



EDITORIAL

Come alive to life

The colour and grace of national festivals are matchless. The period when summer recedes, paving the way for spring, is celebrated in almost all parts of the country in myriad forms, with fervour and gaiety. Festival requires no sequences. It is an experience that suffuses the senses. It is a state of mind and a state of the community as well.

Kerala has a variety of festivals to boast of. They are an integral part of the social and cultural structure of our society. From time immemorial Kerala attracted the notice of people from other parts of the world. Festivals add lustre to the tourism potential of the state. The rich and colourful culture and heritage in Kerala present magnificent weaving to tourism delights. The culture of Kerala represents an epitome of the collective achievements of the people. The cultural heritage of Kerala is also revealed in its varied dance forms, martial arts and folk arts. Our culture is an integral part of Indian culture. Festivals also reaffirm our pride in the cultural diversity of the nation.

Onam is definitely one of the most spectacular of them all. It is a nostalgic enthusiasm for Malayalis across the world. It is like something special in our heart. It gives a sense of cultural roots. Coinciding with the harvest season, this is a celebration time in "God's own Country". A kaleidoscope of

traditions and rituals, a sense of togetherness, a season of fairs and all of them surrounded by an air of great enthusiasm mark the eagerly awaited national festival in Kerala.

The government has extended all arrangements to celebrate Onam. The government is taking steps to distribute 26 lakh grocery kits and make a massive market intervention effort during Onam to ensure that the prices of essential commodities do not go beyond the reach of the common people. The socio-economic development has reduced inequality and provided opportunities for the common man to aspire for a better quality of life. The State Government will be providing Onam kits free of charge to the 20 lakh BPL families this season.

For the youth of today it is an 'instant' celebration and a time for shopping. Many of the business firms are looking for a boost in their sales and have come forward with offers to attract customers. Even with the emergence of nuclear families, Onam has not lost its warmth and colour. Still, Onam gives every Malayali a sort of expectation for a better tomorrow. It is also a celebration of unity. It gives us inner strength that we are not alone in this busy world.

Together let us keep up the spirit.

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Aung San Suu Kyi Wins Gandhi Peace Award

Myanmar's renowned pre-democracy leader and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under detention, has been complimented with Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Peace and Reconciliation. The award was in recognition of her strong commitment to non violence, justice and peace. It was bestowed by the Mahatma Gandhi foundation in South Africa.

While her house arrest ended in may, she is now being kept under detention in the Insein prison in Yangoon on charges of an unwanted visit by an American. In the present case, the prosecution alleged that she violated the terms of her detention under the 1974 constitution. The judgment was put off until august 11. She has been detained for over 14 years.

Suu Kyi led the National League for Democracy to a landslide victory in a rare general election held in 1980 by the military rulers of Myanmar. By her detention the military junta prevented her from assuming the title. She totally represents the sufferings of the Burmese people.



Revitalising NAM

The 15th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was held on July at Sharm-el-Sheikh in Egypt with representatives from 118 member countries on the banks of the Red Sea to debate on peace, development, solidarity, terrorism, food security, climate change and the present economic crisis. Egypt President Hosni Mubarak chaired the summit.

Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh addressed the plenary session of the NAM Summit and emphasised India's commitment to help revitalise NAM, which can play the leading role in the emerging world order following the end of the Cold War. He blamed the developed countries, their industrial activities and the unsustainable life styles for the climate change and economic crisis.

A NAM First Ladies' Summit was also taking place. The theme of that meeting was "Women in Crisis management-Perspectives and Challenges, Best Practices and Lessons Learned."

The Non-Aligned Movement was charted out at Bandung Conference of 1955, held its first meeting six years later in September 1961 in Belgrade. The movement was the brilliant idea of Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdul Nasser and Marshal Tito. Then, there were 25 countries. Forty-eight years later, the movement has grown to 118 members - amid doubts over its relevance in a unipolar world.

Ravi

40th Anniversary of Great Voyage

Forty years ago men from Earth set out for the first time to another planet, the journey to moon.

The Apollo 11 mission was the first manned mission to land on the Moon. On July 16, 1969, it carried astronauts Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, Buzz Aldrin to the Moon. On July 20, Armstrong and Aldrin became the first humans to land on the Moon.

While preparing to plant the first human foot on another world, with more than half a billion people watching on television, Armstrong climbed down the ladder and proclaimed, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

The mission fulfilled President John F. Kennedy's vision. "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade (1960s) is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth," he expressed his ambition during a speech in Congress on May 25, 1961.

Unfortunately, the tapes of the Apollo 11 Moon walk are missing and are believed to have been erased. NASA is in the process of restoring the video footage with the help of modern technology.



Towards a sustainable life

Sustainability encapsulates three facets of life: the environment, society and the economy. As we live through economic downturn, even as experts claim that the worst is over, but we are time and again reminded of the need for food security, protecting our environment and leave it better for the future generation. It is time, the youth of the country adopted a global sense of social responsibility.

Youth action, inclusion and their full participation are the keys to developing today's world for the

generations of tomorrow and central to a sustainable existence. It is time to involve young people to focus on what needs to be done to build responsible youth of tomorrow.

While those in power need to start a dialogue on how to tap on the rich and varied skills, interests and aspirations of young people, the youth need to take up challenges facing them and march ahead in triumph utilising the opportunities that the world of science and technology is throwing up.

Youth are the future of all nations.

Today, as the world is threatened by imminent ecological and environmental catastrophe, it is imperative that nations mould youth who are aware of leading a sustainable life.

Youngsters in India and even in Kerala, are enchanted by the white goods that are flooding the market. With high-paying jobs in the IT sector, they don't think twice about splurging on food and drinks or even on dresses. It is essential that these youth, on International Youth Day on August 12, take a vow to live sustainably on this fragile planet or face a bleak future.

On the International Youth Day, the United Nations Programme on Youth is encouraging youth organisations around the world to host community barter fairs, as this is surely a sustainable way forward. With bartering there is no money involved, only pure exchange of goods and services. And that is a feasible and sustainable solution to many Malaises that plagues our society today.

Kavitha





Practise Developmental Politics

I am happy to deliver the public lecture organised by the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs, Kerala. My greetings to hon'ble Ministers, hon'ble members of legislature and other distinguished guests. When I am with this audience, I would like to talk on the topic "Dynamics of Parliamentary System".

Missions of Parliamentary Democracy

The unique mission of Indian Parliamentary system is to sustain the democracy and grow the democracy with its value system based on civilizational heritage of our nation. At no time, I would like our parliamentarians to compare the democratic system in India with any other democratic system, since no democratic system in any other country has the population of over billion people with multi religious, multi lingual and multi cultural characteristics. Time has come for us to evolve the parliamentary system based on our past experiences and the present aspiration of our youth. I believe there has to be only one vision for Indian democratic system today, which is to bring prosperity and peace in a combined way to the 700 million



Speech delivered by former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, at Old Assembly Hall, Thiruvananthapuram.

citizens living in 600,000 villages and about 300 million citizens living in urban areas

I would like to put-forth to this audience and to the researchers of political system and politico-economic system that we have in India three missions for parliamentary democratic system, one is: bringing economic prosperity in a specific

period to the citizens of India (reporting of higher percentage of people living in poverty for political reasons will bring a revolution from the suffering people). The second is: Indian parliamentary democracy has got to bring peace within the country by eliminating any form of extremism growing in the country. The third task is: the Indian parliamentary system has

to bring peace, harmony and amity with our neighbours and beyond in all directions. The parliamentarians and experts have to ask themselves a question, whether we have a dream to realise all the three tasks for sustaining and growing in the Indian democracy.

India Vision 2020

I still remember in the Indian Parliamentary system, the Prime Minister of India announcing in the Parliament that India will become a

Parliament, 12 legislative assemblies, Chambers of Commerce of the nation and different states, universities and research institutions pertaining to many disciplines. I have myself addressed at-least 10 million youth from schools, colleges and universities during the last seven years about the India Vision 2020.

Let me describe the India Vision 2020 and its challenges. I am presenting this because only 11 years

industry and service sector work together in sympathy.

4. A Nation where education with value system is not denied to any meritorious candidates because of societal or economic discrimination.
5. A Nation, which is the best destination for the most talented scholars, scientists and investors.
6. A Nation where the best of health care is available to all.
7. A Nation where the governance is responsive, transparent and corruption free.
8. A Nation where poverty has been totally eradicated, illiteracy removed and crimes against women and children are absent and none in the society feels alienated.
9. A Nation that is prosperous, healthy, secure, devoid of terrorism, peaceful and happy, and continues with a sustainable growth path.
10. A Nation that is one of the best places to live in and is proud of its leadership.

Integrated Action for developed India

To achieve the distinctive profile of India, we have the mission of transforming India into a developed nation. We have identified five areas where India has a core competence for integrated action: (1) Agriculture and food processing (2) Education and Healthcare (3) Information and Communication Technology (4) Reliable and Quality Electric power, Surface transport and Infrastructure for all parts of the country and (5) Self-reliance in critical technologies.

While I presented the missions for prosperity of states in different state assemblies both ruling party and the opposition listen to me carefully and they accepted the missions unanimously for implementation. Now friends, what can be a greater mission for the Indian parliamentary system to progress politically and economically other than the



developed nation free from poverty before the year 2020 and it was also announced by Prime Minister during his address to the citizens from Red Fort on Independence Day 2003. This vision announced in Parliament and Red Fort was based on the evolution of a document by a 500 experts members team on behalf of TIFAC (Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council) for Transforming India into a Developed Nation before 2020. This document was presented in various fora like

are left for realising the vision of bringing economic prosperity, happiness and peace in the country

Distinctive Profile of India by 2020

1. A Nation where the rural and urban divide has reduced to a thin line.
2. A Nation where there is an equitable distribution and adequate access to energy and quality water.
3. A Nation where agriculture,



The multiple needs lead to the necessity of our graduation from political politics to development politics.

realisation of India Vision 2020 which I have just described.

Another aspect I would like to discuss which I have discussed in the Parliament on 21 March 2005 is on the topic Political Politics and Development Politics.

Political Politics and Development Politics

When I see the members of the largest democracy, I would like to share a thought on Political Politics and Developmental Politics. As you are all aware, in politics there are two dimensions, the first one is political politics and the other is developmental politics. Political politics was essential during the time of independence movement. Today, what is needed for India? With its 220 million people living below poverty line and the illiteracy

rate is in the order of 30 per cent, the employment seekers of more than 30 million, in such a situation, our mission is to lift the 220 million people from below poverty line and to provide graceful and empowered life with full employment potential. That indeed necessitates the developmental politics. When the opportunity is given for a particular party by the people to implement the development plan and it becomes a reality with the support of all members, the country and the people will be blessed by the noble act of the Parliamentarians. Democracy provides opportunity for everybody to prove yourself how better you can perform in realising the vision of the nation.

The need for removal of poverty totally out of our country, the need for providing opportunities for all our people in the fiercely competitive and knowledge based world and the need for providing security to the people and nation in the complex world of today, these multiple needs lead to the necessity of our graduation from political politics to development politics. In a sense, it is a "post-graduation" for the whole nation and therefore the Parliament and state Legislatures which has an exalted position to give directions to the nation. The discussions, debate, consensus towards these kind of goals based on the opportunity given through the Parliamentary democracy, will certainly lead India towards the path of reaching a developed India even before 2020. This is called

developmental politics.

Role of Parliament members

The Parliament is a vital pivot in the institution of democracy in our country. It is one of the main pillars that support the democratic system. And therefore, it has a vital role to play in not only sustaining such a system but also revitalising it, making it a vibrant, progressive, ever-growing fortress of our democratic strength. The Parliamentarians' role, therefore, assumes tremendous significance and it is essential that each one of the Members of Parliament lives up to the aspirations and ideals with which they have become Members with the support of the masses. A proactive, positive role, therefore, is a must and cannot at all be diluted even one bit. The entire nation watches the proceedings in Parliament not only with awe, but with tremendous expectations and concern basically because the future of the nation depends on what the Parliament does. In this era of substantial advancements in the electronic media, we all in the Parliament live in a veritable glass-house in full view of the entire nation. In every action of Parliament Members our 540 million youth who are below 25 years of age should see in you great leaders who can be their role models. We owe it to the voters to fulfill their expectations. Most legislators and parliamentarians I have met over the years, firmly believe a need for societal transformation. Most of them say that "business as usual" or more of the same will not suffice. We need to change? How to bring about the change? Even experiments with direct implementation of projects by the parliamentarians within their constituencies do not appear to have given the necessary momentum for change: that of providing breakthrough triggers for development and removal of poverty at the grass root levels.

Civilizational heritage

The third aspect of democratic parliament system is evolution of great

responsible citizens with value system and of-course,all democratic systems are silent about it throughout the world.I have a suggestion as we have a 5000 years old civilizational heritage. It is all the more important for introducing the third component in our parliament system, that is the evolution of youth having the following feeling:

“I will become a good member of my family, a good member of the society,a good member of the nation and a good member of the world”.

How do we evolve such type of citizens? It has to be by inculcating righteousness in the heart and providing value based education.

Righteousness is the beginning

What we need is a carrier of eternal goodness and wholesomeness in human conduct, which is “Righteousness in the heart”.

As we say in some of our spiritual centres:

Righteousness

Where there is righteousness in the heart

There is beauty in the character.

When there is beauty in the character,

There is harmony in the home.

