

Daring Operation Rescues U.S. Air Force Airman

Pilot Climbed 7,000-Foot Ridge to Evade Capture by Iran; Trump Warns Tehran Will Be Attacked on Tuesday if Strait Is Blocked

Washington, Tehran: An injured U.S. Air Force colonel survived capture by Iranian forces following a grueling 36-hour ordeal in the rugged mountainous terrain of southern Iran. Subsequently, Navy SEAL commandos rescued him in a dramatic nighttime operation. President Donald Trump described the mission as "fantastic." The colonel—an Weapons Systems Officer who had ejected from an F&15E Strike Eagle fighter jet shot down over southern Iran on Friday—navigated the treacherous terrain, moving on injured legs and evading enemy patrols while armed with nothing more than a pistol. At one point, he scaled a 7,000-foot mountain ridge, while U.S. aircraft simultaneously bombed an approaching convoy of Iranian vehicles to buy him time. *The Mail* reported on Sunday. U.S. airmen undergo SERE training—Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape—specifically for scenarios where they might be forced to eject over hostile territory. They wear combat vests equipped with radio/GPS-enabled beacons to signal their location, while also carrying water, food, first aid supplies, and a pistol to aid their survival. The pilot sustained injuries during his ejection but remained able to walk, the news outlet *Axios* reported,



ed, citing a U.S. official. Iran had placed a bounty on the officer's head, triggering a race between Tehran and Washington to locate the missing pilot. "Everything is being done to find the missing pilot," a source close to the President told *The Mail* on Sunday. "There is a fear that he could be captured and used as a pawn." The pilot of the downed jet was recovered within 45 minutes of the crash. The rescue operation encountered severe complications. Two U.S. transport aircraft became stranded at a remote location inside Iran. To prevent them from falling into Iranian hands, U.S. forces were compelled to destroy them, according to reports from *The New York Times* and CBS News.

Subsequently, three additional aircraft were dispatched to ensure the pilot's safety. On Sunday morning, Trump announced his victory via his "Truth Social" platform. "We have caught him!" he had mentioned in it. Trump Escalates Threats, Sets 'Hellish' Deadline for Strait of Hormuz On Sunday, U.S. President Donald Trump issued new, severe threats, vowing to intensify attacks on Iran and its infrastructure if the Strait of Hormuz is not reopened by his specified deadline. These threats were issued following the rescue by U.S. forces of a pilot whose aircraft—shot down by Iran—had crashed within enemy territory. In a social media post, Trump pledged that attacks would be launched again—

raising warnings regarding potential war crimes. "Iranian civilians will be the first to suffer as power plants and bridges are destroyed," Agnes Callamard, head of Amnesty International, stated on social media. She further described Trump's threat as "abhorrent." Diplomatic efforts are ongoing. Trump's deadline—9 p.m. Monday (0100 GMT Tuesday)—centers on growing concerns regarding Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for oil and gas exports from the Persian Gulf to Europe and Asia. This route is also crucial for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Some vessels have already paid Iran for safe passage. Di-

plomatic efforts continued. Oman's Foreign Ministry stated that the deputy foreign ministers and experts from Iran and Oman met to discuss proposals aimed at ensuring "unimpeded traffic" through the strait. Oman frequently acts as a mediator between the United States and Iran. Egypt reported that Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty spoke by phone with U.S. Ambassador Steve Witkoff and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, as well as with the ambassadors of Turkey and Pakistan, who are assisting in mediation efforts. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry stated that it conveyed to Araqchi that Islamabad supports "all efforts to de-escalate tensions." Islamabad indicated that talks between the United States and Iran are expected to take place soon. However, should tensions escalate, Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen could resume attacks on shipping in the Bab el Mandeb Strait—a key waterway leading to and from the Suez Canal. Iran Attacks Gulf Energy Facilities In Kuwait, Iranian drone attacks caused significant damage to power generation stations and a petrochemical plant. According to the Ministry of Electricity, they also disabled a seawater desalination plant. In Bahrain, the country's official news agency reported that a drone attack sparked fires at one of the national oil company's storage depots and at a state-owned petrochemical plant. In the United Arab Emirates, officials responded to fires at a petrochemical plant in Ruwais. The plant's operations were halted after officials stated that the fires were caused by intercepted debris. These attacks occurred one day after Israel struck a major petrochemical plant in Iran. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had stated that the plant generated revenue used to fund the war. The petrochemical industry converts oil and gas into products such as plastics and fertilizers.

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EPS went back on his word on RS seat, says Premalatha

Tiruvannamalai: DMDK leader Premalatha Vijayakant alleged on Sunday that AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami has reneged on a promise to allocate Rajya Sabha (RS) seats to the DMDK, a party that had allied with the AIADMK for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Speaking to reporters at the Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar Temple in Tiruvannamalai, Premalatha stated that the promise regarding the Rajya Sabha seats was an integral part of the agreement reached between the two parties at that time. However,



looking ahead to the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the DMDK has now joined hands with the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA). She had visited the town specifically to campaign for the DMK candidates contesting from the Tiruvannamalai and Kilpennathur Assembly constituencies—E. V. Velu and K.

Pichandi, respectively. Premalatha Vijayakant also displayed to the media a copy of the alleged agreement document, in which the AIADMK side had reportedly pledged to allocate five Lok Sabha constituencies and one Rajya Sabha seat to the DMDK. Elaborating on the matter, she noted that the agreement was signed

in 2024; consequently, Edappadi Palaniswami (EPS) should have allocated the Rajya Sabha seat as early as 2025, yet he failed to do so. Pointing out that her party has been in an alliance with the AIADMK since 2011, she remarked that none of the AIADMK cadres approved of the actions taken by Edappadi Palaniswami or the party's subsequent exit from the alliance. She further added that Palaniswami is now denying having made any such promise. Responding to a question regarding Edappadi Palaniswami's assertion that his party commands a mere half percent of the vote share,

he stated that such remarks are entirely unbecoming of a former Chief Minister and the current Leader of the Opposition. Condemning such comments, he affirmed that his party consistently adheres to the dignified approach and discipline upheld by their leader, 'Captain' Vijayakanth. "During election campaigns, instead of speaking disparagingly about others, leaders should focus on discussing what they intend to do for the constituencies they are contesting," he further added. He also asserted that the SPA would win more than 200 seats in the elections.

BJP is an Anti-Tamil Party; EPS Has Aligned Himself with Them, Says Stalin

Chennai, April 5: The election campaign in Tamil Nadu has devolved into a series of personal attacks following allegations leveled against Chief Minister M.K. Stalin by AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, citing an audio recording. Responding to this, DMK President M.K. Stalin lashed out at Mr. Palaniswami, branding him the "embodiment of betrayal" and a "liar." Addressing a public meeting in Virudhunagar, Mr. Stalin asserted that the betrayals committed by Mr. Palaniswami were too numerous to count. He specifically cited the formation of an alliance with the BJP—a party vehemently opposed by the late Jayalalithaa, the former Chief Minister and leader of the AIADMK—as an act of betrayal. Furthermore, Mr. Stalin alleged that Mr. Palaniswami had also betrayed Jayalalithaa's close confidante V.K. Sasikala, former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, former Minister K.A. Sengottaiyan, and the leader of the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), T.T.V. Dhinakaran. "The AIADMK leader has even betrayed former Speaker P. Dhanapal—who helped him save his government—by denying him the opportunity to contest the election," the DMK President stated. Mr. Stalin campaigned in support of candidates



