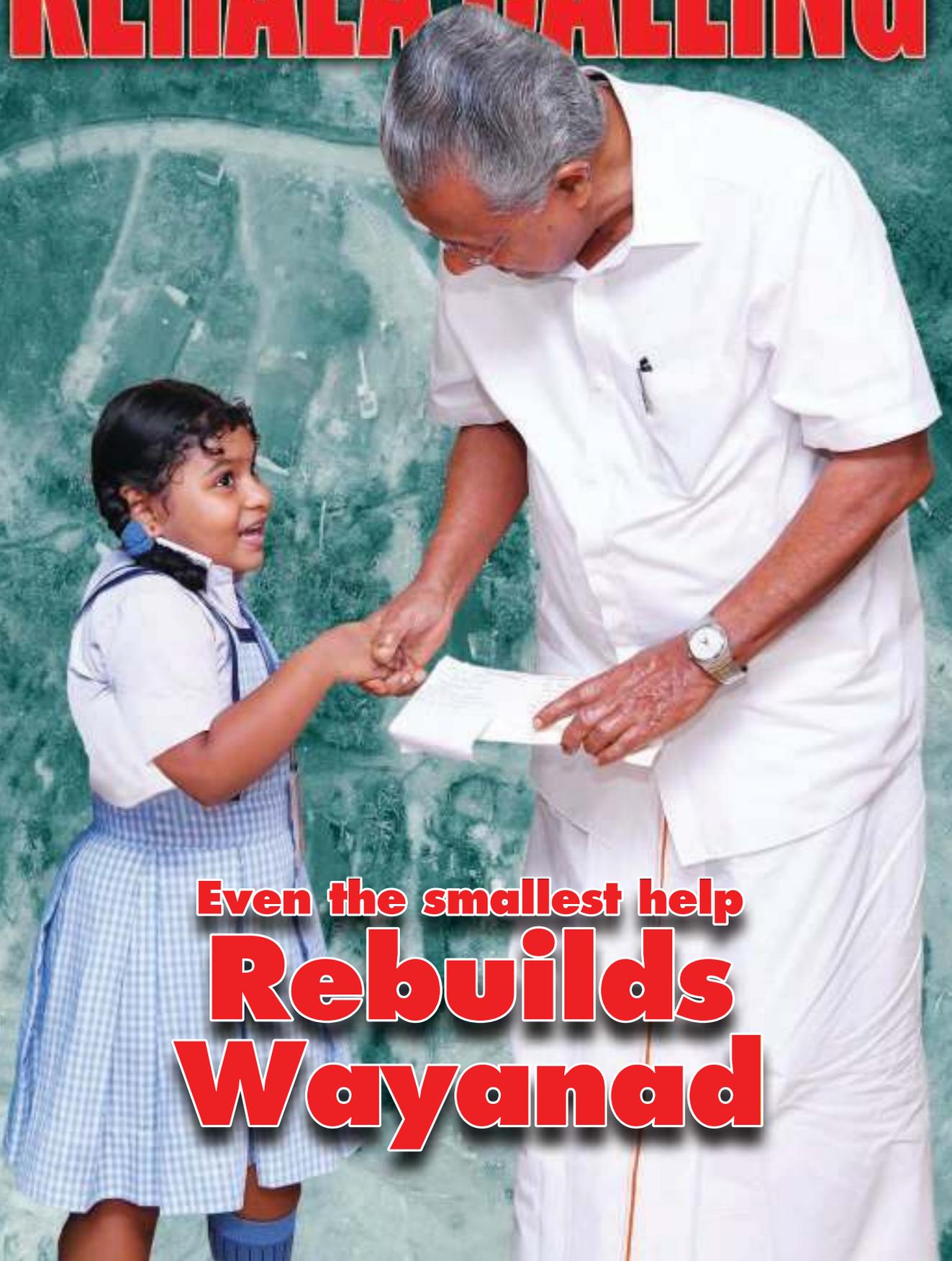


KERALA CALLING



Even the smallest help
**Rebuilds
Wayanad**

SALUTE

TO THE HEROES OF KERALA



Illustration: Rajeeshlal KVP



Let's Rebuild Wayanad

The recent landslides in Wayanad have shaken our state to its core, causing immense loss and suffering. Families have been torn apart, homes swept away, and entire communities are struggling to find their footing again. Yet, despite the gravity of this disaster, the people of Kerala have shown an incredible ability to unite and support each other, proving that even in the darkest times, our collective strength can light the way forward.

The immediate response to the tragedy has been nothing short of remarkable. The Indian Army swiftly constructed a Bailey bridge, providing a crucial lifeline to those stranded. The Fire and Rescue teams, the Kerala Police, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and countless volunteers comprising local authorities, have worked tirelessly to save lives and offer comfort to survivors. These efforts highlight the deep-seated values of solidarity and compassion that define Kerala's response to crises.

However, the road to recovery is long, and the challenges ahead are formidable. The people of Wayanad, who have lost so much, need our continued support to rebuild their lives. This is where we, as a community, must step in. By donating to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF), you are making the most direct and impactful contribution to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most. The CMDRF is a vital channel for providing immediate relief and supporting the ongoing efforts to help those affected by the disaster in Wayanad. Every donation, no matter the size, makes a tangible difference in helping the affected communities recover and regain stability after this devastating event.

The rehabilitation efforts extend beyond just addressing physical needs; they also focus on restoring hope and ensuring that the affected communities have the support they need to move forward. This includes providing medical care, psychological support, and educational resources to those who have been displaced. It is about rebuilding not just the physical, but also the social and emotional fabric of these communities.

Now is the time for us to act with purpose and determination. We must channel our empathy into action, contributing to the ongoing efforts to restore Wayanad to its former glory. Whether through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading the word, each of us can play a role in this collective mission.

Wayanad's recovery is not just a local issue; it is a reflection of the strength and resilience of Kerala as a whole. By standing together, we can ensure that this beloved district emerges stronger from this tragedy. Let us unite in our commitment to rebuild Wayanad, showing that Kerala's spirit of compassion and community is unbreakable.

T.V. SUBHASH IAS
EDITOR



KERALA CALLING

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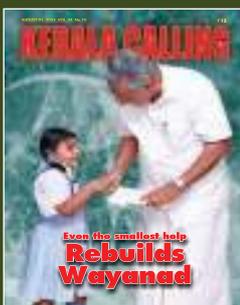
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TOGETHER WE REBUILD

Pinarayi Vijayan
Chief Minister

Wayanad needs our collective strength to rise from the ruins of this devastating calamity. Let's come together to rebuild lives and restore hope for a brighter future.



In the wake of the worst natural calamity in Kerala's history, which has devastated the district of Wayanad, the State has once again demonstrated its indomitable spirit of unity and resilience. The catastrophic event, marked by massive landslides and flash floods, has claimed over 200 lives. Yet, amidst this unprecedented disaster, the people of Kerala have stood united, displaying remarkable courage and compassion as they work tirelessly to support the rescue and rehabilitation efforts in the affected areas.

The landslides, which struck the villages of Mundakkai, Chooralmala, and Attamala in Meppadi Grama Panchayat, have caused widespread

Kerala Fire and Rescue Services, Kerala Forest Department, Kerala Police, the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Kerala Health Services, officials of the Revenue, LSG and Information and Public Relations Departments, KSEB and other allied state services need to be acknowledged for their unwavering assistance. The youth of Kerala once again proved their mettle by actively participating in the crisis response



devastation. In response, all government agencies and rescue services have been mobilised to save those trapped under the massive debris. A Cabinet Sub-Committee, comprising four ministers, has been formed to oversee and coordinate the rescue and relief operations in these areas. This effort has been further strengthened by the invaluable support of central agencies and neighbouring states.

The Government of Kerala extends its gratitude to the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force (IAF), the Indian Coast Guard, the Indian Navy, and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). The exemplary services rendered by our own services also need to be mentioned.

as volunteers. Sixteen relief camps have been set up in the affected regions, including nine shelters and seven rescue camps, to provide immediate relief to those in need.

The Health Department has acted swiftly and efficiently, establishing a temporary hospital at the Government Polytechnic College at Meppadi. At Chooralmala, temporary clinics were

set up in a madrassa and a church. Special medical teams, including forensic surgeons, were deployed to the relief camps, with a particular focus on preventing epidemics and providing care to pregnant women and children. The District Child Protection Unit of Wayanad, under the Women and Child Development Department, has initiated a programme called 'Kuttiyidam' within

in the neighbouring districts of Malappuram and Kozhikode. The Health department has ensured the availability of extra supplies, including 'Kanivu 108' ambulances, to support the ongoing efforts. The state control room at the Directorate of Health Services has been strengthened and is operational round the clock to coordinate these activities.

The State Government has also ensured the timely provision of food and water supplies to those affected and the rescue workers on the ground. Food is being prepared at the Community Kitchen located at the Meppadi Polytechnic, with the assistance of the Kerala Hotel and



the camps to alleviate the psychological stress experienced by children due to the disaster. A team of 121 licensed mental health professionals has been deployed to address the psychological trauma that may emerge in the weeks following the disaster, with a focus on long-term issues such as anxiety and depression.

In addition to these efforts, services have been made available at district hospitals

Restaurant Association, under the supervision of the Food and Safety Department. Unmanned aerial vehicles are being used to deliver these supplies across the difficult terrain.

The rescue mission, which commenced at dawn, was significantly bolstered by the rapid construction of a Bailey bridge by the Madras Sappers of the Indian Army. This 190-foot bridge has enabled the movement of large machinery from Chooralmala to Mundakkai, facilitating the rescue operations. The rescue efforts in Chooralmala were directly overseen by the Cabinet Sub-Committee and other officials who closely monitored the arrangements and issued

instructions as required. They also ensured the uninterrupted supply of fuel for the rescue vehicles.