When there is harmony in the home.

There is an order in the nation.

When there is order in the nation,

There is peace in the world.

Now the question is: How do we inculcate the righteousness in the heart. In my opinion, there are three sources which can build a youth with righteousness in the heart. One is mother,second is father and the third and the most important is the teacher, particularly primary school teacher. Also to provide righteousness in the heart to the young minds, we should have an environment of great education and a spiritual way of life and spiritual environment.

Education with value system

We have seen that the seeds of peace in the world have their origin in the righteousness in the heart of every

individual.Such righteous citizens lead to the evolution of enlightened society. Education with value system has to be so designed that the righteousness in the heart is developed in young minds. That should be the mission of education. The prime learning environment is five to seventeen years of age.This reminds me of an ancient Greek teacher's saying, "Give me a child for seven years; afterwards, let God or devil take the child. They cannot change the child". This indicates the power of great teachers and what they can inculcate in the young minds. Parents and teachers must inculcate moral leadership amongst children.It requires the ability to have insights into the uniqueness and universality of human consciousness.True education is the acquisition of enlightened feelings and enlightened powers to understand daily events and to understand the permanent truth linking man, to his environment,human and planetary.

Suggestions to the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs

Before concluding, may I suggest the following suggestions to the Institute of Parliamentary Affairs:

1. Development of a constituency wise data base of development parameters, taking into account the efforts already in progress

2. Debate and recommendations on mechanisms to ensure that the vision and fundings of major schemes reach the intended beneficiaries fully

3. Debate and recommendations of steps to ensure that India will not be in the list of nations with corruption

4. Debate and recommendations of certain code of conduct so that Parliament and State legislatures maximise the full allotted time for development and growth

5. Debate, recommendations and implemenation of an outreach programme to ensure that best minds are attracted to the political arena and contribute

Let us show to ourselves and the world, the maturity in politics that we

have gained and how we utilise that for the sustained development of the nation. We will strive to build an India that is live and throbbing with a Parliamentary democracy that is vibrant,vigilant,safe and secular.I am sure that is well within our capability and we can achieve it if we really want to.

Conclusion

People are yearning for a life style change by preserving the cultural heritage,values and ethos of the Indian civilization. Only the members of the legislature and Parliament can bring the smiles in the faces of the citizens, by enacting appropriate policies,laws and facilitate for a societal transformation.We have been working with the policies and procedures which are mostly based on mistrust. The design of all laws and procedures reflects this phenomenon of mistrust because of the complexity introduced and implemented to plug loopholes, for example tax avoidance and evasion. As a result motivation and empowerment is dampened and depressed, whereas Indian people have shown enormous achievement when provided an environment of trust and working space. The Parliament and legislatures need to mount a mission to identify and scrap complex old laws and administrative procedures which are hindrance for the growth oriented development economy and give scope to ninety percent of the people who are honest to flower and flourish. Policies, laws and procedures should be framed for this 90 per cent rather than for the 10 per cent who are dishonest. India must move to a trust based system and only the members of parliament and legislature can bring this change.This is the dynamics of Parliamentary Democracy,which I visualise.

I am sure and confident that all of us will rise up to the occasion and elect the right type of leaders who will lay stress on development politics and strive to bring smiles in the faces of a billion people. May God Bless you. ■



Kaziranga National Park

The world famous Kaziranga National Park in Assam is just a step away from becoming one of the seven new natural wonders of the world. "The park, a world heritage site, housing the highly endangered one-horned rhinos, has made it to the second round of the contest".

According to the results available, 77 of the total 440 nominees have made it to round two in as many as seven categories. They will be eligible for listing as one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. The Park is a sanctuary for more than half of the world's one-horned rhinoceros population. Elephants, rhinos, wild buffaloes, gaurs, tigers, swamp deer, sambar deer are some of the other animals in the park.

Highest online population

The number of internet users around the world are expected to touch 2.2 billion by 2013, as India will have the third highest online population in the world. The number of people online around the world will grow by more than 45 percent to 2.2 billion users by 2013 and Asia will continue to be the biggest Internet growth engine. India will stand at third place after China and the U.S., respectively. The report entitled 'Global Online Population Forecast, 2008 to 2013' notes that emerging markets like India, China and Indonesia would have an average annual growth rate of 10 to 20 percent over the next five years, that is between 2008 and 2013.

Asia will account for 43 percent of the global online population, in which China will make up half of this population, in the next four years. Asia had 38 percent of the global online population in 2008. The shifting online population and growing spending power among the Asian consumers means that Asian markets will represent a far greater percentage of the total in 2013 than they do today. On the other hand, the percentage of the global online population in North America will drop to 13 percent from 17 percent between 2008 and 2013, while Europe's share will also drop to 22 percent from 26 percent. Latin America will remain consistent with 11 percent share of the global online population. Countries like India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Philippines will have a substantial online growth rate.

Five musketeers

Bollywood's 5-year report card brings to light that its five musketeers – Aamir Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Hrithik Roshan and Salman Khan – have together netted a business of approximately Rs. 1,830 crore from the ticket windows alone. And, if you add the revenue from satellite, home-video and other mediums to this figure, you can easily see why these men are on top.

It is easy to explain why. Trade sources estimate a total of Rs. 500 crore came from Akshay's 17 releases in the five year period from 2004 to 2008, Rs. 400 crore from Shah Rukh's nine releases, Rs. 365 crore from Aamir's five releases, Rs. 350 crore from Salman Khan's 13 releases and Rs. 215 crore from Hrithik's three films.

Despite these actors' ups and downs, Bollywood depends a lot on these five men because they have a fairly high success ratio. Akshay leads the pack with his earnings by virtue of the fact that he has done the maximum number of films.



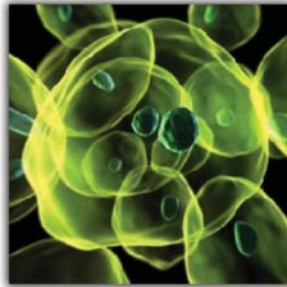
Stem cell treatment

In what can be stated to be a big step for India, stem cell treatment in a Kolkata hospital threw it further into limelight. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Cancer Research Institute carried out a remarkable transplant from an unrelated donor. Cord blood from an infant was transferred to a patient Amal Majumdar who was suffering from aplastic anaemia.

Aplastic anaemia is a condition where bone marrow does not produce sufficient new cells to replenish blood cells. Japan was the first to break this barrier whose success rate so far has been 80 per cent. According to the director of the institute, Ashish Mukherjee, "This is a path-breaking event because neither the patient's blood group nor HLA matched with the new born girl whose stem cells are about to give Amal a new lease of life. Since cord blood stem cells have less antigenic property, they can be used without a blood group or genetic match. But for bone marrow transplant we need an HLA match." What is amazing is that while the donor's blood group is A+, the recipient's is O+.

Protein advantages

PAR4 Protein Destroys Cancer. Dr Vivek Rangnekar, professor of radiation medicine at the University of Kentucky, has in another breakthrough discovered that the Par-4 protein (mass killer of cancer cells) is produced within the human body itself and spreads through circulation to distant organs.



Par-4, after being secreted by human tissues, has also been found to kill only cancer cells. It did not harm normal cells, proving they are not toxic. The presence of large amounts of the Par-4 protein in the super mice had made them completely immune to cancer. Not only did they not develop tumours, they even lived longer.

Par-4, secreted inside the human body by the kidney, lung and prostate, can now be developed so as to inject the protein to treat cancer. Not only primary tumours, but also metastatic tumours that have spread to other tissues should be killed by the Par-4 protein, "Par-4 protein is secreted by human cells. This means it is not necessary to make genetic modifications, or to employ recombinant viruses, to deliver the Par-4 gene to cancer cells. Rangnekar first discovered the Par-4 gene in 1993. In 2007, his team introduced the gene into a mouse embryo, creating the super mouse.



Swine flu spreads to nearly every corner of the globe

Swine flu has spread to nearly every corner of the globe; the World Health Organisation said, admitting it was still unknown how the virus would mutate in the

northern hemisphere's winter. With the death toll still rising rapidly and countries rushing out new ways to check the spread of A(H1N1), the United Nations agency said it was only a matter of time before the pandemic which began in March affected every country.

"The spread of this virus continues, if you see 160 out of 193 WHO member states now have cases, so we are nearing almost 100 percent but not quite yet." the A(H1N1) virus, which the WHO declared a pandemic in June, has resulted in around 800 deaths. Most of the deaths have been concentrated in the Americas, with the United States, Argentina and Mexico the three countries to have recorded the highest number of fatalities. Researchers in New Zealand said that up to 79 percent of the population could become infected, although only two-thirds of those may show symptoms.

The WHO has found, however, from data from Canada, Chile, Japan, Britain and the United States that the majority of cases are occurring "in younger people, with the median age reported to be 12 to 17 years," the health agency said in a statement. "As the disease expands broadly into communities, the average age of the cases is appearing to increase slightly.

KC



Kodiyeri Balakrishnan Minister for Home and Tourism



We often think of heritage as something that could be passed down through generations by word of mouth. Yes, there are some like that; heritages like oral and intangible ones as in the case of Kutiyattam, the Sanskrit drama of Kerala. And there are many other aspects of life involving people, land, farming, art forms and heritage values that can not be passed down by word of mouth alone. We in Kerala have been giving due attention to preserve our heritage wealth through efforts at the government levels, NGOs and private organisations, so that upcoming generations will be able to understand what their homeland, people and lifestyle were like centuries back.

In this context it would be worth mentioning some of the highly successful initiatives of Kerala Tourism in giving due recognition and

popularity to our artistic and cultural heritage. The annual event like 'Utsavam' organised all over Kerala to showcase some of our ancient art forms as well as those evolved over time is helping us to highlight age-old artistic expressions of Kerala. Similarly, we have also given shape to model villages, based on their lifestyle and vocation history to preserve activities like coir-making as in the case of Muhamma Coir Village and the village of Aranmula for metal mirror making and traditional architecture. In Kerala, there are also locations rich in historic representations in the physical sense. We are also into preserving these. And such a location, till now, what was part of pages in history as one with immense wealth of heritage, is slowly being transformed into a heritage destination. I am trying to bring your

Quest the

attention to the present day region of Kodungallur in central Kerala, which was once famous for the port of Muziris. The upcoming heritage site of Muziris would not only elate the people of Kerala, but also generate a great deal of curiosity among travellers visiting Kerala. Like a piece of precious stone concealed from our eyes, the area known as Kodungallur, suddenly sprang to fame with the archaeological discoveries that connected the place to people and trade during the first century BC. In the past ten years, archaeological findings from Pattanam in Kodungallur pointed towards a glorious and eventful past of the region. Trading vessels from Mediterranean ports used to visit Muziris and the visitors enjoyed the patronage of the local rulers of that time. The region was also famous for welcoming people from other religious faiths, especially Christian and Muslim. Kodungallur also has a unique status of being the home to

India's first church and first mosque – the Mar Thoma Church and the Cheraman Juma Masjid respectively. Places like Kottappuram, Gothuruthu, Chennamangalam, Pallippuram and Pattanam located in Kodungallur possess indelible impressions of a period that once witnessed the arrival of several European powers. The historic significance backed by the ongoing archaeological excavations and the existing physical evidence of well preserved forts, palaces, centres of worship and also the historic account of the place has prompted the Government of Kerala to launch a heritage preservation-cum-tourist circuit project at Kodungallur. The heritage preservation project – Muziris Heritage Project – launched recently aims to preserve the heritage wealth and also to restore some of the structures and activity centres associated with daily life. The first phase of the project is currently on and is expected to be over by the end of

2009. The heritage site once completed would be the first of its kind in India and is expected to become a major destination for cultural tourism in the country. The heritage preservation works are being implemented through various government departments and also through private agencies with Kerala Tourism in the lead role. Adhering to international practices and norms, I firmly believe that the Muziris Heritage Project once realised would provide added diversity to the products and services of Kerala Tourism; and also, yet another reason for travellers to visit 'God's Own Country'. ■

Bequest





Benny Kuriakose

People will continue to travel, although how they travel may change. They are looking for more authentic and spiritual experiences and the travel to lesser known destinations has increased.

The long-term sustainability of tourism in Kerala depends on delivering a high quality tourism experience within our host communities. It depends as well on the wise use and conservation of our natural resources; the protection and enhancement of our environment; and the conservation of our cultural assets which includes heritage.

Trends and Patterns

The heritage tourists are growing at a faster rate than any other type of tourism. Beach tourism was the buzz word in the 80s, eco-tourism was in the 90's and now it is the turn of heritage tourism. Travellers are looking for experiences. As world gets more high tech, there is a growing demand for experiences that are "high touch." The tourists want heritage, culture, education and adventure which are authentic.

People will continue to travel, although how they travel may change. They are looking for more authentic and spiritual experiences and the travel to lesser known destinations has increased. Rural festivals and events with a good mix of cultural experience is in great demand.

Comprehensive Development Plans

Comprehensive tourist development plans are essential as the pre-condition for developing any tourist potential of a place. It should be a fundamental principle of any tourist development plan that both conservation, in its widest sense and tourism benefit from it. Heritage sites are important economic and cultural assets that they should be given publicity and be advertised and promoted.

