IN A FOUR-PART SERIES, THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS TAKES A LOOK AT THE DEVELOPMENTAL PRESSURES ON VEMBANAD WETLAND

Reema Narendran | ENS T'Puram, March 15

IT is a scene of absolute destruction. Acres and acres of tree stumps that look as if ravaged by a massive fire. Just across the road, there is a similar scene with dead, black trees with patches of an unhealthy green at the centre. Migratory birds sit atop the stumps, looking perplexed at what was once home to their parents and grandparents. Migrant workers fish amidst the dead

That such an appalling thing happening in Kerala, in the SEZ area of Puthuvypeen in the Vembanad wetland, should be a shame not only to the Forest or Finance Minister but also to the whole Left Government.

is the mode of destruction. Residents of the area allege that the mangroves were poisoned with

high concentrations of a herbicide to effect a slow death. It was done in such a way that the mangroves right in the core area were first poisoned, and then in concentric circles and finally in the periphery.

The whole area looked green and healthy from outside for a long time, until the mangroves in the periphery started wilting. By then, they get labelled as 'dying mangroves', making it too late to save the clump. Earlier, a large section of the mangroves were destroyed for the construction of a road right through

them, and now it is the turn of the mangroves on both the sides of the road. What is ironical is that the Rs 450 crore office complex of the Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology is What is even more disgusting coming up on the land cleared of mangroves.

> The law insists that mangroves should be conserved even while



taking up developmental projects. However, no regulatory norms were considered when the mangroves at Valanthakkad were mercilessly chopped.

"When most tropical countries are struggling hard to rehabilitate mangroves along their coastal shelter-belts, mangroves are being systematically decimated in the name of development along the Kochi and Malabar coasts, said scientist and RARS director K G Padmakumar.

In Kerala, the area covered with mangroves has dwindled to 1,500 acres from the original

70,000 hectares. Of what is remaining, the largest group is at Valanthakkad, which has species like avicennia officionalis, rhizophora apiculata, bruguiera and a number of mangrove associates.

When the tsunami struck in 2004, it was these mangroves which absorbed the shock of the waves. It is true that roads are necessary for the industries in the are to function, but one road would have been more than enough. You have two roads here passing right through the mangroves, and a coastal highway is coming up just 2 km away. Further, the levelling of the land on both the sides of the road is continuing. If the authorities had done some kind of planning the mangroves on either side of the roads could have been saved," said Major Moosankutty, a resident of the area.

A total of 23 acres of the mangrove ecosystem were wiped off



What is left of a mangrove ecosystem at Puthuvypeen

from Puthuvypeen. Complaints were sent to the Malayattoor DFO by Yesudas of Varappuzha and C M Joy, but to no avail.

The Forest Department states destruction of mangroves takes and even then the CZRA can only place in areas assigned as forest direct the police to take action as

land and those coming under the

Coastal Zone Regulation Authority(CZRA). The CZRA can take action only if the mangrove is situated withthat it can take action only if the in 500 metres of the coastline,

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IN connection with the dou-

bling work between Ernaku-

lam and Mulanthuruthi,

Thiruvananthapuram Rail-

way Division has provided

it does not have any regulatory power. Consequently, the state is still in a quandary as to whom the mangroves belong and who is responsible for its protection.

Penaeid prawns and fish vari eties like pearl spot, mullets, seabass and shrimps such as kara, naren and thelly live in the mangroves and the destruction of this vegetation would affect the fish resources of the state," said Cusat School of Industrial Fisheries B Madhusoodana Kurup, who is also advisor to the Fisheries Min-

With Vypeen being transformed into an industrial hub, the residents are moving out fast, but only after filling the mangrove marshes with a mixture of

entonite and waste. The study was conducted with a fellowship from the Centre for Science and Environment, New

Railway helpline numbers

(to be continued)

to know about the updated

information on the re-ar-

rangement of train services.

Passengers could obtain in-

formation from these num-

bers: Tvpm - 0471 2115261,

1072; Ernakulam - 0484

Guarded welcome by SDA Church leaders

Express News Service T'Puram, March 15

THE Seventh-Day Adventist Church leaders, even while welcoming the General Education Department's move to allow students within its fold to write SSLC exams after sunset, said they were unhappy that certain SSLC exams were being conducted on Saturdays.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church is a Christian denomination which is distinguished by its observance of Saturday, the original seventh day of the Judeo-Christian week, as the Sabbath. And on Sabbath Day, the devotees do not work during daytime. Two papers of the SSLC examination fall on Saturdays, Physics on March 20 and Biology on March 27. On March 15, The New Indian Express' had erroneously reported that the exemption of timing was offered to students belonging to Jehovah's Wit-

Express News Service

GUITARIST Prakash Krish-

nan, 36, was killed and 12

others injured in a road ac-

cident at Kilimanoor in the district in the wee hours of

Munch Star Singer Junior

fame Athira Murali, who

was also travelling in the

van involved in the accident. escaped unhurt. Her mother

Jessy is among those injured

the van lost control and fell

into a pond after hitting an

electric post. The van barrel-

rolled several times before

settling down. A nearby shop

was also damaged in the impact of the collision.

