40,234 crore in March 2024. This is a growth of 159% in the last four years, up from ₹11,298 crore in March 2020. Meghalaya accounted for 9% at ₹3,623 crore in March 2024, clocking a 111% growth over ₹1714 crore in March 2020. Tripura comes next with 5% at ₹2,174 crore (₹1,155 crore in March 2020); Nagaland 4% at ₹1,668 crore (₹965 crore); Arunachal 3.8% at ₹1,532 crore (₹525 crore); Manipur 2.9% at ₹1,152 crore (₹403 crore) while Mizoram accounted for 2.25% at ₹907 crore (₹386 crore), show the data.

Maharashtra leads the states with a share of 44%. "There has been a steady rise in awareness about investment options, mainly in smaller towns and cities. This, coupled with growing financial literacy and the surge in interest among retail investors for investing in equities via mutual fund route."

EPFO extends auto claim settlement for edu, others

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has introduced the auto-mode settlement of advance claims for the purpose of education, marriage and housing. Earlier, the auto mode of claim was only available for the purpose of advances for illness.

The retirement fund body has introduced in April 2020 the auto claim Solution, wherein claim is processed automatically by IT system without any human intervention.

Earlier, the limit for auto claims was ₹50,000, which has

now been enhanced to ₹1 lakh.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, around 2.25 crore EPFO members are expected to reap the benefits of this facility in the current financial year. During 2023-24, EPFO settled around 4.45 crore claims, out of which more than 60% (2.84 crore) claims were advance claims. Out of total advance claims settled during the year, around 89.52 lakh claims were settled using auto-mode.

"The entire process in auto-

settlement is IT system driven, eliminating human intervention. Any claim with KYC, eligibility and bank validation is processed for payment by IT tools automatically. As a result of this, the periodicity of claim settlement is reduced significantly from 10 days to within three-four days for such advances," says the labour ministry release.

The claims that are not validated by the system are not returned or rejected. They are further undertaken for the second level of scrutiny and

approvals.

The expansion of the scope of the auto claims to the housing, marriage and education purposes as well as enhancement will directly help many members to avail their funds within the shortest possible duration, which will substantially aid them in promptly meeting their education, marriage, or housing requirements.

Ever since its introduction pan India on May 6, 2024, the retirement fund body has approved 13,011 cases for ₹45.95 crore through the auto-settlement service.

Govt's fiscal management better than UPA's, says FM

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

THE current government's fiscal management appears more effective compared to the UPA's, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday.

Debt increased significantly during the UPA rule from FY04 to FY14, growing 3.2 times, whereas the increase was lower from FY14 to FY24, at 2.9 times, even with the pandemic's impact necessitating borrowing for relief efforts amid falling revenues.

As per Sitharaman, central government's debt, which was 52.2% of GDP at the end of FY14, was reduced to nearly 48.9% in FY19 through gradual fiscal consolidation. During this period, the fiscal deficit was lowered from 4.5% in FY14 to 3.4% in FY19. However, due

to the COVID-19 pandemic and proactive government measures to protect lives and livelihoods, the fiscal deficit surged to 9.2% of GDP in FY21, increasing the central government's debt to 61.4% of GDP.

"Post-pandemic, our government pursued a balanced approach to fiscal consolidation while sustaining growth.

This strategy reduced fiscal deficit from 9.2% of GDP in FY21 to 5.8% in Revised Estimates for FY24," she wrote on X.

The Interim Budget forecasts a rise of fiscal deficit to 5.1% of GDP in FY25. The government's debt-to-GDP ratio fell from 61.4% in FY21 to 57.1% in FY24. She criticised the UPA, saying during their tenure, from FY09 to FY14, gross fiscal deficit (GFD) to GDP ratio remained at 4.5% for six consecutive years. In three years, it ranged between 4.5% and 5% of GDP.

AI, Vistara merger to be completed by 2024-end

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE top management of Air India and Vistara held a joint townhall meeting on Monday where Air India CEO Campbell Wilson and Vistara CEO/Chief integration officer Vinod Kannan highlighted the ongoing integration process between the two airlines and said the merger is on track to be completed by the end of this year or early 2025.

During the town-hall, it was informed that more than 7,000 employees of Air India and Vistara have been assessed and their fitment will be complete in June. Currently, Air India and Vistara together have more than 23,500 employees.

Integration exercise between the two airlines has also started as 120 pilots have been seconded between Vistara and Air India, with more than 60 Vistara employees taking roles in Air India. The employee ratio between Air India and Vistara has been kept at 12:5 since the beginning of the integration



process. The roles and responsibilities of the 7,000-odd employees, including the flying staff, will be clear by the end of next month. Sources said that Campbell spoke about how the merger is an important step in the creation of a world-class airline that the Tata Group had envisioned at the time of the takeover from the Government in January 2022.

Air India Group expects the combined company will make the largest and strongest full-service carrier ever built in India. Sources said that the top

Integration exercise of two airlines started

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management is confident that the airline group, comprising Air India and Air India Express, will become India's largest international carrier, connecting five of the seven continents, operating more flights, carrying more passengers, and deploying the highest capacity on international routes, than any other carrier.

The combined airline expects that after Vihaan.AI transformation plan, it will be 3X the current size. Air India is expected to receive a new aircraft arriving every six days from its orders with Airbus and Boeing

Q4 FY24 RESULTS

Zomato reports ₹175 crore net profit; surrenders payment aggregator licence

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Bengaluru

FOOD delivery platform Zomato on Monday reported ₹175 crore net profit for the fourth quarter ended March 31. In the year-ago period it had posted a loss of ₹188 crore.

