90 pc of 7.55 lakh students clear WB class 12 board exam, students from dists figure among top 3

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

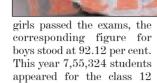
KOLKATA: Boys outshone girls in this year's Higher Secondary Examination in West Bengal, the results of which were declared on Wednesday.

That, despite the number of female examinees far outweighing the number of their male counterparts, which is a commendable feat in itself, at the state's school leaving exams which began on February 16 this year and concluded 13 days later.

Announcing the results 68 days after the conclusion of exams, the West Bengal Education authorities confirmed that 89.98 per cent of the students have cleared the test this year.

The performance is a marginal jump over last year's pass percentage which stood

Addressing a press conference, Council President Chiranjib Bhattacharya said that while 88.18 per cent of



He said that the Council will look into the reasons behind the success rate of girls dipping by almost four percentage points compared to the boys.

Bhattacharya said that 56 per cent of girls and 44 per cent of boys wrote the papers this year which was a noteworthy change in comparison to the gender ratio a decade ago where 55 per cent boys and 45 per cent girls had appeared for the HS exams.

Of the 58 students who featured in the top 10 ranks, 23 were girls, he said. adding that 42.9 per cent of students secured 60 per cent marks or above while 1.23 per cent examinees shone with 90 per cent marks or more in the top bracket.

Bhattacharya stated that Purba Medinipur topped the chart among all districts of Bengal in terms of the num-

Ramakrishna

president said.

Two girls, Pratichi Roy Talukdar from Sunity Academy in Coochbehar and Sneha Ghosh from Krishna Bhabini Nari Siksha Mandir of Hooghly jointly stood fourth with 493 marks each (98.6 per cent) and were declared as toppers among

Vivekananda Vidyamandir

of Malda clinched third rank

with 494 marks, the Council

Mission

Soumyadip told PTI that he wanted to study statistics. "I love reciting poems and am hooked to story books - both classics and contemporaries. I don't believe that one needs to study for long hours. It's just that you need to manage your time well," the second ranker said.

Barasat resident thanked his teachers at RKM, Narendrapur and his parents for their continued

Baby Forest Opens its First Flagship Store in Delhi's Select City Walk Mall

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI (INDIA): Baby Forest Ayurveda Pvt Ltd., a leading name in Ayurvedic baby care, has unveiled its stunning flagship store in Delhi's prestigious Select City Walk Mall. The store offers a unique sensory experience, showcasing the brand's commitment to blending luxury, sustainability, and traditional Indian wellness practices.

Upon entering the store, customers are greeted by a calming ambiance. Earthy tones and textures create a harmonious space, accented by artistic poles and carefully curated product displays. The serene environment reflects Baby Forest's deep connection to Ayurveda, the ancient Indian system of holistic health.

Holistic Baby Care on Display: The store showcases the brand's comprehensive range of baby care products, all meticulously crafted using Ayurvedic principles and natural ingredients. From gentle washes, nourishing hair oils, hydrating face cream, ayurvedic face wash to massage oils and specially designed BPA FREE patented feeding bottle, each item is imbued with the transformative power of Ayurveda.

A Journey of Discovery: The store layout is designed

es in the ongoing earnings season prompted investors to stay guarded. Also, with election season on, no one wants to place longish bets," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities

With support hovering around the 22,150 mark in the Nifty and global markets maintaining stability, there's a possibility of some consolidation, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Seoul ended with gains. European markets were trad-

ing with gains. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional

Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,668.84 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.65 per cent to USD 81.79 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark went lower by 383.69 points or 0.52 per cent to settle at 73.511.85 on Tuesday. The NSE Nifty declined 140.20 points or 0.62

to guide customers on a journev of discovery. Informative displays highlight the benefits of each product, allowing parents to make informed choices that align with their child's unique needs and principles. Avurvedic Knowledgeable staff is also available to answer questions and provide expert guidance.

More Than Just Products:

Forest's commitment to providing an exceptional customer experience. Here, luxurv meets sustainability and ancient wisdom to create a haven of holistic well-being for babies. The store serves as an invitation for parents to embark on a transformative journey, seamlessly integrating Ayurveda into the fabric of their baby's care.