Those injured were rushed

to a nearby private medical

college hospital by the local people who initiated the res-

Prakash died on the spot.

The injured have been

identified as Shyju, 35, and

Rajan, 36, both hailing from

Kumarakom, Shirdin Thomas, 38, of Thrissur, Joy

Thomas, 38, of Vellayam-

balam, Ajith, 35, of Gowree-

sapattom, Jalaluddin, 28, of

Local sources said that

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Monday

in the mishap.

The Seventh-Day **Adventist Church** is distinguished by its observance of Saturday, the original seventh day of the Judeo-Christian week, as the Sabbath

nesses. `Last time when we met the Minister (M A Baby), he assured us that our children will be allowed to write exams after 6.30 p.m. He had also told us that henceforth exams will not be scheduled on Saturdays. But this time he has gone ahead and scheduled exams on Saturdays.

The exams could have been conducted on Fridays,' said Alex C Mathew of Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Kozhencherry.

Poozhanad, Nithin, 21, of Mavelikkara, Jessy (mother

of Athira), 37, of Thirumala.

Farsad, 29, of Nedumangad

Joy George, 50, of Nalanchi

ra, Suresh, 48, of Thaliyal

and Joy, 33, of Kattakkada.

involved in the accident

were members of a music

troupe which was returning

There are two versions

regarding the cause of the

accident: One is that the

driver of the van dozed off

and the other is that he lost

control of the vehicle while

trying to give way to a bus

which came in the opposite

mangalam, is survived by

wife Praseela and two chil dren, Sanker Krishna and

Giri. Prakash, who hailed

from a family with musical

background, was a member

of Trivandrum Springs, a

musical troupe. He had

worked with many leading singers and had also partici

pated in various stage shows

Prakash Krishnan, who was a resident of Sastha

direction.

after a stage show at Tiru valla on Sunday night.

Sources said that those

Guitarist killed, 12

injured in mishap



For Arun Chand, a student of Abraham Memorial Higher Secondary School, Thirumala, appearing for the SSLC examination was a fight against big hurdles. His hard work helped him overcome the disability caused by cerebral palsy. Arun dictated answers to his scribe Remya at the examination centre in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday

SSLC EXAM BEGINS

Express News Service T'puram, March 15

OVER four-and-a-lakh students from the state appeared for the SSLC examinations which commenced on carry water in unlabelled bottles inside

dents are appearing for the examinathe unprecedented decision tion this year at 2,729 centres, of which 11 are in the Gulf countries and nine in Lakshadweep.

The maximum number of students apearing for the examination is from St Mary's Higher Secondary School. Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram, A total of 1.344 students are appearing for the

Historic moment

For the first-time ever in the history of SSLC examinations which began on Monday, students have been allowed to the examination halls. Soaring heat has According to officials, 4,56,518 stu-prompted the State Government to take

> examination from this school while Jaybees English Medium School, Kannur, has the least number of candidates only three

> This year the number of speciallyabled students rose to a record number

of 5.775. The authorities have also provided interpreters and scribes for specially-abled students. They will be given an additional time of 15 minutes too. For the first-time ever, students were allowed to bring water bottles to the examination halls taking into account the unprecedented rise in temperature this year.

Additional drinking water was provided at the schools.

No unfortunate incident was reported on the first day of the examination, according to the officials.

Higher Secondary and Vocational Higher Secondary examinations too commenced on Monday

2100316 and 2100317 = ENS special telephone numbers

Obituary

cue operations.

Chinnamma Thomas



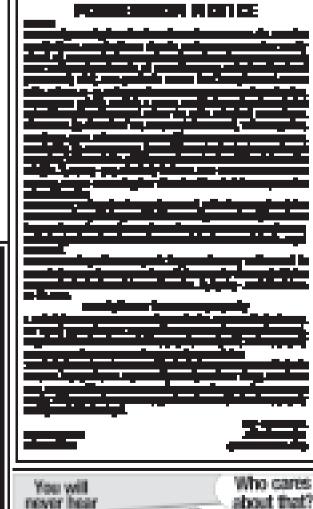
T'Puram: Chin namma Thomas, 88, mother of Dr Vinod Thomas, senior vice-president and IEG director of World Bank

Washington, and Dr Malini Thomas, retired principal of Calicut Medical College, died here on Monday morning.

A retired professor of zoology at the Government Women's College, she was staying at

Vazhuthacaud. The funeral will take place at CSI Christ Church, Palayam on March 17 at 12 noon = ENS





our readers