The platform's revenue from operations in the March quarter stood at ₹3,562 crore, a 73% jump compared to ₹2,056 crore in the same quarter last year. Zomato also said that its quick commerce arm Blinkit business turned adjusted EBITDA positive in March 2024.

In his letter to shareholders, founder Deepinder Goyal said, "We are just grateful that the bet that we took on Blinkit worked out just fine."

Zomato also proposed to create an additional ESOP (employee stock ownership plan) pool of 2% of its outstanding share capital on a fully diluted basis. It allotted ESOP worth ₹18.26 crore shares to its employees, according to regulatory filings.

Zomato's subsidiary Zomato Payment Private Limited



(ZPPL) in a separate filing said it will voluntarily surrender the certificate of authorisation issued by RBI to operate as an online payment aggregator. Also, it is withdrawing the application dated November 11, 2021 submitted with the RBI to operate as the issuer of pre-paid payment instruments.

"At Zomato, we do not see ourselves having a significant competitive advantage against the incumbents in the payments space and hence we don't foresee a business in payments space as commercially viable for us, at this stage," it said. In Q4, it also recognised

an impairment loss of Rs 39 crore in its subsidiary ZPPL.

Zomato also said that rapid store expansion is underway in the quick commerce business as it is aiming for 1,000 stores by March 2025.

"One of the key vectors for growth for us right now is store expansion. In Q4FY24, we added 75 net new stores taking our total store count to 526. In the current quarter (Q1FY25), we expect to add another 100 stores. At this point, we are aiming to get to 1,000 stores by the end of FY25," Albinder Dhindsa, Founder & CEO, Blinkit.

Cairn reserves and resources portfolio up 19%

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

CAIRN OIL & GAS, part of Vedanta Ltd, announced a 19% year-on-year rise in its reserves and resources (R&R) portfolio to 1.4 billion barrels of oil equivalent (Bboe) in this fiscal year. Its total reserve plus resource additions have exceeded production, leading to a Resource Replacement Ratio (RRR) of 533%, a five-fold increase over the previous year's RRR of 108%.

Cairn has recorded a substantial increase in its Gross Contingent (2C) resources to 1.126 Bboe, a year-on-year growth of 33%.

This signifies a larger pool of potentially recoverable resources, fueling future production and cash flow generation for the company, and increased domestic production supporting India's initiative for self-reliance (Aatmanirbhar Bharat). The company has also announced a strategic resource management plan that prioritizes long-term sustainability and value creation for investors.

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

A developer has taken the issue of GST on development rights to the Supreme Court after a ruling by the Telangana High Court. The dispute arises from whether the central government has the authority to impose taxes on the sale of land, as development rights are considered incidental to land sales.

The Telangana High Court decided that joint development agreements should be taxed. The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Union of India to respond. Until a final decision is reached, GST will continue to apply to these rights. The case was heard by a division bench of Justice Sanjeev Khanna and Justice Dipankar Dutta. Abhishek A Rastogi, founder of Rastogi Chamber, representing a real estate company, argued that the crucial issue in a

barter transaction is whether the incidental right to the sale of land should be subject to GST, given that the supply of land is excluded from GST and taxation on land and building is a state matter.

Rastogi emphasised that subjecting the sale of land to additional tax could render projects unviable and create tax cascading due to the tax already imposed on the second part of the transaction. The case is scheduled for further hearing on September 9, with no stay granted by the Supreme Court, suggesting that landowners and developers may need to pay the taxes on the service value until a final decision is reached. Rastogi also highlighted the challenge of valuing services in this context. The GST Council in 2019 had also formed a Group of Ministers (GoM) to address issues related to real estate sector.

Tata Motors falls as brokerages downgrade stock

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

DESPITE reporting a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹17,500 crore for the quarter edging March FY24, shares of Tata Motors crashed up to 9% on Monday, its biggest single-day fall since February 2022, after major brokerages downgraded the stock following weaker outlook and cautious management commentary for financial year 2025.

The share closed 8.34% lower on Monday at ₹960 apiece on the BSE even as equity benchmarks - Sensex and Nifty - recouped early losses and closed the session with minor gains. Brokerage firm Nomura downgraded Tata Motors from 'buy' to 'neutral', citing potential demand risks for its British subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (JLR). Analysts at Nomura foresee sluggishness in FY25, particularly citing an anticipated dip in local passenger vehicle (PV) demand due to ongoing elections. Morgan Stanley (MS) also downgraded the stock to 'equal-weight' from 'overweight', suggesting limited incremental upside due to a 'banner year'.

KUJUR'S RISE TO GLORY, KHATUA'S RECORD THROW

Sprinter clinches gold in 200m; shot putter raises national bar

INDRANEEL DAS @ Bhubaneswar

EVERY discourse ended with him. As if he was omnipresent. It was either the rain that brought the heat down on Monday or the person supposed to be here: Neeraj Chopra. On the warm-up area or the playing arena. Amidst the hype and hoopla surrounding Neeraj, others went about their chores like support casts at National Federation Senior Athletics Competition here on Monday.

An accidental sprinter, a footballer as a child and now running 200m for fun, and almost touching the national record. The story of Animesh Kujur is quite enchanting, especially the way he narrated it after touching the tape at 20.62s at the Kalinga Stadium. Nalubothu Shanamaga (20.97s) finished second while Jay Shah (21.93m) was third. As he sprinted towards the finish line in twilight, a waft of wind blew across the ground that brought the temperature down further. It was comfortable and conditions were ideal for running, jumping and throwing. If Kujur was scorching the track, in the far end, Abha Khatua was creating a new national record in women's shot put, hurling the iron to 18.41m, way, way better than the previous record holder (18.06m by Manpreet Kaur). Kiran Baliyan finished second with a throw of 16.54m, while Srishti Vij managed 15.86m for bronze.