from the DMK-led alliance contesting in the Virudhunagar district; this alliance includes Ministers Thangam Thennarasu and K.K.S.S.R. Ramachandran, as well as Vijay Prabhakaran, the son of DMDK founder Vijayakanth. AIADMK Mr. Stalin stated that the leader has been speaking in a highly derogatory manner and that a whole book could be written detailing the betrayals he has committed. He criticized Mr. Palaniswami, alleging that—by virtue of being part of a "Sangi alliance" (the BJP alliance)—he has taken up the task of spreading WhatsApp rumors. He refuted the allegation that former Chief Minister K. Kamaraj had refused to allocate a suitable site for the burial of former Chief Minister K. Kamaraj's mortal remains. Mr. Stalin asserted that it was Karunanidhi himself who personally spearheaded all arrangements for Kamaraj's burial,

and that he—even amidst pouring rain—personally selected the burial site located near the Gandhi Mandapam in Guindy. "If Mr. Palaniswami's claims were indeed true, the matter would have erupted into a major controversy back in those very days," Mr. Stalin remarked. He further noted that, in 1966 in Delhi, a "mob of Sangis" had attempted to burn Kamaraj alive. Describing the BJP as a "party hostile to the Tamil race," Mr. Stalin alleged that the party harbors animosity toward the Tamil language, people, and culture; he added that Mr. Palaniswami has chosen to forge an alliance with precisely such enemies of the Tamil people. He stated that the BJP is actively attempting to impede Tamil Nadu's development and is engaging in activities detrimental to the state. Mr. Stalin further observed that BJP leaders merely feign affection for the Tamil language—as well as for leaders such as Kamaraj and M.G.R.—solely during election periods.

BJP's Communal Politics Will Not Work in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry: Thirumavalavan

Puducherry, April 5: Thol. Thirumavalavan, leader of the Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), categorically stated on Sunday—while addressing reporters—that the BJP's "political theatrics" would fail in both Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. He further noted that there is "no place for communal politics" in this region. Speaking to the media in Puducherry, the VCK leader expressed confidence that voters would reject divisive ideologies in the upcoming elections. "The people of Tamil Nadu are firm in their resolve not to give room to communal forces," he asserted,

predicting a "massive victory" for the 'Secular Progressive Alliance'—comprising the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Indian National Congress, and the VCK. Addressing the status of the alliance, Thirumavalavan explained that due to time constraints during seat-sharing negotiations, his party had initially filed nominations in four constituencies. However, following discussions with Congress leaders—including Mukul Wasnik—the VCK withdrew from three constituencies; he clarified that the party would now contest only in



the Ozhukarai constituency, while extending its support to alliance partners in the other seats. He also expressed hope that the Congress party would, in turn, extend its support to the VCK in the Ozhukarai constituency. Pointing to the electoral

landscape in Tamil Nadu, he highlighted the "overwhelming reception" currently being accorded to the DMK-led alliance. He further noted that Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's welfare initiatives—particularly the proposed ₹8,000 family coupon scheme—have significantly bolstered the alliance's prospects for victory. Thirumavalavan also expressed concern regarding the features outlined in the BJP's election manifesto; alleging that attempts are being made to alter Puducherry's unique identity, he cautioned

voters to remain vigilant in this regard. He offered clarifications regarding the party's internal decisions—including changes in candidate nominations and his own decision to opt out of contesting the election—stating that such decisions were made based on both practical and political considerations. He also leveled sharp criticism against the Governor of Tamil Nadu, alleging that—during this period when the Model Code of Conduct is in force—the Governor has been participating in events associated with the BJP and the RSS.

Today horoscope



Conflicts between husband and wife will be removed and happiness will increase. Relatives will come looking for the house. Solve old problems. You will visit holy places. There is sudden profit in business. You will finish work quickly at work. A day of renewal.

Anxiety will increase before completing the work. Talk to children gently. Do not over speed the vehicle. Handle expensive items with care. Problems will arise due to employees in business. Implicit objections will come and go at work. A profitable day with flurries.



First stop doubting because Moon is in Rasi. Ego problems with family will come and go. Cross the roads carefully. You will have to work extra hard at work. Do not disclose business secrets. A day to let go.

You will complete challenging tasks with ease. Fraternal assistance is available. You will buy expensive jewelry. There is good news on the way of the wife. Officer will respect you in office. Unexpected profits will come in business. A day where talent emerges.



Conflicts between husband and wife will be removed and happiness will increase. Relatives will come looking for the house. Solve old problems. You will visit holy places. There is sudden profit in business. You will finish work quickly at work. A day of renewal.

You will attend auspicious events with family. The government has an advantage. A favorable verdict will be obtained in the case. You will get the friendship of those in positions of authority. You will adopt new strategies in business. At work, you will behave like a superior. A day of progress through effort.



You will take some important decisions boldly. Siblings are compatible. You will participate in auspicious events. The government has an advantage. You will profit by taking a different approach to business. Support for your opinion at work will increase. Discussions will be successful.

You will meet a childhood friend. You will complete some important tasks with the help of government officials. Vain arguments with mother will come and go. Don't tarnish your reputation by seeking justice for others. Partners will cooperate in business. There will be job satisfaction. A day where expectations are fulfilled.



Since the Moon is in the sign, four or five jobs will have to be done in one day. Expenses will be borne by friends and relatives. By pointing out the mistakes of others, you will get into arguments. Be moderate with officials at work. A deal in business will be delayed. A day that requires patience.

Love support will increase between husband and wife. There will be a happy atmosphere in the family. Half-finished works will be completed. Expected money will come in hand. New ventures in business will be strengthened. You will finish work quickly at work. Good day.



You will meet a childhood friend. You will complete some important tasks with the help of government officials. Vain arguments with mother will come and go. Don't tarnish your reputation by seeking justice for others. Partners will cooperate in business. There will be job satisfaction. A day where expectations are fulfilled.

The government has an advantage. You will benefit from others. There is an unexpected cash flow. Old relatives will visit and talk to friends. Debits in business will increase. You will behave in a manner that will impress the superiors at work. A day of sudden yoga.



EPS Betrayed OPS; AIADMK Has Now Become 'Amit Shah's DMK': Kanimozhi

Tiruppur / Coimbatore: DMK Deputy General Secretary Kanimozhi Karunanidhi stated on Sunday, while speaking in Kangayam, Tiruppur district, that the AIADMK has now transformed into 'Amit Shah's DMK.' Kanimozhi was conducting election campaigns in the Kangayam and Palladam constituencies. "This upcoming election is a contest between Tamil Nadu and the Hindutva forces based in Delhi. The people must not forget that this election is about safeguarding Tamil Nadu's self-respect and rights," she said. Accusing AIADMK General Secretary and Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami of betraying



both the state and his own party, Kanimozhi remarked, "Palaniswami betrayed V.K. Sasikala, who was instrumental in making him the Chief Minister. He also betrayed O. Panneerselvam, who has now joined our ranks. Palaniswami failed to oppose the measures implemented by the Central Government against Tamil Nadu and its farmers. Nor did he oppose the laws enacted against minorities

and those that severely impacted the livelihoods of rural communities." Speaking in Coimbatore, Kanimozhi asserted that since Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has been systematically implementing every scheme designed for women, women across Tamil Nadu are now standing firmly with the DMK. "In its previous election manifesto, the DMK pledged to provide ₹1,000 to women; that promise has been fulfilled. This scheme empowers women by granting them economic rights. Lakhs of women have benefited through the 'Magalir Urimai Thogai' (Women's Rights Assistance) scheme," she stated. An alliance has been formed in Tamil Nadu to oppose the

DMK. They are engaging in malicious activities such as insisting on the three-language education policy, neglecting the Metro Rail project, and undermining the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Today, Palaniswami has announced that the 100-day employment scheme will be extended to 150 days. Although the AIADMK had promised in its 2016 election manifesto that mobile phones would be distributed, it failed to fulfill this pledge. The DMK, on the other hand, has fulfilled the promises it made—including the provision of free television sets, free bus travel for women, and the 'Women's Rights Assistance Scheme.'