When it comes to the overall



development of holistic heritage tourism of Kerala, the following objectives shall be followed:

- Kerala will practise and promote its heritage and culture in a sustainable way without affecting its unique qualities and its significance.
- The cultural assets of Kerala, their values and significance, will be conserved and safeguarded for this and future generations.
- Kerala will continue to be a developing area and will support and further the vitality of the local community.

The tourists will need hotels, hostels, restaurants and several types of transportation. They may want shops to meet their specific needs. Providing all of these is important for heritage sites for without them their culture will be inaccessible for many. It is not the normal function of the government but requires co-operation between public and private sectors.

Tourism is a commercial activity and the tourists look for fun and recreation. It is a bit difficult to control, but tourist experiences must be controlled.

All cultural assets are not equal in terms of attractions. A small number of tourists really seeks a deep learning experience. Not all cultural tourists are alike. Affluent tourists sensitive to local culture will stay in local

accommodations, have local food, and have basic facilities. This represents a tiny portion of the traffic.

Culture and Intangible Heritage

One of the important strategies on heritage tourism should be the conservation of intangible heritage. According to the definition agreed upon in the 2003 Paris Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Intangible heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

As far as possible, the intangible heritage should not be removed from its context or setting, to the extent that the authenticity is affected. The presence of traditional torch bearers is necessary to give life to the heritage. The integrity of the cultural space plays a major role in presenting an authentic experience, although it may not be traditional. Highly commoditised attractions by the tourism sector for easy consumption have a shorter lifecycle.

The intangible heritage helps the visitor to gain a deeper understanding about the place and the culture. Lot of questions can be raised whether the cultural performances organised for the visitors taken from its original context, can be considered as part of the intangible heritage.

Economic Growth and Tourism

There is a dichotomy between

satisfying the pressure for economic growth through tourism and protecting the cultural heritage sites and monuments that lie at its heart. Tourism and heritage management must be integrated to have an outstanding product having mutual benefits. Quality standards and authenticity should be maintained to sustain tourism as well as the cultural heritage.

The heritage tourism project should not be driven by tourism considerations, but managed by the principles and conventions of the international guidelines on cultural heritage management. The success of a project depends on how heritage



One of the important strategies on heritage tourism should be the conservation of intangible heritage.

assets are converted into heritage tourism products.

Access and proximity decide the potential number of visitors. Time availability decides the quality and depth of experience sought.

Role of Local Community

Local Community should benefit from the heritage tourism and it should not cause any disruption to the local

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Conceive the Conserved

life, customs and the development of the area as a whole. The best long term interests of the people working in any local community should be the primary determining factor in selecting options for tourist development. This should be integrated with local level plans. The very assets which the heritage tourism depends, the cultural and natural heritage, are part of the daily life of the people and can be threatened by over exploitation and abuse.

Education and Interpretation

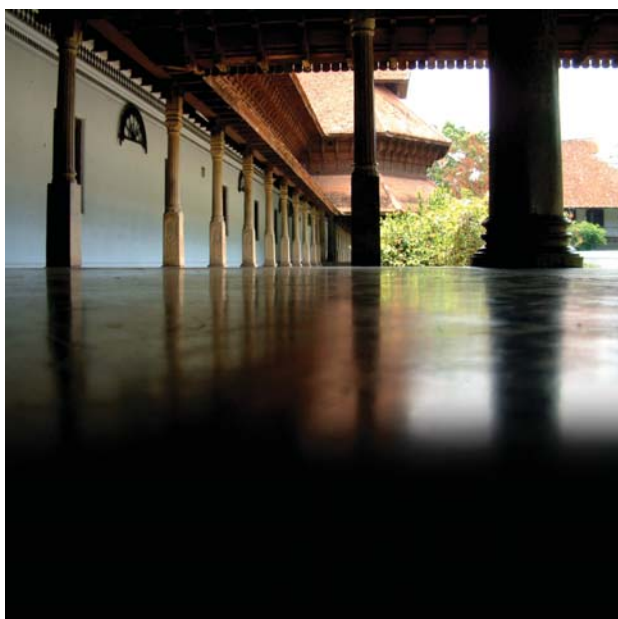
One of the major aims of the heritage tourism projects should be to provide an environment which educates the public at different levels. The visit should be made enjoyable and interesting for everyone. At the directly conceivable level, it educates about the conserved monuments, other tangible and intangible heritage and their various components. Educational programmes should assist and invite tourists to respect and understand the local way of life, culture, history and religion. Tourist policy should take these factors into account.

Interpretation is the means by which people can understand the values and significance of the heritage site or a performing art etc., both as whole and individual elements. There also have been significant technological developments in interpretation since 1990s, particularly in such areas as GPS and computer generated imagery, touch screens, mobile technology and video and audio bands which could be applied to improve communication of the values to the visitor.

Normal Mistakes to be Avoided

“Ill-conceived and poorly planned tourism development can erode the very qualities of the natural and human environments that attract visitors in the first place.” Literature is replete with stories portraying tourism as destroyer of communities and culture.

Some tour operators exploit the local culture and the heritage assets, while providing little in return for the community or the continuing care of the assets. This can lead to cultural damage and the degradation of local economies



and social structures. If the same places and things which attracted the tourists are destroyed, then the development which takes place in association with heritage tourism will have a natural death.

The highly seasonal nature of tourism visits to the area, and the possible concentration of visitor activity at certain key points within Kerala, may lead to a number of localised pressures. For example, the religious monuments have a particular challenge in this matter during festivals. The number of visitors increases many times and the impact of this should be considered. ■



Dennis Marcus Mathew

The usually serene Pampa River and the people on its tranquil shores are in a different world altogether since the first week of July, what with another exciting season of boat races beginning with the historic Champakulam Moolam Boat Race. A season that will see the silvery waters being sliced by oars as over hundred men strain their muscles to send their snake boats racing across from the starting point to the finishing point, egged on by lakhs of spectators on the river banks.

Boat races are not just a sport in Kerala, but part of the state's ethos, its history and heritage. If the story of the Champakulam Moolam Boat Race held on the Pampa in Alappuzha can be traced to nearly 500 years back in time, the Aranmula Uthrittathi Boat Race in Aranmula of Pathanamthitta has similar long-winding chronological contours for history buffs. And then the mother of all boat races, the Nehru Trophy Boat Race held in Alappuzha on the second Saturday of August every year since 1952, is not just part of the heritage of the state, but

an event that has given Kerala a shining spot on the global tourist and sport map.

The reasons why races like the Champakulam and Aranmula have their own place in the state's heritage needs no exploration. The engaging legends that these races have with them are stuff that can draw any reluctant tourist out of his or her home in some foreign land.

The Champakulam Moolam Boat Race, for instance, is said to have begun with the Raja of Chempakasseri, way back in 1545 A.D., going in search of an idol of Lord Krishna to be installed at the Ambalapuzha temple. They had to take shelter for the night in the house of a Christian family, headed by Mappilassery Itty Oommen. The next day, as the king and his men set out with the idol, the family is also said to have accompanied them, participating in the rituals. The king decided that to commemorate the event, a water carnival would be held every year. And that decision, over 500 years down the lane, has been adhered to.



Hear
the Rowing



The Nehru Trophy Boat Race, which has got an international market agency which markets it globally this year, is perhaps the most crowd-pulling race of the 10-plus boat races that are conducted in the season. Clubs vie for the trophy that has former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's signature on it. More than the money that comes as bonus and grant, which seldom meet the expenses, the prestige that comes with the trophy is what inspires the participants. For a little bit of history, the Kainakary United Boat Club, Alappuzha, which won for the last time in 1993, has rowed to victory 12 times - a record that still stands unbroken.

Among the boats, it is the Karichal Chundan that has won the trophy the maximum times, on a whopping 12

occasions while the Champakulam Chundan follows with eight victories. Interestingly, the Nadubhagom Chundan, which had won the first race in 1952, has never been able to win again.

That, however, has not deterred it and the grand old one is around even this year too, epitomising the spirit of the event.

The recent bestowal of sports status to the exciting water sport has also showed that Kerala is just not complete without boat races. Everytime a snake boat, or 'chundan vallom', slithers into the waters with 100-120 oarsmen, it is not only their club that prays for them. But the village from where the boat hails, which in earlier days used to own the boat, also prays for the team and the boat.

The oarsmen carry on their shoulders the sky-high expectations of the entire village and in some cases like that of the Kainakary United Boat Club, the hopes are that of a victory coming as solace to the setbacks farmers in the agricultural region suffer on the field. All this associated bits of custom, and the legends most of the boat races carry with them, have seen the event gaining in popularity across the shores of the country every year.

For foreigners, the sheer spectacle of 100-plus men rowing in unison, an example of physical synchronisation unmatched by any other sport, is the sole reason to book a ticket to Kerala as the boat race gets off to a start. The houseboat industry, another unique feature of Kerala since the houseboats in Kashmir are static unlike those here, which take the passengers on an enchanting cruise along the palm-fringed canals and on the tranquil backwaters, is an added attraction.

Whether the State has adequate infrastructure and facilities to attract more tourists and to sustain the international community's interest in snake boat races is an issue to be debated and if possible, solutions evolved. What is in no doubt is that the boat races have the potential to draw tourists from all corners of the world. ■



See the Song



Sreevarahom Balakrishnan



It is indeed a matter of pride and joy that Kutiyattom has been acclaimed universally as a most treasured heritage of humanity.

The soft rustle of the swinging palm leaves fondled by the tender breeze, the roar of the rolling waves whipped by the west wind, the translucent blue of the tranquil lagoons and the deeper blue of the skies above, the lush green of the lovely landscape all around, the cloud-capped hilltops of the Western Ghats, the riot of colours at sunsets, the incessant pounding and pattering of monsoon showers – all these are manifest in the myriad art forms of Kerala, fusing themselves into a fascinating audio-visual montage.

Kerala is a land of infinite variety and infectious gaiety. It has a long history spiced by myths and legends dating back to centuries. A melting pot of a host of castes, customs and cultural traditions, Kerala abounds in an amazing number of alluring arts – classical, folk and ritual. From the majestic Kathakali and Kutiyattam to the awe-inspiring Theyyam and Padayani, they reveal the phenomenal range and sweep that Kerala arts are renowned for. As the adage goes, not a single day rolls on in Kerala without the drums beating, cymbals clashing and deities dancing to their rhythm, be it shine or rain.

Considered almost synonymous with Kerala the world over, Kathakali is one of the most classical of all the performing arts in India. Both ritual and theatre, it blends the basic styles of pantomime, passion play and dance drama to telling effect. It has largely benefited from a long

Cymbals clashing Round the Year





process of merging and emerging, incorporating several influences – indigenous as well as foreign – in its evolution over the centuries. Kathakali conjures up an ethereal world of knights, gods, demons, damsels, sages and satyrs from mythology on the earthen ground at the premises of a temple in the flickering flame of a traditional oil lamp. But for the fruitful efforts of Vallathol the great poet, Kathakali would not have

attained the rare glory and renown it enjoys today.

Regarded as Kathakali's progenitor, the highly stylised Kutiyattom is perhaps the only Sanskrit drama enacted strictly in adherence to the canons encoded in Bharata's 'Natyasastra,' the ancient treatise on dance techniques and dramaturgy. Staged in Kuthambalams, the exclusive theatres built to traditional norms at temple precincts, it presents the works of such illustrious writers as Bhasa, Harsha, Saktibhadra and Kulasekhara. Kutiyattom and Koothu, another dramatic art of this genre, and performed by a specific community, the Chakyars. Thanks to the famed Ammanur Chakyars, the sublime splendours of this age-old

art form are spotlessly sustained in their excellent performances. It is indeed a matter of pride and joy that Kutiyattom has been acclaimed universally as a most treasured heritage of humanity.

A must in major temples, Panchavadyam is an amazing orchestra of percussions accentuated by the sonorous sound of horns. It consists of five instruments (and hence the name) – the thimila, maddalam and edakka (drums), kombu (horn) and elathaalam (cymbals). The beats begin soft, but gradually mount to a crescendo of sounds in marvellous unison. The reverberating resonance of the thundering climax is to be heard to be believed. Panchavadyam has won international acclaim, thumping its way to several India Festivals in foreign lands.

Seductive in style and substance, Mohiniyattom is the Dance of the Enchantress both literally and figuratively. A solo performance by a female dancer, it enraptures the spectator by its erotic content (laasya) and ecstatic execution. Simply but elegantly dressed in white, she glides



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Cymbals clashing Round the Year

about in harmonious strides, transforming herself into a coquette, and weaves dazzling dance patterns with vivacious poise. Attempts at modification or modernisation have only done harm to the pristine charm of this exquisite dance form.

Theyyam, meaning 'Daivam' or God, is a powerful pastoral dance having strong ritualistic roots. The North Kerala landscape dotted by Theyyam shrines speaks of its popularity in the region. Propitiatory in intent, it symbolises the primitive concept of ancestor worship and the impact of the deified dead on the living. Bedecked in complex, colourful mask and makeup, and enormous headgear elaborately decorated, the oracular

dancer moves about pronouncing benediction to the suppliant devotees. The accompanying drum and pipe provide rhythm to the performance. The ensemble varies in size, style and scope from shrine to shrine; but the same is the spirit everywhere – invoking the divine element in man.

Fostered and flourished under ecclesiastical sponsorship, Margom Kali is a group dance that extols the life and mission of St. Thomas, it involves a lot of brisk and vibrant movements of the body along with the choral rendering of songs. The dancers go round and round an oil lamp having twelve wicks – the actual number of performers. The early Christians of Kerala were obviously

the first practitioners of this didactic dance. Predominantly Christian in spirit, theme and patronage, Chavittunatakam too merits mention.