As Abha went with the Dope Control Officers to give her urine samples, Animesh was narrating his story. He dribbled football before dabbling with athletics. His father, a police officer, was a national-level footballer. As a youngster, he began his foray into the sport. His stint at the Sainik School, Ambikapur, just accentuated his interest. "In Sainik School, everyone used to play football and is very popular," he said. Destiny, however, had other plans. He started flirting with athletics before he got hooked to it. Like with millions of people's lives, the pandemic did play a role in shaping his future. A lean young man, he turned bulky and started sprinting. "I started running sprints and then around the pandemic, when I used to go to ground, my friends told me to compete at the state meet. There I got selected for the na-

Women: 200m: Unnathi Aiyappa Bolland (Karnataka) 23.85s, Srabani Nanda (Odisha) 23.89s, Devyaniba Mahendrasini (Gujarat) 24.14s; 800m: KM Chanda (Delhi) 2:02.62s, Twinkle (Punjab) 2:03.94s, Amandeep Kaur (Punjab) 2:07.66s; 100m hurdles: Nithya Ramraj (Tamil Nadu) 13.14s, Pragyan Prasanti Sahu (Odisha) 13.40s, Mourmita Mondal (West Bengal) 13.64s; Long jump: Nayana James (Kerala) 6.53m, Shaili Singh (Uttar Pradesh) 6.34m, Moumita Mondal (West Bengal) 6.18m; Shot put: Abha Khatua (Maharashtra) 18.41m, Kiran Baliyan (Uttar Pradesh) 16.54m, Srishti Vij (Delhi) 15.86m; **Men:** 200m: Animesh Kujur (Odisha) 20.62s, Nalubothu Shanamaga (Andhra Pradesh) 20.97s, Jay Shah (Maharashtra) 21.31s; 800m: Animesh Chaudhary (Himachal Pradesh) 1:50.16s, Mohammed Afsal P (Kerala) 1:50.44s; 5000m: Sawan Barwal (Himachal Pradesh) 13:51.01s, Harmanjot Singh (Madhya Pradesh) 13:51.61s, Kiran Matre (Maharashtra) 13:52.62s; 110m hurdles: Manav R (Tamil Nadu) 14.03s, Nishanthraja G (Tamil Nadu) 14.22s, Sachin Binu (Kerala) 14.25s; Discus throw: Nirbhay Singh (Haryana) 55.27m, Gagandeep Singh (Punjab) 54.38m, Oinam Alson Singh (Manipur) 52.03m; High jump: Chetan B (Karnataka) 2.09m, Swadhin Kumar Majhi (Odisha) 2.09m, Shaik Mohiddin (Andhra Pradesh) 2.05m; Decathlon: Gokul KR (Kerala) 6762 points, Kamal Singh (Uttar Pradesh) 6685 points, Stalin Joes S (Tamil Nadu) 6630 points.



Nayana James of Kerala won gold medal in women's long jump | SHAMIM QURESHY

tionals and I started running 200m," he said. "First Nationals, I finished fifth. Then, my parents told me, you have a future on this, go ahead." If that was not a quirk of fate, then the next one definitely could be counted as one. He was competing at the U23 competition in Bilaspur in 2022 where he had seen a "foreigner" working with some athletes and he walked up to him and asked if he would train him. "I didn't know who he was but I saw he was with other athletes so I just walked up to him and asked 'coach, will you train me?'" Next year he was in the Odisha Reliance Foundation. The coach turned out to be Martin Owens - head coach of Reliance Foundation youth sport, Odisha. And in the last year, he transformed into the

country's top sprinter.

Khatua, on the other hand, talked about a tweak in technique that transformed her from an average thrower to a champion. She also spoke about her journey from a nondescript village in Midnapore district. She idolises Ryan Crouser and Tajinderpal Singh Toor and tries to imitate their techniques. The glide technique she had used earlier was transformed into rotation, relying more on speed for power than on brute strength. "I made those adjustments at the end of 2022," said the shot putter from West Bengal, who is representing Maharashtra, the state where she works. She started her career as a heptathlete and realised she was no good in high jump. "My shot put was good so the coaches asked me to concentrate on this," she said.

In her village, even now, the news reaches late. "We never heard of any Olympics or Asian Games. There is no sport in our village (Narayangarh)." She also recollected how the coaches and others convinced her to change the technique. "Initially it was difficult but within two months or so I adjusted," she said. "By 2023 I started to throw with a new technique and at the Asian Championships I won silver, equalling the national record. This year, again I started to work on my technique. But in the Indian Grand Prix, I did not throw well because of the iron. It was small but here I got my own iron and the ones provided by the organisers." As the final event of the day wound down, the rivalry between long-jumper Nayana James and Shaili Singh intensified in the women's long jump. However, it was Nayana who trumped Shaili again.

Edwards to lead Netherlands in T20 WC



Scott Edwards was on Monday named as the captain of the Netherlands for the T20 World Cup. Indian-origin cricketers - Teja Nidamanuru, Vikram Singh and Aryan Dutt - are also part of the squad. This is the third successive ICC showpiece event the Netherlands are participating after the T20 World Cup in 2022 and last year's 50-over World Cup.