NDA Seeks to Alter Tamil Nadu's DNA Using Its 'Faulty Engine' Chief Minister

The BJP Continues to Act Against the State; The Madurai AIIMS Project Stands as Proof of Its Neglect Stalin

Madurai / Virudhunagar: Launching a scathing attack on the BJP, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin stated on Sunday, "The people of Madurai cherish peace and harmony; indeed, this constitutes the very DNA of Tamil Nadu. However, 'divisive forces' are attempting to shatter this. The NDA alliance, utilizing its 'Dabba Engine' (faulty engine), seeks to fundamentally alter the DNA of Tamil Nadu." Speaking at an election campaign rally held in Thirumangalam in support of 10 DMK alliance candidates from the Madurai district, the Chief Minister remarked, "The 'Aryan Model' seeks to destroy development and social harmony; conversely, the 'Dravidian Model' has elevated Tamil Nadu to the status of a premier state within the country. The BJP simply cannot tolerate this." He further added, "The BJP's animosity is not directed solely at the DMK; it harbors a deep-seated hatred toward Tamil Nadu itself." Taking aim at Union Minister Piyush Goyal—who had raised questions regarding Tamil Nadu's fiscal health—Stalin challenged the Central Government to publicly release a comparative analysis of tax devolution among the various states. "Clarify to the public exactly how much the state

receives in return for every single rupee Tamil Nadu contributes to the Central Government, and contrast that with the share received by the BJP-ruled northern states. Had Tamil Nadu received an equitable share, we would not be facing this financial crisis today," the Chief Minister asserted. Earlier on Saturday, while releasing the BJP's 'White Paper' on Tamil Nadu's fiscal status, Piyush Goyal had stated, "Tamil Nadu is heading towards a state of bankruptcy." Speaking on the long-stalled Madurai AIIMS project, the Chief Minister noted that the project has become a symbol of the Central Government's neglect. He questioned why the BJP—which managed to complete the construction of the Bilaspur AIIMS hospital in Himachal Pradesh within five years—has been unable to complete the construction of the proposed AIIMS hospital in Madurai alone. During his address, the Chief Minister also drew attention to an article published in *The New Indian Express* (TNEI) newspaper, which highlighted Madurai's emergence as a hub for development. Prior to the meeting held at Thirumangalam in Madurai, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had also conducted election

campaigning in the Virudhunagar district earlier that morning. Dismissing the allegations leveled by Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami—who claimed that former Chief Minister and veteran Congress leader K. Kamaraj was not accorded due respect—the Chief Minister pointed out that upon Kamaraj's passing, it was senior DMK leader M. Karunanidhi who, amidst heavy midnight rains, personally selected the Gandhi Mandapam as the venue for conducting his final rites. Addressing a public meeting held at Sathirareddipatti, Stalin recalled that during the discussions regarding where to place Kamaraj's mortal remains for public homage—specifically the proposal to place them at the Congress Grounds in Tenampet—Karunanidhi had insisted that Kamaraj was not merely a party leader, but a leader belonging to all people. Consequently, Stalin noted, it was Karunanidhi who ensured that Kamaraj's body was placed at the Rajaji Hall, thereby allowing the general public to pay their final respects. "Ever since forming an alliance with the Sangh Parivar forces, Edappadi Palaniswami (EPS) has been operating solely based on WhatsApp rumors," he stated. Stalin further pointed out that had the allegations current-

ly being raised by Edappadi Palaniswami been true, they would have sparked a major controversy at the very time they allegedly occurred. On the contrary, he noted, leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress had consistently praised Karunanidhi through their writings. Citing another instance, Stalin recalled that after the passing of Janaki M.G.R.—who had served as Chief Minister for a brief period—it was Karunanidhi who, during the DMK's tenure in 1996, ensured that her portrait was installed at the Fort, even though AIADMK leaders had failed to do so previously. He accused the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) of consistently acting against the interests of Tamil Nadu. However, he criticized the alliance for projecting itself as "pro-Tamil" only during election periods, and for attempting to appropriate leaders like Kamaraj and M.G.R. as their own. "It was this very group that attempted to set fire to Kamaraj's residence in Delhi back in 1966," he alleged. He noted that they have targeted not only various sections of society—including farmers, women, and minorities—but also members of their own ranks, such as K.A. Sengottaiyan, V.K. Sasikala, T.T.V. Dhinakaran, O. Panneerselvam, and P. Dhanapal.

Weak Evidence and Hostile Witnesses Undermined the Foundation of the Case Against Ponnudi: Judge

Villupuram : In a verdict delivered on Thursday, Villupuram Principal District Judge A. Manimozhi acquitted former Tamil Nadu Minister K. Ponnudi and seven others in a red sand quarrying case, observing that the prosecution had "miserably failed" to prove the charges. She attributed this failure to hostile witnesses, unreliable documents, and a lack of concrete evidence. In her judgment, the Judge noted that the case was severely weakened by procedural irregularities and documents that appeared to have been fabricated under duress; ultimately, she stated, the case collapsed entirely due to the absence of strong evidentiary support. Investigated by the Villupuram District Crime Branch (DCB) police, the case alleged that between 2007 and 2011, Ponnudi had misused his official position to facilitate illegal red sand quarrying operations in Poonthurai village within the Vanur taluk. It was further alleged that this resulted in a loss of over ₹28 crore to the state exchequer. Ponnudi's son, P. Gautham Sigamani; his relatives, S. Rajamahendran and V. Jayachandran; and his associates—K. Sadhanandam, K. Kumar, and M.

Gopinathan—were also named as accused in the case. The accused were charged under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957. Furthermore, a case was registered under Rule 36A of the Tamil Nadu Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 1959. The charge sheet for this case was filed in 2013, and the trial spanned a period of 13 years. During this period, a total of 57 witnesses were examined. The final arguments regarding this case concluded on March 2nd of this year. In its verdict, the court observed that the failure of the district administration to substantiate the evidence presented by the prosecution was the primary reason for the complete collapse of the State's case. The Judge pointed out in the verdict that more than 40 government officials—including Tahsildars, Village Administrative Officers, Revenue Inspectors, and Mines Department staff—turned 'hostile witnesses' by testifying against the prosecution during the court proceedings. Several witnesses deposed that their signatures on documents related to inspection 'mahazars' (records), joint inspection reports, and house searches were obtained

under duress at the DCB office, without them ever having visited the actual incident sites. The court noted that many such reports were fabricated or lacked credibility. According to the verdict, Sundaram and Kanthan—Deputy Directors of the Department of Geology and Mining—admitted that the joint inspection reports were not prepared based on actual field inspections. Furthermore, Sundaram stated that he was coerced into signing backdated reports. The complainant—the then Tahsildar of Vanur—informed the court that he had signed a pre-typed complaint without having any knowledge of its contents. Meanwhile, the then Revenue Divisional Officer stated that he had been coerced into signing documents prepared by the District Collector's office. Out of a total of 57 witnesses, 33 turned hostile. During searches conducted at the residences of the accused, no incriminating evidence was seized; this weakened the prosecution's argument that a large-scale conspiracy had taken place. Based on these findings, the court ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges; consequently, all the accused were acquitted.