The rescue operations were organised into six pre-determined sectors, with 40 teams using excavators and other machinery to clear debris and search the depths of the river. The search operations extended from the damaged buildings in Mundakkai to the surrounding areas. Specialised rescue teams, including K-9 dog squads and radar systems, were deployed in the sector areas to locate the missing. The radar systems provided by the Indian Air Force, including 1 ZAWER and four REECO from Siachen and Delhi, were

search operations, with additional support from eight police stations along the Chaliyar river for the search of missing persons. The KSEB ensured the swift restoration of electricity connections in the landslide-affected regions and guaranteed uninterrupted power supply to areas where survivors were being treated.

The people of Kerala have extended



instrumental in locating people trapped under the debris.

The collective efforts of the district administration, along with various government departments and non-governmental volunteer groups, have been exemplary. The Fire and Rescue Services were the first respondents on the scene and worked tirelessly to rescue people stranded across the river and transport rescue personnel and equipment. Scuba teams, special task forces, and rope rescue teams were deployed from all the districts in Kerala.

The Kerala Police played a critical role in the rescue mission and

their unwavering support and efforts in contributing to the rescue mission and the rehabilitation of those affected. The people's response, both in financial and non-financial terms, has been extraordinary. Volunteers have worked tirelessly in community kitchens to prepare meals for survivors and rescue workers, while others have actively participated in search, rescue and relief

operations. The global Malayali diaspora has also extended its support, contributing generously to and contributed financially to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF), with many promising to help rebuild houses for those who have lost their homes.

Kerala's collective response to this disaster has once again proven that our state will always stand united in the face of adversity.

of the landslides. A new township will be constructed for the people of the affected villages, ensuring that all necessary amenities are provided. The government is currently ensuring that the education of students at the Government Vocational Higher Secondary School, Vellarimala, is not disrupted, and necessary measures have been taken for speedy reissuance of certificates to those who have lost them in the disaster.

Funds from the CMDRF are disbursed to provide financial aid to those in distress so that they may have some solace. From 30 July 2024 onwards, all the donations received in it is being directed towards the ongoing rescue and rehabilitation efforts for the survivors of the Wayanad landslide. The



This spirit of cooperation and selflessness has been consistently demonstrated in the past too during the Ockhi Cyclone in 2017, Kerala floods and Nipah outbreak in 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic. These events bear witness to Kerala's inherent resilience and our innate ability to overcome any calamity that may strike us.

The State Government has planned extensive rehabilitation programmes for the survivors

government urges everyone to come forward and contribute to the CMDRF to aid in the rebuilding and restoration of Wayanad. Your contributions will directly support the ongoing rescue and rehabilitation efforts, providing much-needed relief to those who have lost everything.

Every donation, no matter the size, plays a vital role in helping us rebuild homes, restore communities, and bring hope back to the lives of those affected by this devastating calamity. Let us stand united in our commitment to rebuild Wayanad and ensure a better future for all.

CMDRF

Kerala's Lifeline for Transparent and Effective Disaster Relief

One of the most devastating disasters Kerala has witnessed, recently occurred in the Mundakkai and Chooralmala regions of Wayanad district. A vast area has virtually disappeared, along with homes, schools, roads, and essential livelihoods. Everything necessary for human life has been lost. The entire community must come together to rebuild these areas in the best



Amidst Wayanad's devastation, Kerala relies on the transparent and efficient Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund to rebuild lives and restore hope.

possible way. The support of society as a whole is crucial for the government's efforts to restore the lives of the people there.

However, in such a situation, it is vital to take seriously the attempts by some to undermine the unity of the community. There has been an increase in false propaganda, urging people not to contribute to the Chief Minister's



Distress Relief Fund. We must recognize these deceptive efforts. The reality is that the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund is implemented with complete transparency and subject to rigorous auditing. It is the most efficient means of providing aid to those who deserve it.

The beneficiaries of the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund include those affected by natural disasters, individuals seeking treatment

from around the world who care deeply for our land are being delivered by the government to the deserving hands.

The Pinarayi Vijayan government, which was elected in 2016, transformed the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund into a systematic and transparent mechanism, eliminating bureaucratic hurdles and delays that previously obstructed the timely disbursement of funds to those in need. Today, applicants no longer need to visit offices in person at any stage, from submitting the application to receiving the funds in their bank accounts. Eligible individuals can submit applications online or offline, through Akshaya



for serious illnesses, accident victims, and the dependents of those who have passed away. Additionally, the fund provides assistance to small businesses without insurance, those who lost their fishing equipment due to sea turbulence, and homeowners whose properties are damaged by fires. The contributions made by our beloved people

centres, representatives' offices, or by mail. No recommendations are required to receive financial assistance. Once an application is submitted, anyone can track its progress using the docket number provided.

Over the past seven and a half years, the government has disbursed ₹7,687 crore through the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund. On average, this government has allocated ₹338 crore annually. Since 2016, the government has implemented numerous measures to make the relief fund more efficient. Not only has the amount of assistance provided been increased, but the



CMDRF ALLOCATION

CMDRF Allotments (Amount in crores) (21-05-2021 to 04-07-2024)

Financial Year	Okhi	Flood	Covid	DBT Treatment Assistance	Allotments excluding Flood, Covid, DBT			Total Allotments
a	b	c	d	d	e		d + e	a+b+c+d+e
					DC	DEPTS		
2021-2022 (21-05-2021 - 31-03-2022)	-	377.59	211.99	287.51	2.25	54.65	344.41	933.99
2022-2023	0.37	370.52	90.17	214.31	63.24	56.09	333.64	794.7
2023-2024	0.05	99.75	25.83	135.01	15.35	12.58	162.94	288.57
2024-2025		9	52.96	20.7	1.25	-	21.95	83.91
Total	0.42	856.86	380.95	657.53	82.09	123.32	862.94	2101.17

CMDRF Allotments (Amount in crores) (25-05-2016 to 20-05-2021)

Financial Year	Okhi	Flood	Covid	DBT Treatment Assistance	Allotments excluding Flood, Covid, DBT			Total Allotments
a	b	c	d	d	e		d + e	a+b+c+d+e
2016 -17 (25/05/2016 – 31/03/2017)					111.56		111.56	111.56
2017-18	25.11				243.87		243.87	268.98
2018-19	85.92	1849.35		171.44	29.19		200.63	2135.9
2019-20	7.94	1334		187.62	22.01		209.63	551.57
2020-21		698.54	730.22	193.13	22.53		215.66	1644.42
2021-22 (01/04/2021 – 20/05/2021)				3.49				3.49
Total	118.97	3881.89	730.22	555.68	429.16		981.35	5715.92

(Amount in crores)

CMDRF- Contribution Received (From 25-05-2016 to 19-05-2021)	5636.53
Budget Provision	950
Total	6586.53
CMDRF- Fund Allotted Amount (From 25-05-2016 to 19-05-2021)	5715.92
Okhi Contribution (From 06-12-2017 to 26-07-2018)	108.59
Okhi Allotment (From 14-12-2017 to 11-12-2023)	119.37
Flood Contribution (From 27-07- 2018 to 26-03-2020)	4970.52
Flood Allotment (From 28-08-2018 to 04-07-2024)	4738.77
Covid Contribution (From 27-03-2020 to 29-07-2024)	1129.74
Covid Allocation (From 01-04-2020 to 04-07-2024)	1111.15

**CMDRF
Budget
Allocation**

Financial Year	Allocated Amount (in crores)
2016-17	200
2017-18	200
2018-19	150
2019-20	200
2020-21	200
2021-22	250
2022-23	250
2023-24	250
Total	1700

distribution process has also been made more transparent and streamlined. Additionally, the limits on the amount that can be sanctioned from the relief fund by the Chief Minister, the Revenue Minister, and District Collectors have been raised. Previously, the limits were ₹ 1 lakh, ₹ 5,000, and ₹ 2,000, respectively. These limits have now been increased to ₹ 3 lakh, ₹ 25,000, and ₹ 10,000, respectively. Furthermore, the Revenue Special Secretary has been authorized to sanction up to ₹ 15,000. For amounts exceeding ₹ 3 lakh, approval from the Cabinet is required before the funds can be allocated. The government has increased the annual income limit for applicants from ₹ 1

Furthermore, even if someone has already received financial aid for treatment of critical illnesses like cancer or kidney disease, they are now eligible to apply again after two years. Through the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund, financial assistance amounting to around ₹ 57 crore has been provided to the victims of endosulfan. During the recent flood phase, a total of ₹ 4,970.52 crore was received



lakh to ₹ 2 lakh. When deficiencies in the medical certificates submitted with applications were noticed, the regulations were made stricter. Additionally, a mobile app was introduced to facilitate doctors in providing these medical certificates.

The maximum amount of ₹ 4 lakh can now be sanctioned for damages to homes caused by fires, and up to ₹ 2 lakh can be provided to those who lose their livelihood due to sea turbulence. The financial assistance for the dependents of those who die in accidents has been increased to ₹ 1 lakh.

as contributions to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund. Of this amount, ₹ 3,881.89 crore was spent during the previous government's tenure, and ₹ 842.88 crore has been spent during the current government's tenure up until November 30.