PREPPING FOR BIG STAGE

EVEN as the Indian Premier League reaches the frenzied final stages of the tournament, international cricket has resumed in full swing. With the T20 World Cup beginning in under three weeks, a look at what teams have done and will do before the carnival in the US and the West Indies.

As always, it was business as usual for the Pakistan side. In April, they had a five-match T20I series against New Zealand at home. They just about drew a depleted Kiwi outfit 2-2. They are currently involved in a three-match series against Ireland (tied 1-1 now). They round off the tune-up with a four-match T20I series against England away from home.

As was advertised more than a week ago, the England players selected for the World Cup have left their IPL sides. They will all be part of that four-match T20I series against Pakistan.

Featured in a series against Zimbabwe which they won 4-1 in the beginning of May. One of the first teams to land in the US, they will have a tune-up three-match series against the co-host in Texas. It could prove to be a smart choice as they play their first World Cup match in Texas against Sri Lanka.



NEW ZEALAND
Unlike Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, sent a heavily depleted squad to Pakistan to face the hosts in April. Do not play any other games.

IRELAND, NETHERLANDS, SCOTLAND

Netherlands will be hosting the lesser-spotted T20I triangular series with the other two nations visiting. Netherlands, who impressed with some of their outings at the 50-over World Cup, will be hoping to build. Ireland and Scotland certainly have a T20 upset in them and will be hoping to use this tournament to oil their arsenal.

13 OF THE 20 TEAMS WILL HAVE PLAYED NO OFFICIAL T20I MATCHES IN APRIL AND MAY

MAY 26 - THE IPL FINAL

JUNE 1 - First match of the T20 World Cup (between US and Canada)

- Group A: India, Pakistan, Ireland, Canada, USA
- Group B: England, Australia, Namibia, Scotland, Oman
- Group C: New Zealand, West Indies, Afghanistan, Uganda, Papua New Guinea
- Group D: South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Netherlands, Nepal

TUNE-UP FIXTURES

May 15 - Ireland vs Pakistan (last match; series tied 1-1) • May 21 - May 25 US vs Bangladesh (three-match T20I series) • May 22 - May 30 England vs Pakistan (four-match T20I series) • May 18 - May 24 Tri-nation series (Netherlands, Scotland, Ireland)

Do or die clash

Sixth-ranked Delhi Capitals and seventh-ranked Lucknow Super Giants are only separated by net run rate. A victory could significantly increase their chances of making it to the playoffs. A look...

RISHABH RETURNS

After missing out on the clash against Bengaluru, Rishabh Pant will return for the home match. Delhi did well with the ball to control RCB's scoring but they certainly missed Pant, the batter. His return could strengthen the Capitals, but they need a miracle to make it to the play-offs.

LAST CHANCE FOR DELHI

With this being their final match of the league stage, a win could take them to 14 points. The win will not guarantee a place in the top four. However, a loss against Lucknow would definitely shut the doors for the season.

POOR NRR TO HAUNT LSG?

LSG's poor net run-rate after 12 matches has come to haunt them in this edition. Given their two remaining matches, one against Delhi and the other against Mumbai Indians, are away games, it becomes more challenging for the KL Rahul-led side.

Delhi Capitals vs Lucknow Super Giants, New Delhi
Live on Star Sports and Jio Cinema, 7.30 PM

All eyes on Rahul as LSG get ready for Capital challenge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

EVEN as Lucknow Super Giants brace for a must-win encounter against Delhi Capitals, all eyes will be on their captain KL Rahul.

After the hammering Lucknow received at the hands of Sunrisers Hyderabad, they are in a bit of a tricky position, needing to win the remaining two games to have a chance at qualifying for play-offs. Amidst all this, the heated conversation between Rahul and LSG owner Sanjeev Goenka after the loss in Hyderabad has only brought more eyeballs to this clash. However, Lucknow assistant coach Lance Klusener dismissed the social media buzz, calling the incident as a "robust conversation."

"I don't see any problem with some robust discussion between two cricket lovers. So for us, I guess it's just a storm in a teacup. We love a robust discussion. I think that's how teams get better. So, it's not a big thing for us," the South African said



KL Rahul has to make sure his team win big to improve the NRR | SPORTSPICS

Teams	P	W	L	Pts	NRR
KKR	13	9	3	19	1.42
RR	12	8	4	16	0.34
CSK	13	7	6	14	0.52
SRH	12	7	5	14	0.40
RCB	13	6	7	12	0.38
DC	13	6	7	12	-0.48
LSG	12	6	6	12	-0.76
GT	13	5	7	11	-1.06
MI	13	4	9	8	-0.27
PBKS	12	4	8	8	-0.42

* - until the end of GT vs KKR match

Gujarat out, Kolkata finish in top two

CHENNAI: Gujarat Titans became the third team to be out of the playoff reckoning after their match against Kolkata Knight Riders at Ahmedabad was washed off without a ball being bowled. Titans needed a win to keep alive their chances. Meanwhile, the visitors, Kolkata, cannot finish below the top two thanks to the one point they earned. It's significant as they will now get two attempts to qualify for the final.

in New Delhi.

That said, Rahul, as a batter, will have a point to prove as they not just need a win, but a big one too, considering the beating their net run rate received in Hyderabad.

They will be up against Delhi, who, too, will need a victory to stay in contention. But they will also need other results to go their way.

Unnathi wins gold, makes it to Junior World C' ship

TANMAY DAS @ Bhubaneswar

YOUNG sensation Unnathi Aiyappa, on her first senior competition, bagged gold medal in the 200m race, clocking 23.85s in the 27th National Federation Senior Athletics Competition 2024 at Kalinga Stadium here on Monday. Competing with local favourite Srabani Nanda, the 18-year-old Karnataka athlete came first to qualify for the 2024 World Athletics U-20 Championship. Meanwhile, Srabani clinched silver with a timing of 23.89s and Devyani of Gujarat received the bronze medal with 24.14s.