IN TIRUCHY 11, including 3 minors, held in councillor's murder case

Tiruchy: 11 people, including three minor boys, were arrested on Saturday night in connection with the murder of a DMK councillor near Navalpattu in Tiruchy. The arrested were M Madhan (25) of Thiruverumbur, K. Bhuavaneswaran (25), R. Hariharan (19), R. Nagaraj (27), R. Sanjay (23), S. Rex Lawrence (22), R. Suresh (19) and P. Suren Kumar (32), and three minor boys from Kattur on charges of murdering a DMK councillor from Koothapar town panchayat councillor A. Ranjithkumar (42). According to sources, Ranjithkumar had recently built a new house in Solamadevi village. On March 30, he was waylaid and hacked to death by an armed gang while returning home. The probe revealed that the murder was masterminded by historysheeter J. Dinesh Kumar, Bottle Mani (35) from Thiruverumbur. There was prior enmity between Dinesh Kumar and Ranjithkumar over money and control over turf.

94-Year-Old Woman Dies in Cylinder Explosion in Sivakasi; Son Sustains 90% Burns

Virudhunagar: In the Thiruthangal area near Sivakasi, a 94-year-old woman lost her life, and her 74-year-old son sustained 90 percent burns in an explosion caused by a gas leak at their home on Sunday. The deceased woman was identified as R. Ponnuthai, and her injured son as R. Jayachandran. According to reports, Jayachandran—a retired official of the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board—had been living with his mother due to a family dispute, while the other members of his family reside in Chennai. It is alleged that on Saturday night, one of them turned on the gas stove but subsequently failed to turn it off. By Sunday morning, the leaking gas had permeated the entire room. Unaware of the gas leak, Ponnuthai attempted to light

the stove, triggering a massive explosion. Officials from the Fire and Rescue Services Department stated that upon receiving information regarding the incident, emergency rescue teams immediately rushed to the scene. Upon reaching the site, the rescue teams observed that the house had sustained partial damage due to the impact of the explosion. Jayachandran was rescued with his injuries and admitted to the Sivakasi Government Hospital for treatment. As Ponnuthai remained trapped beneath the debris, additional rescue personnel and a water tanker were summoned to the scene to assist in the recovery operations. Subsequently, Ponnuthai's body was recovered from the rubble and handed over to the police.

IVR Calls and Targeted WhatsApp Campaigns: Political Parties Turn to Technology to Woo Voters

April 06 Monday, 2026

Wheeler from Madurai, answered her mobile phone—which rang around 12:30 PM on Sunday afternoon—she decided to accept the call despite noticing a 'Spam' warning displayed on the screen. While she had anticipated the usual fraudulent bank alert calls, what she actually received was a pre-recorded audio campaign message sent by a political party, highlighting its election promises. "It was a recorded call lasting 31 seconds. The call detailed a promise made by the DMK under its 'Illathu Arasi' scheme—a coupon worth ₹8,000 intended to assist women in purchasing household appliances. It did appear as a 'Spam Alert'; nevertheless, I answered the call," says Nivitha. Annoyed by the repeated occurrence of such calls between 10 AM and 1 PM, she has since blocked the number. With the election date fast approaching, political parties in Tamil Nadu have intensified their efforts to reach out to voters. In this context, Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) calls and WhatsApp messages have emerged as key campaign tools within the digital sphere. While the DMK has been expanding its campaign by continuously sending pre-recorded IVRS calls—starting Thursday—to emphasize its key electoral promises, the AIADMK has entered the fray in response by reaching out directly to voters through viral 'Reels' (such as the 'Arasiyal Aattam' series) and targeted WhatsApp messages. According to sources within the DMK's Information Technology (IT) wing, beyond generic social media Reels, individual candidates are employing unique strategies to connect with voters in their respective constituencies. "For instance, IT Minister Palaniivel Thiaga Rajan has been distributing a sort of 'Balance Sheet' to voters in his constituency. We possess the contact details of voters, and dedicated teams are actively working to address the specific grievances of individual voters. Furthermore, ward-level functionaries within each constituency are constantly meeting and interacting with voters. This direct, personal rapport established with the electorate is proving to be a significant asset to our campaign," the sources stated. As for the AIADMK, the pre-recorded messages they disseminate primarily highlight key issues specific to each constituency, while also focusing on the perceived shortcomings in the performance of the incumbent Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). "Our teams maintain constant contact with voters by sending constituency-specific WhatsApp messages. We have established dedicated teams specifically for the purpose of disseminating information in support of the NDA alliance," noted T. Gourishankar, Deputy Secretary of the AIADMK's IT wing. He further noted that candidates contesting in each constituency are employing unique strategies to connect with voters through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. Meanwhile, the BJP has already commenced the task of reaching out to beneficiaries of Central Government schemes to solicit their support in the upcoming elections. "Our party has obtained lists of beneficiaries from various government schemes, such as the Prime Minister's Health Insurance Scheme. We are individually contacting each beneficiary to explain how the Central Government has stood by them over the past 10 years, ensuring a process free of any corruption. Our teams are making these calls from our 'War Room,' which has been established in Chennai," stated KBS Sankarapandi, State Secretary of the Tamil Nadu BJP's Trade Wing. Noting that the party also plans to launch an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) service approximately one week prior to the election, Sankarapandi added: "If we launch our campaign too early, voters might grow weary; they might even go so far as to ignore our calls or block those numbers. At this juncture, we are campaigning for our candidates by leveraging social media influencers. The primary objective of our campaign is to highlight the corruption allegations against DMK ministers that we recently brought to light." Although a newcomer to the electoral arena, the TVK party also plans to utilize WhatsApp services for its campaign efforts. "Our party's election manifesto has already been circulated across social media..."

Cong nominee clarifies amid caste tag row

Coimbatore: CONGRESS' Singanallur candidate has received flak after her caste-based surname featured in the party's candidate list. However, Srinithi Naidu clarified that it was a clerical error. The Congress' candidates' list, released on Friday, mentioned Singanallur candidate as 'V Srinithi Naidu'. The use of a caste identity along with her name created a flutter, as she is fielded by the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance. In response, Srinithi issued a clarification on X on Saturday. "Seeing my name listed with a caste suffix in the candidate list came as a great shock to me as well. However, it was only a clerical error," she said. She further stated that her only identity is her father's name, who introduced her to the world, and her educational qualifications, which have given her strength. She emphasised that caste and religious bias have no place in her principles and that she firmly believes in equality. Srinithi had earlier contested the 2021 Assembly elections from Udumalpet constituency in Tiruppur district on a Makkal Needhi Maiyam ticket and lost. She joined the Congress few years back and has been working as one of the joint secretaries of the All India Youth Congress. Earlier, a section of Congress cadres in Coimbatore had criticised the decision to give seats to the new entrants and also staged a protest. The caste surname has intensified the criticism, with some saying it is a deliberate attempt to expose her caste identity to secure the vote bank of a particular community. Social media users also said her explanation is not fully convincing, as she claimed her name as Srinidhi Venkatesamohan, while using 'Srinidhi Prem' on her X account.