A total of ₹ 4,724.8 crore has been spent on flood relief. Additionally, ₹ 961.62 crore was

allocated for the Chief Minister's Local Road Reconstruction Project, which was initiated to restore local roads damaged during the floods. A loan scheme named "Ujjivan" was also introduced to help disaster-affected individuals who lost their livelihoods due to the floods to restart their means of livelihood. Through this scheme, financial assistance of up to ₹2 lakh was made available. As Ockhi disaster relief, ₹118.97 crore was allocated during the previous government's tenure, and ₹37 lakh during the current government's tenure, bringing the total to ₹119.34 crore. Contributions to the CMDRF during the Ockhi phase amounted to ₹108.59 crore. Financial assistance of ₹20 lakh

through various departments and ₹79.18 crore allocated to District Collectors. The contributions to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund come from those who love and care for our land, given for the welfare of our community. The government spends these funds with the utmost caution and integrity. The funds received in the relief fund are subject to auditing by the



each was provided to the dependents of fishermen who lost their lives in the disaster and to the families of those who went missing.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, ₹1,129.74 crore was received as contributions to the relief fund, out of which ₹1,058.21 crore was spent on relief efforts. The previous LDF government provided ₹984.84 crore in financial assistance for medical treatment through the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund. Up until November 2023, the current government has spent ₹800.29 crore for this purpose. This amount includes ₹123.32 crore provided

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and the accounts are also presented in the state legislature. Additionally, the details are made available to the public on the official website. The government is committed to using the relief fund in a flawless and effective manner to ensure the welfare of our land and its people.



Thus the world responds



Joe Biden (US President)

“Jill and I extend our deepest condolences to all those affected by the deadly landslides in the state of Kerala in India. Our prayers are with the victims of this tragic event, and we mourn with the families who have lost loved ones. We commend the bravery of the Indian service members and first responders supporting the complex recovery effort. We will continue to hold the people of India in our thoughts during this difficult time.”



Allu Arjun

“I am deeply saddened by the recent landslide in Wayanad. Kerala has always given me so much love, and I want to do my bit by donating ₹25 lakh to the Kerala CM Relief Fund to support the rehabilitation work. Praying for your safety and strength.”

Kili Paul (Social Media Influencer)

“I am really touched by what happened in Wayanad. I am praying for Wayanad and all of Kerala. I am with all of you during this difficult time. I hope we will overcome this.”



Sourav Ganguly

“A Landslide has hit Wayanad very hard and completely ruined a village. The people of that community need your help and assistance. Donate to the Chief Minister’s Fund. Every bit of help will make a difference to their lives.”





Mohanlal

“The devastation in Wayanad is a deep wound that will take time to heal. Every home lost and life disrupted is a personal tragedy.

Viswasanthi foundation is pledging Rs. 3 crore for immediate relief and rebuilding efforts with the support of Dorf-Ketal Chemicals India Pvt. Ltd. One of our commitments is the reconstruction of the LP school at Mundakkai. Together, we will rebuild, heal, and emerge stronger.”



Mammooty

“The people of Wayanad are like us, and their situation is getting worse day by day. We can imagine the mental situation of them especially of those who lost their dear ones. So we should voluntarily act for them.”



Manju Warriar

“We have been witnessing the visuals of one of Kerala’s worst natural calamities since the past few days. To overcome this, all Malayalis are united irrespective of their religious and political differences. We will overcome this situation just as we stood together in the backdrop of the Kerala Floods. I request everyone to contribute what they can towards the Chief Minister’s Distress Relief Fund.”



K.S. Chithra

“I am deeply distressed by the landslide disaster in Wayanad, a breathtakingly beautiful region. My heart goes out to the victims and their families.”



Sania Mirza

“The landslides that hit Wayanad, Kerala on July 30th have hit an entire village, marking one of the state’s worst tragedies. Pain of this loss is deep and the affected communities need our help. Now is the time to come together and support Wayanad’s recovery. You can make a difference by donating to the chief minister’s relief fund which will directly help in rebuilding efforts. Let’s stand with Wayanad and help restore what was lost. Let us make an impact.”



Basil Joseph

“A tragedy with no comparison has struck Wayanad. We are all responsible to support the rehabilitation process and contribute what we can toward the relief fund.”



Prithviraj

“I request everyone to comply with the government’s instructions in the ongoing heavy rain and avoid any unnecessary travels. Everyone must also guard themselves against misinformation. My prayers are with the people of Wayanad.”



Asif Ali

“We are going through a sorrowful phase. The tragedy that struck Wayanad has shocked Malayalis across the globe. What we are witnessing now is a combined effort in the form of voluntary service by the people and an inclusive rescue mission under the leadership of the Chief Minister to help Wayanad’s recovery. I request everyone to contribute what they can towards the emergency relief fund. We will overcome this as well.”

Vinay Forrt

“We are witnessing a tragedy at the moment. I believe that it is the responsibility of all Malayalis to help and support our siblings who have been affected by the landslides in Wayanad. It is an important task to rebuild villages like Mundakkai and Chooralmala that have been wiped off the district’s map. Let us all contribute toward the relief funds. We will overcome this as well”



Navya Nair

“We are in the face of a tragedy without comparison. An entire village has been wiped out due to incessant rainfall. A whole community has come united to contribute toward the rescue mission. Each Malayali’s heart stands with the people of Wayanad. We all need to work towards rebuilding the villages of Mundakkai and Chooralmala. I hope everyone will donate towards the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund.”

Lakshmi Menon and Midhun Ramesh

“We are in an unstable situation due to the Wayanad landslides that have wiped out an entire village. We have witnessed the rescue operation by the people of Kerala who have united as ‘one’. Malayalis from around the world are with Wayanad. We all must stand together to overcome this difficult situation. We should help restore Mundakkai and Chooralmala. To achieve this, it is our responsibility to contribute towards the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund. Let us stand with Wayanad.”



Once life flourished around the Seethamma kundu waterfall at Mundakkai. Everything came to an abrupt end.



Kerala's Unyielding Spirit



Kerala once again proves that Malayalees are unbeatable when it comes to overcoming crises, standing united beyond all differences

K. Jyothinath

Freelance Journalist

It was a second birth for Arun when the rescue hands touched him.

Trapped under the cold, suffocating mud for 12 excruciating hours, Arun's life hung by a thread. The landslide had engulfed everything around him, leaving him buried beneath a crushing weight of earth and debris. As time passed, hope seemed to fade, but Arun clung to it desperately. His thoughts wavered between despair and a fierce will to survive, his heart pounding in the darkness that had become his world.

Then, just when all seemed lost, he felt it—hands, firm and reassuring, reaching through the debris. They weren't just any hands; they were a rescue hands, driven by the same relentless determination that had kept Arun alive. When they finally pulled him out, battered but breathing, it wasn't just a rescue—it was a new chance at life. Arun's survival brought hope to everyone around him, showing that even in the darkest moments, there is a reason to keep fighting.

Arun's story is one of many that reflect the resilience and spirit of Kerala in the face of disaster. Buried beneath the debris in the aftermath of a landslide in Wayanad, his survival seemed almost impossible. But as hours ticked by, a coordinated effort involving

the fire and rescue department, police, and volunteers worked tirelessly to pull him out alive. When he was finally freed, it wasn't just a victory for Arun; it lifted the spirits of an entire community struggling to overcome the devastation.

A group of strangers clasp hands as they traverse a narrow footbridge over a raging river. The surrounding landscape is a tattered expanse of brown, overwhelmed by a blanket of mud and debris. Their faces, etched with the pain of the tragedy that struck the previous night, nevertheless reflect a steadfast determination. This image from Mundakkai—a village devastated by a powerful landslide—shows the strength of the Malayalees as they face adversity together.

Wayanad has been devastated by a landslide, leaving communities shattered and lives hanging in the balance. The magnitude of the disaster

Spirit Shines Once Again



is immense, affecting hundreds of individuals across several wards of the Meppadi Grama Panchayat. Yet, amid this chaos, a remarkable display of collective action is unfolding. From every corner of Kerala, people have rallied with a shared purpose—turning despair into hope and determination into action. Heroes are emerging from all walks of life, driven by a singular mission of rescue and relief. Their efforts are a heartfelt salute to the spirit of humanity, showing that together, we can face any challenge and find light even in the darkest times.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan aptly captures this spirit, describing the response to Wayanad's crisis as a powerful demonstration of collective humanity. "All the people of Kerala are standing together to support Wayanad. Rescue personnel, including the army, fire force, and police, are leading the rescue operations. Health

workers, government departments, local residents, and countless volunteers are all contributing to this effort. The unshakable conviction of brotherhood and humanity resonates across Kerala today," he says about the rescue and relief mission in Wayanad.

Rapid Response that Brings Communities Together

The response has been fuelled by a wave of unity and selflessness. The Indian Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), police, forest and fire departments, and numerous volunteers come together with a singular mission: to save lives. The Madras Engineering Group of the Indian Army exhibited extraordinary skill by constructing a 190-foot-long Bailey bridge in just 34 hours. This bridge has become a vital lifeline, enabling further rescue efforts and providing hope to those stranded.

The police quickly set up a makeshift footbridge, bridging the gap between the rescue teams and those in need. The fire and rescue department is working tirelessly, saving lives, including that of Arun, who was trapped under the mud for 12 hours. For the forest department, the image of one of its officials cradling a rescued infant in a bedsheet symbolizes profound empathy and care characterizing the response.

The Indian Air Force too plays a role, distributing relief material by helicopter to remote areas like Pothukal village.



A coordinated effort involving 1,006 rescue workers has formed the crux of managing the crisis here. These teams prepare daily reports, ensure the availability of vehicles and equipment, and provide essential services in relief camps, from delivering food and sanitation to offering counselling and preserving the dignity of all affected.

Collective Humanity in Action

Since the onset of news reports about the landslide, volunteers have sprung into action with extraordinary resolve. At the relief camps in Meppadi, they are playing a crucial role in transforming these spaces into well-organised hubs of support. A few rooms in the structures housing the relief camps have been converted into coordination offices. Chief coordinators from various government departments meticulously manage lists of supplies and the needs of camp residents in these makeshift offices. Community kitchens have been established, with teachers and volunteers preparing meals thrice a day, ensuring that everyone has access to hot food, tea, and snacks.

