

## Ensuring Sustainable Development

Social policy measures and economic development can go hand in hand. The welfare state has played an important role in sustainable development. We have proper policies and programmes to enhance the welfare of the people and achieve social and economical equality. Responsive, accountable and people-friendly governance at all levels is an added advantage.

An important feature of the Left Democratic Front Government is allocation of a relatively large amount of public funding to social services widely available for the common man. The Government is going ahead in the developmental path without compromising in social justice and in welfare measures. The Kisan Sree Insurance Scheme, a unique project, reiterates the Government's commitment for the welfare of the farmers. About five lakh farmers will be benefitted.

A healthy and educated population is a key factor for development. The decision to provide health cards to the students of the Government schools in the state is a radical initiative. Government is upgrading 300 hospitals in the State and taking steps to ensure quality of service. This will provide the common man easy access to all basic medical services. The Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana, implemented through LIC is to cover rural landless households which have no insurance cover at all. The Rs 5000 crore housing project will make housing affordable to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities and other eligible sections of the society. The Debt Relief Commission formed with an aim to release the coastal areas caught in the debt-trap, will help to remove the financial burden.

Government has taken several steps for the welfare of women, children and older people. A highly planned intervention to prevent atrocities against women has also been formed by the Government. The Jagratha Samithis in local administrative bodies have become sanctuaries of justice for women. To help older people avoid isolation, neglect, poverty and age discrimination, the Government has introduced the Senior Citizen's Policy which will make the sons and daughters responsible for caring their parents.

The minorities have received a new deal. Sachaar Commission reports are being fulfilled in Kerala by the LDF Government. Poor Muslim girls are to get Rs 3000 to Rs 5000 as scholarships for graduate and post graduate studies.

Government is keen in reducing the time and cost of the disposal of welfare agenda. Steps are taken to ensure adequate delegation of power and resources to the local self governments in rural and urban areas. Moreover, the laws and procedures are being simplified, obsolete laws repealed and laws existing against the weaker sections reformed.

Government is determined in ensuring the diversification of projects and programmes for sustainable development and fair distribution of basic amenities to the people. The readers can flip through the pages of **Kerala Calling** to have a look into the welfare agenda unleashed by the Kerala Government.



# Plans Productive

FARMING



Rice is life to millions in the world and crores of families spread over in more than one hundred nations are engaged in its cultivation, processing and trade. Rice is really more than a food to them. Every part of the tender member of the mighty graminiae family has a place of pride in every home ranging from prayer room to the kitchen.

India though is the largest area holder under the crop in the world, the State of Kerala is often termed as the most rice

from 4.3 lakhs to 2.6 lakhs hectare, pushing the State to a near precarious situation. Thanks to the large scale enthusiastic participation of farmers in the efforts put in by the Government, it is claimed that the State has already brought over 16500 hectare of otherwise barren and discarded field back to paddy cultivation. This is a remarkable and heart-warming success as it generates big hope and inspiration to the extension, and research workers and people's leaders functioning at the micro level.

Role of dynamic public policies like the increase in the procurement price of paddy from Rs 7.50 per kg to Rs nine and now to Rs 11 has contributed much for inspiring the peasants to come out cheerful.

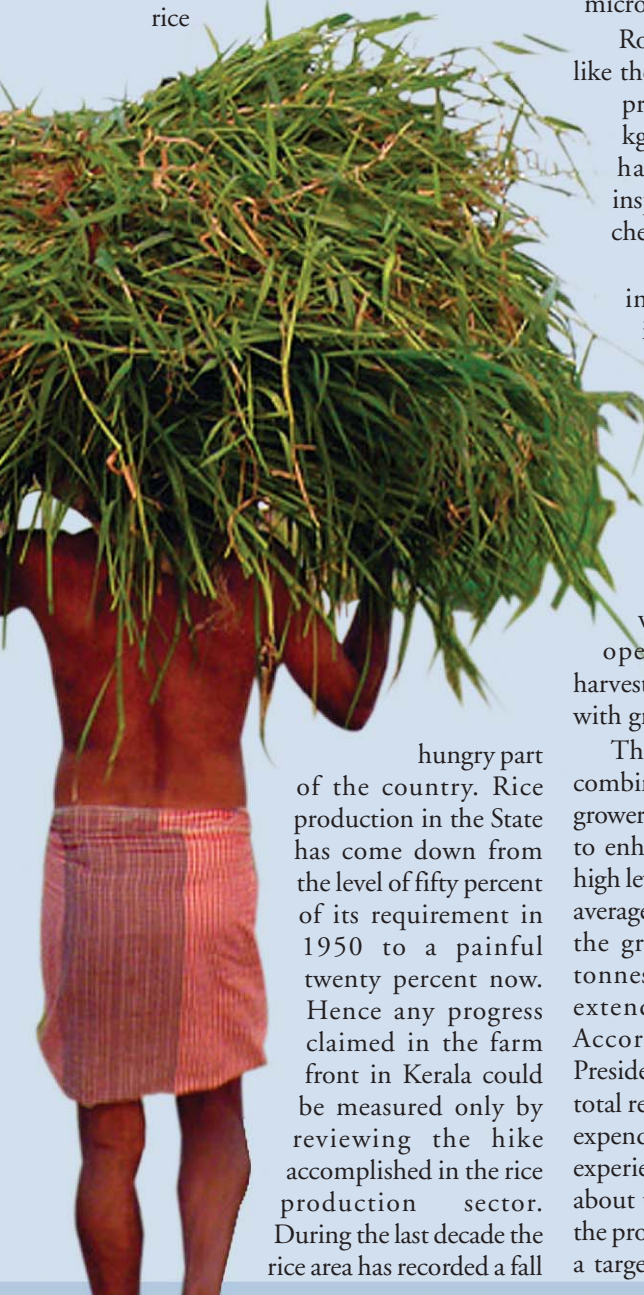
Improved efficiency built up in procurement and prompt intervention made in the payment system too has its positive impact, in attracting more farmers to rice farming again. Welcome change noticed is the introduction of more mechanisation and it is a novel experience to observe women labour participating in operations connected with harvesting and winnowing machines with great enthusiasm.

The revival of group farming by combining modern technology and growers' total participation has helped to enhance the productivity to very high levels in very large tracts too. The average yield recorded at Anthikad by the group farming samithi is 6.3 tonnes per hectare from an area extending about 2000 hectare. According to Ramachandran, President of the samithy, per hectare total revenue was Rs 63000 while the expenditure was only Rs 25000. This experience is a promising indication about the possibilities for enhancing the productivity on a large scale. With a target to produce 1.6 lakh tonnes

of paddy additionally during the year, the State has set the ball rolling fast. Reports received from the districts reveal that the progress so far accomplished could be hailed as a very bright one. In Pathanamthitta District fields kept barren for over thirty years have been brought under plough, and the sowing of paddy is over in more than 2000 acres. Outstanding progress has been reported from Alappuzha, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Kannur and Kollam. By the end of the financial year significant results could be expected as intensive activities are taking place in various grama panchayats to bring more land under paddy.

Kerala at present is experiencing a 60 per cent deficiency in its vegetable requirement. A massive programme to bring 1000 villages under an intensive production effort has been launched to improve the situation. Popularly known as "1000 vegetable villages," the vegetable growing programme too has received a flying start. Out of the 180 villages targeted during the first leg, 169 are put into operation involving 5368 farmers and could supply over 15000 tonnes of vegetables through various outlets so far. Plans are ready to cover 436 villages more during the second leg. Tremendous enthusiasm is witnessed in the various other vegetable production programmes like school gardening and homestead vegetable production schemes. Involvement of self-help groups, social service organizations etc are creating very significant impact in the rural areas. There is every possibility to evolve a sustainable system of vegetable production in various panchayats which enjoy the potential to launch similar efforts. The contribution made by the District, Block and Grama Panchayats is very significant. It is note worthy to add that several panchayats have come forward with novel plans for providing farmer friendly marketing support.

hungry part of the country. Rice production in the State has come down from the level of fifty percent of its requirement in 1950 to a painful twenty percent now. Hence any progress claimed in the farm front in Kerala could be measured only by reviewing the hike accomplished in the rice production sector. During the last decade the rice area has recorded a fall



One of the most significant agriculture developments during the current year is the acceptance of two development documents submitted by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and its acceptance by the Government of India. The farming situation in Alappuzha and Idukki are sure to undergo a very big welcome change once the projects are put into operation. The estimates may go further and more funds may be required to fulfill the objectives in its totality. The vigilant people of these districts will then experience a total development which includes better transportation, greater mechanisation, massive development

programme and this will provide a great protection to them against several risks experienced at present.

Introduction of a pension scheme is another effort aimed to give more security to the full time small and marginal farmers. The programme will prove to be a boon to the cultivators if implemented with grace.