Baby Forest's flagship store goes beyond simply selling products like bath ritual collection, everyday essentials, organic clothing, It also offers a captivating educational experience. Visitors can learn about the rich history and philosophy of Ayurveda, gaining a deeper appreciation for these time-honored practices. This holistic approach sets Baby Forest apart, empowering parents to embrace the power of Ayurveda in their child's well-

A Haven for Wellness: The flagship store marks Baby

Gagan Agarwal, founder of Baby Forest stated: "we are thrilled to bring the enchanting world of Baby Forest to the heart of New Delhi. The new store is a reflection of our dedication to providing a nurturing environment for both babies and new mothers. With the Delhi flagship store as a launchpad. Baby Forest plans to open 10 additional stores in major metro cities across India. This expansion signifies the brand's commitment to making its unique blend of Ayurvedic baby care accessi-

News channel cameraman killed in elephant attack; Kerala CM, LoP condole

PALAKKAD (KERALA): In a shocking incident, a cameraman of a leading Malayalam news channel was killed in a wild elephant attack while reporting in this north Kerala district on Wednesday.

A V Mukesh (34), working with Mathrubhumi News, was seriously injured in the elephant attack when he and the reporter were capturing visuals of the movement of the strayed elephant herd, channel sources said.

The tragedy struck the hapless cameraman when he was shooting the visuals of jumbos crossing a river in a place located between Malambuzha and Kanjikode.

It is an area that witnesses frequent straying of wild elephants, locals said. Though the reporter and

the driver of the vehicle could manage to run away to safetv. Mukesh was attacked and seriously injured by a jumbo. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but he could not be

saved, they said. fromHailing Parappanangadi district, Malappuram Mukesh had been working in the Palakkad bureau of the Mathrubhumi News for the

He had been part of the New Delhi bureau of the

channel for several years.

Mukesh also proved his skills in reporting by penning over 100 articles in Mathrubhumi online as part a column titled "Athijeevanam," in which he depicted the lives of marginalised people.

His colleagues remembered that his articles in the column helped invite attention of authorities and the general public to the plight of the poor and marginalised.

They also said Mukesh used to provide financial assistance to those persons whom he had mentioned in his column by collecting money from his salary. He is survived by his wife.

Meanwhile, many people including Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly V D Satheesan and ministers A K Saseendran, M B Rajesh, Saji Cherivan and others condoled the shocking demise of the cameraman.

"Heartfelt condolences on the sad death of Sri A.V columnist & Mukesh, Cameraman, @mathrubhuminews in an elephant attack. His writing reflected a deep commitment to the uplift of the poor. May his soul attain Mukti," Khan said, in a post on 'X

Stock markets edge down on selling in banking & IT shares, weak global cues

Avik Das from McWilliam

Higher Secondary School in

north Bengal's Alipurduar

district emerged as this

Das, an aspiring astro-

physicist, obtained 496

marks out of the maximum

500 which translates to 99.2

Narendrapur Ramakrishna

Mission Vidyalaya in South

24 Parganas secured the

second rank with 495 marks

Saha

topper,

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m HS}$

Bhattacharya declared.

per cent.

Soumyadip

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: Benchmark Sensex slipped by 45 points in volatile trade on Technologies, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv and ICICI Bank were the major laggards.

On the other hand, Tata

H1FY25, Nair added. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed

0.78 per cent and smallcap

Wednesday due to selling in private bank and IT shares amid weak Asian markets and continuous foreign fund out-

Declining for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 45.46 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 73,466.39. During the day, it declined by 437.93 points or 0.59 per cent to 73,073.92.

unchanged at 22,302,50.

Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Unilever, Bank. HCL

"The Indian market echoed

The NSE Nifty remained

From the Sensex basket,

Motors, Power Grid, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro and Maruti were among the gainers.

subdued investor sentiments akin to those of its Asian peers, and on worries about declining voter turnout. Despite domestic Q4 earnings largely meeting estimates, the earnings landscape appears to be moderating," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

A sector-specific action was visible in FMCG and auto stocks, aided by an expectation of a revival in rural demand in

index advanced 0.50 per cent. Among the indices, IT declined by 0.57 per cent, bankex by 0.38 per cent and

teck by 0.29 per cent.