This wave of voluntarism indeed extends beyond immediate relief efforts. Collection points have sprung up across districts, with donations ranging from clothes and food to medicines and sanitary products. People and institutions are mobilizing resources and coordinating with volunteers to collect materials, including medicines. Leaders across the political spectrum, right from the Chief Minister, are contributing their salaries to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF).

Volunteer and youth organisations have established multiple collection centres, coordinating the distribution of collected materials to relief camps and planning for future rehabilitation. Educational institutions have launched campaigns to gather relief materials, working with NGOs and local groups to address ongoing needs.



Rapid Construction of Bailey Bridge by the Indian Army:

The Madras Engineering Group of the Indian Army constructed a 190-foot-long Bailey bridge in just 34 hours. This bridge became a crucial lifeline, enabling further rescue efforts and providing hope to those stranded in the landslide-affected areas of Wayanad.



Notable collaborations between celebrities, trusts, and local administrations have further strengthened the relief efforts. The Care and Share International Foundation, led by actor Mammooty, and the CP Trust, founded by businessman CP Salih, have contributed significantly by dispatching a range of relief materials, including water tankers and ambulance services. The Vishwashanti Foundation, helmed by actor Mohanlal, also declared its support for reconstructing the calamity-struck villages.

From Crisis to Community

As the CM notes, assistance pours in from across the nation and beyond, with people worldwide contributing to the Chief Minister's relief fund and expressing solidarity. This global support, combined with the tireless efforts of volunteers, highlights the colossal power of collective action.

“In the wake of the tragedy in Wayanad, people everywhere are responding to our call for help. The global community stands united with us, and we are grateful for the support,” the CM says.

The collective action of volunteers not only provides immediate relief but also sets the stage for long-term recovery. The sight of community members and organizations working tirelessly to aid those in need embodies the resilience and solidarity that define Kerala. This united effort demonstrates that, even in the face of such overwhelming challenges, the spirit of voluntarism and community can bring hope and healing to those affected.

The landslide in Wayanad have brought immense devastation, but this crisis situation has also illuminated the strength of unity and the indomitable spirit of humanity. The cooperative action and voluntarism that we are witnessing during this crisis serve as a proof to the courage, compassion, and resilience that define Kerala. As we reflect on the heroes who emerge from this crisis, we are filled with gratitude and renewed faith in the power of our shared humanity.



Community Kitchens and Volunteer Efforts:

At the relief camps in Meppadi, volunteers, along with teachers, organized community kitchens, preparing meals thrice a day for survivors and rescue workers. This coordinated effort ensured that everyone had access to hot food, tea, and snacks, showcasing the collective spirit of care and support across Kerala

Chief Minister Calls for Financial Support and Climate Action from Prime Minister

During his visit to the landslide-affected areas of Wayanad, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was called upon by Kerala's Chief Minister to provide substantial financial aid for the rehabilitation of those affected and to address the broader impacts of climate change. The Chief Minister emphasized the need for a collaborative effort between the state and central governments to tackle the challenges posed by the disaster.

The Prime Minister conducted an aerial survey of the worst-hit areas before visiting Chooralmala, where he also met with survivors at a relief camp in Meppadi and spoke with the injured at WIMS Hospital. He offered comfort and reassurances, promising continued support from the central government.

The Chief Minister highlighted the extensive damage caused by the landslide, with preliminary assessments estimating losses in the thousands of crores of rupees. He presented a detailed note to the Prime Minister, outlining Kerala's immediate needs and stressing the importance of rapid financial support to rebuild and implement long-term strategies to combat the increasing frequency of climate-induced natural disasters.

He also pointed out that Kerala has been disproportionately affected by global warming and climate change, leading to unpredictable natural calamities like the recent landslides. The Chief Minister called for the establishment of advanced research centres in Kerala under institutions such as the Geological Survey of India and the India Meteorological Department. He emphasised the need for modern climate monitoring systems and tools to better predict and manage future disasters.

The Chief Minister also requested the Prime Minister to declare the Wayanad landslide a severe disaster and a national calamity, highlighting the scale of the destruction and the urgent need for coordinated efforts to rebuild and protect the state from future climate-related threats.



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan receives Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he comes to visit Wayanad.





Swift Action By Fire and Rescue

Staff Reporter

The Fire and Rescue Department once again demonstrated its commitment and dedication, launching a large-scale rescue operation in the Chooralmala-Mundakkai regions, saving hundreds of lives.

On July 30, 2024, at 01:55 AM, the Kalpetta station received information about a landslide which had occurred around the Chooralmala-Mundakkai region. A rescue team from Kalpetta station was dispatched immediately. En route, they encountered a fallen tree blocking the road, which they cleared before reaching the affected area. Upon arrival, they found that the landslide had caused the river to flood the Vellarimala School

area, trapping many people within the building. Following this, the Sulthan Bathery station was informed, and additional teams arrived to assist in the rescue operation.

The rescue efforts, which also included the local residents, commenced immediately. The team was working under the illuminance of an inflatable tower light when a second landslide occurred. The loud noise prompted locals to shout warnings, allowing the rescue team to escape from the oncoming mud, water, and rocks, miraculously avoiding injury. Realizing the extent of the damage, which affected most homes and other establishments in the Mundakkai and Chooralmala areas, the rescue team notified higher authorities and continued the rescue operation with additional personnel. Senior officials coordinated the



deployment of more rescue teams from other stations in Wayanad district and neighboring districts to safely evacuate those who were trapped under the debris. Due to the strong current in the river, access from Chooralmala to the opposite bank was impossible, so the rescue efforts focused on the Chooralmala side. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) also joined the operation. Recognizing the urgency of crossing the river to reach Mundakkai, the team courageously crossed the river and set up a zip line bridge using ropes. This enabled them to begin evacuating people from Mundakkai. Many, including the elderly and infants, were rescued using rope rescue techniques.

As the zip line bridge was time-consuming and required significant effort, a temporary bridge was

constructed using an extension ladder from a fire tender and bamboo log at a narrower part of the river. This bridge allowed more rescuers to reach the Mundakkai and Punchirimattom areas, where they continued to evacuate those trapped while safely relocating them to secure locations. Rescue personnel ensured the safety of those crossing the temporary bridge.

By then, military units and NDRF personnel had arrived and used the temporary bridge to carry out further rescue operations. The Fire and Rescue Department successfully evacuated approximately 800 people, including the elderly, children, women, and persons with disabilities, using the temporary bridge on the same day.

Fire and Rescue teams from all districts across the state, along with Civil Defense volunteers, were dispatched to Wayanad. A 13-member scuba diving team from Thiruvananthapuram, who were in Ernakulam for another program, also joined the rescue efforts directly from Ernakulam. The newly acquired mobile wireless base station vehicle from the Thiruvananthapuram region was deployed in Wayanad to establish an effective communication system. The communication system was set up by personnel from the Chacka station workshop, who were on special duty, facilitating coordination of the rescue operations.

The department's Special Task Force and teams from the Water



Rescue Academy also joined the rescue efforts. In the initial stages, when bringing in equipment like Hitachi JCB was impractical, search operations were carried out using hand tools such as pickaxes, shovels, and crowbars. The team led by the Sulthan Bathery Station Officer risked their lives to rescue a person trapped in deep mud. Searching in mud-filled areas, including wells and ponds near houses, was extremely challenging and increased the risk of accidents. Despite the dangers, the personnel worked with courage and presence of mind, speeding up the rescue operations.

Once equipment like Hitachi JCB became available, the search gained momentum. In high-risk areas, the search continued using this equipment while other personnel continued manual searches. Additional equipment needed for the search was sourced from various stations across the state.

Each day, an average of 600 personnel from the Fire and Rescue Department were deployed for the rescue operations. The teams included the Special Task Force, the scuba diving team, other department personnel, and Civil Defense volunteers. To ensure the efficiency of the search operations, personnel were rotated with fresh teams from all districts in the state at regular intervals. Personnel from the Chacka station workshop, who had reached

Wayanad, provided on-the-spot repairs for vehicles and equipment during the operations.

The timely and efficient actions of the Fire and Rescue Department were vital in the rescue operations. The construction of the zip line bridge on the first day, which facilitated the rescue of people, including infants, and the subsequent construction of a temporary bridge that allowed the evacuation of around 800 people, was a significant achievement. Rescue operations continued through the temporary bridge until the army completed the Bailey bridge. Additionally, several bodies recovered during the search were transported to the hospital via the same bridge. The tower light and other lights set up by the department provided illumination that allowed the rescue operations to continue until dawn on the first day.



Wayanad Rehabilitation to be Implemented in Three Phases: Cabinet Subcommittee Announces Comprehensive Plan

The rehabilitation efforts for those affected by the recent disaster in Wayanad will be executed in three distinct phases, according to the Cabinet Subcommittee. The first phase will focus on the temporary rehabilitation of those currently residing in relief camps. Revenue Minister K Rajan, speaking at a press conference, outlined that individuals willing to stay with relatives will receive necessary support, while others will be provided with rental accommodations or other facilities at the government's expense.

The government plans to utilize government-controlled buildings and facilities for temporary housing, ensuring all necessary amenities are available. A special team will be appointed to oversee the provision of these amenities to those temporarily rehabilitated. In the second phase, the government will establish interim transit homes as a precursor to permanent housing solutions. Prefabricated technology will be employed to construct these homes at suitable locations identified for the purpose. The final phase will involve the development of a comprehensive township project, equipped with all necessary amenities for complete rehabilitation, the Minister added.

Mental well-being

In addition to housing, the government is taking steps to ensure the mental well-being of the affected individuals. Professional counselling services will be made available to those in need, with 136 counsellors already providing their services across various camps.