Enter festive season, and the entire land is enveloped in an enchanting aura, evoking in each and every sleepy town and village a collective spirit of celebration and camaraderie. Significantly enough, every season is festival time in Kerala, be it summer or winter. Perhaps that is the reason why tourists and travellers from far and wide made a beeline to this strip of land irrespective of climatic variations. And Kerala offers them sumptuous fare, rewarding them in ample measure. ■



Farouk Luqman

Prosperous Fabulous

When I first visited Thiruvananthapuram during my college days in the late fifties it was a glorified village without one good shop.

Ten years ago I went back again to prepare for launching Malayalam News Daily. At the time there was a nice government-run hotel called Asoka in Kovalam with its own beach and swimming pool operated by personnel who were assured of lifelong service. The location on a hill in Kovalam was fantastic, still is, and the beach belongs to it also and there was a Maharaja Palace that was part of it and if you were able to spend then Rs. 10,000 a day you would stay in it if you wished. Now the palace is denied to the public even to those who could pay up to

Rs. 20,000 per night. It is sealed, and nobody is able to stay in it or even just to visit it. Very soon it will rot and waste away. Thiruvananthapuram then had potholes, open sewers, narrow roads, congested markets and awful traffic plus officers manning signals at East Fort by using hand fans showing 'Go' or 'Stop'.

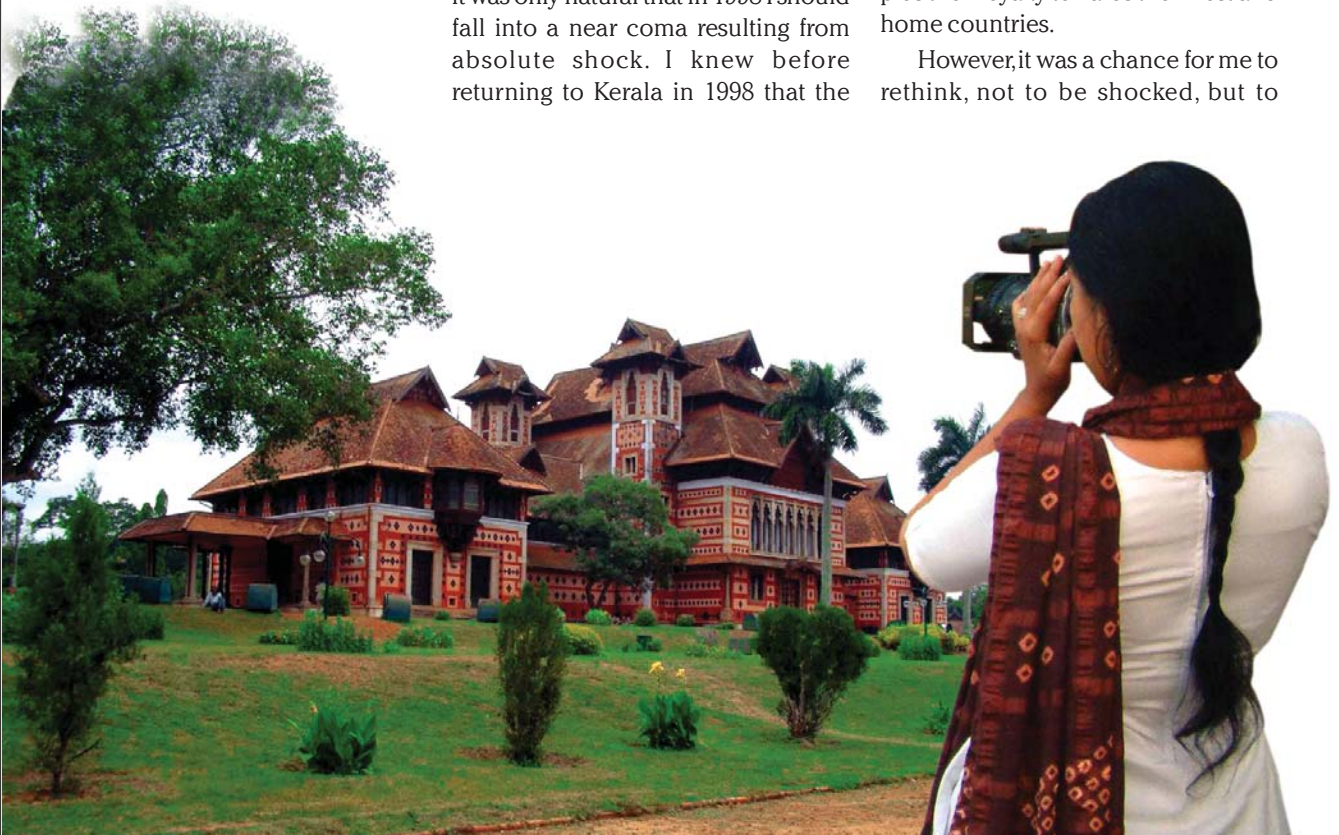
The authorities concerned were ignorant about electric signals even the type used in the poorest little towns of Yemen and Mozambique.

Having lived in the cities of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, many times in New Delhi and Mumbai it was only natural that in 1998 I should fall into a near coma resulting from absolute shock. I knew before returning to Kerala in 1998 that the

small state – only 550 km long and 50 km wide and then with hardly 30 million people, was swimming in money sent home by millions of hard working Malayalis in the Gulf region and other parts of the world from the USA to Malaysia – two million then in the Gulf countries alone. Nowadays they are sending home a minimum of four and a half billion dollars plus money and cash in the pocket when going home for their annual leave.

The reader must be disappointed with me by now although I love the people, admire their spirit of enterprise, intelligence, patience and honesty plus their loyalty towards their host and home countries.

However, it was a chance for me to rethink, not to be shocked, but to



Present Future

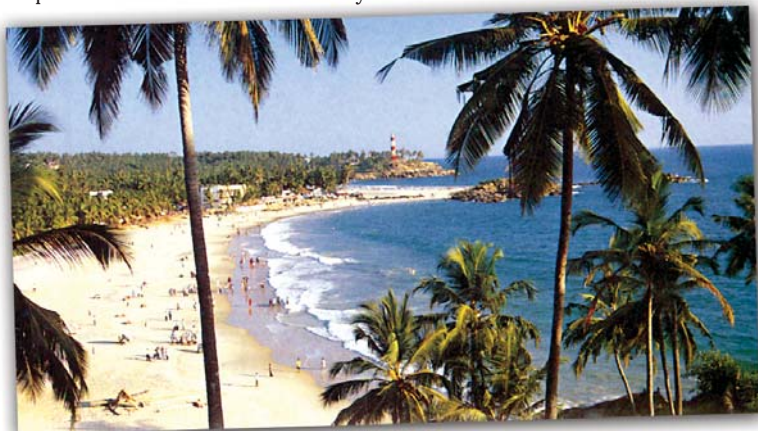
realise that Thiruvananthapuram in particular and the rest of Kerala has come of age and been transformed to what is now a semi modern metropolis of one million, new glass fronted office buildings, beautiful villas on all the seven hills which make up the capital of Kerala, roads are being widened and the ugly pavement stalls and also dwellers are fast disappearing.

There are neat schools and some hospitals funded by Gulf based Malayalis which compares favourably with those in Jeddah and better than some of the polyclinics in the GCC cities. The World Bank is helping develop city roads, many of which are actually dual carriage so there is not much need for 'sounding horns' continuously. So the time needed to Kovalam from our office in the downtown is actually only 20 minutes.

The beach, I happily noted, has a nearby mosque which I could see from the balcony of my room and hear the Azzan five times a day including Fajr at about 04:30 am. The beach, according to a noted commentator and observer, will become a very long, urbanised and developed one, the longest in India and one of the longest and most beautiful on earth, probably similar to Miami Beach in the US and Penang in Malaysia. Penang Beach is lined with glorious hotels, top notch restaurants, amusement parks, fabulous seafood centres, which roll down to the beach where ladies remove their shoes and walk down to feel the cool waters and breathe in the air. I hope Kovalam to the southern most tip of Kerala will be something

like that in 20 years. Too optimistic? OK. Make it 30 years according to some of those I have spoken with in Thiruvananthapuram recently.

So what is going to happen in Kerala given stability, union reasonableness, wise political leadership and economic enterprise without harassment by trade unions? My expectations are that Kerala may



soon become, some say it is already, the richest state in the country per capita. It has more money in cash and currency than it can use wisely enough apart from bungalows and shops.

But this need not be either true or perpetual because the same people who have left Kerala the last few years – 10.5 million emigrants at present or thirty percent of the whole population – ranging from Matunga in Mumbai, to Brisbane in Australia, and Dubai, Jeddah and Fujaira (4000 are already in Yemen) will build the new Kerala and then go on to build cities in their neighbouring states. In fact Kerala's

Gulf returnees are already investing in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The latter – that is Tamil Nadu – is cashing in on Gulf made fortunes, using Keralite investments to develop its IT industries while Kerala's IT industries are lagging behind unfortunately.

So, what is the future of the tireless Keralite emigrant? One: few unskilled youths will find jobs abroad, only educated ones will be welcome in the Gulf sector ranging from State Registered Nurses to IT plus MBA personnel. Two: The percentage of those willing or being forced by economic conditions, to emigrate, will fall. Three: the percentage of those going back – reverse migration – will rise slowly in the next ten years. With more remittances remaining in Keralite banks, the state will witness a

boom in various sorts.

The millions of Keralites who have sacrificed so much since independence to support themselves and families back home deserve to be admired and appreciated by the Central Government which is benefiting so much from the foreign exchange flood from the Gulf.

God willing I would love to see Thiruvananthapuram again in 2020, the year it will become another Penang or, perhaps, Miami, although I prefer the former. ■

The writer, a Yemen National, is Editor-in-Chief of Malayalam News, the first Malayalam Daily outside India, published from Jeddah



Sasikumar Thalassery

Muzhappilangad

Kerala's Only Drive in Beach

Feel the Radiant
Beauty



It is the ideal place to enjoy water sports like skiing and para gliding. District Tourism Promotional Council has constructed childrens park near the beach and the Nirmithi Kendra has erected bamboo huts for the visitors to sit and watch the blue sea and listen to its sound.

Kannur, the city of looms and lores is a beach lovers destination. The 82 kms coastline is full of hidden surprises and treats. The idyllic Kannur beaches with silver sands and gently lapping surf had been visited by ancient travellers even from halcyon days. Muzhappilangad, a pleasant calm beach 13 kms away from Kannur town on the Tellicherry Kannur national highway is the longest drive in beach in Kerala, and is the only one of its kind which bask in their sheer beauty. Three narrow unpaved roads winding through coconut groves leads to this white sea shore with incessant blue waves, the name Muzhappilangad

beach does not excite anybody but a visit to this beach definitely gives one an exciting and unforgettable experience. Once you enter this beach you are far from the heat and pollution and the maddening crowds and the place will bring you closer to nature. This palm fringed sand bank 4.5 kms long and curves in a wide area looks like an asphalt layer and so it ensures smooth and easy driving. Watching the radiant beauty of the sea and listening to the sound of the friendly waves offer tranquillity and quietude unimaginable. For those wanting to stay free from the maddening crowds during the incredibly hot months of April and May. The long stretch of white sandy beach make it ideal for swimming. The friendly waves and the incandescent surf makes the beach a swimmer's paradise. Dreaming lazy days on the sun drenched sands or paddling along the shore is an irrefutable cure for any burdened stress. Unlike many other beaches that are crowded and dirty, these sands are cleaner and the calm atmosphere charms the senses at once. Visitors often linger to enjoy the ambience of the beach on starry nights and inhale the fresh air and feast their eyes on the lights emitting from the boats plying on the high seas like twinkling fire flies. It is the ideal

place to enjoy water sports like skiing and para gliding. District Tourism Promotional Council has constructed childrens park near the beach and the Nirmithi Kendra has erected bamboo huts for the visitors to sit and watch the blue sea and listen to its sound. In the dappling blue sea, at a distance of about 200 metres, lies Dharmadam Thuruth, a lush greenery with dense undergrowth, making it a perfect portrait against the azure sky. The green island adds to the allure of the beach. A conjunction of the beach and island is very rare and nowhere to be seen. KTDC project to introduce rope way system linking Dharmadam Thuruth and Muzhappilangad Beach billed as the biggest rope way in India, if come in to existence, would change the entire face of the beach. Resorts for tourists and a marine aquarium if constructed will be an added advantage for beach goers. House boats can be operated in the adjacent three rivers. All these can change Muzhappilangad beach to one of the major tourist and beach lovers' destinations in the state. Come to Muzhappilangad, Kerala's only drive in beach and feel the calm fresh atmosphere and wake up to the chirping of birds instead of blaring horns and enjoy the romantic feel in the evenings in the pleasant sea breeze.



Not Mere But Life in

The concept of Onam is filled with nostalgia and also a solid expectation of a class-less human society.