Energy, industrials, utilities, auto, metal, power and services were among the gainers. "Investors traded with cau-

tion due to lack of fresh positive triggers and ended on a flat note with a slightly negative bias amid selective profit-taking in banking and IT stocks.

Firm European market cues also failed to fuel optimism, as no stoppage in foreign fund outflows and no major surpris

attitude of Rahul Gandhi's mentor: Sitharaman **STATE TIMES NEWS**

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister

Sitharaman on Wednesday lashed out at Congress leader Sam Pitroda for his 'racist' remark, saying it reveals the mindset and attitude of Rahul Gandhi's Pitroda, the head of the

Indian Overseas Congress, had triggered a controversy on Wednesday with his people of the east look like the Chinese and those of the south look like Africans" remarks.

In a post on X, Sitharaman retorted saying, "I am from South India. I look Indian! My team has enthusiastic members from north east India. They look Indian! My colleagues from west India look Indian!

"But, for the racist who $_{
m the}$ mentor@RahulGandhi we all look African, Chinese, Arab and the White! Thanks for revealing vour mindset

and your attitude. I.N.D.I

ble to parents nationwide.

alliance's shame!". Pitroda in a podcast interview to a media house had said: "We could hold

Pitroda's racist remarks reflects mindset,

the country as diverse as India together. Where people in the east look like the Chinese, people in the west look like the Arabs, people in the north look like, maybe, white and people in the south look like Africans. It does not matter. All of us are brothers and sisters. We respect different languages, different reli-

> different food. Dissociating the party from Pitroda's remarks, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on X: "The analogies drawn by Mr Sam Pitroda in a podcast to illustrate India's diversity are most unfortunate and unacceptable. The Indian National Congress completely dissociates itself from these

gions, different customs,

Forest fires: SC pitches for preventive steps, says cloud seeding, depending on rain god no solution

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said cloud seeding or "depending on rain god" is not the answer to the raging forest fires in Uttarakhand and that authorities will have to take preventive measures to tackle the problem. The Uttarakhand govern-

about the steps taken to control the forest fires and said 0.1 per cent of the wildlife cover in the state was on fire due to such incidents. The state government told a bench of Justices B R

ment apprised the apex court

Gavai and Sandeep Mehta that since November last year, there were 398 forest fires in Uttarakhand and five people were killed in such Deputy Advocate General

of Uttarakhand Jatinder Kumar Sethi told the court that all the fires were manmade. A total of 350 criminal cases have been lodged in connection with the forest fires, he said, adding that 62 people have been named in those.

"People say that 40 per cent of Uttarakhand is on fire, whereas 0.1 per cent of the wildlife cover was on fire. And all this was man-made. From November till today, we have 398 fires, all manmade," the counsel said.

The court was hearing an application that has raised the issue of raging forest

fires in Uttarakhand. During the hearing, the



bench told the state's counsel, "Cloud seeding or depending on the rain god is not the answer. He (applicant) is right in saying that you have to take preventive measures.

The state government placed before the bench an interim status report containing details of the various steps taken by authorities to deal with forest fires. Sethi said helicopters of the

Indian Air Force were also pressed into service to extinguish the fires "What is the number of

human lives lost?" the bench The counsel said five people

were killed due to the forest The bench sought to know how many animals were

killed in such incidents. The counsel said he will get the information and apprise the court.

A lawyer, who has filed an application for impleadment in the matter, told the bench that the state is painting a "very rosy picture" but media reports claim that the entire machinery involved in tackling forest fires is busy in

election-related work

"The state of affairs is pathetic. People who go to douse the fires do not even have proper equipment," he

Another counsel appearing in the matter said entire forests are covered with pine trees and that is the reason behind forest fires. "The British may have

introduced them but now their produce is being used by the country. We cannot eliminate those trees. And they cannot grow in the lower reaches," the bench observed, adding that no one is disputing that forest fires are a "serious problem".