The state government is also addressing financial concerns. An emergency meeting of the State-Level Banking Committee, chaired by the Chief Secretary, has been convened to discuss the repayment of bank loans. The Minister urged private financial institutions to halt collection activities from those staying in relief camps during this crisis.

Local representatives and disaster-affected individuals will be included in teams assigned to gather information from the six zones into which the disaster-hit areas have been divided. The process is nearing completion. Additionally, national cabinet teams are expected to inspect the affected areas, and all necessary information has been shared with them.

A team of experts from the State Disaster Management Authority will conduct a detailed study of the geographical conditions in the landslide-affected areas of Mundakkai, Churalmala, Attamala, and Punchirimattam. The team, comprising representatives from geology, hydrology, soil conservation, and hazard analysis sectors, will submit a comprehensive report. The Minister revealed that a draft list of 138 missing persons has already been published, expressing hope that this number will decrease following the completion of DNA testing and blood sample

Minister P.A. Mohammed Riyas called on the central government to declare the Wayanad disaster a national disaster and allocate funds accordingly. He highlighted past instances where disasters with fewer casualties received such recognition and financial support. The Minister also urged the public to avoid spreading propaganda that could undermine the confidence of the affected communities, stressing the unity and resolve of everyone involved in overcoming this catastrophe.

Thank You, Soldiers



Wayanad Bids an Emotional Farewell to Army Personnel

No grand speeches, just heartfelt gratitude filled the air as Wayanad's residents gathered to say goodbye to the Indian Army. After ten days of relentless rescue efforts, the soldiers prepared to leave the landslide-ravaged district. In a simple yet profound gesture, locals formed a human chain to express their unity and appreciation. The usually stoic soldiers were visibly moved by the community's quiet but powerful show of support. As the convoy departed, the people stood in silence, a mix of sadness and pride in their hearts. In those final moments, a deep bond was formed between the rescuers and the rescued, a reflection of shared resilience in the face of tragedy.







Kerala Police's Heroic Response in Wayanad

Staff Reporter

The Kerala Police displayed extraordinary bravery and dedication following Wayanad's devastating landslide.

The unexpected landslide that wiped off a serene piece of land in Wayanad district has put untold agony in the minds of the common people in our society. Though the heavy rainfall in the State is no longer startling as it has become a part of climate change nowadays, this incident of landslide was a blow to the public which caused heavy damage to the land and life of the people. Wayanad district, which is known for its



lush green landscapes and hilly terrain, thus faced one of the worst landslides in the wee hours of July 30, 2024.

The landslide was a result of incessant rainfall, thereby causing massive soil displacement, resulting in the burial of two villages, schools, post office and many dwelling units under debris. Roads were rendered impassable, communication lines were severed, and many families were trapped in isolated pockets with no access to food, water, or medical aid. The situation called for immediate and coordinated action, and the Kerala Police rose to the occasion with remarkable efficiency and dedication, as usual.

As soon as the landslide was reported, the Kerala Police swung into action in the affected area. The initial hours were critical, as lives were at stake, and the terrain made rescue operations extremely challenging. Special Operation Group (SOG), a well-trained wing of the Kerala Police, was the first force to reach the spot. They erected a temporary bridge in place of the bridge that washed off, which helped the rescue workers to reach the barren land. Unfortunately, this bridge was also damaged in the subsequent heavy downfall of water in the stream. SOG later worked in tandem with the Local Police, Malabar Special Police, Kerala Armed Police, Quick Reaction Team, India Reserve Battalion, etc, apart from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force and local volunteers. Efforts put forward by the canine squad of the Kerala Police, often known as K9 squad was also laudable. Murfi, Maya and Angel, three Police dogs that were trained to locate deeply buried dead bodies helped to dig human mortals from the debris.



Rescue operations in the affected area were intense and required meticulous planning. The State Government deputed M R Ajith Kumar, a senior IPS Officer in the rank of Additional Director General of Police to work in close coordination with the district administration and to streamline the rescue operation. Another senior IPS Officer K Sethu Raman was nominated as Onsite Incident Commander to oversee the rescue operation. Senior Police Officers located in the nearby districts and Commandants of various other Police establishments were pressed into service along with 800 plus Police officials in Wayanad district. Furthermore, an equal number of men were pushed to nearby Malappuram district. A Special Control Room was opened within a few hours of the incident at the Police Headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram under the direct supervision and control of Dr Sheikh Darvesh Saheb, State Police Chief. Under his personal supervision, a team of Police Officers worked round the clock in the Special Control Room to monitor and supervise the rescue operations.

The specialized wing of the Kerala Police that deserves a special mention in the rescue operations is the High Altitude Training Centre team (HATC). This 14-member team of the Kerala Police is a dedicated one which is trained in rescue and retrieval operations in hilly and mountainous terrain. They dared into venture onto the hilly terrain where accessibility was zero for others. Their work was particularly challenging, as it required not only physical endurance but also emotional strength.

Rescue operations in Wayanad were undertaken with utmost dedication and challenge. Continual rainfall rendered the terrain



unstable, increasing the risk of additional landslides. As the motorable roads were washed off, reaching far off places was a difficult task. Despite these obstacles, the Kerala Police remained steadfast in their mission. They improvised and adapted to the situation, often using alternative routes and methods to reach the affected areas. The men deployed in the team have put in endless hours of selfless service with no food and rest, to rescue their brothers and sisters under the rock and mud.

Police also helped the district administration in setting up and managing relief camps for the displaced. They coordinated for the distribution of food, water, medicines, and other essential supplies, ensuring that the basic needs of the affected population are not hampered. The Kerala Police instituted special surveillance and patrolling in the relief camps to boost the courage and mental strength of the people. Through their press releases and social media pages, they have put light on various measures undertaken by them in the affected area.

Along with the other uniformed forces, the Kerala Police

have also emerged as true heroes, demonstrating unwavering courage and dedication in the face of adversity. Their efforts in the rescue and relief operations were fundamental in saving lives and providing much-needed support to the affected communities. With the support extended by the Government and the public, they exemplified the spirit of selflessness and duty, earning the respect and gratitude of the entire state and the nation. Their contribution during this crisis will be remembered as a shining example as to how the Police can go beyond its conventional role to serve humanity in times of need.

I RISKED IT ALL TO SAVE LIVES

A Journey Across a Raging River in the Face of Disaster



Dr. Lovena Mohammed
Emergency Physician

As an emergency physician, nothing could have prepared me for the harrowing rescue mission in Chooralmala, Wayanad, where I found myself crossing a treacherous river on a rope to reach those in desperate need of medical care.

I was in Mysore when the disaster struck. Early in the morning, my mother called me with alarming news: a massive landslide had devastated Chooralmala in Wayanad. She urged me, as an emergency physician, to respond to the crisis—it was my duty.

Without hesitation, I contacted the head of my department, Dr. Venugopal, at Aster MIMS Hospital in Calicut, where I serve as a senior specialist in emergency medicine. The hospital management had already dispatched a mobile unit to the affected area, staffed with nurses, and they instructed me to join them.

I arrived in Wayanad by the afternoon and joined the hospital team, which included Nurse Labeeb, Nursing Assistant Farseena, our driver Anas, and Mr. Atheef, the chief of the Aster Volunteers group. As we approached the disaster site, locals warned us of the potential for another landslide, making it dangerous to proceed. But we were determined to assess the situation and offer aid.

The scene was devastating: a collapsed bridge, and numerous people stranded helplessly on the other side of a raging river. The only way across was a makeshift ropeway, akin to a zip line. I asked the Kerala government's fire and safety rescue team if there were any medical professionals on the other side. Upon learning there were none, I resolved to cross over.

Initially, fear gripped me. But seeing the desperate faces of the stranded people erased my hesitation. Trusting in the fire force department's safety measures, I got onto the rope and made my way across.

Upon reaching the other side, I joined forces with a medical volunteer team from the Pain and Palliative Centers of Gudallur and Sultan Bathery. Together, we worked efficiently, pooling our limited resources.



Among them were Nurse Siby and a woman volunteer who tirelessly assisted wherever she could, along with Mr. Samad. We prioritized the triage and stabilization of patients, ensuring those with the most critical injuries were evacuated first.

The fire and rescue teams were instrumental in transporting patients safely, including a three-month-old baby. In a particularly touching moment, a brave young firefighter named Nikhil stepped up to carry the baby. I cleared out my medical box and lined it with cotton and towels to keep the baby warm. The child's mother handed over her baby with unwavering trust in our team and the system—a profoundly emotional moment.

We managed to stabilize several patients with suspected spine and chest injuries, providing first aid to many with minor and some more severe wounds. As the day progressed, an Air Force helicopter arrived, bringing more rescued individuals. I boarded the chopper to assess their condition, ensuring they were stable before continuing to assist on the ground.



Throughout the operation, the fire force, NDRE, and army teams performed admirably. It was a humbling experience to contribute, even in a small way. Notably, many rescued women seemed comforted by my and other female volunteers' presence. This highlighted an often-overlooked but crucial aspect of disaster response: the comfort and reassurance that women bring, especially in moments of vulnerability. Women and children, in particular, may feel more at ease and secure when they see other women among the responders. This familiarity can be a source of peace and emotional stability, which is critical in the aftermath of a disaster.

The presence of women in disaster response teams is not just beneficial; it is essential. It fosters an environment of trust and empathy, making it easier to communicate and care for those affected. Women in emergency medicine and disaster response bring unique perspectives and skills that enhance the overall effectiveness of the team. Their involvement can break down barriers and cultural taboos, allowing for more

comprehensive and sensitive care, especially in communities where gender dynamics play a significant role.