Onam is the National festival of Kerala which reflects its uniqueness as a fertility ritual. It is a pure secular festival in North Malabar. In Kochi, Onam has some sort of religious connection ie., the myth related to Trikkakkara Appan or Vishnu. The people of this region make an idol of Trikkakkara Appan and rituals of adoration are performed. Onam was a festival of 28 days there where the kings of other regions of Kerala assembled. Athachamayam a spectacular cultural as well as visual event still exists in Trikkakkara. On the contrary, the other parts of Kerala, the folk praise the beloved king Mahabali who was believed as the saviour of the people. During the rule of Mahabali, there was prosperity and equality everywhere. The folk believed that

there was no falsehood, deceit and corruption and in all respects it was an egalitarian reign. After the deceit of Vamana, Mahabali was supposed to be stamped down to Patala (infernal region) and he was permitted to visit his subjects once in a year during the Malayalam month of Chingam, which has been being celebrated as Onam.

People of Kerala receive their king with Onappookkalam (flower-carpet), Onasadya (ceremonial feast) and a numerous performing arts. In this way Onam could be defined as a fertility ritual in two ways: this is the ceremony of prosperity; flowers are arranged in the form of Pookkalams which are also the symbols of fertility. It is not only a reminiscence of a golden era but also the sweet and colourful dream about future, an egalitarian dream. The

Festival Celebration

concept of Onam is filled with nostalgia and also a solid expectation of a class-less human society.

In North Malabar (especially in Kannur District) Onathar/Onavedan visits the houses disguised as Maveli, wearing small crown and costume with red cloth and limited make-up. A boy is appearing as Maveli (onathar) holding the bell and onavillu (bow) in each hand. He dances in front of the courtyard of the houses in tune with the song and drumming of his

fellow-men. Vannan community performs Onathar on Uthradam and Thiruvonam days. In the southern part of North Malabar, Onappottan/Oneswaran is representing Maveli in the similar way of Onathar. Onappottan is performed by the Pana community of Kozhikode District. The performer holds an umbrella made of palm-leaf, properly decorated with tender coconut leaves. He will wear a crown and long beard.

There is a folk saying,

'Athappathonam' which means, Onam festival commences on 'Atham' and concludes on Thiruvonam. All these days, Onappookkalam will be arranged on the courtyard and also in the Akathirayam (Drawing room). Chekkipoovu/ chetthi (chrysanthus flower), Thumbappoovu (leucas flower), Mukkuttippoovu (flower of a sensitive plant), Onappoovu, Kakkappoovu and Arippoovu (small yellow flower) are some important flowers used for the Pookkalam.





We cannot trace back, the exact period when Onam came into existence in Kerala. These are some references in the Sangam literature about Onam. The books of this period 'Maduraikanchi' and 'Haryakshamasamarolsavam' give us some proof that Onam was being celebrated in those periods. We have also the popular folk myth of Mahabali. But the scholars were mixing myth and history together and hence we could not collect convincing proof in this regard so far.

There is a folk saying that 'Kanam Vittum Onam Unnamam' which means everybody should celebrate Onam (eat the onam feast) even by selling the right of 'Kanam' (land right). The landlords used to supply onappudava (Dhothi) to their tenants and dependants. The parents present onakkodi (new cloth) to their children even today.

A number of performing arts and recreational games are performed during onam festival. Onathallu is a martial art as well as a kind of combat between two groups. The leaders of the group beat the opponent with lands, sitting on the shoulders of their respective fellow-men.

There will be a mediator named Chazhikkaran to control the combat. Alathur and Kunnamkulam still

preserve the onathallu.

Onakkummi/Kaikottikkali is a female dance form performed during onam which is very much similar to Thiruvathirakkali. Kolattam also is a dance of women using sticks in their hands which is also a circular dance.

Pulikali is a dance form of Thrissur district, performed in the onam season. The human bodies are painted completely to create the illusion that they are tigers. This may be an extension of the Tribal dance like Narikkali, Karadikali etc. Many tigers dance together according to the furious speedy rhythms of the drummings.

Kummatti is a secular dance form performed during onam days.

Kummatti characters visit the houses and dance in the background of the rhythm of onavillu (Bows). Thalla (Grandma) Krishna, Shiva, Kirathan, Darika, Narada etc. are the characters who wear beautiful wooden mask. The costumes are made of a typical grass named Kummattippullu. The musicians sing and the characters dance. Kummatti is performed in the districts of Palakkad and Wayanad too.

Vallamkali (boat race) is another spectacular event performed in connection with onam festival. Chambakkulam, Payippattu, Aranmula, Alappuzha and Punnamadakkayal are some of the major venues of Vallamkali. These are different types of boats like Kalivallam, Chundan vallam, Veppuvallam, Odi, Churulan etc.

Onam is a binding factor of the people of Kerala and also a symbol of equality and prosperity.





These kinds of names are given to the boats according to the size and pattern. The participants of Vallamkali must prove good oarsmanship to lead the boat to victory. More than hundred persons are rowing with team spirit in a Chundan vallam. Lakhs of tourists and natives assemble to witness the Vallamkali. The participants sing the Vanchippattu (boat-song) during paddling.

Thumbi thullal, Thalayattam, Velan thullal (onathullal), Monthayam Thalavumkali, Ammanattam etc. are other art forms related to onam. A number of folk songs were prevalent in connection with onam. There were many recreational games also played on onam festival days. Most of them have been vanished due to modernisation and industrialisation.

Most of the famous Malayalam poets have written on onam. P.Kunhiraman Nair alone had written more than 5 dozen poems in this regard. He conceived that Onam is a binding factor of the people of Kerala and also a symbol of equality and pros-

perity. He writes: "Even then, oh! Onam! What an unknown mystery is your lovely concept?" (Mungikkulichlilla).

Onam festival has been attracting hundreds of tourists from India and abroad. Onathallu, Pulikkali, Kummatti, Vallamkali etc. are the important events which are major attractions for them.

The State Tourism Department has been conducting a week long Onam festival in Thiruvananthapuram. Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium, Kanakakkunnu Palace etc. are some of the important venues of onam festival. The major Folk performing arts of Kerala are staged at this venue. Theyyam, Padayani, Mudi yettu, Arjuna Nrittam, Vilpattu, Chavittu Nadakam, Oppana, Margam Kali, Kuthiyottam, Kaniyarkali, Poorakkali, Kakkarassi Natakam, Folk songs etc. are some of the attractions of the onam festival. Classical arts like Kathakali, Kutiyattam, Mohiniyattam etc. are also arranged in the previous years. Apart from these variety of art forms popular performing arts like mimics parade, ganamela,

programmes designed by the cine-artistes etc. are also have been staged at different venues. Every year, the numbers of tourists are increased and the people of Kerala are definitely in a festival mood on all these days.

The District Tourism Promotion Council has also been conducting district-wise festivals during Onam. They are also celebrating Onam for a week or more by exhibiting various visual folk art forms of Kerala. They are also conducting boat-races where ever lakes or rivers are available.

The tourists are however visiting Kerala on these days not only to enjoy the visual and recreational art forms but to witness the attitude of the Keralites towards the bygone era which was almost an egalitarian social system in which Mahabali was believed as the most beloved protector of his subjects. They also peep into the mystery of the myth, history and legends of the secular and most popular people's festival of Kerala. ■

The writer is Secretary, Kerala Folklore Academy, Chirakkal P.O., Kannur



Sunil Hassan

Can we reorganise the celebration of onam to foster social integrity, and develop the value of accommodating the differences and living together?

The immense possibilities for human interaction that festivals and celebrations offer are not unravelled much. Festive practices provide an indication of genuine culture of the society, its vitality and social dynamism. Festivals are the important zones of popular and folk culture. So considerable effort has been invested in the maintenance and fostering of festivals by the whole society. The aim of the festivals is to support social integration through the reified view of culture.

Let's Harvest Harmony



events associate with traditional festivals communicate important cultural themes, often through the use of special forms of language, music, and dance. However, they can permeate over the social fabric to make them a valuable spectrum, which can express the reflection of the cheerful and sincere faces of human beings who dwell on separate strata of the society.

The festivals have a very specific social function that helps to inculcate in people the need to respect the right to differ in societies. As the festivals are different in one another, it is not the tradition or myth that justifies them. But, the ideal of determined values of living together respectfully and the

conviction that there is a need to build bridges between different entities, which are defined by religion, caste and ethnic criteria.

Public events often express, reflect, and reinforce social relationships among communities, and cultural values. The rituals and the variety of

The festivals must look more to the future than to the past. In many ways traditional festivals are the past made present, which, as historical signs, may legitimate actions of the present. While Malayalis around the globe start raising the music and musings of Onam, there must be aired some serious thoughts on the beauty of togetherness and harmony. Because, the people of Mahabali now a days becomes



fractions of 'ones' who take refuge in their own waterless compartments.

Onam, the happy blend of myth and reality, is the most popular harvest festival of Kerala, and a part of the cultural repertoire. It brings back nostalgic memories, carried on the wings of folklore, of a bygone beautiful era of prosperity, equality and righteousness under the glittering reign of Mahabali. Year after year, for centuries, the people of Kerala, irrespective of caste, creed or colour,

join together to welcome back their vanquished king. However, the popular myth associated with Onam has diverse socio-cultural variations, analysis and understanding.

The vociferous welcome to king Mahabali in millions of households in Kerala makes onam a grand feast even in the poor man's hut. After the sumptuous feast there will be sports and games that attract every one in the society.

As the majority of Malayalis fondle,

irrespective of religion, the myth about Mahabali who comes to visit his people once a year, onam is one of the greatest unifiers in our state. It is a special time that is marked by bonhomie and buoyancy, and hectic market activities. It is a time for flowers, food and fun. The onam days mark the regeneration of the land of plenty and prosperity.

As the government and different social organisations play a good role in boosting the cultural sentiments of whole Malayalis in onam days, they can develop a bonding of loyalty of the masses to their endeavour to recreate the good old golden days of righteousness and prosperity.

The initiatives of celebrating festivals in a plural society are a consequence of a growing awareness that a way of cohesive life must be supported, and nurtured a harmonious coexistence of different entities. It will be appreciated when all Malayalis participate in the onam celebration. It can free them from the clutches of mental barriers, which hamper intercommunity interface.

No other festival, other than onam, can spread the threads of spirit that drape over all Malayalis and inculcate in them a feeling of oneness and harmony. It is high time we stood together to choose the festival season of onam to rebuild the Malayali society on a powerful basement cemented in brotherhood cooperation. When a society joins to celebrate a common festival they cannot ride their minds and hearts away to dark, micro compartments. Onam possesses the potential and vibrancy to instil the sense of unity among all Keralites as there exist different understandings on onam. When the government and non governmental organisations lead the festival they should deliberately bear an agenda for amity.

Can we reorganise the celebration of onam to foster social integrity, and develop the value of accommodating the differences and living together? ■

The writer is Asst. Editor, Kerala Calling

Feast



Onam, the harvest festival of Kerala, is celebrated by all, irrespective of caste and creed, rich or poor. Festivals like Vishu, Christmas, Bakrid, Deepavali etc. are also celebrated here. All festivals have a common fact of sharing and giving presents among the members. When we examine each festival in detail there will be some special food connected to each of them. For example, Deepavali is connected with sweet items and Christmas is connected with a variety of dishes containing meat. As all we know, onam is connected with 'Sadya' which includes vegetarian meals and 'payasams'.

Preparation for onam begins when the farmer prepares his land for viruppu paddy and for cultivation of vegetables for onam. But the banana growers will start the preparation almost ten months before 'Thiruvonam'. So the real preparation for onam starts ten months earlier.

For preparing 'Ona Sadya' different types of vegetables are needed. Main items needed are brinjal, cucumber, snakegourd, lady's finger, drumstick, nendran, mangoes, ginger, lemon, elephant foot yams, colocasia, bittergourd, peas, ashgourd, carrot, cabbage etc. Almost all the vegetables are cultivated in Kerala and the farmers plant them according to the requirement. But it is insufficient to meet the high demands during the onam season. So with the aim of selling their product to us the farmers of Tamil Nadu cultivate more vegetables and the vegetables come to our market are mainly from Nagercoil, Thirunelveli, Theni, Kampam and Coimbatore areas. Cool season vegetables are produced in Wayanad and Idukki and the rest come from Ooty and Kodaikanal.

Yams, cucumber, snakegourd, ginger, green chillies and banana are



Our Signature

produced here in large quantities and the rest are produced only in small quantities. But now the state government have planned and implemented various vegetable development schemes which resulted in increased vegetable production aiming self sufficiency in the coming years.

The prices of vegetables will be going high during onam seasons. But the government has taken steps to control the price hike by starting “Ona Chandas” where the vegetables and other items needed for ‘ona sadya’ are being sold at a reduced price. Malayali can not imagine an Onam without onasadya. So the demand for vegetables are increasing year after year.

The sweet smell of sambar, the special colour and taste of our aviyal make one’s mind and mouth full.

Different types of thorans, kalan, olan, rasam etc. are made by combining vegetable and spices in different proportions. The traditional style was handed over through generations. Like the fragrance of volatile oil spreading in the air, the taste and smell of our sadya has

spread throughout the world. People around the world are happy to be here during onam season and to have our delicious onasadya along with our traditional ‘onakkodi’.