Earlier, Unnathi won a bronze in the 100m hurdles at the Asian U20 Championships in Dubai. She clocked 13.66s (qualification mark 14.20s) and got the tickets for Lima, Peru to participate in the World Athletics U-20 Championship from August 27-31. She is the daughter of former Indian heptathlete Pramila Aiyappa and quarter-miler BP Aiyappa. Pramilla won bronze at the Asian Games at Guangzhou in 2010.

Unnathi entered the track with an aim to clock below 24.35s, the Junior Worlds qualifying mark at the finals. "I kept my acceleration till the finishing point and was happy with the timing. This is my first senior event where I won a gold medal in the 200m race and qualified for the 2024 Junior Worlds," said Unnathi. In Peru, she will participate in 100m hurdles and 200m race. Talking about her preparation and how she will deal with two different events, Unnathi said, "I trained under my father BP Aiyappa, as a coach he knows my strengths and weaknesses better than me. My favourite event is the 200m race and I am also good at hurdles. My mother Pramilla, a Sydney and Beijing Olympian, she is a better athlete than me. My dream is to win Olympic medals for my country." Full story: newindianexpress.com

EXPRESS READ

Nikhat, Minakshi make winning start

ASTANA: Reigning world champion Nikhat Zareen (52kg) made a rampaging start to her campaign with a convincing 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Rakhymberdi Zhansaya on the opening day of the Florida Cup boxing tournament here on Monday. Minakshi (48kg) and Anamika (50kg) also made winning starts to their campaign.

Manu, Anish destined for Paris Games

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

MANU Bhaker is destined for Paris after an impressive display in the Olympic Selection Trial (OST), where country's top-five shooters across rifle and pistol disciplines have been competing for a chance to go to the Olympics. The ace pistol shooter, who was also part of the Tokyo Olympics, topped the women's 25m pistol qualification round in the OST T4, which is being held in Bhopal, to take an unassailable lead. She pipped Esha Singh on the day. Both had a tally of 586 but Manu was declared winner because of higher inner-10s (talk about margins!).

The T4 finals of the said category will be held on Tuesday but the road ahead seems clear.



Manu Bhaker and Anish Bhanwala

Based on scores across the trials so far, Manu and Esha are set to represent the country in the said event during the upcoming Olympics. The best three scores will be the main basis for selecting a trial apart from other things like bonus points and rankings (national and Qualification Ranking for the Olympic Games). The top-two have quite a gap from the rest of the shooters. It's the

same story for Anish Bhanwala, who has been riding high throughout the trials. On Monday, he was pipped by Adarsh Singh but Anish has done enough in recent weeks to more or less ensure a ticket for Paris along with Vijayveer Sidhu.

Adarsh topped the trials by bare minimum as he had the same score as Anish, a tally of 583 and the same number of inner-10s. But the former won on countback (as the name suggests, player with most points after countback).

Both Anish and Vijayveer have a good enough lead over the rest of the shooters in the competition. The final team for the Paris Olympics will be declared after a meeting of the selection committee post the trials.

Nole 'concerned' after being hit on the head with water bottle

AFF @ Rome

NOVAK Djokovic described his shock third-round elimination from the Rome Open by Alejandro Tabilo on Sunday as "concerning", two days after he was hit on the head by a bottle which he said has caused nausea and dizzy spells.

Djokovic's bid for a record-extending 41st Masters 1000 title was ended in just over an hour by Chilean Tabilo, who is ranked 32nd in the world and claimed his first win over a top-10 opponent, 6-2, 6-3. The 24-

time Grand Slam winner said that his subdued performance on a court where he has won six titles might have been due to the blow suffered while greeting fans on Friday night.

He had initially laughed off being accidentally struck on the head by a hard water bottle following his straightforward second-round win over Corentin Moutet, by wearing a cycling crash helmet to training on Saturday morning.

"I don't know, to be honest. I have to check that. Training was different. I was going for



Novak Djokovic lost 6-2, 6-3 in third round to Chilean Tabilo on Sunday | AP

kind of easy training yesterday (Saturday). I didn't feel anything, but I also didn't feel the same," Djokovic told reporters. "Today under high stress, it was quite bad - not in terms of pain, but in terms of this balance. Just no coordination. Completely different player from what it was two nights ago." Djokovic also said that he would have scans to "see what's going on" before the French Open in Paris, where he will head not just worried by the after-effects of the bottle incident but also his form. The last

time Djokovic got to Roland Garros without a title to his name that season was in 2018, when his first honour of the campaign came at Wimbledon.

With the French Open getting underway in two weeks and where he is the defending champion, Djokovic admitted that "everything needs to be better in order for me to have at least a chance to win" a 25th Grand Slam. "The way I felt on the court today was just completely like a different player entered into my shoes," added Djokovic. "It's a bit concerning."



Kylian Mbappe (L) & Ethan Mbappe pose with their mother Fayza Lamari | AFP

Mbappe bids farewell to PSG fans in final home game

AGENCIES @ Paris

KYLIAN Mbappe scored on his final home appearance as a Paris Saint-Germain player but the French champions suffered a 3-1 defeat against Toulouse on the night they picked up the Ligue 1 championship trophy. Mbappe confirmed in a video posted on social media that he would be leaving PSG when his contract expires at the end of the season.