As part of the anniversary celebration of the Department of agriculture, Government has decided to construct a Karshakabhavan and a modern farmers training centre at Thiruvananthapuram. Another welcome step initiated is to adopt 100 villages and develop them as model agricultural villages. This must be

100 million while "Kerafed" made a profit of Rs 38 million for the first time in its history. Plantation and farming corporations too have made very attractive profits of Rs 125 million and Rs 135 million respectively and created new records. This gives an indication to the all round efforts made to improve the working of the public sector corporations in the farming sector.

All said and done, the progress of the activities in the agriculture sector is evaluated by the performance in three vital sectors. The most important one is the increase in the actual production of rice, vegetables and all other crops. The second one is the profits generated by the farmers by marketing the same. The third one is the availability of quality farm produce in plenty at an affordable price to the consumer. There must be a harmonious working linkage between the three. It is a very difficult task to accomplish the same especially in the present contest of global recession and consequent depressing and unpredictable fast economic changes happening in the country. As a part of our humble efforts to face the difficult situation, Kerala should intensify the activities in the agricultural front to double the production. Present experience needs careful policy reorientation for protecting the interest of both farmers and consumers. The major crops of Kerala like rubber, cardamom, pepper, coconut etc. are facing unbearable fall in price whereas the cost of all food items are on the increase. It is a titanic task to help the farmers to produce more while the cost of all inputs including labour is going up day by day. Simultaneously the capacity of the cash crops to earn more from the market is on the decline. In this context agriculture sector deserve more care, more funds and more protection. The future progress in the farm front mainly depends on the public policies given shape to translate the above needs in to a reality. ■

The writer is former Director of Agriculture, Government of Kerala



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of avocations, waterways and tourism apart from building a new era of prosperity in the farms and homes.

Another very important change inducted into the farming sector is the efforts made to link agriculture development with farmer welfare activities and programmes.

Formation of Kisansree, a total insurance scheme for farmers was introduced in Kerala perhaps for the first time in the nation. Over five lakh full time farmers have joined the

accepted and supported by all those who love the real growth in rural life.

Seven corporations working in the agriculture sector for providing more amenities to the farmers together have made a profit of over Rs 500 million. Functioning of all these organisations have been fine-tuned so that they could provide better service to the farming community and handsome non tax revenue to the Government. Campco, the power tiller producing factory, has made a profit of over Rs





# Equality Not a Motto But in Toto

Kerala has won laurels for its achievements in the fields of health and education. The State can proudly claim to have high levels of social development indices compared to other states and to the national average. A direct reflection of these achievements is seen in the quality of life of women in Kerala. The high levels of female literacy, female life expectancy and sex ratio favourable to women were achieved not by accident. Nor these should be a matter of surprise to any student of Kerala's history. Modern Kerala emerged through a long process of social reform movements, ideological battles and struggles of peasants and workers spanning more than a century and a half, which paved the way for many of these achievements. The relatively better position enjoyed by the women in the State is also attributable to the interventions made by the popular Governments that came to power, especially the path breaking reforms initiated by the first EMS led ministry of 1957. When women in most parts of the country still have to suffer the horrors of casteist discrimination and exploitation and are denied basic human and civic rights by their oppressors, Kerala experience shows

how women could act as agents of social change.

However, in the recent discussions, the grave weaknesses and questions on the women's status in the State are rightly highlighted along with any talk on achievements. Although the quality of life enjoyed by most women in Kerala is still better, the rising atrocities against women, the pathetic state of marginalised sections of the population like women fishworkers and advivasi women and the patriarchal values entrenched in almost all sectors of the society are major limitations. Hence, any initiative for the advancement of women in Kerala has to take note of these limitations and should devise strategies to overcome them and establish gender relations based on equality of men and women.

What marks the efforts of the LDF Government in the implementation of policies and programmes aimed for women over the last two and a half years is the conscious attempt to address the above challenges faced by the women community in the State. Practical programmes are required to improve the lot of women who are fighting poverty and are having relatively backward social and cultural attainments. At the

same time, the Government is also aware of the strategic need to bridge the gender divide prevalent in the society and has included this in its approach to the women's question.

The increase in the social security pensions including widow pension to a minimum of Rs.200 from Rs.120 shows the Government's commitment to poorer sections. The restriction on

model hospitals. Central schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana which did not get proper attention during the previous Government were implemented in right earnest. Along with this, a comprehensive health insurance scheme has also been launched to provide free medical care to the poor patients. All these initiatives are certain to address some

of the limitations in the status of women discussed earlier.

About half-a-lakh women are working in the ICDS-Anganawadi sector in the State. They are not treated as regular employees by the Central government and do not enjoy any retirement benefits. Introduction of pension was a major demand of these workers, which has been accepted by the State Government. Honorarium paid to these workers and helpers was also increased by 35 per cent by the State Government showing how it valued the services put in by them. Selected Anganwadis are being developed as Community resource centres catering to the adolescent girls and women in the locality.

A major weakness of the Kerala's development paradigm is the decreasing share of women in gainful employment. Women are concentrated in low wage earning sectors of employment. If women are to get better employment and better wages, their skill development is a must. Women should be equipped to take up jobs in sector other than those traditionally earmarked for women. The Government has devised a Finishing School project as a Flagship programme to achieve this objective. Kerala Women's Development Corporation is coordinating the activities in this area.

Increasing atrocities against women, especially violence within their homes is a matter of grave concern. It is important to strengthen the implementation of the Prevention of Women Against Domestic Violence Act. It is a matter of pride that Kerala was one of the first states to take steps for the implementation of the new Act by designating Protection Officers and Counselling centres. Now the Government has created 14 posts of Women Protection Officers, which will go a long way in giving solace to the women facing domestic violence. The functioning of the Women's Commission, Police



payment of pension to widows having male offsprings aged over 20 was removed. Effective interventions were made in helping the traditional industries like coir, cashewnut and handloom sectors which had to face the adverse impact of globalisation and the ongoing financial crisis—where women are employed in large numbers.

Projects for improving the facilities in the Government hospitals and making them more women friendly were initiated by the Government. Hospitals in tribal areas in Attapady and Wayanad were renovated. Many Government hospitals were renovated and defunct services like deliveries were restarted. 115 Community Health Centres are being upgraded to develop them as

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## Equality Not a Motto

Women's Cells and Jagratha Samithis were also strengthened to redress the grievances of women.

The experience of Kerala in the last 12 years proves the efficacy of decentralisation in the empowerment of women at the local level. An average of Rs.150 crores is being spent on the Women's Component Plan by Local self-governments each year. Transactions worth hundreds of crores are also being handled through the Kudumbasree network. All these have contributed to improve the economic status of women across the State. Kudumbasree is also going to play an active role in the new Food Security programme launched by the Government. A massive Gender Self Learning Programme involving the 37 lakh women members of the Kudumbasree Self Help Groups has also been launched.

The State Women's Policy formulated by the Government bore testimony to its commitment to improving the gender status of women in Kerala and to establish a new gender relationship based on equality. It will be a declaration for removing the vestiges of inequality and anti-women tendencies in the Kerala society and ensuring gender equality in all spheres of life. Even before the formal declaration of the new Women's Policy, the Government has, acting on the draft recommendations, set up a Gender Advisory Board to coordinate the women's development activities and programmes of various departments and agencies. When the Policy will be officially adopted soon, the State should be able to make more focused interventions for betterment of women's status and usher in a new era of 'gendered' politics in the State. It is the New Year hope of the women of Kerala for 2009. ■

The writer is the member of the Gender Advisory Board of the Government and the State President of All India Democratic Women's Association.



# Knitted Well

The present economic policy once embraced by the majority of Nations dated back from the nineties with the hope of rejuvenating the world economic order has now proved to be a great menace to the humanity as a whole, sowing the seeds of destruction in the economic, social and cultural sectors of each nation. Those who were the staunch believers of the new system and advocated vehemently for the same are now on the lookout to find a way out from causing further damage to the economy. In this context the relevance of Co-operation as an alternative economic force to eradicate the evils of the present economic system draws greater attention. The Co-operative ideology practiced in its true spirit can play a significant and distinct role in contributing towards the socio economic development of the society especially the poor and down trodden. With this goal in mind the Left Democratic Front Government has been formulating and implementing policies to strengthen the movement in such a way as to make it a strong alternative economic force and as a helping hand in implementing the welfare

programmes of the Government. The LDF Government has been successful to a certain extent, in providing many relief to the society in addition to the objectives for which they are organised.

On assuming power the Government was faced with the dual challenge of eradicating wide spread corruption prevailed in this sector during United Democratic Front rule and at the same time ensuring their financial stability to make them suitable for meeting the economic needs of the common man with limited resources. During the short span of two and half years innumerable petitions alleging serious irregularities involving corruption and misappropriations were received requesting immediate intervention of the Government. If all the efforts of the UDF constituents were directed towards looting the resources of Co-operatives the efforts of the LDF Government is directed towards making the sector strong and vibrant ensuring that no such untoward activities or corrupt practices or any other irregularities are repeated in Co-operatives.