Onam, the festival of harvest, is also an occasion where the family gathering and sharing between the farmer and the farming community occurs. Fruits, flowers, leaves, roots and shoots are there in the “ona curries” which give the taste of onam specially

flavoured by our spices and vegetables. Different colours of the vegetables used give a cool feel of seeing an oil painting of a scenery with different shapes of yellow, red, blue, green and their combinations. The rich colours which are made by nature and made from nature can be seen in the sadya specially prepared by nature, i.e., vegetables and fruits. ■

The writer is Assistant Director of Agriculture, Farm Information Bureau





Indunarayan

Specials for Onam



Yam Chips

yam-1/4 kilo
salt to taste
oil to fry
Cut yam into ¼ inch square pieces and fry in hot oil. When it becomes brown and crisp, sprinkle salt water and transfer the chips to a paper to remove the excess oil.

Green Gram Dal Payasam

2 cups green gram dal
2 cups first milk prepared from 12 cups grated coconut
6 cups second milk
9 cups 3rd milk
half kg jaggery for syrup
half cup sago
half tsp cumin seed powder
¼ tsp ginger powder
¼ cup coconut pieces fried in ghee
In a thick bottomed vessel roast green gram dal. Wash the dal and boil it in the 3rd coconut milk till well cooked. When it thickens add jaggery syrup. Stir for a while so that the dal and

syrup mix well, and the dal absorbs the sweetness. Add 2nd milk and sago and cook. Mix cumin seed powder and dry ginger powder in the first milk. Pour it gradually into dal mixture. Add coconut pieces. Stir for 2 seconds and remove from fire.



Rice-ghanadal Payasam

Coconut (grated)- 2 Nos
Raw rice- one cup
Roasted ghanadal- half cup
Jaggery- one cup
Sugar- one cup
Cardamom - 5 Nos, powdered
Dry ginger- one inch piece
Sliced ripe banana- one cup
Coconut pieces- ¼ cup
Ghee- one tsp
Grate the coconut and grind

Elayappam

One Cup Rice Flour
One cup water
One tsp oil
A pinch of salt
2 cups grated coconut
one cup jaggery
Heat water. When it boils, lower the flame and add oil, salt and rice flour and mix to a fine paste without forming lumps. Remove from fire and divide into 8-10 portions. Make balls and keep aside. Mix the coconut and jaggery and keep aside. Divide this into same number of portions as the number of rice flour balls. On a piece of plantain

leaf, place the prepared rice ball. Flatten it with the palm as thin as you can. Now place a portion of the coconut mixture in the centre of it and spread. Fold it and press only the ends, along the edge of the folded ada. Repeat till all the mixture and rice balls are used up. Steam these adas and serve on thiruvonam day.



Green Chilli Achar

green chilli- 200 gms, salt- to taste
tamarind- a small ball
oil- to fry
dried red chilli- one
mustard seeds, fenugreek seeds- ¼ tsp each
Cut red chilli into rounds, having ¼ inch thickness/
Fry in hot oil and transfer



Dal Payasam

Chanadal- ¼ cup
Moong dal- ¼ cup
Jaggery- one cup
Sugar- half cup
Coconut- 5 Nos
Cashew nuts- 5 Nos
Cardamom- 3 Nos powdered
Milk- 2 Litres
Roast chanadal and moong dal to golden colour. Pressure cook with just

enough water and keep. Wash and soak raw rice and nuts separately in little water. Grind together the nuts, grated coconut, the soaked rice and jaggery. Mix with the cooked dal. Add enough milk and boil well to get the required thickness. Add sugar and cardamom powder. Mix well and remove from fire. Fry nuts in ghee and add.

in a mixie. Sprinkle hot water, allow mix to cool. Strain and squeeze out the milk. For the 2nd milk, pour 2 cups of water to the coconut and grind. Then squeeze out the milk. Similarly prepare the third milk adding 3 cups milk to the coconut, grind and squeeze. Keep each milk separately.

Heat the 3rd coconut milk. Wash the rice and roasted chanadal. Cook in this way till it becomes tender. Now add the second extract of coconut milk. Add jaggery, sugar and boil till it thickens. Add the first extracted milk, powdered cardamom and dry ginger. Do not boil. Remove from the fire and garnish with coconut pieces fried in ghee. Serve payasam with banana slices

to a plate. Soak tamarind in one and a half cup water and squeeze its pulp. Add the water and pulp to the fried chilli and stir.

Fry dried red chilli, cut into 2 pieces, fenugreek seeds and mustard seeds. When the mustard seeds splutter, pour the achar to this and off the gas.





Thunder of Lightning

Dating from ancient times lightning was linked to mythology. One of the most classic portrayals was that of the Greek god Zeus. An ancient story is that when Zeus was at war against Cronus and the Titans, he released his brothers, Hades and Poseidon, along with the Cyclopes. In turn, the Cyclopes gave Zeus the Thunderbolt as a weapon, which became a popular symbol of Zeus and continues to be today.

In Hindu mythology Indra is the God of heaven, lightning, rain, storm and thunder. The Thunderbolt (Sanskrit Vajra) is an attribute of Indra. It is shown as a zig-zag with non-pointing ends. This symbol represents Power and

Speed. Lightning is mentioned in the Bible, as a mixture of fire and water.

The Phenomenon of Lightning

Lightning is an atmospheric discharge of static electricity usually accompanied by thunder, which typically occurs during thunderstorms and sometimes during volcanic eruptions or dust storms. In the atmospheric electrical discharge, a leader of a bolt of lightning can travel at speeds of 60,000 m/s (220,000 km/h) and can reach temperatures approaching 30,000 °C. There are some 16 million lightning storms in the world every year.

How lightning initially forms is still a

matter of debate: Scientists have studied root causes ranging from atmospheric perturbations (wind, humidity, friction, and atmospheric pressure) to the impact of solar wind and accumulation of charged solar particles. Ice inside a cloud is thought to be a key element in lightning development and may cause a forcible separation of positive and negative charges within the cloud, thus assisting in the formation of lightning.

Benjamin Franklin was the first person to identify electricity in clouds. In June 1752, it was reported that he raised a kite, accompanied by his son as an assistant. At the end of the string he attached a key and tied it to a post with a silk thread. As time passed, Franklin noticed the loose fibres on the string stretching out; he then brought his hand close to the key and a spark jumped the gap. The rain during the storm had soaked the line and made it conductive. Although experiments from the time of Benjamin Franklin showed that lightning was a discharge of static electricity, there was little improvement in theoretical understanding of lightning for more than 150 years.

Lightning leader development is not just a matter of the electrical breakdown of air, which is about three million volts per metre. Lightning rapidly heats the air in its immediate vicinity to around 20,000 °C - about three times the temperature of the surface of the Sun. This compresses the surrounding clear air and creates a supersonic shock wave which decays to an acoustic wave that is heard as thunder.

Step Leader formation of lightning

As a thundercloud moves over, an electric charge equal to but opposite the charge of the base of the thundercloud is induced in the Earth below the cloud. The induced ground charge follows the movement of the cloud, remaining underneath it.

The path of ionized air, starts from a negatively charged mixed water and

ice region in the thundercloud. Discharge ionized channels are known as leaders. The negatively charged leaders, generally a "stepped leader", proceed downward in a number of quick jumps (steps). Each step is on the order of 50 to 100 ft. The stepped leader may branch into a number of paths.

When a stepped leader approaches the ground, the presence of opposite charges on the ground enhances the strength of the electric field. The electric field is strongest on ground-connected objects whose tops are closest to the base of the thundercloud, such as trees and tall buildings. If the electric field is strong

enough, a conductive discharge (called a positive streamer) can develop from these points. As the field increases, the positive streamer may evolve into a hotter, higher current leader which eventually connects to the descending stepped leader from the cloud. It is also possible for many streamers to develop from many different objects simultaneously, with only one connecting with the leader and forming the main discharge path.

Types of Lightning Cloud-to-ground lightning

This is the best known and second most common type of lightning. And it poses the greatest threat to life and property. Cloud-to-ground lightning is



enough, a conductive discharge (called a positive streamer) can develop from these points. As the field increases, the positive streamer may evolve into a hotter, higher current leader which eventually connects to the descending stepped leader from the cloud. It is also possible for many streamers to develop from many different objects simultaneously, with only one connecting with the leader and forming the main discharge path.

Electrical Discharge of static energy

When the electric field becomes strong enough, an electrical discharge (the bolt of lightning) occurs within

a lightning discharge between a cumulonimbus cloud and the ground. It is initiated by a leader stroke moving down from the cloud

InterCloud-Intra Cloud lightning

Lightning discharges may occur between areas of cloud without contacting the ground. When it occurs between two separate clouds it is known as inter-cloud lightning and when it occurs between areas of differing electric potential within a single cloud, it is known as intra-cloud lightning. Intra-cloud lightning is the most frequently occurring type.

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Contd. from page 37

Thunder of Lightning

Positive lightning

Positive lightning, also known as "bolts from the blue", makes up less than 5 per cent of all lightning. It occurs when the leader forms at the positively charged cloud tops, with the consequence that a negatively charged streamer issues from the ground. The overall effect is a discharge of positive charges to the ground.

Other type of Lightning

There are various type and form of lightning such as Bead lightning, Ball lightning, Ribbon lightning, Rocket lightning, Sheet lightning, Heat lightning, Ground-to-cloud lightning etc.

Trees and lightning

Trees are frequent conductors of lightning to the ground. Trees are natural lightning conductors, and are known to provide protection against lightning damages to the nearby buildings. Tall trees with high biomass for the root system provide good

lightning protection. When a tree acts as a natural lightning conductor, due to skin effect most of the lightning currents flow through the skin of the tree. As a result, the skin gets burnt and may even peel off. But if the tree involved is a coconut tree it may be completely destroyed by the lightning currents.

Thunder

The electrostatic discharge of terrestrial lightning superheats the air to plasma temperatures along the length of the discharge channel in a short duration. The gaseous molecules undergo a rapid increase in pressure and thus expand outward from the lightning creating a shock wave audible as thunder. Since the sound waves propagate not from a single point source but along the length of the lightning's path, the sound origin's varying distances from the observer can generate a rolling or rumbling effect. Since light travels at a significantly greater speed than sound

through air, an observer can approximate the distance to the strike by timing the interval between the visible lightning and the audible thunder

Step Potential and Touch Potential

When a lightning hit a tree or a building, current reaches the ground and flow through earth depending upon the intensity of the lightning. It will create a potential difference between different parts of the earth point. It is called step potential. If a person touches a metal object where current is flowing, there is a potential difference with respect to the earth is called touch potential.

Lightning Protection System

Lightning protection system can be mainly classified into a) External Lightning Protection, b) Internal Lightning protection

External Lightning Protection

It consists of Air Termination system, Down conductor system, Earth

termination system.

The probability of a lightning stroke penetrating the space to be protected is considerably decreased by the presence of an air terminating system. The air terminating system is a combination of rod, stretched wire, meshed conductor. The down conductor is to reduce the possibility of occurrence of dangerous sparking, down conductors are arranged in such a way that from point of strike to earth. The earth termination system is to disperse the lightning current into the earth without causing dangerous over voltage.

Internal Lightning protection

Equipotentialization is a very important measure to reduce fire and explosion danger and life hazard in the space to be protected.

Equipotentialization is achieved by means of bonding conductors or surge suppressors connecting the LPS, the metal framework of the structure, the metal installation, the extraneous conductive parts and the electrical and telecommunication installations

within the space to be protected. It will help to protect electrical and Electronic equipments and reduce injuries to human inside the building

Surge Protection Devices

Nowadays SPDs are widely used in

The month wise incidents of lightning recorded over a year reveals that the month of April and May have recorded the highest incidents of lightning.

the protection of Electrical / Electronic equipments against surges. This will ensure protection against surge up to a certain limit.

SPDs are devices designed in such a way that they will reduce the transient surges into a safe and

tolerable limits. As per IEC standards SPDs are classified in to class 1, 2, 3 depending on the application.

Incidence and intensity of lightning - a Kerala scenario

Studies conducted by scientists of CESS Thiruvananthapuram based on three different aspects reveal the following facts.

A district wise distribution of lightning casualties all over Kerala shows that Kannur is the most affected area followed by Kollam, Kozhikode and Malappuram.

Another graph of the month wise incidents of lightning recorded over a year reveals that the month of April and May have recorded the highest incidents of lightning followed by the month of October and November.

Yet another diagram depicts the time of occurrence of lightning recorded for 24 hours. It shows that the maximum number of lightning strikes were recorded in the evening (4 – 8 pm) and minimum occurrence was recorded in the early morning. (4 – 8 am) ■



In disaster management, assessing the risks is precisely estimating the probability of occurrence of events like floods, landslides, earthquakes or tsunami and the probable magnitudes of adverse effects caused by them on human values or ecology. Questions like what can go wrong and why? how likely is it? how bad it come be? and what can we do about it? invariably provide indications of the type of risks, probability of their occurrences, the extent of damages they can cause and finally, the options or alternatives to manage the risks inherent in such incidents.

Multihazard Disaster Management Action Plan

The unprecedented devastating earthquake which shook Latur in Maharashtra on the 30th September 1993 prompted Maharashtra for the

first time in the country to prepare an MDMAP at the state and district levels and also one for Greater Mumbai to tackle the multi-faceted impacts of the disaster. The expert committees formed for this purpose, deliberated on the various hazards, studied the demographic and spatial features of the disasters and the specific risks and vulnerabilities that the districts in Maharashtra have. Plans focusing on the institutional set up and information flow, providing disaster specific response along with the specific roles of primary agencies involved, were drawn up. While the disaster response activities remained largely under the direct guidance and supervision of the State or district or division, the approach allowed a lot of flexibility at the local level providing for coordination of different agencies from the field level to the Government

at the Centre. A well thought out plan would essentially provide a quick and effective response in emergency situations. Even though districts would handle the disasters basically, the State would intervene in a planned manner to support the endeavours of the district, thereby building confidence and self-reliance at that level.