City face Spurs hurdle

LONDON: Ange Postecoglou said Tottenham will go all out to beat Manchester City on Tuesday, even though it could open the door to bitter north London rivals Arsenal to win

the Premier League. Mikel Arteta's Arsenal are one point above City at the top of the table, but Pep Guardiola's team crucially have a game in hand. Arsenal, on 86 points, host Everton in their final match of the season on Sunday while City play West Ham at home.

NEW TREATMENT CAN SLOW PROGRESSION OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

FOR Rishab Shukla (name changed), it was a sheer stroke of luck. In 2021, the 40-year-old from West Delhi was visiting an orthopaedician to figure out why he struggled to walk normally and fell on the ground every now and then. Dr Anshu Rohatgi, senior consultant neurologist and professor at Sir Gangaram Hospital, was paying a visit to the orthopaedician, his colleague, when Shukla ran into him. The orthopaedician shared the case history with his friend. A glance at the report, and Dr Rohatgi suspected that the man was suffering from multiple sclerosis (MS), a disease that the family had not even heard about. Tests further confirmed his worst fears.

Today, the businessman is back to leading a life as normal as possible.

Approximately 2.9 million, or 1 in 3,000 people in the world, have multiple sclerosis. In India, approximately 1.5 lakh people (11 per one lakh) are suffering from MS, which is a chronic disease of the central nervous system (CNS), which includes the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. This debilitating disease is a leading cause of non-traumatic disability in young people, commonly diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40, and is twice as likely in women than men. In this progressive disease, patients suffer tremendous disability while the quality of life deteriorates along with regular hospital costs.

Advancements in therapies

Innovative highly effective MS therapies are therefore essential to tackle progression and help reduce the impact of the disease on the daily lives of people with MS and their families, according to experts. According to Dr Vinay Goyal, chairman, neurology, neurosciences, Medanta, Gurugram, there is no cure for MS, but medications known as disease-modifying therapies are available to help reduce the frequency and severity of relapses. He said these therapies, which can be administered orally, via injections, or through infusions, aim to minimise damage and scarring to the myelin sheath surrounding the nerves, commonly associated with MS relapses. Myelin is an insulating layer, or sheath that forms around nerves, including those in the brain and spinal cord. It is made up of protein and fatty substances.

Relapsing or progressive

Most people living with MS either have relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) or primary progressive MS (PPMS) at the time of diagnosis. RRMS is characterised by episodes of new or worsening symptoms (relapses) followed by recovery periods. PPMS is a highly disabling form of MS characterised by steady

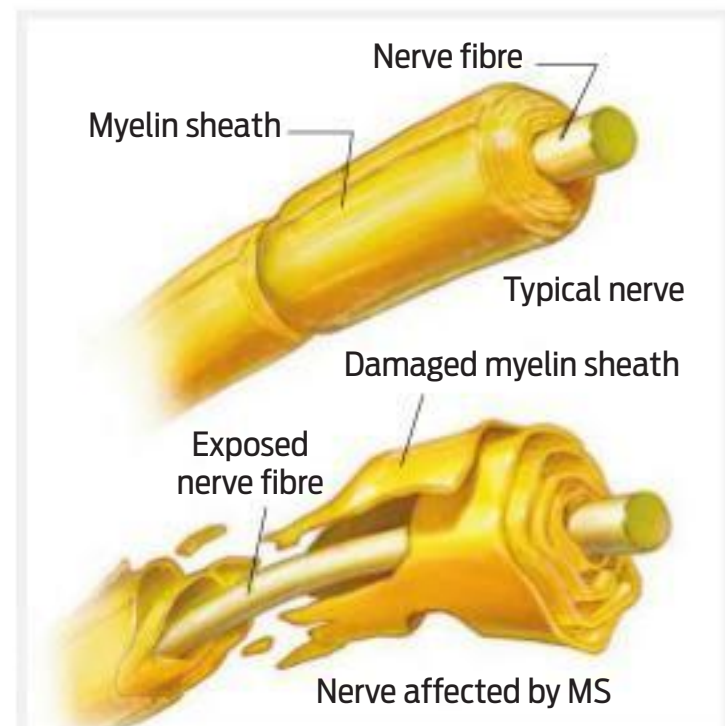
ly worsening symptoms, usually without periods of improvement/remission. Approximately 15% of people with MS are diagnosed with PPMS. Dr Goyal said there are various treatments - from steroid treatment to symptom special therapies to disease-modifying therapies - that reduce the frequency and severity of MS relapses and slow down disease progression. Dr Rohatgi, who treated Shukla for PPMS, said they started the businessman straight on ocrelizumab - a breakthrough drug that has been approved by USFDA - for it not only enhances the quality of life in MS patients but also promises improved outcomes. "We had to import the drug at that time because it was not yet introduced in India. Now, it is available in India. Until now, there was no treatment option for patients suffering from primary progressive MS."

"This (the drug) represents a monumental breakthrough, addressing a longstanding unmet need and extending hope to a substantial portion of the MS community in India, covering the majority of MS patients," he added.

He said with a robust decade-long track record of safety and efficacy, the therapeutic monoclonal antibody has emerged as the preferred choice for MS treatment, offering relief and convenience with its twice-yearly dosing schedule. Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-produced molecules engineered to serve as substitute antibodies that can restore, enhance, modify or mimic the immune system's attack on cells that aren't wanted. He said the drug helps ease the burden of hospitalisations and promotes adherence. "It not only enhances the quality of life for MS patients but also holds promise for improved outcomes," he added.