Moreover, the inclusion of women in these fields sets a powerful example, encouraging more women to pursue careers in emergency medicine and disaster management. It showcases that women are equally capable of handling high-pressure situations, making critical decisions, and providing life-saving care. Their participation enriches the diversity of the field, leading to more well-rounded and holistic approaches to patient care and crisis management.

As an emergency physician, I'm accustomed to dealing with crises daily, yet the scene at Chooralmala was particularly harrowing. Crossing the roaring river on a rope was terrifying, but the sight of helpless people on the other side was even more heartbreaking. We had to set aside our emotions, think rationally, and act decisively.

Every effort, however small, matters in such emergencies. I'm grateful for the opportunity to do my part. Let us continue to prioritize the people of Wayanad and support them in rebuilding their lives. Together, we can help restore our beautiful region to normalcy.

The presence of women in disaster response and emergency medicine is not just beneficial but transformative. It brings a much-needed balance of compassion, understanding, and strength to crisis situations. I urge more women to consider this path, as their contributions can profoundly impact and inspire those around them. The sight of women stepping forward in times of crisis is a powerful reminder that strength and care know no gender. Let's continue to champion this diversity and inclusivity in all our endeavours, for it is through our collective efforts that we can truly make a difference.

Standing Strong in Wayanad's Darkest Hour



Nikhil Mallisery
Fire & Rescue Officer, Kozhikode

The rescue operations conducted by the State Fire and Rescue Services were nothing short of exceptional

I was jolted awake by the sound of my phone ringing. It was Senior Fire and Rescue Officer Bineesh. When I answered, his voice carried a gravity that shook me to full alertness. A landslide had struck in Wayanad, and our rope rescue team was needed immediately. The clock read 3:00 AM. As I stepped out of my room, the tension was already palpable; my family was awake, aware of the flooding. I gathered my gear with a sense of urgency, and headed to the station, where my team was already waiting. We grabbed our equipment, steeling ourselves for the mission ahead.

The roads were flooded, forcing us to navigate alternate routes to reach the Kalpetta station. Even before we stopped the vehicle, Fire and Rescue Officer Naushad was already running towards us, his face a picture of urgency. Several areas were submerged, people were stranded—we had to reach them immediately.

By the time dawn broke, we had rescued nearly a hundred lives, including a pregnant woman who urgently needed to be admitted to the hospital, and even a small puppy trapped in the rising waters. But our work was far from over. Another alert came in, directing us to Chooralmala with our rope rescue kit. We set out without delay.

When we arrived at the scene, the devastation was far worse than any of us had imagined. Villagers who had lost everything were running through the mud, their faces etched with despair. Government officials and rescue workers were everywhere, their movements frantic, yet purposeful. The bridge connecting Chooralmala and Mundakkai had collapsed. On the Mundakkai side, people were injured, crying out for help, desperate to cross over to Chooralmala, where safety awaited.

Our team moved into action, anchoring a rope to a large tree on the far side, setting up a makeshift lifeline across the abyss.

Using this setup, we began transporting rescue workers, equipment, doctors, food, and water to the isolated side.

Following the doctor's instructions, we prioritized the injured, ferrying them to the Chooralmala side where ambulances stood ready. The intensity of the situation was palpable; even seasoned rescuers couldn't shake off a lingering fear. The whistle's shrill sound echoed through the rain, a signal for rescuers to be on alert for another landslide. The river below, swollen and furious, roared as if in defiance.

I had to use a hydraulic cutter to clear iron debris and cross the rope to reach the stranded people on the Mundakkai side. After handing over the equipment, I joined those pulling the rope from the other end, struggling against the thick fog that shrouded Chooralmala.

Then, Dr. Lavana from the emergency department of MIMS Hospital, Kozhikode, approached us with a plea:



a three-month-old baby and the mother needed to be urgently transported to safety. Our team quickly devised a plan, first securing the mother, then preparing a plastic container to safely transport the infant across the treacherous divide. When the baby was handed to the doctor, a faint cry pierced the air, but then silence followed as the baby calmed down. I took the child in my arms, readying myself for the crossing.

The mother's eyes were full of fear as she prepared to entrust her three-month-old to a complete stranger. Sensing her anxiety, I said, "don't worry. No matter what happens, our team will ensure your baby reaches the other side safely." Her response, however, filled me with a courage I hadn't expected: "We have faith in the Fire Force."

We got the mother across first, and then it was my turn. As I held the baby close, the sight of the river raging below stirred something deep within me—a surge of emotion that transcended the role of a rescuer, making me feel as vulnerable as

a father. I pressed the container holding the baby tightly against my chest. Only when we reached the other side did a wave of relief wash over me. After handing the baby over to the team, I watched until the doctors had the child safely in their care. Then, without pause, I returned to the rescue operations.

With many still stranded on the Mundakkai side, we had to devise another method to get them across. Extending the ladder from the fire engine, we managed to bridge the gap, using a chopped-down tree trunk as a base, securing it with ropes, and laying planks on top to create a makeshift bridge. Without wasting any time, we successfully brought everyone over to Chooralmala.

In the past, the army would have been called in for rescue operations of this scale. But times have changed. The Fire and Rescue Service is now equipped with advanced tools and precise training. The government has provided the necessary facilities, from equipment to modernization of our training programs, which emboldens us to act with confidence. That day, our team was unwavering, united in purpose.

From the early hours of the morning when we first arrived, to well past 11:00 PM when we finally completed our search, it was us—resilient, steadfast—who were there until the end. Fear was absent from the faces of those who crossed that rope. These were people who had lost everything—their loved ones, their homes, their pasts—left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. What more was there to fear? Their faces bore a stoic acceptance, as if they had already braved all that life could throw at them.

Bridging the Digital Divide



Gautham Krishna
Freelance Journalist

In a world increasingly driven by digital technologies, the promise of youth-led innovation is hampered by a widening digital divide. As global efforts intensify to harness the potential of the next generation, Kerala is stepping up with initiatives aimed at bridging this gap, positioning its youth at the forefront of sustainable development.

'Digital Native' is the word of the century. Coined at the advent of the new millennium, the term accurately describes the youth of today who live in a world where digital innovations and technology permeate all aspects of daily life. The term is universally used to describe those who grew up around digital technologies, surrounded by the intrinsic fundamentals of the modern information age.

Youth aged 15-24 dominate the wide spectrum of users who benefit from digital technologies, making up approximately 75% of the user base. Consequently, the United Nations (UN) commemorates this year's International Youth Day under the theme, 'From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development.' The theme was chosen to recognize the complex web that interconnects digital technologies with youth development and the eventual achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These were formulated by the UN in 2015 to deliver a set of goals and targets that will ensure global development by the year 2030, straddling across the domains of economic growth, education, equality, and so forth, while integrating the principles of sustainability.

Digital technologies play a significant role in the advancement of SDGs that fall under economic, social, and environmental dimensions while simultaneously reducing the completion cost by US\$ 55 trillion. Developing youth-inclusive methods is instrumental in achieving these targets. Conversely, this raises an important question: 'Is digital technology and innovation truly youth-inclusive around the world?'

At a single glance, it is not unusual for one to assume that all young people are inherently familiar with digital technology and fit under the umbrella of 'tech-savvy kids.' However, this notion is far from accurate. While those from developed nations of the world have greater accessibility to digital technology



and the internet, vast majorities of the world's youth population reside in developing countries. These regions usually witness well-defined disparities in digital accessibility based on socio-economic backgrounds. This results in a stoic 'digital divide,' which strips certain sections of society from something as fundamental as access to the internet. A drawback that arises from this predicament is that most youth are not equipped with the essential skills required for modern-day jobs. The technology-driven world we live in demands advanced digital skills such as coding, software and app development, network management, and knowledge of concepts such as the Internet of Things (IoT). Several barriers exist in achieving integrated youth development on par with the digital age. While most regions have managed to improve their literacy levels with basic education becoming more accessible to the youth, digital literacy still needs to be integrated into global education systems. Gender inequality



exists in digital accessibility within the world's developing countries, with young women often being less exposed to digital services and the internet than their male counterparts.

However, numerous measures have been adopted to eradicate these barriers, with governments worldwide investing more resources into the education industry and emphasizing the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)-inclusive teaching methods to enable youth to become perfect candidates for future job industries.

Kerala is adorned by numerous indices that speak about its successful development initiatives. The state ranks the highest in terms of HDI (0.75) in the country, a rating comparable to most developed nations across the globe. Official reports further place Kerala among the best-performing states in development indicators. The state government has undertaken several policies and initiatives that focus on providing the youth with

crucial skills and opportunities to thrive in the constantly developing global economy.

The Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) was established by the government as a nodal agency to advance entrepreneurship and provide potential innovators with a platform to launch their ideas. The agency has become noteworthy for setting up Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centres (IEDCs) in higher educational institutions across the state, with engineering, management, arts, science, and polytechnics coming under its fold. These centres, together with programmes such as the Young Innovators Programme (YIP), an initiative by the government development agency K-DISC, enable the youth in the state to foster their ideas and innovations. Simultaneously, these budding innovators can avail themselves of the facilities provided by the government.

While the term 'digital native' accurately describes the youth of today, it is essential to note the numerous disparities and inconsistencies that remain in global digital accessibility. The presence of this digital divide, particularly in the developing regions of the world, poses a considerable drawback to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Even so, there has been significant improvement in lessening this divide, with initiatives such as the Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) and Young Innovators Programme (YIP) providing better opportunities to the youth in Kerala. The complete eradication of the digital divide is a requisite to attaining overall youth development in parity with the current digital age.