Community Participation, a "sine-qua-non"

Kerala also can draw up an action plan similar to the one designed in Maharashtra. It would assume an element of disaster preparedness on the part of the Kerala State District Administration and would enlist the participation of the community as a whole and a great deal of involvement of non governmental organisations. Community participation is a sine qua non for the success of the disaster

A silhouette of a person walking and holding an umbrella against a dramatic, sunset-colored sky. The person is on the left side of the frame, and the umbrella is open. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and dark blue, with some clouds. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

Disaster
Come
to

mitigation efforts. So Kerala should develop a communication strategy effective enough to involve the community and create public awareness and this will go a long way in minimising the impact of disasters. The risk mitigation strategy should include involvement of citizen groups local community based organisations, NGOs, mutual aid and resource groups, other private sector bodies and LSGs. Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) can be formed in Kerala, using the services of the willing people in the community.

Go the Maharashtra Way

The various types of disasters, the districts of maximum risks plus the grade of vulnerability (high, low or medium) have to be first of all assessed and analysed. Earthquakes, floods, cyclones, waterborne diseases, road accidents, fires, industrial and chemical accidents, usually come in this category of disasters commonly occurring in the State. A multi disaster State Response Strategy (MDSRS) has then to be chalked out. All the agencies and the Departments like Home, Revenue, Healthcare, Medical Education, Finance, Transport, Municipal Corporations, Panchayats, PWD, Agriculture, Housing, Food and Civil Supplies,

Forest, Water Resources, Labour, PRD with their disaster specific function have to be brought under a single umbrella of control and directions to attend to all kinds of disasters listed above. An Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), with the Chief Secretary at the helm of officers, to be the hub of activity during a disaster to act in a simple and an uncluttered manner can be set up in Kerala. As the master coordination and control point for all counter disaster endeavours, EOC will take all decisions under a unified command. It has to be provided with an efficient communication network and latest technology tools; allowing for data communication and video conferencing facilities. A comprehensive geographical information system (GIS) for the entire state should be developed.

Maps giving the location of the disaster prone areas, the nearest hospital/ ambulance facility, the shortest vents for evacuation etc. have to be made available in a digital format both to the EOC and the districts. Various formats for information reporting and monitoring, have to be developed for the various stages of the disaster cycles and for the various departments involved in the disaster

response operations. Standard operating Procedures (SOPs) also have to be developed for warning and evacuation, activities on receipt of warnings and relief and rehabilitation.

Response structure and Mitigation Strategy

Kerala has to develop a well defined Response Structure with the EOC at the State headquarters and District Control Room at the Districts with well laid out provisions for information update, coordination, technical assistance, resource mobilisation and control and monitoring, each specifically designed to the department / agency concerned for the optimal functioning of the Emergency Operation Control (EOC) and the District Control Rooms (DCR) headed by the district collector in all the 14 districts.

Training the Response Teams

If the Disaster Management Action Plan (DMAP) has to effectively executed, the important social functionaries and the community as a whole has to be told what they should do in times of distress. The State can prepare and maintain a manual, listing the tasks to be performed by each department / authority responsible for specific functions. The manual should also contain details on warning, evacuation, information on key contact persons and emergency officials and do's and don't's in the face of a disaster. The present Institution of Land and Disaster Management in Thiruvananthapuram may be strengthened by posting senior geoscientists / disaster management specialists who have credibility and real expertise in Disaster Response Management to head the faculty there and to give good leadership.

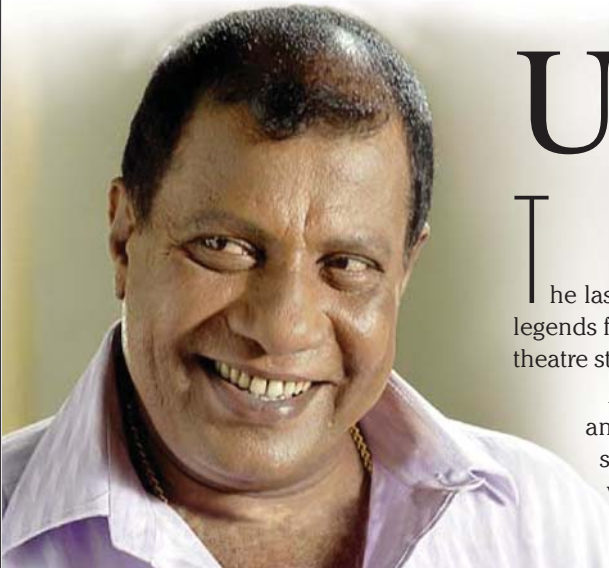
Minimising the loss or damages to life and property during disasters is the Government's responsibility and DMAP, perhaps is the most dependable resource at the hands of the Government to reduce this risks during disasters. ■

The writer is director, Information & Public Relations Department

Combine COMBAT



Vacuum Unfilled



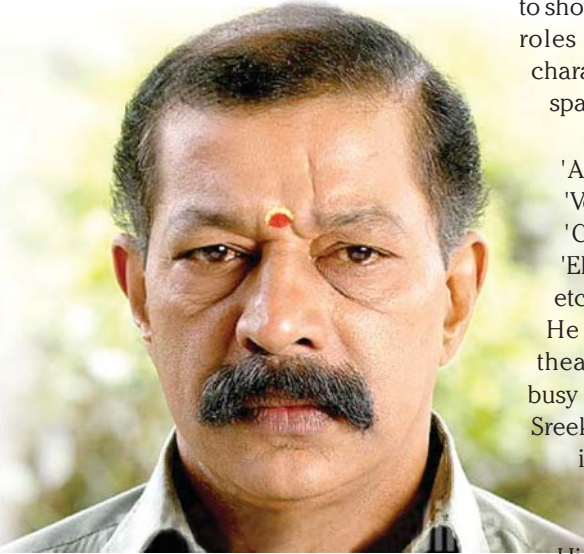
The last week of July and first week of August this year snatched two legends from Malayalam film world. Versatile actors who came from the theatre stage Murali and Rajan P.Dev passed away during this period.

Actor and Chairman of Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy, Murali and actor Rajan P Dev, who made their own space in stage and screen through their novel attempts and acting style left this world following brief illness. Murali and Rajan P.Dev had similar interests and passion in their fruitful acting career. Both came from theatre to cinema and continued their theatrical mission till their end of life, even though they were having unavoidable position in film field.

Murali was admitted to a private hospital in Thiruvananthapuram on 4th August due to chest congestion. He was hospitalised just after his return from Cape Town, where he was acting in a Tamil film 'Aadhavan'. The end came around 8.30 pm on 6th August. He was 55 and survived by wife Shailaja and daughter Karthika. He was born on 25 may 1954 in Kudavattor near Kollam.

Murali acted in around 250 films and won the national award for best actor for his performance in 'Neythukaran', directed by Priyanandan. He received Kerala State best actor award for his roles in 'Adharam' (1992), 'Kanakkinavu' (1996), 'Thalolam' (1998) and 'Neythukaran' (2001). He also got best supporting actor award for his performance in Bharathan's 'Amaram'. Murali has acted in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi films other than Malayalam.

Murali was considered as last word for manliness in Malayalam cinema. His entry into Malayalam cinema arena was through 'Njattadi' directed by Bharath Gopi in 1978, but the film was not released. Later he acted in Aravindan's 'Chidambaram', Lenin



Rajendran's 'Meenamasathile Sooryan' etc. But his role in Hariharan's 'Panchagni' made him popular in mainstream Malayalam films.

His career graph from villain in 'Panchagni' to national award winning 'Neythukaran' saw many remarkable roles of different genres. He was able to show his flexibility by handling the roles of hero, villain, supporting/ character actor etc in in his career spanning 30 years.

Roles in the films 'Lalsalam', 'Akashadooth', 'Chakoram', 'Venkalam', 'Valayam', 'The King', 'Chambakulam Thachan', 'Ekantham', Pulijanmam, Patram etc brought many laurels to him. He was active in experimental theatre stages even when he was busy in films. He performed in C.N. Sreekantan Nair's 'Lanka Lakshmi' in stage and it was presented again in Thrissur two years back.

His affinity with left politics started when he was a student. He contested in 1998 Lok Sabha election as Left Democratic Front 's candidate from Alappuzha constituency. Murali wrote five books. Among them, 'Murali muthal Murali Vare', 'Mrigashala Kadhakal' and 'Abhinayathinte Rasathantram' were notable.

Rajan P Dev died at Ankamali on July 29 following brief lung infection.

He was born in Cherthala as elder son of S.J Dev and Kuttiyamma on 20th May 1953. The world of drama paved Rajan P Dev his entry into the film world. He started with small roles in early 80's and become established as a tough villain through the role Carlose in Thampi Kannanthanam's 'Indrajaalam'. After that he proved himself through his hardcore villain roles and moulded his space in South Indian film world. He was the one to broke the same old villain concept in Malayalam cinema and presented his characters with utmost ease. But later he shifted his focus from those roles to comic roles and proved again his flexibility and range. He acted in around 180 films in Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu languages; mostly as villain roles. 'Ee Pattanathil Bhootam' was his last film.

He tried his luck as a director through films Achammakuttiyude Achayan and Achante Kochumolkkku.

Before he was active in films, he immortalised several characters in dramas, including Kochuvava in S.L. Puram Sadanandan's 'Kaattukuthira'. Earlier, he was active in theatre field through N.N. Pillai's plays and that helped him a lot to mould his talents as a stage actor. Dev was adjudged with state award for best drama actor in 1984 and 1986. He also started a drama troop named Jubilee Theatres in Cherthala to continue his theatrical mission. ■

The writer is journalist based in Thiruvananthapuram



Madhu Eravankara

A film by Mohanlal for Mohanlal; Bhraram is frame-by-frame Mohanlal. The image of the superstar is broken in the movie and Mohanlal is transformed to the real Sivankutty with all his strength and weaknesses.

Just imagine a still pond in a lonely woods. Somebody throws a stone and many ripples originate! This is what exactly happens to Unnikrishnan's

house. On a fatal evening a stranger appears at the doorstep of Unni's flat and the tranquility of the house is lost forever. The stranger seems to be like a bomb, which may blast any time. Paradoxically, outside in the streets real bomb blasts are taking place too.

The stranger claims as Jose takes Unni back to the old school days. Unni is totally perturbed, especially after

When Beetles Whimper





talking with Alex Varghese, his life friend, who confirms that Jose could be Sivankutty, whom they fear eternally. And sooner the stranger reveals his identity. After a series of dramas Sivankutty makes Unni to accompany him to the 'last journey'. Here begins the dangerous journey of Sivankutty. Unni and later Dr. Alex Varghese become the vulnerable co-travellers.

Shot in exquisitely charming locales of high ranges, Bhramaram, lingers on the edges of life and death. As the publicity poster highlights, the film is brutally innocent. A human being is persistently crucified all through his life for the crime he never committed. In his endless journey to seek innocence he finally succeeds. But it was too late.

Sivankutty holds a tornado in his mind. Yet in the opening sequence he appears too jovial and in his unwelcome intimacy with Unni's wife and the kid is unforgettable. He proves to be good at heart in spite of his bitter past experiences. It is true that at times



he loses control over himself, especially when he drives the truck and jeep. He brings Unni and Alex back to life even though they try to kill him. This incident leads to the unexpected confession by them. The ever-changing nature of Sivankutty is in the safe hands of Mohanlal, perhaps himself executing one of the superb performances of his career.

Bhramaram has the freshness of a beautifully conceived story, which many of Blessy's earlier films lack. And the presence of a highly worked out script is felt from the beginning to end. Usually, in second half of his films, Blessy loses the grip and the films land somewhere. This has happened to Kazhcha, Thanmathra and Calcutta News. Such a doom is luckily missing in Bhramaram.

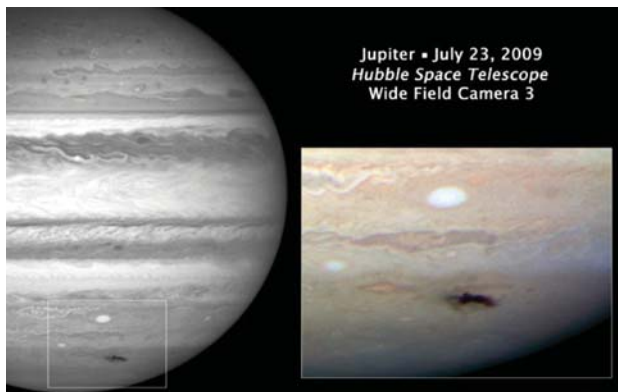
Blessy's casting in Bhramaram needs special admiration. Suresh Menon as Unni performs brilliantly. This veteran actor superbly wears the helplessness, rage, apprehension and the make up of an obedient husband. And so is Muralikrishnan as Alex Varghese. Unni and Alex are the embodiments of trepidation and all their deeds are the natural outcome to curb their inner fear. Other artistes like Lakshmi Gopalaswamy, KPAC Lalitha and, of course, the heroine Bhoomika make their compelling presence. As the story is hero oriented, the heroine has nothing to do on the screen but the positive aspect of the script is that the heroine's presence is felt throughout the film. The child artiste Nivedita's

stunning performance is another highlight of the film.