COOPERATION





With a view to assess the gravity of corruption and subsequent remedial measures to be taken to solve the problem the Government appointed District level and State level monitoring committees. More than Rs.2000 crore was, so to say, looted from Co-operative Sector by resorting to various means of corrupt practices and it was matter of serious concern for the LDF Government to tackle with the issue. Inspections, enquiries etc as contemplated under Kerala Co-operative Act were taken up by the department and further follow up actions were also taken. Now the Government is proud to say that it could control financial irregularities and corruptions to a considerable extend.

In order to protect the funds and assets of the Co-operatives and to bring the culprits before law a Co-operative Vigilance Department headed by DIG of Police as State Vigilance Officer and three zonal offices with Superintendent of Police as Zonal Vigilance officers are constituted and they have started functioning. During the last two and half years this Government has been able to achieve great progress in all spheres of the co-operative sector. The welfare measures and such other programmes implemented through co-operatives are of paramount importance in the sense that it supplements the welfare programmes

undertaken by the State Government.

In order to meet the increasing credit needs of the members and to take up other welfare activities the first priority was given to increase the resources of the credit Co-operatives. In addition to the traditionally followed deposit mobilisation programmes of each year three more such programmes were successfully implemented with the supervision and guidance of Co-operative Department under Sahakarana Nikshepam Keraleeyam Programme. The result was so tremendous that about Rs.21000 crore were able to be mobilised raising the total deposit from Rs 20000 crores as on May 2006 to Rs 41000 crores as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008. Now the Credit Cooperatives have a strong financial base.

During the month of February 2007 and February 2008 intensive collection drive for recovery of long pending overdue loans were programmed. The debt ridden farmers and other borrowers were relieved of their long pending liabilities by introducing one time settlement scheme with many relief measures such as reduction in rate of interest, waiver of penal interest, notice charges

and other legal expenses. Altogether a relief of about Rs.3000 crore was provided and this was considered to be an effective measure to save the borrowers from their untold miseries and tendency to commit suicide due to the long pending financial liabilities. Apart from relieving the borrowers from their financial crisis the credit societies were also much benefited, as their funds held up for years together as bad debts were recovered without resorting to any legal steps.

More than 100 non-profitable Credit Co-operative societies could wipe off their losses and now they have turned profiteering.

Another important scheme introduced in the Consumer sector is the Sahakarana Vipananam Keraleeyam, which is a Land Mark in the history of Co-operative movement in Kerala. The distribution of essential commodities through a network of retail outlets of the Co-operatives with a reduced rate helped much to control the price hikes especially during the festival seasons. More than 22000 retail outlets were opened throughout the State. It is a



fact that big monopolies recently entered in the consumer sector were compelled to close their ventures at least in two or three cities in the State. Co-operatives have been in the forefront to protect the consumers from the exploitation of the private traders which endorses a strong message that co-operatives sector should be strengthened at any cost.

Considering the necessity and importance of energising the agricultural sector a series of relief measures were also declared by the Government. Interest on agriculture loans is considerably reduced by which benefit of about Rs.175 crore has been made available to the farmers. In addition to this One Time Settlement Scheme, the Government have written off the agricultural loans of farmers who committed suicide. Special packages in Wayanad, Kasaragode and Palakkad were implemented extending a further assistance of

more than Rs.389.38 crore. Further Government ordered to write off agricultural loans up to and including Rs.25000 availed by the farmers of Wayanad district amounting to Rs.39 crore. Another important decision taken by the Government was to restore the Government Order of moratorium on loan repayments once declared and subsequently cancelled by the UDF government without even reimbursing the interest eligible to the societies on implementing the said order. Considering the financial crisis experienced by the societies due to the compliance of the directions of the Government this Government examined the case in detail and sanctioned the eligible amount to the

societies which stood to the tune of Rs.51 crore. Now interest free loans are distributed through PACS for paddy cultivation and agricultural loans at the rate of seven per cent. If the loans are availed by SC/ST farmers a further reduction of two per cent is also allowed.

Recommendations submitted by the committee constituted for bringing suitable amendment to Kerala Co-operative Societies Act are under consideration which will be enacted at the earliest. The Government has proposed to reorganise the audit wing of the co-operative department in view of its importance in curbing corruptions and malpractices to ensure the effective functioning of the co-operatives. The relevant provision of the Kerala Co-operative Societies Act has been enforced for appointing the Director of Co-operative Audit and proposal for the reorganisation of audit wing and general administration are under consideration.

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Recently, the Government has declared a Risk Fund Scheme by which the borrowers from Co-operatives on joining the scheme before availing the loans will be relieved from their loan liabilities subject to a maximum of Rs. one lakh, in the event of their death within the period fixed for the repayment of their loan. The implementing authority is the co-operative welfare and development board.

Thus it is expected that the co-operative movement of Kerala can be fostered in a manner suitable for the overall development of the socio-economic and cultural life of the rural and urban population. ■



The path of welfare with distributive justice has been the tool to the social progress Kerala has achieved and maintained. The high development indices compared to the rest of the country had reached in par with developed nations. But the two sections of Kerala society remained as unlinked wagon in the track at the back end of this changes. They are the fishermen community and the Adivasis. Both these groups are in a sense “Ecosystem People” who directly depend on the natural resources for their livelihood. The social systems formed in and around these two communities and their ramifications are draining their means of the livelihood and income and they

# Saving from the net of troubles



FISHERIES

still remain at the back end of the social changes that happened in Kerala. It is a clear indication that even though there were concerted efforts earlier it did not give the desired results. During the last two and a half years, we are witnessing a major shift in the treatment of this issue and one can realise the changes that are happening. The treatment that brought in these changes can be broadly classified as follows:-

1. Bringing in new regulatory and legal supports
2. Improving the infrastructural support
3. Massive welfare supports
4. Improving peripheral supports
5. Effective risk coverage and mitigation support

### Change in approach

Instead of going for a piece meal and 'here and there' approach a well thought out Master Plan has been prepared for the development of the Fisheries Sector and decided to adopt an integrated development approach. This documented master plan now forms the reference point for the developments in the fisheries sector. Fisheries master plan has been formulated for the sustainable development of fisheries sector to increase the marine fish production from the present six lakh ton to 7.5 lakh ton by the end of the next five years and the inland fish production from 0.75 lakh ton to two lakh ton which is the basic livelihood support of fishermen.

### New Legislations

Kerala has witnessed three important legislations during this period. The Kerala Fishermen Debt Relief Commission Act, the Fishermen Welfare Cess Act and the Monsoon Pelagic Fishing Protection Act were enacted to address the critical issues in the Fisheries sector of Kerala. The Government had already announced to bring in the basic sectoral reform through Aquarim Reforms Act and Unified Inland and Aquaculture Act in the fisheries sector. Strong legislations like these are



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required to pluck out the parasites and to create a conducive environment to nurture the desired social changes.

### Developing coastal infrastructure

The prioritised developments in the coastal infrastructure are those very much essential for the sustenance of livelihood of Fishermen. Government has already completed the formalities for the formation of a Coastal Area Development Corporation, a special purpose vehicle

to pool financial resources and facilitate speedy implementation of coastal infrastructure. 12 fishing harbors and 25 new fish landing centres are under the process of construction. Improving the existing harbors to meet the international standards is also progressing.

In the fisheries sector, construction of 5214 houses has been taken up. There is also scheme for the rehabilitation of 11,000 fishermen families who are under the threat of rough sea and sea erosion at an estimated cost of more than Rs 325 crores under the Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme.

### Welfare measures

Last two and half years have witnessed implementation of massive welfare activities to Kerala fishermen and to the coastal people.

For the first time, total insurance coverage has been brought into the traditional fishing. The scheme is being implemented for providing insurance coverage to traditional fishing implements such as crafts and gears. The assured amount is 75 per cent of the agreed value of the fishing implement. Premium is 1.8 per cent of the agreed value. 25 per cent of the premium is met by the beneficiary and the remaining 75 per cent by the Government. About two lakh fishermen are benefited by this scheme.



## Move against debt trap

Among several other reasons, the debt trap is one of the major issues for fishermen's economic backwardness. Providing Working Capital support to release the community from the clutches of exploitation has been initiated. Three schemes to address this issue are already started with a total outlay of Rs.38 crores. "The Working Capital for Revolving Fund" project for fishermen and fisherwomen had already covered more than 26,000 families. The schemes envisaged to provide an impressive amount of Rs.6,000 and Rs.4,000 to active fishermen and fisherwomen. It also ensures a minimum wage support in the sector informally. Rs.13.68 crores is the total outlay of the project implemented by Matsyafed. First

livelihood is the primary requisite for social and economic well being. Considering the limiting factors for exploiting coastal marine fishery resources, there is a need to consider every possibility of alternate livelihoods. As part of the Tsunami Rehabilitation a massive livelihood support programme has been initiated and is progressing. Project assistance to the tune of 80-85 per cent of the overall worked out project expenses were provided as grant to the selected beneficiaries.

More than 1,000 Micro Enterprises will come up all along the coastal area. Apart from these special projects such as Sea food kitchen, Fish Kiosks, Dry Fish production units, Vehicle for Fresh Fish Marketing, Ornamental Fisheries, Mussel Farming and Supermarkets are

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phase of the project is getting completed in five districts viz., Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikkode. Similarly a revolving fund project for the peeling workers of Kerala is under implementation through the Matsya Board. 10,000 peeling workers will be supported with this working capital assistance.