Advertisements on websites designed to arouse desire.

Loan Apps That Turn into Deadly Weapons



Police advise caution.

In every era, the general public finds itself entangled in various types of problems. If one were to ask whether problems seek out the people or if the people seek out problems, in the vast majority of instances, it has become a common occurrence for people to actively pursue trouble and get caught in it. By simply clicking on specific links received on their mobile phones, individuals end up losing the entire balance held in their bank accounts. Furthermore, mysterious syndicates employ a variety of methods to deceive the public and swindle them out of their money. Apprehending these syndicates—which typically operate from the northern states—remains a highly complex and challenging task. In particular, a great number of people are currently suffering after losing their money in financial institutions. Lured by various enticing advertisements promising "double returns" or "high interest rates" on their investments, many individuals invest their funds only to lose them and be left in distress. On the other hand, the situation regarding private lending apps has spiraled into a grave crisis; individuals who borrow money but are unable to repay it are being subjected to such severe harassment by the companies' employees that many have gone to the extent of taking their own lives. By failing to thoroughly investigate matters and adopting a mindset that simply securing funds for immediate needs is sufficient, members of the public make erroneous decisions that leave them suffering for the rest of their lives. This issue has become particularly acute since the advent of mobile phones, with a vast number of people becoming entangled in and distressed by such predicaments. Despite continuous efforts by the police to raise public awareness regarding this issue, people continue to fall victim to and struggle with these types of problems. In this context, criminal syndicates from northern states have recently begun targeting southern regions—including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh—by launching lending apps and actively soliciting borrowers, offering loans to the public of their own accord. Initially, members of the public would access specific applications recommended to them via their mobile phones to obtain loans for urgent needs, subsequently repaying the borrowed amount along with a stipulated interest rate. Various companies, having obtained authorization from the Reserve Bank, have been providing loans to the public and collecting repayments on a monthly basis at specified interest rates. Amidst this scenario, a fraudulent syndicate has now emerged; by issuing various enticing advertisements—claiming that a loan would be granted "free of cost" simply by downloading a single mobile application, and that too without the need for any documentation—they are currently extending loans to the public and engaging in fraudulent activities. Currently, the number of cases involving individuals victimized by these loan applications is on the rise across every police district. Observing how these fraud rings execute their tactics, one finds that they send SMS notifications to all mobile phone users—operating under various aliases—announcing that loans can be disbursed within just one or three minutes. Furthermore, they actively advertise these offers across various social media platforms. Believing these claims, individuals facing financial distress proceed to download the specific mobile application in question. Upon launching the downloaded app, users are initially prompted to answer four or five preliminary questions. Once the user consents to all these prompts and

taps the confirmation button, the fraudsters gain access to and download the entirety of the data stored on the mobile device—including all contact numbers, text messages, and even photos and videos from WhatsApp. The user remains completely unaware that this data extraction is taking place. Subsequently, they proceed to disburse the loan. Initially, they offer a loan of ₹3,000, which must be repaid within a strict seven-day timeframe. However, if one borrows ₹3,000, only a sum ranging between ₹1,800 and ₹2,000 is actually credited to the borrower's bank account; the remaining balance is deducted by the fraudsters upfront as interest. However, when making the payment, a total of 3,000 must be paid. This amount must be repaid within seven days. Failure to do so will result in the collection of double the interest. Furthermore—even after the loan process is completed and the borrowed funds have been repaid—money may be credited back into our bank account without our knowledge. In many instances, we do not receive an SMS notification regarding this transaction. However, if we check our bank

36-yr-old dies after delivery, hubby claims negligence

Salem: FOLLOWING the death of a 36-year-old woman after delivering her second child at the Mettur District Headquarters Hospital, her husband has sought police action and an investigation into the death. The deceased has been identified as S Kalaiselvi, a resident of Chekkanoor in Mettur. Her husband, M Sasikumar (40), said the couple has a seven-year-old daughter. She was admitted to the hospital on March 31 for delivery and had been under inpatient care since. On April 4, around 8 pm, she went into labour and delivered a baby girl. However, within an hour of the delivery, her husband was informed that she had died. Sasikumar alleged that the death was due to medical negligence and claimed there was an absence of adequate doctors at the time of treatment. Sasikumar has filed a complaint at the Mettur police station. Police sources said a postmortem was conducted on the body, and it was handed over to the family on Sunday. Responding to the allegation, Joint Director of Health Services, Salem, Dr SP Nandhini said, "The absence of doctors cannot be alleged as the full medical team, including the duty doctor, anaesthetist, physicians and obstetrician, was present with the patient. The delivery took place around 8.30 pm on Saturday, and within 15 minutes, the patient had a postpartum collapse and went into cardiac arrest. The exact cause can be ascertained only after the postmortem report."

'Work and Commuting Choices Predispose Urban Men to Obesity'

New Delhi: A new nationwide study reveals that the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai have emerged as major hubs for 'abdominal obesity' among both men and women. The primary reason for this is the creation of an environment conducive to weight gain, driven by sedentary jobs involving prolonged sitting, heavy reliance on motorized transport, and the easy availability of packaged foods. Published in the journal *Nature & Scientific Reports*, the study identifies a rising trend of abdominal obesity across the country; however, this increase is not uniform. Instead, it follows a distinct pattern shaped by geographical location and gender. Based on data from the 5th round of the National Family Health Survey (2019-2021), the study was conducted using information gathered from over 700,000 individuals across 707 districts. The study indicates that more than half of Indian women aged 15-49 (56.6%) and nearly half of Indian men aged 15-54 (48.9%) are affected by abdominal obesity. This signals a concerning trend with long-term implications regarding the prevalence of non-communicable diseases. "We find no grounds to interfere with the order passed by the Gujarat High Court in this case on its merits." — Supreme Court Manickam Tagore states that the new legislation will adversely impact the interests of the southern states.

The BJP intends to deny reservation benefits due to women belonging to the OBC category: Congress alleges. Despite substantial financial allocations to the pharmaceutical, fertilizer, and petrochemical sectors, their actual utilization remains low: Parliamentary Committee Report. The Central Government has formulated draft rules to control oil lumps washing ashore in coastal areas. An Indian Navy ship has docked at a Tanzanian port for strategic exchanges and Yoga sessions. The Supreme Court has ordered a couple to share joint custody of their son until a Canadian court delivers its final verdict. 'Work and commuting choices are predisposing urban men to obesity.' Priyanka Gandhi Vadra @priyankagandhi Wishing everyone a very Happy Easter. May love, kindness, and compassion guide us through these trying times. Easter reminds us that light will triumph over darkness. Shivraj Singh Ch-

ouhan @ChouhanShivraj I offer my heartfelt tributes to the great freedom fighter Jagjivan Ram on his birth anniversary. The service you rendered to the nation will continue to inspire us forever. Today's insights: In India, 56.6% of women and 48.9% of men exhibit abdominal obesity. Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai are the key hotspots for abdominal obesity. In the northern states, the prevalence of this condition is significantly higher among both men and women. **Waistline Watch:** Although the prevalence is currently low in Central India, the risk is on the rise. In Eastern India, mixed trends are observed, with an increase noted in urban areas. Due to a combination of biological and social factors, women are disproportionately affected compared to men. The incidence of disease

such as diabetes and heart disease is on the rise. Led by researchers from the Health Systems Transformation Platform in New Delhi, this study has revealed significant geographical disparities. While abdominal obesity is observed at high rates among both men and women in northern states—such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Delhi—the situation in Central India is starkly different. Districts within Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and certain parts of Maharashtra have recorded relatively lower levels of abdominal obesity. However, the study cautioned that this advantage may not endure, noting that as cities expand and lifestyles evolve, these regions too could soon follow the same trajectory as the North. The primary reason for the rising prevalence of abdominal obesity among both men and women in the northern states is their diets, which are heavily laden with fats and refined carbohydrates. Concurrently, physical labor has declined drastically, giving way to mechanization and sedentary, desk-based occupations. In certain communities, a larger body size is still perceived as a symbol of prosperity. Eastern India presents a mixed picture; in states such as Bihar and Jharkhand, the prevalence of this condition remains low due to persistent poverty and malnutrition.