Moving Beyond “Creepy Crawlies”



Femi Ezhuthupallickal Benny
Amritha Jaiprekash Kurup



Apis cerana (Asiatic honey bee). Source: Jeet Bisht

Growing up in a small village in Kerala, we were closely connected to nature and taught to appreciate all living things, including insects. However, not all insects were treated equally. A vivid memory is the appearance of alates (winged termite swarms) at the onset of monsoon, especially after the first showers. Alates would swarm around lights at night, often falling into our kanji (a rice porridge staple). As children, we found this disgusting and demanded the dish be replaced. Now, as an entomologist, I understand that alates are clean, emerging after first showers only to mate and then die. Recently, after the summer showers in Bengaluru, I was having tea and fried snacks when an alate fell onto my plate. I simply picked them out and continued eating. The tea shop owner offered to replace my plate, but I proudly declined, knowing it was not a big deal. Now that’s what awareness and proper education about insects has done to me- a vicissitude in perception!

In the urban landscape that dominates much of our lives, insect encounters are often limited to fleeting glimpses of houseflies, the annoying buzz of mosquitoes, or the petrifying sight of cockroaches scuttling across the floor. These encounters, coupled with societal perceptions that connect insects to scary creatures, have shaped a widespread aversion towards insects, restricting them to the derogatory labels of “creepy crawlies” or “bugs.” However, beneath these dismissive epithets lies a profound ignorance of the role insects play in sustaining life on Earth. Since there is a dynamic decline in insect diversity as well as their population contributed by habitat loss, conventional agricultural practices, climate change and environmental pollution, it’s time to address these matters of concern for ecosystem health. Public awareness

and dialogue on the importance of insects are crucial at the moment to change this narrative, especially in India, hosting a vast diversity of insects.

It’s imperative to come out of these prejudiced notions that consider insects as ugly and recognize the remarkable ecological services that insects provide. Without them, agricultural systems would crumble, leading to food shortages and economic instability. A well-known example of insect ecosystem services is the case of rusty patched bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*) in the United States, where the insect faced a dramatic decline due to habitat loss, pesticide use, and disease, severely impacting the pollination of crops like tomatoes, blueberries, and cranberries. To counter this, conservation groups such as the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation initiated programs to reintroduce the species through habitat restoration, reduced pesticide use, and breeding and releasing efforts, resulting in increased crop yields and enhanced biodiversity. Insects also serve as nature’s



Dung beetle roller, carrying a dung ball towards its nest. Later females lay their eggs in these balls. Source: Amritha Jaiprekash Kurup



Bumblebee (Bombus haemorrhoidalis) pollinating cosmos flower. These bees exhibit buzz pollination, wherein they vibrate their thoracic muscles at high frequency causing pollen to bounce off from the flower and get trapped in their fur coat. Source: Femi Ezhuthupallickal Benny.

recyclers and decomposers, breaking down organic matter and thereby replenishing nutrients in the soil, bolstering the health of ecosystems worldwide. For example, in the 1800s, European settlers introduced cattle to Australia, but the absence of native dung beetles in Australia, capable of processing cattle dung led to dung accumulation, increased parasitic infections, and economic losses in the cattle industry. To address this, scientists introduced dung beetle species from Africa and Europe in the mid-20th century, which effectively decomposed the cattle dung, thereby improving soil fertility, reduced parasite and pest populations, and boosted the cattle industry's productivity. This historical event is one of the several testaments to the ecological role of dung beetles and the broader role insects play in maintaining ecosystem health. The role of insects as predators and parasitoids of agricultural pests, and thus preventing yield loss are also not widely acknowledged.

Beyond their ecological significance, across cultures and cuisines, insects have long been consumed as a sustainable

and nutritious food. For example, for several indigenous communities spread across India (Nagas of Nagaland, Adi and Aptani's of Arunachal Pradesh), insects are a valued source of food and traditional medicine. Rich in essential nutrients such as protein, vitamins, and minerals, insects offer a viable solution to the current global challenges of food security and the unsustainable reliance on conventional livestock farming. As we recognize the urgent need for alternative protein sources in the wake of climate change, population explosion and environmental degradation, the importance of insects as a dependable food source cannot be overstated.

People's participation and public awareness are two strong shields we can use to shift the standpoint of insect disgust! Insect walks, workshops, educational talks, campaigns to learn about local insects' diversity, insect friendly gardening and so forth are few ways through which we can get to know these amazing beings. Photography, creating simulation experiences about insects and their environment, organizing festivals to commemorate beauty and roles of insects are also equally important in establishing and popularizing their uniqueness and significance.

Earlier, we marveled at the glittering dance of fireflies under a starry sky. Butterfly wings, fluttering in silent grace, mesmerized us, and the cicadas' rhythmic clicks sparked our curiosity. Nevertheless, the initial awe has dimmed, replaced by a distorted view of insects. But it's time to retrain our eyes, to shed those unsettling images and rediscover the captivating wonders these creatures truly are. As we face the climate crisis, protecting and conserving insects becomes even more crucial for a healthy and sustainable future.

Through the Lens



Aziya Shammad
Photographer

Photo Credit: Aziya Shammad

Aziya Shammad, an ardent photographer inspired by her father's passion, captures the world's intricate beauty and profound stories through her lens.

The world, a ceaseless canvas of colors, emotions, and stories, has always beckoned me to capture its essence. My journey as a photographer began in the most innocent of ways, with a child's fascination for my father's old film camera. The magic of developing those film strips, revealing hidden images, sparked a curiosity that would shape my path.

As I grew, so did my passion. The transition to the digital age brought with it a DSLR, a tool that extended my creative horizons. It was during my twelfth year, a time of youthful exploration, that I truly discovered the power of photography. With every click, I was freezing moments in time, preserving laughter, tears, and everything in between.

Photography, for me, is more than just a hobby; it's a language through which I express myself, connect with the world, and tell stories. It's the art of seeing the ordinary in an extraordinary light. The camera becomes an extension of my eye, allowing me to share perspectives, evoke emotions, and inspire others.

My venture into the world of photography was an odyssey ignited by my father's infectious passion. His steadfast assistance and encouragement have been the guiding stars that have illuminated my path. I vividly recall the night of the 2018 super blood moon. It was a celestial spectacle that captivated the world, and my father and I were determined to capture its ethereal beauty. His

excitement was contagious, and together, we embarked on a photographic adventure that would shape my future.

That night, under the crimson hue of the moon, a seed was sown. A seed that would blossom into a deep-rooted love for capturing the world through a lens. My father's belief in my abilities spurred me on to explore the myriad wonders of nature and the human spirit.

From the early morning treks to the late-night adventures capturing the city lights, my father has been my constant companion. His keen eye for detail and his patience in guiding me through the intricacies of framing and composition have been invaluable.

I cherish the moments when I manage to capture a truly extraordinary image. The sparkle in my father's eyes and the proud smile that graces his face are my greatest rewards. His love for photography has not only inspired me as a photographer but has also fostered a bond between us that is as enduring as the natural world we both admire.

From the heights of national highways to the sandy shores of Shanghumugham Beach,



our adventures have taken us to countless locations. Each place offers a unique perspective, and with my father by my side, I have learned to see the world through a photographer's lens.

My father was more than just my mentor; he was often my muse. His weathered face, a testament to years of passions, became my canvas. From the rugged outdoors to the quiet balcony of our home, I found endless subjects in him. His patience as I experimented with light and shadow was as boundless as his support. These images, a blend of artistry and affection, are a cherished part of my portfolio.

His influence has been instrumental in shaping me into the photographer I am today. And as I continue to explore the vast canvas of the world, I carry with me the invaluable lessons and unwavering support of my father.

Each time I raise my lens to capture the world's tapestry, a whisper of gratitude echoes within. For it was Mr. Emil Abraham, a visionary who claimed the human eye to be the ultimate camera, found the spark within me during my UG days. His words, like a master's brushstroke, laid the foundation

upon which my photographic journey rests. In the quiet moments behind the viewfinder, I find myself a disciple, reverently applying the lessons bestowed by my mentor, whose influence remains as vivid as the images I create.

This year, as we celebrate World Photography Day on August 19th, under the theme of 'An entire day,' I find myself reflecting on the countless moments I've captured. From the vibrant hues of nature to the subtle nuances of human emotion, every photograph is a testament to the beauty that surrounds us. It's a reminder that even in the smallest details, there is a story waiting to be told.

Videography, too, has become an integral part of my artistic expression. The ability to capture motion, sound, and emotion in a single frame is exhilarating. It's like composing a symphony, where visuals and audio harmonize to create a captivating narrative.

Whether I'm behind the lens of a camera or a video camera, I am constantly seeking new perspectives, experimenting with different techniques, and pushing the boundaries of my creativity. Each click, each frame, is a step towards self-discovery and a deeper appreciation for the world around me.

Photography has enriched my life in countless ways. It has taught me patience, observation, and the importance of finding beauty in the unexpected. It has connected me with people from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of community and shared experiences.

As I continue on this photographic journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to share my vision with the world. I am excited to explore new horizons, experiment with different styles, and continue to grow as an artist.

So, here's to the art of capturing moments, preserving memories, and inspiring others. Happy World Photography day!!

The Invisible Hand



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Exploring the unseen economic value of unpaid care work and the urgent need for gender equality in the labour force.

Most economies have been mesmerised by Adam Smith's concept of the invisible hand and its positive impact, driven by private profit incentives and free competition rather than coercion. This invisible hand is believed to guide the economy and bring stability and growth. I strongly feel that there is yet another powerful invisible hand that creates, shapes and maintains the human resource-the homemakers. The ILO states that 6.4 billion hours daily are spent performing unpaid care labour. In other words, it means 2 billion individuals working 8 hours every day without pay. Women do eighty per cent of the unpaid care work in Asia. Yes- women have been identified with unpaid care work and have remained invisible in the National Accounts. Labour inside the household has undoubtedly restricted women and has prevented them from being a part of the labour market. Unpaid household work is also a powerful weapon of intimidation, bringing forth the notion that housework is not actual work at all -after all it is unpaid. The status of women is at stake. The monetisation of this unpaid work is only discussed in household kitchens and is only a part of bedroom quarrels.