The recently started interest free loan scheme will assist 40,000 Fisher women to avail an interest free loan of Rs.5,000 each with a pay back period of one year. Beyond the financial support all these projects have training component to bring in desired attitudinal changes. The social animators attached to these projects are keeping an eye on the course of the project.

Even though the legal support and infrastructural support for fishermen are put in place, ensuring a sustainable

gradually getting acceptance and attaining momentum in ensuring income to the coastal families.

Empowerment through involvement is the effect of this massive mobilisation. The training support has been designed to make the coastal people mentally prepare to new ventures. The skill development training, management and accounting trainings and exposure visits had brought in a behavioural and attitudinal change very much essential for the sustainability of the system.

## Peripheral supports

The fourth component, the peripheral supports basically help to check the leakage of the fruits of these measures from their hands. Kerala is in forefront among other states which extends welfare schemes to the fishermen. The schemes are designed





Rs.200 and it benefits 35,000 fishermen.

Matsya Neethi Stores and Theeramythri Super Markets are established with the aim of intervening in the distribution of essential commodities to fishermen at a regulated price.

### Safety at Sea

Fishing in the Sea is one of the most risky livelihoods. The tools of modern technology including space application and satellite supported technology will be brought in to save the life of fishermen at Sea. An integrated Sea Safety Programme namely “Kadal Suraksha” is under process of implementation with a total outlay of Rs.18.8 crores. This includes procurement of Rescue Boats, formation of Sea Rescue Squads and supply of Sea Safety Kits to fishermen. This kit include the Search and Rescue Beacon which help to transmit messages of distress with accuracy in time and location for early and targeted rescue operations. This is implemented with the help of ISRO, Keltron, Coast Guard, etc. Besides these, 50 numbers of Matsya Vigiana Kendras will start functioning

## Welfare schemes for fishermen

- Group Insurance Scheme
- Reimbursement of Medical Expenses
- Death while Fishing or Immediately thereafter not due to Accident
- Financial assistance for the marriage of daughters
- Oldage Pension Scheme
- Financial assistance for temporary disability due to accident.
- Financial assistance to the dependents for the death of fishermen
- S.S.L.C. cash award and Scholarship
- Family Welfare Scheme
- Financial assistance for treatment of fatal diseases
- Sanitation Scheme
- Maternity benefit scheme
- Fishermen’s Guidance Centre.
- Sreshta Matsyathozhilali Award
- Cash award for Higher Education
- Education support to Fishermen children.

in such a way that a fisherman may get the benefit of these schemes on each phase of his life. Special care has been taken to evolve schemes for the benefit of female fisherfolk and wives of fishermen. This includes timely short term intervention such as free ration during trawl ban period or the Savings cum Relief schemes provide financial assistance to fishermen during the lean seasons of fishing. Old age pension to fishermen and allied workers has been enhanced to



to provide vital information regarding sea conditions, climate changes, potential fishing zone details and general information regarding various activities of Department of Fisheries.

The welfare activities cannot withstand the test of time unless empowering the fishermen through attitudinal changes and stabilising the changes with appropriate linkages. These are very essential for the determined forward march towards welfare fisheries. ■

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The five thousand crore rupee scheme announced by Kerala Government in November 2008 for providing houses and land to all landless people can rightly claim to be one of the most ambitious project yet envisaged by any state government for the welfare and upliftment of the marginalised sections of the society.

The scheme that aims to provide houses for all people within the next two and half years is unique in many respects. Most importantly the scheme aims to provide not only land and housing but also the maximum possible arable land to the underprivileged sections of the society. In a state like Kerala where land is scarce, this is an audacious move.

As per the current estimates there are 1,33,000 shelterless scheduled caste families in the State of which 68,148 families are landless also. Each family would be given three to ten cents of land. Beneficiaries will be given Rs. 50,000 for the purchase of land. Rs.17,000 crore will be set apart for this. Among the scheduled tribes there are 35,000 homeless families.

The Government is planning to meet the land need by evicting the encroachments in government land and other available land with the Government. The land evicted in Munnar and elsewhere in the State will also be utilised for this purpose. Government also hopes to settle the land issues in different parts of the State through this process. Revenue Department will set apart Rs.300 crore for the purchase of land.

Forest dwelling tribes are being provided with land in the forest area. The process is likely to be completed by April this year. Remaining tribal families will be covered under the present package. Legislation is on the anvil to stop the transfer of land provided free of cost, from the original beneficiaries. A cabinet subcommittee with Chief minister as chairman and

Minister for Welfare of Scheduled and Backward communities and Revenue Minister as vice chairmen would oversee the implementation of the package. Thus five thousand crore comprehensive package is path breaking in every respects.

The Left Democratic Front Government that is completing its third year in power has already done commendable work in the health care

first time in class. The SC students in grades 1 to 7 studying in authorized unaided schools in pre metric level are also being provided with thousand rupees a year as tuition fees and one third of the amount as special fees.

In higher education sector also SC/ST students will be provided with complete fee reduction lumpsum grant and stipends per month for

# Welfare for the marginalised

**For the first time in the country, Kerala Government has launched a comprehensive free medicare and health insurance scheme covering the entire scheduled tribes in the State.**

sector. For the first time in the country, the State Government has launched a comprehensive free medicare and health insurance scheme covering the entire scheduled tribes in the state. Perhaps the most heartening aspect of the present government's policy is its realisation that rather than announcing new schemes the actual beneficiaries should be made aware of their rights. Investment in education thus occupies prime position in Government's agenda.

In Kerala, where school education is free, students belonging to SC/ST and other eligible sections are being provided with lump sum grants to the tune of Rs140-330 for buying study material, clothes etc. at the beginning of the academic year. 50 per cent of the above will be granted as lump sum grant to a student failing for the



higher education. This concession is available for all courses having government recognition. Educational facilities are made available in private boarding schools for students who pass 4th standard with high marks. Training will be provided for SC-ST candidates applying for posts in Government, semi government and public sector organizations in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Palakkad and Kozhikode.

In order to give intensive coaching for SC/ST candidates appearing in civil service examinations special coaching centres has also been established. Another notable achievement is that entire educational assistance is released to students in time and that the entire arrears are cleared. In the last two years stipend were released at the beginning of the academic year itself, and also four months in advance.

Another notable achievement is the constitution of the Kerala State Commission for scheduled Castes and tribes, as statutory commission to ensure and protect the rights conferred by the constitution. Kerala is the second state to constitute such a commission after Karnataka.

Thus the track record so far for the LDF government in the welfare sector is praiseworthy. ■