It also referred to a recent news report on the possibility of rains in Uttarakhand.

The state's counsel said forest fires are not just peculiar to Uttarakhand but are reported from across the world.

The bench posted the matter for further hearing on May 15.

While hearing a petition on forest fires in 2019, the apex court had observed that such incidents pose a serious problem in hill states, especially

during summer, and the reason is the presence of a large number of pine trees, which are highly flammable.

It was hearing a plea moved by advocate Rituparn Uniyal seeking urgent steps to protect forests, wildlife and birds from wild fires in Uttarakhand, saying the number of such blazes has increased over the years and these incidents cause massive damage to the environment.

The petition has sought directions to the Centre, the Uttarakhand government and the principal chief conservator of forests in the hill state for making pre-fire arrangements and framing a policy to prevent such incidents.

"Forest fires Uttarakhand have been a regular and historic feature. Every year, forest fires in Uttarakhand cause great loss to the forest ecosystem, diversity of flora and fauna and economic wealth. Forest fire is one of the major disasters in the forests of Uttarakhand," the plea has said.

It has added that forests and wildlife are the most important natural resources and play a significant role in human life and environment.

"Forests are socially and environmentally interlinked with the people in the hilly areas, and play an important role in the economic welfare and development of the region," it has said.

CBI takes over probe in INLD leader Nafe Singh Rathee murder case



STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The CBI has taken over the investigation into the killing of the Indian National Lok Dal's Harvana unit president Nafe Singh Rathee and a party worker by unidentified gunmen in February in Bahadurgarh near Delhi, officials

During the attack, three private gunmen hired by Rathee for security had also sustained injuries when the assailants opened fire on the former

The Central Bureau of Investigation

(CBI) has re-registered the case on the recommendation of the Haryana government, the officials said, adding that it was routed to the agency by the Centre through a notification on April

The central probe agency has named seven accused, including former BJP MLA Naresh Kaushik, in its case, the officials said.

The other six accused are Karambir Rathee, Ramesh Rathee, Satish Rathee, Gaurav Rathee, Rahul and

Kamal, they said. They added that an FIR filed under

IPC sections of criminal conspiracy. murder, among others has been filed

analogies

against the accused in the case. The 67-year-old MLA from Bahadurgarh and INLD worker Jai Kishan were killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on Rathee's SUV on February 25. Rathee was elected from Bahadurgarh twice in 1996 and 2005.

The attack, which took place two months before the Lok Sabha elections, drew sharp criticism from the opposition parties which questioned the law and order condition in the BJP-ruled state.

According to the FIR, based on the statement of surviving driver Rakesh, a white-coloured car was following their vehicle. Rakesh tried to speed away but had to stop as the Barahi railway crossing was shut.

Suddenly, five assailants came out of the car and shouted that they teach them a lesson for their enmity with Satish, Karambir, Ramesh and Naresh and opened fire at them, Rakesh said in his complaint, which is a part of the CBI's FIR, the officials said.

Coaching class owner loses Rs 1.88 crore to stock trading WhatsApp group scam

STATE TIMES NEWS

THANE: A 48-year-old coaching class owner in Thane district was duped of more than Rs 1.88 crore in a share trading scam that started with the membership of a WhatsApp group, police said on Wednesday.

As per the complainant, an unidentified person added him to the WhatsApp group `STOCK Vanguard (F)' in March, said an official.

The group had 170 members and advice about share trading used to be posted there, he told police.

The complainant found the advice trustworthy and invested money in the recommended shares, following which he was added to another group, `STOCK-

Vanguard-VIP', the official said.

Three persons, who identified themselves as Isha, Divya, and Raj Rupani, contacted him, showed him some kind of 'SEBI certificate' to gain his trust, and told him that he could make huge profits by investing through an app called CINVEN/IC SERVICES, the complainant

He invested more than Rs 1.88 crore, but when he demanded his money back, there was no response, he

A case of cheating under Indian Penal Code section 420 (cheating) was registered at Vitthalwadi police station but no arrests have been made yet, officials said.