Do Not Be Complacent

As far as loan applications are concerned, there is no such thing as a truly "authorized" app. Fraud rings employ various tactics to trick us into downloading these applications. Specifically, if we are searching for information related to a hospital—and either fail to find it or experience a delay in doing so—these fraudsters have configured their systems to immediately display a prompt. This prompt claims that the specific hospital-related details we are seeking are contained within a particular app, urging us to download it to access that information. Believing that we are indeed downloading content related to the specific hospital we searched for, we proceed to download the app. The moment the download is complete, all the funds in our bank account are drained away. Similarly, when it comes to loan applications, the act of downloading them results in the theft of all our personal data. Even if we initially borrow a small sum—thinking it is a trivial amount—and successfully repay it, many people subsequently find themselves trapped and unable to extricate themselves from these lenders. Therefore, the public must not be complacent or dismissive simply because the amount involved seems small.

been extensively defrauding individuals in the southern states, information has now begun to surface indicating that China is operating in the background of these activities. In this context, Chinese nationals are developing loan applications and distributing them via the Google Play Store. In connection with this, four Chinese nationals who were lying low in Bengaluru were arrested two years ago. Their accomplice managed to flee to Singapore. Statements obtained from the arrested individuals have revealed that the money swindled through these loan apps is being channeled to China, and that a massive network is operating behind this scheme. Therefore, it is advisable for the general public to exercise caution regarding this matter.

What Needs to Be Done

In most cases, when these loan apps disburse a loan, they simultaneously request—under the guise of a "guarantee"—three additional mobile phone numbers. We typically provide the numbers of our spouse, family members, or friends. They securely store these numbers; subsequently, if a problem arises—specifically if the borrower fails to answer their phone or switches it off—they contact the additional numbers obtained earlier and proceed to threaten those individuals. Therefore, to escape their clutches, one should, as far as possible, change the three mobile numbers that were originally provided. Furthermore, one must freeze their bank account; only then can one prevent the fraudulent syndicate from depositing money into the account. Additionally, steps must be taken to completely block them from contacting you in any manner. They will likely attempt to contact you for a period of a few months; however, if they are unable to establish contact after that time, they will eventually leave you alone.

Police Advisory

When downloading loan applications, the lending institution gains access to all the data stored on our phones—including contact numbers, photographs, videos, and other personal information. If we fail to repay the loan amount within the stipulated timeframe, the lenders may exploit this access to create morphed, obscene images of the borrower and use them to issue threats. Consequently, many individuals, overwhelmed by mental distress, have resorted to suicide. Therefore, members of the public are strongly advised to refrain—to the greatest extent possible—from downloading loan applications that are unfamiliar to them or that pose potential risks. Furthermore, if anyone threatens you in connection with such matters, you must immediately visit the nearest police station to file a complaint; under no circumstances should you contemplate taking any drastic or wrongful steps. The police station will provide you with the necessary guidance and assistance. Furthermore, if individuals are misrepresenting and circulating photographs of you or your family members, you must first learn to handle the situation with composure. It was stated that, with the assistance of the police, it is certainly possible to extricate oneself from such fraudulent situations.

Fake Numbers

The individuals associated with predatory lending apps—who frequently contact the public—have configured their networks to appear as though they are calling from countries such as Pakistan or Bangladesh. In most instances, none of the mobile numbers they use are genuine. Furthermore, it is difficult to contact them whenever one attempts to do so.

amount they demand, they will morph photographs of women found on our mobile phones—superimposing our image onto them—and proceed to send these morphed, obscene images to many of our relatives. This creates a massive crisis. At that point, they will contact us again and issue threats, demanding that we pay the money immediately; otherwise, they warn, they will continue sending these photographs to every single contact stored in our mobile phone. Terrified by this, many people end up paying the money. So-

me change their mobile phone numbers. There have even been instances where individuals, in desperation, have smashed their mobile phones and thrown them away. Subsequently, if a complaint is lodged with the police, the officers typically offer advice such as: "Either pay the money or don't—it is up to you—but you should simply change your mobile phone number." However, even if we change our mobile phone number, they will have already secured and retained the details associated with our bank accounts. Consequently, a situation arises where one's bank account also gets frozen. The only way to escape this predicament is to change one's mobile phone number and simultaneously freeze the associated bank account. In this manner, a gang hailing from a northern state has been defrauding numerous individuals across Tamil Nadu, engaging in financial extortion through this novel type of scam. People have been filing complaints regarding this issue at police stations across the state. However, since the perpetrators of these scams are predominantly based in northern states, the police face various legal and logistical hurdles in

traveling there to apprehend them. Consequently, the police are advising affected members of the public—warning them against accepting money through such applications in the future—before sending them on their way. Notably, almost everyone who falls victim to these predatory loan applications is well-educated. Believing they lack funds for urgent necessities, they turn to the wrong applications and get trapped; subsequently, finding themselves unable to extricate themselves, they ultimately manage to escape the situation by changing their mobile phone numbers with the assistance of the police department. While several individuals had already committed suicide due to these predatory loan apps, a recent incident in Egmore—where a young man left behind a poignant suicide note before taking his own life—has caused widespread grief. Following this, Gopinath (33), a resident of Pudupet who worked at a travel agency, committed suicide by hanging himself two days ago after updating his WhatsApp status to read, "I am going to commit suicide." Upon investigating the matter, the Egmore police discovered that Gopinath had obtained a loan of ₹50,000 through an app called "Quick Cash." It appears that he had subsequently repaid the loan amount. However, the lenders continued to harass and threaten him repeatedly, demanding additional interest payments. When he failed to pay the extra amount, they morphed his photograph into an obscene image and circulated it via WhatsApp to his relatives and friends. It has now come to light that Gopinath took his own life, unable to bear the humiliation caused by this act. Gopinath's mother, Dhanalakshmi—who is now bereaved—stated: "We pledged our jewelry to repay a loan that had been taken through a mobile application. Even after the money was repaid, individuals from northern states continued to harass us, repeatedly demanding more funds. Amidst this situation, they morphed my son's photograph into an obscene image and sent it to his office colleagues and friends who were listed in his mobile phone contacts. Heartbroken by this, Gopinath wept incessantly. We tried our best to console and reassure him. However, he has now taken his own life," she said, weeping as she spoke. Many others currently find themselves in similar circumstances, driven to the brink of suicide. If a complete stranger offers to lend us money—especially when those funds are credited to our bank account within a mere minute—it is a situation that warrants extreme caution.