The writer is Assistant Editor, I&PRD



## Kerala

# shows the way

SCST



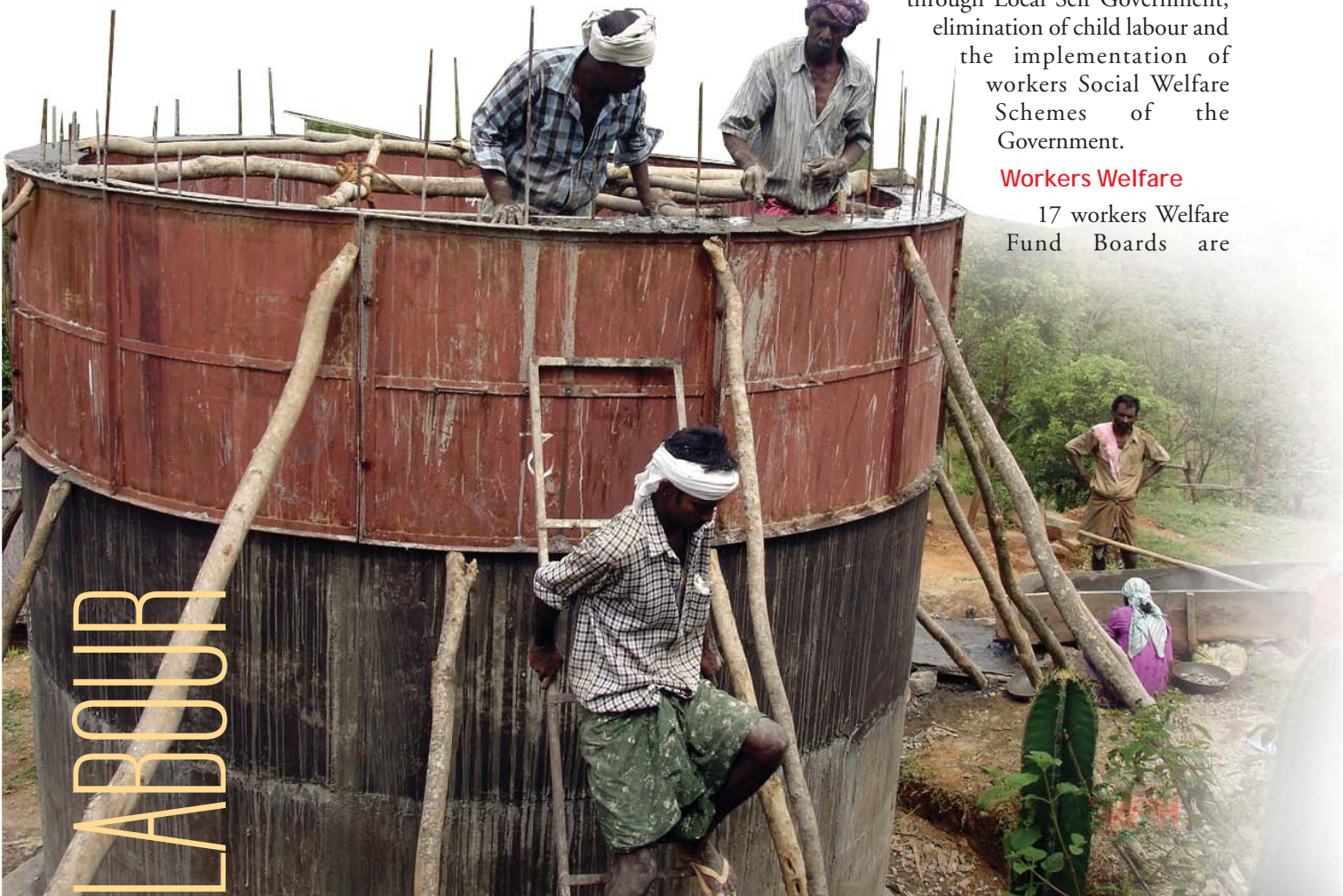
# Sweat now Sweet

Ensuring the enforcement of Labour laws, creating peaceful atmosphere in the Labour Sector, maintaining good relations between the employees and workers are the major objectives of the Labour Department. Other

functions include fixing and implementing of minimum wages for workers in various Labour Sectors, Registration of trade unions and inspection of yearly returns, assistance to tree climbers in case of accident, distribution of agricultural pension through Local Self Government, elimination of child labour and the implementation of workers Social Welfare Schemes of the Government.

## Workers Welfare

17 workers Welfare Fund Boards are



LABOUR

**It is the proclaimed policy of the LDF Government to bring all the workers in the state under the coverage of anyone of the welfare schemes. The Government enacted various legislations on priority basis to achieve the above goal.**

functioning under the Labour Department. The benefit given by each board is enormous.

### **Welfare Fund Boards and Legislations**

It is the proclaimed policy of the LDF Government to bring all the workers in the State under the coverage of anyone of the welfare schemes. The Government enacted various legislations on priority basis to achieve the above goal. Kerala Shops and Commercial Establishment Workers Welfare Fund Act and Kerala Small Plantation Workers Welfare Fund Act are two major achievements in this direction. About 10 lakhs workers in the Shops and Commercial Establishments will be benefited by the Shops and Commercial Establishment Workers Welfare Fund Scheme. About two lakhs small plantation workers who are not covered by the Plantation Labour Act will be benefited by the latter.

In order to make the Kerala Handloom Workers Welfare Fund Board more viable and to augment its financial basis the Kerala Handloom Workers Welfare Fund (Cess) Act has been passed by the Legislative Assembly. Due to the bye-laws applicable to certain handloom establishments there were handloom workers who had to retire from employment at the age of 58 years. In order to make eligible all the handloom workers in the State for pension the State Government amended Kerala Handloom Workers Welfare Fund Act by fixing the pension age at 58 years.

The previous Government had exempted several sectors from the purview of the Shops and Commercial Establishments Act. All those exemptions have been



withdrawn and the workers were brought under the coverage of the scheme.

There were no schemes to grant relief and to promote welfare activities to the Non -Resident Keralites. Having considered the matter in detail the Government decided to introduce a Welfare Fund Scheme to them. The Non Resident Keralites' Welfare Bill, 2008 has been passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly.

The rate of all the welfare pensions in the State has almost been doubled. Arrears in pension have been cleared totally. Such a situation is very rare in the history of Kerala.

The ex gratia given to the dependents of tree climbing workers who died in work site accidents has been enhanced considerably. In death cases the sum was raised to Rs.50000 from Rs.10000. Financial Assistance for permanent disability has also been enhanced to Rs.25,000.

### **Plantation Sector**

The plantation sector in Kerala was in severe crisis when the LDF Government assumed power in 2006.

22 major tea plantations were remaining closed. About 25000 workers in the tea sector were rendered jobless. A number of deaths / suicides were reported from among the jobless workers due to poverty and starvation. This grave situation was apparently the offspring of the import policy pursued by the Central Government.

Government of Kerala took several steps on war footing to alleviate the miseries of the workers. Plantation Relief Fund committees were constituted under the chairmanship of District Collector for rendering assistance to the poor workers. Funds were also provided for the various welfare activities. Rs.2.98 crores have been released for providing drinking water and electricity to plantation workers in Peerumedu.

Series of discussions were held at official and Minister's level with the owners of plantations for persuading them to reopen the estates. Several concessions were also given to the estate owners by way of exemption from remitting minimum demand





charges of electricity, plantation tax, agriculture income tax etc.

Simultaneously detailed proposals containing rehabilitation packages were submitted to Government of India for the revival of the tea industry. The State Government has succeeded in persuading the Central Government to announce Special Purpose Tea Fund and a revival package.

As a result of the continuous efforts of the State Government majority of the closed plantations were reopened and started functioning. The plantation sector is gradually retrieving to the good old days.

As a solace to the plantation workers their minimum wages have been revised by a tripartite settlement arrived in the PLC meeting. The earnest and tiresome efforts made by the State Government and the support given by the Central

Government finally gave a sigh of relief to the poor plantation workers.

### Agricultural Workers Pension

A scheme has been introduced for giving pension to agricultural labourers who have attained the age of 60 and having membership in the Kerala Agricultural workers Welfare Fund Board. The scheme is being implemented through the Local Self Governments. The pension amount was Rs.40 at the beginning (1980-81) and the amount raised to Rs.130 in 2007-08 and to Rs.200 in 2008-09. 25375 more persons were given Pension after the LDF Government came to power and the total beneficiaries as on 31-3-2008 is 5.40 lakh. In 2007-08 Rs.164.74 Crore has been spent under the scheme.

### Distress Relief

For providing help to the unorganised daily waged workers like manual workers, butchers, tree

cutters, milk suppliers Government is implementing daily waged employees distress relief scheme. The one time assistance given under the scheme is Rs.2000 per worker, through the district labour officer. Rs. five lakh has been earmarked for 2008-09.

Under the estate workers distress relief welfare scheme, workers in estates facing natural calamities, flood, communicable disease and acute poverty being given Rs.1000 each through the Inspector of plantations. Rs. one lakh has been allotted for 2008-09 for giving assistance to 100 workers.

### Exgratia / F.A to workers

Exgratia/Festival allowance is being given to workers of closed down cashew factories, public sector undertakings, private sector factories, closed estates, newly opened estates and non functioning coir society's. An amount of 2, 04,22,800 sanctioned to 32613 workers in 2008-09.



Labour department is the nodal department for enforcing the enactments related to child labour. As per provisions under the child labour (prohibition and Regulation) 1986 Act, employment of children is prohibited in the 15 hazardous occupations.

### Minimum wages

Of the 80 employments included in the schedule of employment under the minimum wages Act 1947, minimum wages fixed in 41 employments. Minimum wages committees have been constituted in sales promotion in Pharmaceuticals, Khadi, Handloom, Toddy tapping, Shops & Commercial establishments, private hospitals and printing press sectors. After the LDF Government came to power minimum wages have been revised in cashew, hill produce, light motor vehicles, oil palm, plantation, timber/plywood and ayurvedic/allopathic medicine sectors. Constituting committee for fixation of minimum wages in the sectors of computer software, Petrol Pump employees, and workers engaged in homes, diamond cutting/polishing employees, employment in security service, Handicraft, Tele film, film distribution companies has been recommended to the Government.

Preliminary notification has been forwarded to the Government in respect of workers in jewellery manufacturing sector.

### Industrial Relations

Eight Industrial Relations Committees namely cashew, coir, motor transport, textile, plantation, toddy tapping, Kuttanad and working journalists have been constituted.

### Child Labour

Engagement of child for employment and depriving chances for education is an infringement of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution of India. This is also a violation of the rights of the child envisaged under the UN, rights of the child.

Labour department is the nodal department for enforcing the enactments related to child labour. As per provisions under the child labour (prohibition and Regulation) 1986 Act, employment of children is prohibited in the 15 hazardous occupations. The Act prohibiting employment of children below the age of 14. The Act also describes the conditions for engaging children in dangerous employment under the age group 14-18. The Act prohibits the employment of children under the age of 18 in dangerous occupations listed in the Act.

Child labour is not an acute problem in the State. But the department is committed to eliminate any form of it.

It is roughly

estimated that child labour in the State does not cross more than one thousand in selected employments & Industries like Auto engineering, Hotel & Restaurant, Ornament making, construction-brick manufacturing, domestic services, rag picking and beggary etc. No child labour exists in the organised industries and plantations in the State.