Treatment cost

Ocrelizumab is currently the sole approved therapy for all forms of MS, including PPMS. Over three lakh patients have been treated with Ocrevus across 100 countries. It targets a type of immune cell called CD20-positive B cell that plays a vital role in the disease. It



Treatment options

Steroids: Used to address multiple sclerosis relapses, steroids help reduce inflammation and speed up recovery during relapse episodes

Symptom-specific therapies: Various therapies target specific symptoms of MS, such as:

- Physical therapy to improve mobility and coordination
- Occupational therapy to assist in daily tasks and improve independence
- Speech therapy to address speech and swallowing difficulties
- Pain management techniques to alleviate discomfort

Disease-modifying therapies: These medications aim to reduce the frequency and severity of MS relapses and slow down disease progression

HEALTHY TIPS

- Do regular exercise
- Follow a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids
- Avoid smoking
- Practice stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises to help manage stress levels, which may play a role in triggering MS relapses
- Some research suggests that maintaining adequate vitamin D levels may reduce the risk of developing MS
- Speak with a healthcare professional about appropriate supplementation
- Minimise exposure to potential environmental factors that may be linked to MS, such as certain viral infections or heavy metals

SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms can affect nearly every part of the body and mind
- Up to 90% of people with MS experience fatigue
- Within 15 years of onset, more than 50% of people with MS have difficulty walking
- Vision difficulties is the first symptom in 15-20% of people with MS
- At least 80% of people with MS experience bladder issues
- Depression is approximately two times more likely
- Sleep problems are twice as likely

may be out of reach for many as the drug costs between ₹10-12 lakh a year, depending on the dosage, in India.

However, Dr Rajasekhar Reddi, Director, Max Institute of Neurosciences, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, Delhi, said the drug stands out with its proven clinical efficacy and real-world evidence. "It's time we prioritise treatments backed by substantial data to provide meaningful relief to those battling this relentless condition."

Diagnosis and management

Echoing the demand for medications that effectively manage the disease, Dr Manoj Satyavani, director and consultant neurologist, Institute of Neurosciences, Surat, Gujarat, said, "Even when clinical symptoms seem stable, all forms of MS entail underlying disease activity, characterised by nervous system inflammation and irreversible brain nerve cell loss. The primary goal in MS treatment is to diminish disease activity, thus decelerating disability progression promptly." MS patients face unique challenges on dif-

ferent fronts, which start right from early detection, said Sandeep Chitnis, national honorary secretary, Multiple Sclerosis Society of India. He said the disease-modifying treatment costs lakhs and should be classified under rare diseases. "Timely diagnosis can help prevent the onset of most of the disabilities. An MS patient can live a productive life with the help of the latest treatments at the early stage." Experts said the first battle won is on detecting MS early. Unfortunately, no one test can be done to diagnose MS, which is a lifelong condition without a cure.

"MS is diagnosed by combining clinical and MRI findings, electric or neurophysiological investigations, and laboratory tests. If these tests fulfil a set of so-called MS diagnostic criteria, the healthcare professional or neurologist diagnoses MS," added Dr Preetha, consultant neurologist, Prashanth Hospitals, Chennai. Once it is diagnosed, there are treatments aimed at managing symptoms, minimising the frequency of flare-ups, regulating disease progression, and improving quality of life, she added.

MYTH BUSTERS



Dr Renu Thomas
Prostate gland health

Senior consultant and coordinator, department of urology, KIMS Health Thiruvananthapuram

Myth: Prostate problems only affect men at an advanced age

Fact: While the risk of conditions such as prostate cancer and benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) increases with age, younger men can also be susceptible to issues such as prostatitis, inflammation of the prostate, and prostate abscess.

Myth: Prostate cancer is always deadly, there is no cure

Fact: Advancements in treatment options, including surgery, radiation therapy, and hormone therapy, along with regular screenings and prompt medical attention, can significantly enhance the chances of successful treatment and long-term survival.

Myth: High levels of sexual activity lead to prostate problems

Fact: Contrary to popular belief, there is no conclusive evidence linking high levels of sexual activity to an increased risk of prostate problems. In fact, some studies even suggest that regular ejaculation may have potential health benefits for the prostate, reducing the risk of certain conditions such as prostate cancer.

- COMPILED BY UNNIKRISHNAN S

Safety concerns over Covid vaccine

HEMANT KUMAR ROUT @ Bhubaneswar

THE decision by global pharmaceutical major AstraZeneca to withdraw its Covid-19 vaccine Covishield has reignited the debate and discussion around vaccine efficacy and adverse events following immunisation (AEFI).

Produced by Serum Institute of India (SII), Covishield was jointly developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. The Cambridge-headquartered bio-pharmaceutical company had introduced the vaccine as Vaxzevria in the UK and European Union. So far, around 175 crore doses of Covishield have been sold and it is the most widely administered vaccine in India. In a UK court, AstraZeneca recently admitted that its vaccine could lead to thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS), a condition that results in blood clotting and low platelet count. Despite widespread vaccination, a very limited number of TTS cases have been documented in the country. However, the revelations regarding the potential rare side effect and subsequent withdrawal of the vaccine have sparked concerns. SII has made it clear that the withdrawal has nothing to do with the legal battle and attributed it to the decline in demand.

Rare side effects

Rare side effects refer to adverse reactions that occur infrequently among the vaccinated. It could be one in one lakh vaccinated population or it could be one in one lakh doses administered. These side effects are typically observed in a small percentage of vaccine recipients. Examples of rare side effects associated with Covid vaccines include pericarditis, myocarditis and blood clotting.