'India's Unity Rests on Equal Respect for All Its Regions': Pinarayi Vijayan

New Delhi: Emphasizing that the upcoming delimitation process requires nuanced scrutiny rather than blind acceptance, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan asserted on Sunday that states which have successfully controlled and stabilized their populations must be provided with constitutional guarantees. Speaking in an exclusive interview with this newspaper, Vijayan described Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance—that southern states would not lose their existing number of parliamentary constituencies—as a clever play on words designed to mask an injustice. Responding to Modi's remarks, Vijayan noted, "The central issue facing the Indian Republic is not merely the total number of constituencies a state holds; rather, it is the proportional representation that state secures within the Union, and its comparative political significance."

Speaking at an election campaign rally in Kerala on Saturday, Modi had stated that the number of Lok Sabha constituencies would not be reduced in Indian states that have successfully controlled their populations. Furthermore, the Prime Minister indicated that the total number of constituencies would be increased to ensure that states across the country benefit. Emphasizing the need for consensus, Vijayan argued that until all states achieve population stabilization, the ratio of constituencies among states should be maintained based on the 1971 census figures. "Any increase in the total number of constituencies must be designed in a manner that does not diminish the comparative strength of states that excel in human development indices. The Union Government cannot unilaterally impose a decision of such significance. This decision



must be arrived at based on a consensus reached through the Inter-State Council and Parliament, in a way that respects the diversity and sovereign rights of all constituent states. If the Union Government proceeds with constituency delimitation solely on the basis of current population statistics, it would effectively amount to punishing states—such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and others—that have earnestly implemented national policies regarding population control and

social development," he stated. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan also expressed his concerns regarding the proposal of a scheme to increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies by a uniform 50 percent across all states. "In such a scenario, even if Kerala's representation were to rise to 30 seats, the strength of a state like Uttar Pradesh would multiply manifold, potentially reaching 120 seats or more. This would ultimately result in the systematic dilution of South India's democratic voice," he observed. Vijayan further noted that, by tilting the balance of power heavily in favor of a specific region, the Union Government appears to be conveying the message that the developmental strides achieved by South India—through decades of investment in the health and education sectors—are now

being viewed merely as a 'political liability.' "This is not a 'fair delimitation of constituencies'; rather, it is a 'demographic conspiracy' that undermines the very fundamental principles of federalism," he asserted categorically. Going beyond mere assurances, Vijayan urged the Union Government to provide a firm, constitutional guarantee ensuring that no state would suffer a diminution in its relative political influence as a consequence of its success in social governance. "India's unity rests upon the equal respect accorded and the sharing of power extended to all its diverse regions, irrespective of the size of their populations. The Prime Minister must ensure that the principle of 'political equality' applies fully to the rights of those states that have spearheaded the nation's path of progress," he stated.

Supreme Court Directs Couple to Share Joint Custody of Son Until Canadian Court Issues Verdict

New Delhi: In a matrimonial dispute case, and keeping the welfare of the child in mind, the Supreme Court recently issued a directive to a couple. Accordingly, the Supreme Court directed that both the husband and wife shall hold joint custody of their son until the father (the petitioner) approaches the Canadian court and seeks a modification to the order previously issued by that court. "The petitioner (the husband—Shripal Shah) is granted liberty to seek a modification to the order issued by the concerned Canadian court. Until such time—and as an interim arrangement that shall not prejudice the arguments of either party regarding the merits of the case, based on the application the petitioner intends to file before the Canadian court—the first respondent (the wife—Dillana Shah)

and the petitioner shall hold joint custody of the child," observed a bench comprising Justices M.M. Sundresh and N. Kotiswar Singh. According to the details of the case, Shripal and Dillana were married in Canada in 2018. In 2020, a son was born to them in Canada; with the consent of both parties, an OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) card was obtained for the child. During the COVID-19 pandemic period (from May 2020 to April 2022), the couple and their child resided at their home in Canada. Shortly thereafter, matrimonial disputes began to arise between the couple. Subsequently, the mother approached the Canadian court—and later the Gujarat High Court—to initiate legal proceedings. On behalf of the father, Senior Advocate Anil Malhotra appeared

and argued before both the Gujarat High Court and the Supreme Court. However, the Supreme Court declined to interfere with the verdict delivered by the Gujarat High Court. In its judgment, the Gujarat High Court had observed, "The father is at full liberty to approach the Canadian Court—where proceedings are currently pending—to seek redressal for his grievances, including his rights of visitation and custody of the child." The Supreme Court stated, "We find no grounds whatsoever to interfere with the merits of the order passed by the High Court." While dismissing the Special Leave Petition (SLP) filed by the father, the Supreme Court further clarified that the mother is at liberty to approach the Gujarat High Court regarding the release of the child's passport and OCI card.

With Nitish Heading to the Rajya Sabha on April 10, the Path is Cleared for a BJP Leader to Assume the Chief Minister's Post

Bihar Party Leader States that NDA Leaders Will Decide on the New Chief Minister's Name After the Swearing-in Ceremony

Patna: Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar is set to take his oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha on April 10; this move will pave the way for the formation of a new government in the state, Bihar BJP President Sanjay Saraogi stated on Sunday. Speaking to reporters, Saraogi noted that Nitish Kumar—who was elected as a Rajya Sabha member on March 16—will be sworn in as a member of the Parliament's Upper House on April 10. He further added that, subsequently, senior leaders from the BJP and its NDA alliance partners would convene to select the leader who is to be chosen as the next Chief Minister. A meeting of the State Cabinet has been convened for Wednesday; this is expected to be the final Cabinet meeting held during Nitish Kumar's tenure as Chief Minister. Following his election to the Rajya Sabha, Nitish

Kumar resigned from his position as a member of the Bihar Legislative Council on March 30. "This will be the last Cabinet meeting in which Nitish Kumar participates," a senior BJP leader confirmed. Prior to departing for New Delhi on April 9, Nitish Kumar has also called for a meeting of JD(U) leaders on April 6. Party sources indicated that during this meeting, JD(U) leaders would discuss the party's future strategies following Nitish Kumar's resignation as Chief Minister, as well as the role Nitish Kumar would play in the new Cabinet, in which a BJP member is set to assume the Chief Minister's office. Upon his return from Delhi, Nitish Kumar will step down from the post of Chief Minister. According to sources within the BJP's inner circle, it is expected that Nitish Kumar will step down as Chief Minister on April 12, and a meeting

of BJP and NDA leaders will be held on April 14. A new government will be formed following the conclusion of the meeting of the NDA legislative party leaders. "All arrangements have been finalized. This is merely a procedural formality; the name of the next Chief Minister will be announced shortly," they stated. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha—who also holds the portfolio of Minister for Revenue and Land Reforms in Nitish's cabinet—sought to downplay speculations regarding the next Chief Minister. "The NDA is currently in power in Bihar, and it will continue to remain so. Within the NDA alliance, there is no 'Big Brother' or 'Little Brother'; a 'Brother' is simply a brother," he told reporters. However, Sinha denied reports suggesting that he is in the race for the Chief Minister's post.