A five year State action plan has been formulated for eradicating the child labour to make the State child labour free zone with the involvement of other department and NGO's.

Vigorous enforcement activities helped to reduce the child employment rate further. Till very recently, the activities against the elimination of child labour confined to the enforcement of the child labour (prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986. Now the action has been extended to other areas of child engagement like rag picking, beggary, domestic work etc. One State squad and three regional squads have been formed and conducting special drives in institutions. State level core committee and monitoring committee and district level Child Labour Rehabilitation-cum-welfare Societies have been formed for rehabilitation and education of children engaged in dangerous occupations. Employers engaging children in hazardous labours have to pay a fine of Rs.20,000 - towards Society's fund.

The enforcement wing of the department is implementing about 19 laws for workers Welfare. For this special inspections and raids are being conducted. Registration of contract workers and awareness for inter State migrant workers were undertaken as part of enforcement activities. ■

Courtesy: R. Sakthikumar, Publicity Officer, Labour Department





The Constitution of India has given special provisions for the upliftment of the minorities. But it remains a fact that there is no considerable progress in the social condition of a large section even after five decades since the adoption of Indian Constitution. Kerala is one of the few states, which stands as an exception. The social reform movements and the influence of the Left movements were the major factors that contributed much for the minority.

In India there are 13.8 crore Muslims. The Sachar Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India has made available the information required for planning, formulating and implementing specific policies and programmes to address issues relating to the backwardness of the community.

Immediately after the publication of the Sachar Report, Kerala went on with its implementation. On October 15, 2007, an eleven-member

committee headed by LSG Minister Paloli Mohammed Kutty was appointed. The Paloli Committee has put forward 10 suggestions that require most urgent action. The State Government has taken steps to implement five of them in this financial year itself and Rs.10 crore was earmarked in the budget. The notable one was the formation of a Special Department for the welfare of the minority.

On the basis of the suggestions of the Paloli Committee, two special projects are implemented for the educational progress of the Muslim women. The first one is to provide scholarship to Muslim girls for higher education and the second is to give stipend to the students staying in hostels. 5200 applications for scholarship and 1200 applications for stipend were received by the government so far.

The Government plans to give scholarship for 5000 girls doing graduation, post graduation or

# Moves from the margin

WELFARE



**The State Government has appointed an eleven-member committee headed by Paloli Muhammed Kutty, Minister for Local Self Government Institutions on October 15, 2007 to recommend suggestions that require most urgent action.**

professional courses. The monthly scholarship will be Rs 3000 for graduation, Rs 4000 for Post Graduation and Rs 5000 for professional courses. It will be issued till the end of the course.

Muslim girls who stay in hostels for studying will be given an amount of Rs.10, 000 a year.

Pension as well as welfare fund is being implemented for nearly half lakh Madrasa teachers from this January. Welfare fund and pension scheme having insurance coverage is unprecedented in the State. The project will be implemented in collaboration with the insurance companies in the public sector. Contribution to the welfare fund will be collected from the monthly donation of the Wakf Board and the monthly contribution of the madrasa or the mosque committee who appoint the teachers enrolling the welfare fund. The reserve fund and the amount needed for initial activities will be provided by the Government as grant and Rs.one crore has already been granted this year.

The minimum duration required for the right to pension is 10 years. If a member retires or dies before that, an amount will be given from the project as relief. Ensuring career security and oldage pension, radical

changes have been brought in their lives. The Welfare Fund Office has started functioning at the Wakf Board headquarters in Ernakulam. The pension scheme is envisaged to implement using contributions from employees, employers, Wakf Board and grant from the Government. The pension amount will be calculated on the basis of their individual contribution and their working period.

In addition to this, Career Training Programme Centre will be started enabling the educated Muslim boys to find out suitable jobs without delay. Five such centres - Thiruvanantha puram, Ernakulam, Malappuram, Kozhikkode and a place between Kannur and Kasargode - will be started this year. These centres aim at improving the morale of the educated Muslim youth taking part in competitive examinations.

After the LDF assumed power in Kerala, numerous policies were executed towards the welfare of the Muslim community. The most important of them is the transparency in Haj pilgrimage.

The Kerala Government and the State Haj Committee continue to press the demand to distribute the quota in proportion to the number of applications received from various states and to end the practice of giving quota to private tour operators.

The LDF Government is doing a commendable job in providing facilities for the Haj pilgrims every year. The Haj camp conducted at Karipur in 2006 is an example. In 2007 and 2008 Haj camps were conducted in a better way than the previous years.

The concept of Haj House in Kerala has been a dream for the last 10 years. Though this effort was declared during the former UDF Government, no practical actions were taken. When this Government assumed power, the construction of the Haj house was given foremost importance. It provided financial help, obtained the right to collect contributions from the Haj pilgrims,



# Suggestions by Paloli Committee for quick action

1. To form a department for the welfare of the minority community in the state. Co-ordinating similar things existing in various departments to this department. Starting its district level administrative centre as well. As a part of this a minority cell was formed in the secretariat in May 2008.

2. Before forming a department in connection with the urgent actions adopted for solving the backwardness of the Muslims, a minority welfare cell be formed in the state secretariat.

3. Provide Pension and Welfare fund to the Madrasa teachers. The govt. should give one crore rupees as grant for the initial functions of the cell. Also the govt. should give one crore rupees per year as grant for continual functions.

4. The suggestions in the Sachar committee report should be executed as quickly

as the SC/ST project implementation.

5. The minority package should be effected soon in districts like Kannur, Kozhikkode, Malappuram, Palakkad, Ernakulam, Kollam and Alappuzha. Actions needed for this be implemented on consultation with the central govt.

6. Urgent consideration be given to the matter of scholarship for muslim girls. Required amount be sanctioned.

7. Urgent consideration be given to the matters in connection with educational institutions.

8. On question related with the loss in reservation discussion with the person concerned and functions of the community be started immediately. Quick steps be taken for temporary appointments.

9. Quick steps be taken for including communities like dakhni, Kachi, Memen etc. in the reservation category.

10. Special programme be formed to solve the backwardness of the muslims in the coastal as well as mountainous regions.



The Kerala Wakf Board was designated to look after the welfare activities of the Muslim communities in Kerala. The Wakf board which is functioning now is in accordance with the Wakf law framed in 1996 based on the central Wakf act of 1995.



and took necessary steps to ensure the contribution from the Central Haj Committee. The four storied 62,000 square feet building with all the modern amenities was constructed within six months spending Rs. seven crore. It was handed over to the Kerala Haj pilgrims by the Chief Minister on November 5, 2007. Thus the long cherished dream of the Muslims in Kerala was materialised.

The most important thing about the minority communities is related to Wakf. The Kerala Wakf Board was designated to look after the welfare activities of the Muslim communities in Kerala. The Wakf Board was established as per the Wakf Law framed in 1996 based on the Central Wakf Act, 1995. The main responsibility of the Wakf Board is to look after and maintain the Wakf institutions and properties.

The Paloli Committee also examined the problems of the fishing community and recommended that steps be taken to solve the problems of people belonging to that field also. ■



It is my pleasure to inaugurate the seminar, 'Free Software, Free Society'. The international seminar, aiming at to protect the practising freedom in computing, development and culture, and to accomplish more freedom, starts here today.

Neo colonial powers have recognised that there is no need to overpower anybody by fighting daring forests and hills. Instead, just seize a generation's knowledge, efficacy and power to think. Succumbing to this tactics is propagated as the real development. The more obedient you are, the more development savvy you will be! Their way is to destroy any kind of resistance by labelling it as anti developmental.

The lines of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore,

"Where the mind is without fear  
and the head is held high;  
Where knowledge is free;  
Into that heaven of freedom,  
my Father, let my country  
awake."