The Labour Force Participation Rate in an economy is positively correlated to its growth and development. The Labour Force Participation Rate [LFPR] for females in India is acutely lower compared to males. The NSO data on PLFS-2022-23 highlights that only less than four in ten working-age women enter the labour force as compared to eight in ten men. The gap between female and male LFPRs is one of the sharpest in India.

And when women do enter the labour market, they earn significantly less than men for performing the same work. According to the World Economic Forum, women earn just 71% of what men earn. The ILO states the gender pay gap in India is 27% as of 2023. It is an economic issue with a strong cultural and patriarchal root. Prof. Claudia Goldin, the Nobel laureate has explained gender differences in earnings and employment rates over 200 years, connecting it to the nature of work and the role of societal expectations

regarding childbearing. It was confirmed by a study conducted by The Kerala Knowledge Economy Mission which found that in Kerala 57% of women left the labour force because of the burden of household work. For instance, the presence of small children in the household increases the value of time in the nonmarket sector for the person most responsible for child care and, hence, also would increase the reservation wage. Therefore, it is not surprising to find women participating in the labour force intermittently. They work prior to the arrival of the first child, withdraw from the labour market when the children are small and need full-time care, and return to the labour market once the children enrol in school. The male-female gap in labour force participation is highest in the reproductive years for females. On the job front, due to growing



disparities, humiliation, violation, and vulnerability are rampant in workplaces compelling the government to formulate laws against workplace harassment. On the home front, the services of a housewife are rarely recognized or accepted as work at all. She is taken for granted. A working woman undoubtedly means one working overtime clubbing inside household work with professional work. Combining paid work with the mountain of domestic labour at home also takes a toll on their health. Cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children, the old and the sick are never the manifesto of the male members. However, women have been saved by numerous technological interventions and developments - machines that have complemented household work. Despite this, female labour force participation has lagged, pulling

back the economy's potential for prospective growth and development.

Services of housewives are not included in national income though they contribute to GDP. The crucial hurdle is how to calculate wages for household work. There is the challenge of distinguishing work and leisure and also the productive and unproductive work. Wages for housework would redefine the role of women in society and would lead to the welfare of a large segment of the population. It can empower the women in an Indian patriarchal household. As Karl Marx stated, labour creates value and goods are crystallized labour. Women create value in the true sense of the word - they produce human resources, preparing and adding value to the economy's potential. They selflessly spend huge quantities of time and energy preparing this resource - sacrificing the opportunity cost of earning an income outside of homes. It is this selfless service laced with love and care that acts as the invisible mechanism strengthening the foundation of an economy. It is this mechanism that facilitates the participation of men in the economy. Countries estimate the value of such services to be about 8-9% of the GDP of a nation. Economic growth on its own will not correct the gender disparity in the labour market. Social norms and cultural barriers may still keep the women at home and keep them away from the labour market.

With evolving dynamics in the Indian labour market transforming work paradigms and providing flexibility through work-from-home and online platforms, women have many opportunities for economic participation. The opportunity cost of domestic work which they sacrifice would tend to be much higher. Addressing women's safety, ensuring flexibility in working hours and creating gainful employment opportunities in a healthy social environment is the key to increasing women's participation. The message is clear - either make provision for payment for domestic labour or ensure women's labour force participation. Gender equality is an unfinished task and a human issue. We need to remember that when women do better, economies do better.

STAND WITH

A.K. Antony Urges Public to Support Wayanad Landslide Victims through CMDRF

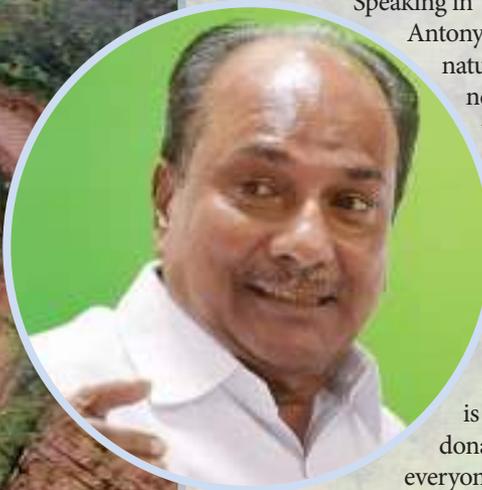
Veteran Congress leader A.K. Antony has called on the public to contribute to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF) to aid in the rehabilitation of those affected by the recent Wayanad landslide tragedy.

Speaking in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday, Antony emphasized the unprecedented nature of the disaster and the urgent need for collective support to assist the victims.

Antony, who has a history of contributing significant amounts during past natural calamities, including during his tenure as a Member of Parliament, announced that he would be donating Rs 50,000 to the CMDRF. Though he acknowledged that this contribution is smaller compared to previous donations, he stressed the importance of everyone, regardless of political affiliations, coming together to help those in need.

"This is an extraordinary tragedy that has struck the hamlets of Wayanad, leaving families devastated," Antony said. "It is crucial that we set aside our differences and contribute generously to the CMDRF to ensure that the affected families are rehabilitated properly."

He also noted that the full extent of the casualties is still unclear and highlighted the urgent need for support to ensure the well-being of those who have lost their homes and livelihoods.



WAYANAD

Young Dancer's Heartfelt Tribute

13-Year-Old Performs Bharatanatyam to Aid Wayanad Landslide Victims

In a moving display of compassion and talent, 13-year-old Harini Sri from Tamil Nadu took centre stage to perform Bharatanatyam for three continuous hours, raising funds for those affected by the devastating landslides in Wayanad.

Harini's efforts culminated in a generous donation of ₹15,000 to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF), a sum that included her personal savings. On Thursday, Harini personally handed over the contribution to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who commended her dedication and spirit.

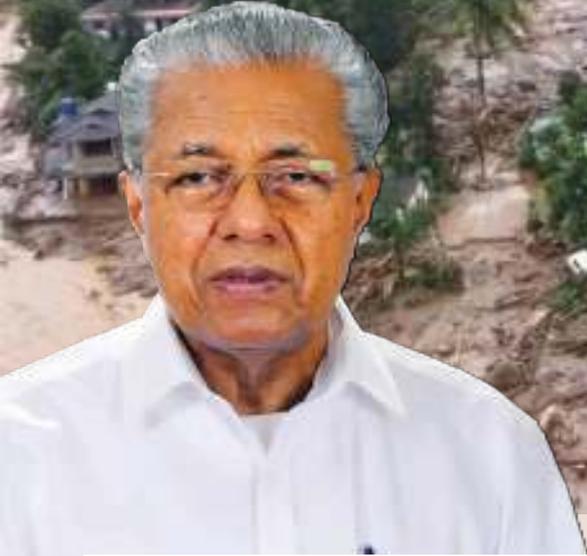
The young dancer's selfless act did not go unnoticed, with the Kerala government's Information Public Relations Department taking to X (formerly Twitter) to highlight her initiative. The post read, "A 13-year-old girl from Tamil Nadu, Harini Sri, performed Bharatanatyam for 3 hours straight to raise funds for the Wayanad landslide to #standwithwayanad. She donated Rs15,000, including her savings, to CMDRF."

Harini's performance stands as a powerful reminder of how art can bridge distances and offer hope, even in the face of overwhelming tragedy.



STAND WITH WAYANAD

DONATE TO THE CHIEF MINISTER'S DISTRESS RELIEF FUND



**LET'S UNITE FOR
WAYANAD**

VISIT www.donation.cmdrf.kerala.gov.in | **TOGETHER WE REBUILD**
Every Donation Counts

Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund Account

No.	Bank	Account Number	IFSC Code
1.	State Bank of India	39251566695	SBIN0070028
2.	South Indian Bank	0721053000003020	SIBL0000721
3.	Federal Bank	10210100422271	FDRL0001021
4.	HDFC Bank Ltd	50100350210557	HDFC0002485
5.	ICICI Bank	626201089884	ICIC0006262
6.	CSB Bank Ltd	00 9603981212190001	CSBK0000096
7.	Axis Bank	920010023834712	UTIB0000784
8.	Dhanalakshmi Bank	003700100156782	DLXB0000037
9.	IDBI Bank Ltd	0889104000111454	IBKL0000889
10.	Indian Overseas Bank	009901000002020	IOBA0000099
11.	Union Bank of India	502902010900782	UBIN0550299
12.	Canara Bank	5842132000007	CNRB0005842
13.	Kotak Mahindra Bank	1815162037	KKBK0009206
14.	Bank Of Baroda	29860100006714	BARB0PEROOR
15.	Standard Chartered Bank	43710072419	SCBL0036099
16.	Kerala Gramin Bank	40341101051311	KLGB0040341
17.	IndusInd Bank	159900002020	INDB0001599
18.	Bank Of India	853810110007599	BKID0008538
19.	Punjab National Bank	3301000104118534	PUNB0330100
20.	Kerala Bank	110110801000339	KSBK0000101
21.	Central Bank of India	5652206185	CBIN0280937
22.	UCO Bank	02880110077641	UCBA0000288
23.	Indian Bank	7839343398	IDIB000P030
24.	Covid-TSB A/c (1475)	799010100191475	
25.	Special Treasury Savings Bank	799010100193172	

**Let's join hands
to rebuild lives
and restore
everything that
has been
shattered.**

Contribute to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund, which ensures that your assistance reaches those in need, transparently and is subject to auditing

This contribution is eligible for deduction under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.

<https://www.facebook.com/CMOKerala>

#StandWithWayanad

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