AstraZeneca and SII had earlier disclosed the rare side effects of the vaccine in product inserts.

Noted epidemiologist Dr Jayaprakash Mullyil said there is an old teaching that if a drug has no side effects, it has no effect at all. This goes without saying that vaccines may have side effects that are very rare. "But there is still confusion over adverse events after vaccination, as it is difficult to know whether they are vaccine-induced or due to Covid infection. In fact, vaccines are beautiful ways of preventing diseases," he said.

On withdrawal of Covishield, the former principal of Christian Medical College, Vellore, said the usefulness of the particular type of vaccine is over. "After the Omicron variant arrived, everybody got infected. Omicron is an immune escape variant and it produced many sub-variants. This series of variants made sure people were immunised whether vaccinated or not. Omicron gave people very good lasting immunity against all previous variants like Alpha and Delta. People who were infected by Omicron or its sub-lineages got natural immunity. Covishield was manufactured for the first series of variants. It has no value now," he said.

Risks and factors

The duration of the risk of rare side effects associated with Covid vaccines can vary depending on several factors, as different vaccines have varying risks. The risk of rare side effects may differ among various demo-

graphic groups, such as age, sex, and underlying health conditions.

Eminent virologist and public health expert Dr T Jacob John said TTS is one of the rare side effects and generally such cases are mostly reported within a few weeks of vaccination. "The side effects do not occur after two or three years of vaccination. People should not worry and panic as not everyone who receives the vaccine will be affected by TTS," he clarified.

Dr E Venkata Rao, principal investigator of the human trial of a Covid vaccine, however, differs. He said theoretically, all those who were administered with the vaccine are at risk of side effects, but not randomly. For example, he said, an alcoholic person may be at a higher risk compared to a person who is physically fit due to a regular yoga practice. "Yes, side effects can occur after two to three years. But that is very rare," said Dr Rao, professor of community medicine at IMS and SUM Hospital, Bhubaneswar.

Call for review of vaccines

A group of doctors under the banner of Awaken India Movement has urged the union government to review the science behind all Covid vaccines and stop the fear mongering against vaccines. They have demanded an audit of their commercialisation as well as implementation of active surveillance and monitoring mechanisms to ensure vaccine adverse events are identified at the earliest. The body said the product insert of Covid vaccines was never seen by people taking the shot and the government never considered prior informed consent a necessity.

STEM CELL TRANSPLANT

Effectiveness depends on disease, donor compatibility

OFTEN used to treat blood diseases and certain types of cancer, the success rate of stem cell transplant depends on several factors including the type of disease and donor compatibility, tells **Dr Anoop P**, senior consultant, haematology, haemato-oncology, paediatric haemato-oncology and bone marrow transplant, Aster CMI Hospital, Bengaluru, in an interview with **Rishita Khanna**. Edited excerpts:

What is stem cell transplant?

Stem cell transplant, also known as bone marrow transplant, is a medical procedure in which damaged or diseased bone marrow is replaced with healthy stem cells. These are parts of the blood and immune system. Stem cell transplants are often used to treat many diseases, including lymphoma, leukaemia, multiple myeloma, haemoglobin disorders such as thalassemia, sickle cell anaemia, and bone marrow failure conditions such as aplastic anaemia. They have the ability to heal or provide long term relief by replacing damaged cells with healthy cells and restoring the body's ability to produce blood cells and fight diseases.

What are the primary types of stem cell transplants, and how do they differ in their application and effectiveness?

The main types of stem cell transplants are autologous and allogeneic. Autologous transplant uses the patient's own stem cells collected before treatment and has a lower risk of rejection, but is limited to the treatment of certain diseases. Allogeneic transplantation uses stem cells from a suitable alternative donor who is genetically matched with the patient. Although autologous transplantation is the first choice for some cancers such as multiple myeloma and lymphoma, allogeneic transplantation is preferred for leukemia, thalassemia, aplastic anaemia and immunodeficiency disorders. Both aim to replace damaged cells, but their effectiveness depends on factors such as the type of disease and donor compatibility.

How are stem cells harvested for transplantation and what is the criteria for selecting donors?

There are two methods of collecting stem cells - peripheral blood stem cell collection via apheresis, where blood is collected, stem cells are isolated, and the remaining blood is returned, or bone marrow aspiration, where stem cells are extracted from the pelvic bones with a needle. Donors undergo rigorous screening, including medical history, physical examination and blood tests to ensure compatibility and minimise complications. Compatibility is determined by human leukocyte antigen (HLA) matching, which evaluates tissue type compatibility between the donor and recipient. Donors must be healthy and committed to the donation process.

INTERVIEW

DR ANOOP P

What are the diseases that benefit most from stem cell transplant, and what are the success rates? Stem cell transplants are often used to treat many blood diseases and some cancers. However, the success rate depends on variables such as the subtype of the disease, the patient's age, general health status, and type of transplant.

What are the key challenges or risks for donors and recipients?

Stem cell transplantation carries risks and complications mainly for the recipients. It is generally a safe procedure for donors. Recipients may face complications such as transplant rejection, life threatening infections, organ damage from chemotherapy or radiation, and long-term effects such as reduced fertility or secondary cancer. Donors may experience discomfort or problems with stem cell collection procedures such as bone marrow aspiration or apheresis. Additionally, both parties may experience psychological stress, financial stress, and uncertainty about treatment.

What advice would you give to individuals considering stem cell transplantation?

Consult a haematologist, oncologist, or stem cell transplant specialist to evaluate whether it is appropriate for your situation. Discuss risks, cost-effectiveness, and treatment options.