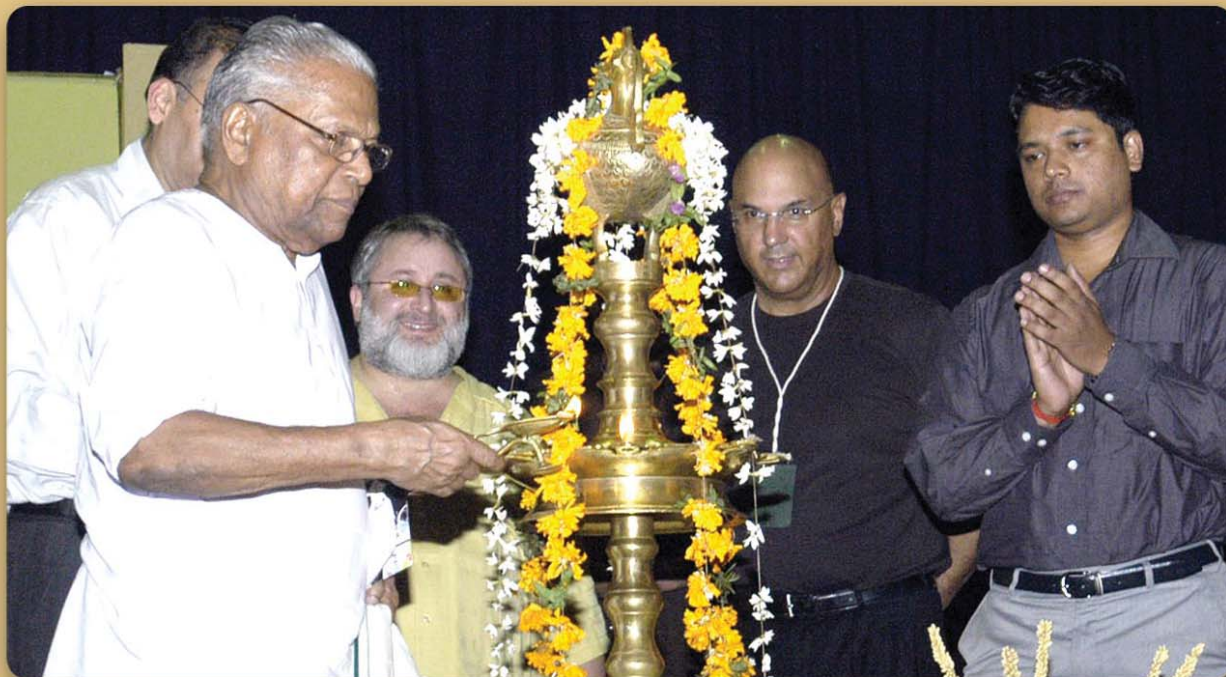
is the heritage of our land  
too. The knowledge chant  
that

"Robbers can not  
steal away,

# Free Soft Explore the possibility

The inaugural speech of Chief Minister  
V.S. Achuthanandan at the International  
Seminar on Free Software Free Society in Kochi.





**Our IT Policy targets a knowledge society, which accommodates everyone. This government is trying to bring the sidelined people to the mainstream. The project 'Insight', intended to enable the blind to use computer with ease, is an evident for that.**

Increase by giving away,  
Brings honour even after death,  
Education is the greatest wealth.”

is what we learnt by reciting and practised. But the endurance and success of free software is the answer to those who argue that new developmental mantra is what suited for the new world order and they try to marketise all human values.

It is for the same reason that the State Government has given great importance to free software in its IT Policy. We have made it clear that in all fields where public fund is spent, we will support Open Standards. We will try to propagate this idea even by joining hands with other countries. To head this move, an international study centre will be started in Thiruvananthapuram this month itself. This institution will have the patronage of eminent figures like

Richard Stallman. Similarly, a training centre will be initiated in Ernakulam jointly by C-Dit and Kerala State IT Mission to give expert training in free software. Ensuring trained human resource is the aim of this centre.

This seminar would be beneficial to make the world aware of the unlimited possibilities of free software to the world. Now the businesses going on here do live telecast through internet. That means any one at anywhere in the world can watch directly the programmes going on here. It is the first time in Kerala that the possibility of spreading knowledge is used in such a conference.

Our IT Policy targets a knowledge society, which accommodates everyone. This Government is trying to bring the sidelined people to the mainstream. The project 'Insight', intended to enable the blind to use

computer with ease, is an evident for that. I have talked to them directly during their training period. The information that tribal brothers of Goodallur and the fisheries people of Vizhinjam present papers in this seminar is worth gratifying. Every technology becomes fruitful only when they serve for such social change. That is why this Government gives priority to Malayalam computing.

Representatives from different countries are present here. The Government is willing to work in cooperation with those who are interested in engaging such activities with long term cooperation. It is expected that these kinds of seminars will become the platforms for this.

It is idiocy to argue that our society and its values should change according to technology and its market possibilities. Technology is for human being. Not the reverse. Wishing that this seminar may give inspiration to go ahead by holding tight the tradition and value of us and by using modern technology with the vision of a knowledge society which include everybody, let me remain.

Thanks and good bye. ■

## Lobster Korma

Lobster meat - 450 gms, Coconut milk - half cup, Cardamom - 3 Nos.  
Greenchilli - 4 Nos., Sliced and boiled Onion - 4 Nos., Oil - one tablespoon  
Coriander leaf - one teaspoon, Cinnamon - one inch stick, Pepper powder and salt - to taste

Heat a vessel and pour oil in it. Heat 10-15 minutes. Add cardamom, boiled onion, green chillies and stir. Grind this. Add lobster meat, salt, pepper powder and enough water and cook. Pour coconut milk and off the burner. Garnish with coriander leaf, onion slices and green chillies.



## Shrimp-vegetable Curry

Cleaned, shelled shrimp - one cup, Potatoes - 5 Nos. (halved lengthwise and cut across in 1/8 inches thick slices), Onions - 2Nos. (halved lengthwise and then sliced fine) turmeric paste - half tablespoon, chilli paste - one teaspoon, slit green chillies - 4 Nos., oil - two tablespoons

Heat oil in a frying pan. Add the sliced potatoes. Stir and fry until potatoes begin to change colour. Add sliced onions, turmeric and chilli pastes. Stir well and fry for five to seven minutes. Add half cup water to the contents of the pan and allow to simmer, stirring occasionally. Add green chillies and salt to taste. When the water is completely absorbed and the potatoes nearly cooled, add the shrimps. Stir and fry until shrimps are done.



## Varaal and Kokum Curry

Varaal fish - 8 to 10 Nos., turmeric - half teaspoon, chilli paste - half teaspoon mustard paste - two tablespoon, mustard seeds - 1/4 tablespoon, coconut oil - four tablespoon, kokum - 2-3 Nos., water - three cups, salt to taste, green chillies, slit - 4 to 5 Nos.

Add one cup water and the kokum in a bowl and leave for ten minutes. Then add to a mud pan. In another pan, add turmeric, chilli and mustard paste in two cups of water. Heat oil in a frying pan and when hot, add mustard seeds. Cook till seeds stop spluttering. Add the pieces of fish very carefully. Fry fish for a 2 minutes shaking the frying pan so that the fish doesnot stick to the bottom. Add the turmeric-mustard paste mixture to this. Boil in a mud pan. Add salt and green chillies. Simmer for 20 minutes. Off the fire.

## Crab Curry

Crab - 6 Nos., dry coconut cut into half chopped, Big onions - 2 Nos., red chilli powder- 2 teaspoon, cumin seeds - one teaspoon, garlic cloves - 6 Nos., ginger - one inch piece, cloves- 4 to 6 Nos., pepper corns - 5 Nos., cardamom- 6 seeds, green chillies- 2 Nos., coriander seeds- one tablespoon, salt to taste, oil - 4 tablespoon, coriander leave - one tablespoon, mustard seeds - one teaspoon, mustard powder-one teaspoon, lime juice one teaspoon



Clean the crab and cut into pieces. Grind dry coconut, one onion, red chilli, cumin, ginger, garlic, cardamom, pepper, coriander leaves and

coriander seeds to form a paste. Add cloves. Heat oil in a vessel and add mustard seeds, chopped onion and green chilli. Fry for a minute, add ground masala and fry till its oil separates, add mustard powder, red chilli powder, salt and limejuice. Add crab pieces. Mix well. Add half cup of water and cook.