3 Arrested in Bihar: Gun and Ammunition Recovered from Madrasa; Special Investigation Launched

Patna: Three individuals have been taken into custody for allegedly possessing a gun and ammunition at a madrasa located in Kawandira village, within the jurisdiction of the Chakia police station in Bihar's East Champaran district. Acting on intelligence inputs, the police conducted a surprise raid on the madrasa. During the raid, officers arrested three individuals found in possession of a country-made pistol and live ammunition. The police have launched an intensive investigation to determine the source of these weapons and the purpose for which they were being stored at the premises, known as 'Islamia Madrasa.' East Champaran District Superintendent of Police (SP), Swarn Prabhat, confirmed the police action. He further stated that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been co-

nstituted to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the matter. Asgar Ali, a local resident of the area, alleged that illegal activities had been taking place at the concerned madrasa for a long time, claiming that criminals involved in the illicit arms trade frequently gathered there to finalize sales deals. SP Swarn Prabhat stated that the police initiated this operation based on specific intelligence received regarding this matter. He confirmed that three individuals have been taken into custody for questioning and that a thorough examination of the madrasa's operations is currently underway. Preliminary investigations have revealed that the premises were indeed being utilized for the buying and selling of weapons, and served as a rendezvous point for suspicious individuals. The Superintendent

of Police further stated that the process of verifying the backgrounds of the individuals currently held in custody for interrogation is underway. Given that CCTV cameras had been installed within the Madrasa premises, the police are currently scrutinizing the recorded footage. Furthermore, a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team and a sniffer dog squad have been summoned to assist with this investigation. The police are also conducting inquiries to determine whether the three individuals currently in custody have any links to the 'Popular Front of India' (PFI) organization. It is noteworthy that, earlier, a joint team comprising the Sakhya police and the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) had arrested a key administrator of the PFI from this very Madrasa.

People Evacuated from a School in Moscow Drone Attack on Fuel Depot in Russia; Oil Refinery Catches Fire



Moscow, April 5: Russian officials stated on Sunday that a fuel leak occurred at Primorsk, Russia's Baltic Sea port, while a fire broke out at the NORSI oil refinery following a drone attack. Over the past month, Ukraine has intensified its attacks on Russia's energy infrastructure, aiming to disrupt Russia's primary sources of revenue and diminish its military capabilities. The 'Reuters Iran Briefing' newsletter provides you with continuous updates and analysis regarding the latest developments related to the conflict involving Iran. Alexander Drozdenko, the Governor of the northwestern Leningrad region, initially reported that a pipeline rupture had occurred at Primorsk, one of Russia's key oil export hubs. Subsequently, in a post published via the Telegram app, he clarified that the oil pipeline itself had not been damaged; rather, the fuel leak resulted from shrapnel—metal fragments scattered during an attack on a fuel depot within the port area—striking the facility. Primorsk, one of the country's largest export gateways, has the capacity to handle up to 1 million barrels per day. Commercial satellite imagery from the U.S., analyzed by Reuters on Thursday, indicated that at least 40 percent of the port's storage facilities were damaged during drone attacks launched by Ukraine last month. At one point last month, due to these attacks—coupled with a blockage in an oil pipeline in Ukraine and the seizure of oil tankers linked to Russia—approximately 40 percent of Russia's total oil export capacity was incapacitated. Furthermore, on Sunday, Gleb Nikitin, the Governor of the Nizhny Novgorod region, announced via Telegram that a fire had broken out at NORSI—Russia's fourth-largest oil refinery—following a drone attack, and that two sections of the facility had been struck. Noting that a power station and several residential homes were damaged during the incident, he added that, according to preliminary reports, no injuries had been sustained. Separately, Russia's TASS news agency reported on Sunday—citing official sources—that approximately 100 people were safely evacuated from a military school in Moscow following a fire at the facility. The report also stated that, according to preliminary information, no individuals currently remain trapped inside the building.

Falling Cherry Blossom Trees Raise Concerns

Tokyo: Many of Tokyo's famous and iconic Somei Yoshino cherry blossom trees were planted during Japan's post-war boom in the 1960s, and they are now aging and becoming frail. Some trees have already fallen, and many others require structural support. As the Japanese people celebrate the season of their beloved flower, this situation is sparking concerns regarding safety. On Thursday, two cherry blossom trees toppled over; one fell in Kinuta Park in central Tokyo, and the other collapsed along the Chidorigafuchi Green Way. The tree in Kinuta Park damaged a fence, while the other tree nearly fell into the Imperial Palace moat; fortunately, no one was injured in either incident. The tree in Kinuta Park stood 18 meters tall with a trunk diameter of 2.5 meters. Officials stated that it was one of the oldest trees in the park, believed to be over 60 years old. In March, another old cherry tree in the park toppled over, injuring a passerby. Masakazu Noguchi, a Tokyo metropolitan official responsible for public parks, reported that 85 trees fell across Tokyo's parks last year—injuring three people—and that many of these were cherry trees. During 'Hanami'—the season for viewing cherry blossoms—people gather beneath the trees; the falling of these trees has put officials in Tokyo—the birthplace of this specific cherry blossom variety—on high alert. Last month, Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly member Yutaka Kasama expressed con-



cern on social media, stating, "(At Kinuta Park) cherry blossom trees with partially exposed roots or visibly rotting sections appear dangerous." Furthermore, he called for the implementation of robust safety measures rather than the immediate felling of the trees. Key factors contributing to the deterioration of cherry blossom trees include advanced age and decay caused by internal fungal growth. Arborist Hiroyuki Wada noted that signs such as excessive leaning, or the presence of cavities or mushrooms at the base of the trees, are indicators to watch for in order to identify potentially hazardous trees. He added that risks are heightened when rainwater accumulates within the tree trunks following rainfall. "Many of the trees we encounter in our daily lives were planted during the post-war era; having now reached an age of 70 to 80 years, they are losing their

structural integrity," he said. He further pointed out that these trees are also being adversely affected by the intense summer heat and prolonged periods of dry weather. "I hope that through what is currently happening to these highly symbolic cherry blossom trees, people will be prompted to reflect on the issue of climate change," he stated. Following incidents that occurred in March—and prior to the commencement of the cherry blossom viewing season—officials conducted health inspections of trees across Tokyo's major parks. At Kinuta Park, officials carried out preliminary inspections on over 800 cherry trees. They removed several trees and placed warning signs near others. However, no warning signs had been placed near the tree that toppled over on Thursday. "At present, the measures we are implementing are largely temporary in nature,

rather than fundamental interventions such as replanting trees," said Noguchi. "Since we cannot definitively guarantee that the environment is entirely safe—even after conducting inspections—we urge visitors to the park to exercise extreme caution." At Inokashira Park—one of Tokyo's most popular cherry blossom viewing spots—dozens of aging cherry trees and their branches have been cut down and removed over the past few years for reasons related to public safety and a 'Safe Tree Restoration Plan.' Observing the empty spaces surrounding a pond that was once completely enveloped by blooming pink blossoms, some visitors took to social media to express their regret.

Wada notes that an effective restoration plan is essential to preserve the cherry blossoms and the picturesque scenery surrounding them. Although reports regarding falling cherry trees are concerning, cherry blossom

enthusiasts stated that they did not wish to miss the opportunity to view these delicate pink blooms, which last for only a very brief period. "I do feel a bit apprehensive; however, I believe that as long as we stand a safe distance away from the base of the trees, it should be safe," said Lisa Suzuki. Another visitor, Akira Kamiyashiki, mentioned that he had come to the park with his daughter—despite safety concerns—because rain was expected over the weekend. "Now that I have seen the warning signs advising people not to approach the trees, I feel that it is safe," he said. Cherry blossoms—or 'Sakura'—are the most cherished flowers among the Japanese people. These blooms typically reach their full splendor from late March through early April, coinciding with Japan's celebration of the start of the new academic and business year. Many Japanese people take great pleasure in strolling beneath the shade of these trees or enjoying a picnic.