Songs, penned by Anil Panachooran and scored by Mohan Sitara, have little contribution in a film like Bhramaram. The producers and directors should make note of one thing. If you have a good story and if you know how to tell it effectively, you do not need extra ingredients like songs, dances, stunts or vulgar comedians. The producers Raju Malliath and A.R. Sulfikar could take proud of providing an opportunity to Blessy to attempt for a meaningful creation.

The outstanding contribution to Bhramaram by the cinematographer Ajayan Vincent is to be recorded. The film dwells on two distinct paces. The outdoors is mainly on the roads manifested with very risky shots. When the camera is almost static in indoor scenes, Ajayan Vincent experiments with all sorts of movements in outdoor in tune with the treatment and the characterisation of the protagonist. The editor Vijayasankar too keeps up the tempo of the shots.

Bharatan and Padmarajan were the ardent proponents of middle cinema where they tried to keep up the good elements of cinema even when striving for commercial success. Many have tried to be in the array later. But in the new century, attempts were seldom made in this direction and, no doubt, Bhramaram could be treated as a strong contender of middle cinema. ■



NASA, ESA, H. Hammel (Space Science Institute), and the Jupiter Impact Team

Hubble snaps fall-out from Jupiter impact

THE Hubble Space Telescope has turned its new Wide Field Camera 3 on the aftermath of the 19 July collision between the gas giant and an unidentified object.

NASA describes the image as the "sharpest visible-light picture yet" of the atmospheric debris from the prang, first spotted by amateur Oz astronomer Anthony Wesley and subsequently captured in the infrared by the Keck Observatory in Hawaii.

The agency is suitably chuffed with this first science observation from its new camera, installed during space shuttle Atlantis's STS-125 mission back in May. Although the instrument is not yet fully calibrated, Heidi Hammel of the Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colorado, which made the observation, enthused: "Hubble's truly exquisite imaging capability has revealed an astonishing wealth of detail in the impact site."

"By combining these images with our ground-based data at other wavelengths, our Hubble data will allow a comprehensive understanding of exactly what is happening to the impact debris."

Colic In Babies May Be Caused By Gut Bacteria

Researchers at The University of Texas Health Science Centre at Houston say one organism discovered during their study may unlock the key to what causes colic, inconsolable crying in an otherwise healthy baby.

Colic can be a dangerous situation for a baby. The parent's frustration over the crying can lead to maternal frustration, post-

partum depression and even thoughts of harming the baby."

Published in the July 23 online edition of the *Journal of Pediatrics*, the



Moon astronauts urge Mars mission

Neil Armstrong At a rare public reunion of the Apollo 11 crew, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins said Mars instead of the Moon should be the focus of exploration. Neil Armstrong, the first man on the Moon, said the race to get to the Moon had been the ultimate peaceful contest.

He said it was an "exceptional national investment" for the US and ex-USSR.

The trio spoke at an event at Washington DC's National Air and Space Museum to mark the 40th anniversary of their mission.



Yawn alert for weary drivers

AN INTERNATIONAL team in the US and India has developed a new in-car yawn-detection system

Writing in the inaugural issue of the *International Journal of Computational Vision and Robotics*, Aurobinda Mishra of Vanderbilt University, in Nashville, TN, and colleagues Mihir Mohanty of ITER, in Orissa and Aurobinda Routray of IIT, West Bengal, India, describe a computer programme that can tell when you are yawning and could prevent road traffic accidents.

The new programme is based around

an in-car camera hooked up to image-processing software that captures a sequence of images of the driver's face. It then analyses changes in the face and accurately identifies yawning as distinct from other facial movements such as smiling, talking, and singing. The yawn frequency is then correlated with fatigue behaviour and could then be hooked up to a warning system to alert drivers to the need to take a break.



study pointed to an organism called *Klebsiella*, a normally occurring bacterium that can be found in the mouth, skin and intestines. In the study of 36 babies, half of which had colic, researchers found the bacterium and gut inflammation in the intestines of the babies with colic.

Colic is defined as unexplained and severe crying in an otherwise healthy newborn. It usually occurs in infants three months old or younger and lasts for more than three hours daily for at least three days a week.

Toucan's bill keeps things cool

RESEARCHERS believe the beak can regulate body temperature. The toucan's enlarged bill may not just be for attracting mates or handling food, as biologists have speculated. It also may be able to exchange heat with its environment, enabling the bird to adjust its body temperature as its surroundings change. With the largest beak relative to body size of all birds, the toucan has long fascinated researchers, including

Charles Darwin, who speculated that the beak's size was used to display colours to the opposite sex, giving bigger-billed birds a reproductive edge. Accounting for 30 per cent to 50 per cent of the body's surface area and

about one-third of its length, the colourful bill has many blood vessels and is not insulated. These factors, contend the authors of a new study, make the beak well-suited to regulate body temperature.



AIDS-like disease in chimps may be a 'missing link'

A MOTHER chimpanzee in Gombe National Park, Tanzania, was infected by simian immunodeficiency virus and died in November 2006.

Scientists have discovered that chimpanzees in Tanzania are falling ill and dying from an AIDS-like disease - a surprising finding that could lead to insights into the illness and, perhaps, to a vaccine. The study, published in

British research journal *Nature*, showed that chimps infected by certain strains of simian immunodeficiency virus, a precursor to HIV, died 10 to 16 times more frequently than uninfected chimps during a nine-year study.

The results contradict previous evidence suggesting that chimpanzees were immune from AIDS and that SIV infections in the species were harmless.

AIDS researchers say the discovery presents a unique opportunity to deduce how the closely related SIV and HIV cause disease in closely related species - chimps and humans. That should speed up development of more effective AIDS therapies and vaccines, researchers say.



Clouds may be thinning due to global warming

Clouds decline due to global warming, suggests a study of the Northeast Pacific, which in turn would lead to more climate change.

Clouds reflect sunlight, cooling the atmosphere, note the Science study authors led by Amy Clement of the University of Miami. Whether global warming creates more clouds or less "remain a primary cause of uncertainty in global climate model projections," says the study. Global warming is projected to raise average atmospheric temperatures from 3 to 7 degrees Fahrenheit this century, by best estimate of the 2007 International Panel on Climate Change.

Looking at North Pacific cloud records from 1952 to 2007, the study concludes clouds likely thin with warming. Only one climate model includes this added warming effect, they note.

Greens Award



Joshy Manjummel, Ernakulam bags first place in the 6th All India Nature Photo Competition, Greenvision 2009, organised jointly by I & PRD and Greens. Ashish Bathery of Wayanad got second place.

Year will end with record intake in State service

The current year will end with record intake in State service, Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan told the Assembly.

As many as 15,740 advice memos have been issued

FTA: panel to have Kerala member

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has assured a Kerala delegation, led by Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan, that the Cabinet sub-committee to be set up by the Central Government to study the impact of the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

between India and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) will have a Kerala representative. The committee would keep in touch with Kerala and the Centre would forward a copy of the draft agreement to the State government for a detailed study. Mr. Achuthanandan, in a three-page

memorandum, wanted the Centre to take the Kerala government into confidence before signing the agreement. Besides, there should be a debate on the issue after making public the terms of reference of the agreement.

Later, the Chief Minister said that the State government would have its

own study of the adverse effects of the FTA on peasants, fishermen, and those in traditional industries. Others in the Kerala delegation were Food Minister C. Divakaran, Agriculture Minister Mullakkara Ratnakaran, Rajya Sabha MP Sitaram Yechury and some CPI(M) MPs.

Rs.50 crore to promote medicinal plant cultivation

The Minister for Agriculture, Mullakkara Ratnakaran, announces that the State government will implement a Rs.50-crore project to promote commercial cultivation of medicinal plants. A Rs.49.27-crore project has been approved for the purpose under the Eleventh Plan. Steps will be taken to identify and tap potential markets.

Inaugurating the project at a function held in Thiruvananthapuram, the Minister said that a sum of Rs.13 crore will be spent during the first phase of the project to be implemented this year by the Department of Agriculture in association with the State Horticulture Mission and the National Mission on Medicinal

Plants-Kerala. Public sector institutions, self-help groups, cooperative institutions and manufacturers of herbal products will be involved in the project. Financial aid will be provided for production of planting materials, increasing the area of cultivation, post-harvest maintenance and

processing. Assistance will be provided to farmers to establish nurseries, drying sheds, storage, processing and quality control units. Aid will also be provided to organise exhibitions and sales fairs. Promotion of organic farming techniques will also be accorded priority.

A two-day seminar on 'Promotion of cultivation and marketing of medicinal plants' was also organised. After launching the project, the Minister stressed the need to popularise the cultivation of medicinal plants in the State. The loss of traditional knowledge and the lack of public awareness are responsible for the decline of



by the PSC between January and June and steps are afoot to recruit 5,000 persons in the State police service and 600 engineers in the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) within the next few months.

Pointing out that the average annual intake in the State service is 25,000, Chief Minister says that the PSC will get very close to that number by taking the total number of advice memos issued by it to 23,000 in the coming two months. Going by the current pace of recruitment, the intake this year will exceed the average annual intake so far, thereby setting a new record.

Steps to widen National Highway stretch

The State Government will submit a detailed project report to the Centre for widening the congested Thampanoor-Kaliyikkavila stretch of National Highway No.47 to six lanes. Public Works Minister, Mons Joseph,

Kerala Highway Research Institute is already on the job of conducting a feasibility study on the widening. Sixty per cent of its work has been completed and the study report will be ready within

work lagging for years. The onus of acquiring land and handing it over for widening to the Public Works (National Highway) Wing was on the State.

Although proposals for another road and an elevated highway were mooted at the meeting, it was decided to widen the existing highway stretch. The meeting was told about the traffic snarls along the stretch and the congestion caused when buses halted at designated stops near busy junctions. It was decided to set up 44 segregated bus bays on the stretch to avoid such congestion.



disclosed this at a high-level meeting convened at Hotel Mascot in Thiruvananthapuram to discuss the development of one of the busiest stretches of the highway passing through the district. Union Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor was present. The

a month.

The Union Minister, who represents the Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha constituency, said that he would take steps to make available funds from the Centre for widening the stretch, a

V. J. Thankappan, N. Shaktan, R. Selvaraj, George Mercier and V. Sivankutty, MLAs; Tom Jose, Secretary, Public Works Department; District Collector Sanjay Kaul; and Chief Engineer (National Highway) Suresh Koirala attended the meeting.

medicinal plant cultivation in Kerala. "Ayurveda did not become popular like allopathy because its language was Sanskrit," he said. He called for a campaign to impart awareness of the dietary and therapeutic benefits of medicinal plants. He released the proceedings of the national seminar.

Mayor C. Jayan Babu presided. V. Sivankutty, MLA; K. Prathapan, Director, State Horticulture Mission; H. Nagesh Prabhu, Managing Director, Oushadhi, Anitha Jacob, Director of Indigenous Medicines; and G. Surendran, Marketing Director, Agriculture Department, were present.

Prisons Act soon

Home Minister, Kodyeri Balakrishnan, has said that the State will soon have its own Prisons Act. Presiding over a function organised at the open prison at Nettukaltheri near Neyyattur, Thiruvananthapuram in connection with the inauguration of an office building and a free legal aid clinic, the Minister said the draft of the Kerala Prisons and Corrective Services Act was ready. The Travancore Cochin Prisons Act and the Central Act are in force in the State now. The government has



recommended the premature release of 200 prisoners in the State who have served 10 years of their sentence.

Pointing out that all prisons in the State together can house only 4,309 prisoners, the Minister said there are 6,950 persons in the prisons in the State. The State has submitted a Rs.536-crore project to the Centre for the modernisation of prisons. A

high-security prison that can house 200 persons and a court is to be set up at Tavanur in Malappuram district. The Minister lauded the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court Justice S. R. Bannurmath for initiating steps to bring the courts closer to the people. The Chief Justice visiting the prison and inaugurating a function is a history in the State, he added.



Islamic banking for NRKs

Interest-free loan for entrepreneurship! A dream all these days were. But will be a thing of past soon. The State Government is examining the possibility of setting up a special financial institution based on Islamic banking principles to provide entrepreneurial loans to people returning to Kerala from the West Asian countries.

Addressing the delegates of an international conference on 'Financial Crisis in the Gulf and its impact on South and South East Asian Migrants' at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, including those from West Asia from where many Keralites are returning jobless, Minister for Finance, Dr. Thomas Isaac said that such a mechanism would provide loans to the returnees interest-free for starting their own employment ventures. The resources for providing interest-free loans must come from the

profits this mechanism or institution would generate through other financial operations.

The idea is to augment the scheme launched recently by the state-owned Kerala Financial Corporation (KFC) to provide entrepreneurial loans at low interest rates to people returning from the West Asian or Gulf countries after losing their jobs because of the global economic slowdown. Such an initiative will help returning migrants integrate meaningfully into Kerala society.

Islamic banking refers to a system of banking that is consistent with the principles of Islamic law (Sharia) and its practical application through the development of Islamic economics. Sharia prohibits any payment of fees for the renting of money.

- Hari



P R Sreekumar



Bloom untimely: Neelakurinji is blooming once again at Thankappanpara, Munnar against its tendency to bloom in a clustered manner on typical inflorescence stocks once in every 12 years. Shedding of its plietesials habit may be because of the impact of global warming.