## Naadan Konchu Curry

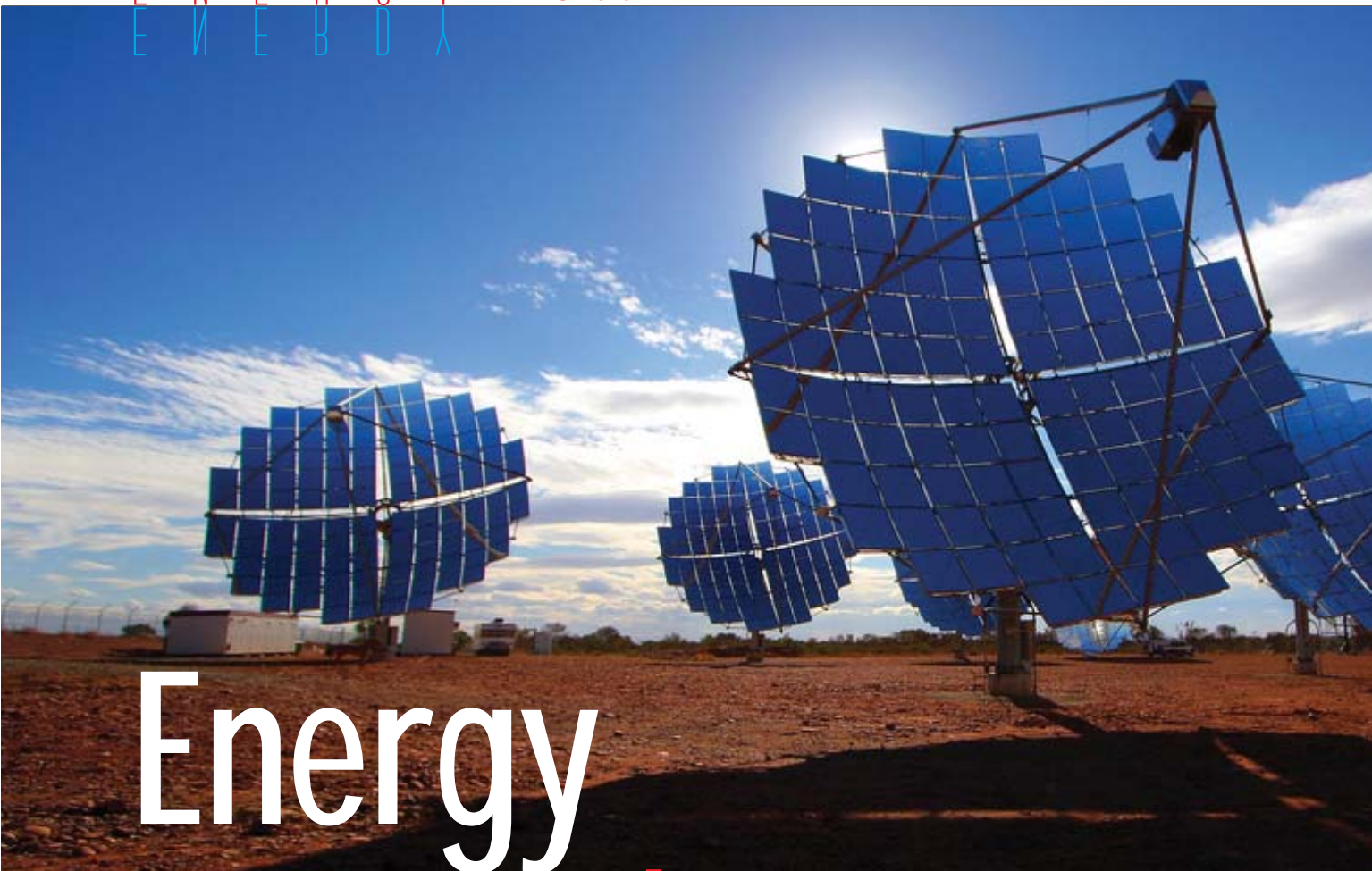
Prawns (Konchu) - 250 gms  
Onion - 2 Nos.  
Turmeric powder - half teaspoon  
Chilli powder - 1/4 teaspoon  
Coriander powder - 1/4 teaspoon

Tomato - 2Nos.  
Crated coconut - 2 cups  
Salt to taste  
Oil for frying  
Cloves - 2 Nos.

Cinnamon - a small piece  
Clean prawns, apply turmeric and salt and marinate for ten minutes.

Grind onions, coconut, all the powders and garam masals to a paste. Heat oil and fry prawns till brown. Remove and keep aside. Add cumin seeds to the same oil and onion fry till brown in colour, add chilli powder and chopped tomatoes, salt and ground masala and fry for a few minutes and add fried prawns to it, bring to a boil.





# Energy won't be easy

One lesson we have to learn from nature is that all sustainable systems are cyclical in character. Whether it is water or oxygen or carbon or other essential elements, we see that what ever is taken from the soil or air is put back into it, sooner or later. Life is a fall out of the process of circulation of these elements.

The only exception is energy. As we studied in school, energy can not be created or destroyed. It is changed from one form to another. It is also transferred from one body to another. The source of all the energy that reaches the Earth, is the Sun. All the forms of energy that we see on the Earth, with a few notable exceptions, are derived from the Sun, either

recently or in the remote past. The major source of energy that we use is the fossil fuels, mainly coal, oil and gas. They are abundant, yet finite. And their stock is running out. Considering the current rates of extraction, and given the escalation in this rate, it is presumed that we will run out of oil in about forty years and gas in another twenty years. Coal might last a couple of centuries more. But we also know that when we burn these fossil fuels, we release millions of tons of carbon which had been tied up in them, into the atmosphere, in the form of carbon dioxide. This has been going on for a couple of centuries now, and already the percentage of carbon dioxide in the

atmosphere has gone up by 50%. The resulting green house effect is sure to raise the average atmospheric temperature by several degrees in the coming decades. The impacts of such a Global Warming have been debated for some time now, and there have been some disputes about it. However, there seems to be a general consensus that Climate Change is a fact and not some Cassandra crying wolf. It is also agreed that its consequences will be generally unpleasant, and will adversely affect many countries. Food production will be seriously affected, habitats will be lost due to flooding, Mosquitoes and vector borne diseases will multiply uncontrollably, and much of the



Electricity generation is, of course, the major energy sector. Here the importance of Renewable Energy Sources has been well recognised and given ample lip sympathy. We are still hiding behind the excuse of "high costs" thereby allowing the market to dictate policy.

infrastructure built up along low lying coastal belt will be lost. Thus it becomes imperative that urgent steps to be taken to reverse the present trend of increasing rate of fossil fuel burning.

It is a fact that developed countries like the USA, EU, Japan, etc are responsible for the bulk of the emission of carbon dioxide and other so-called green house gases. But we have to realise that India and China

are also major culprits, but our per capita figure is very low because we have a huge population and the vast majority of this 'billion plus' population never uses any fossil fuel at all. They make do with non-commercial fuels like cow dung, agricultural residue or dry leaves and twigs for cooking their daily gruel, which is all the energy they get to use. They do not use any cars or trains or even buses, but depend on bullock carts for transporting their goods from their fields to the markets. But when the per capita figures are calculated, it is their presence in the denominator which saves us from sure embarrassment in international fora.

So, when it comes to a redistribution of energy the first task is to ensure that the poorest sections get adequate energy for their daily requirements of cooking, lighting, agriculture, transportation and other needs. Again, if the decision on what fuels are to be used for what purpose, is to be left entirely to the market, it is not likely to improve the situation any. There has to be a conscious policy initiative on the part of the government, with the support of the people, so that the progressive measures contemplated can be implemented with the support of the people.

For example, one area of fast increasing fuel use is transportation. Consciously or unconsciously, we are emulating the US model of transportation development, based on increased use of private transport vehicles. The EU also has a good many automobiles, but they have made it a point to retain their very efficient public transport systems. Unfortunately in India, our developments in the public transport sector have not been any where near as spectacular as the revolutionary transformation which took place in the private automobile sector. This has to be reversed. Doubling of railway lines, electrification, starting of frequent passenger train services for short distance commuters, improving the bus and water transport systems,

will all be important elements of this alternate policy frame work. Switching over from petrol / diesel based vehicles to electric vehicles will have to be another crucial element of an eco friendly scenario.

Electricity generation is, of course, the major energy sector. Here the importance of Renewable Energy Sources has been well recognised and given ample lip sympathy. But not enough is being done in the field. We are still hiding behind the excuse of "high costs" thereby allowing the market to dictate policy. Arguably, there is no need to support with tax money the conspicuous consumption of the filthy rich, through subsidised solar panels. But the use of solar energy for lighting remote hamlets and isolated habitats can and should certainly be subsidised. And the finance required for this ought to be raised by imposing a "carbon tax" on fossil fuel uses, as is being done in several developed countries. Similarly the road blocks which prevent the speedy exploitation of wind and micro hydel resources, should be removed post haste. Much of the impediment is due to an antiquated mind set, which fails to perceive the "Win – Win" scenario, resulting from private investments in these fields.



In the mean time, our scientific and technical community has to awaken to the task of preparing for the imminent breakthroughs in solar technology, which are bound to come soon, so that we can benefit from them without undue delay. Information collection, Systems studies and Policy research ought to receive the highest priority. ■



# Agri-trade Strategy needed

**A**griculture in the past and in the near future will remain a domineering influence on the Indian economy. The sensitivity of aggregate growth of the economy to the fluctuations in growth trends of agricultural sector is undisputable. The following facts indicate how agriculture in our economy is strategically significant, both as a survival to it and a feeder line for further growth.

- Agriculture sector provides cereals and non-cereal eatables to feed the world second largest population.
- In the total National Income of India, agricultural sector contributes 18.5 percent.
- About 65 percent of total working population is engaged in agriculture.
- The contribution of agriculture sector in the total export earnings is around 14.7 percent.
- Agriculture provides raw material to various types of industries.

The aforesaid observations are indicative of the reality that performance of agricultural production and productivity directly and indirectly affect the overall economic performance of the economy. The present article is an

attempt to examine at least partially, the case study of agro processing industries, keeping in view the preceding observations.

The decade of 1990's witnessed two very significant developments that have profound impact on India's agriculture trade. The first phase of development relates to liberalization of economic policy and second relates to formation of WTO in 1995. Liberalization has provided an opportunity to take advantage of rising international prices which were well above the domestic prices. However, after the operationalisation of WTO in the year 1995, international price of agricultural commodities have dropped to a very low level and Indian agricultural goods prices in domestic market turned higher than international prices. This rendered Indian market attractive for import of several agricultural commodities. WTO is aimed at free and fair trade. But compared to pre-WTO period developed countries have increased tariffs and started providing huge domestic subsidies to their farmers under "Green Box", and "Blue Box" classes of the WTO. For these reasons, the competitiveness of developing countries like India has declined

considerably in world agricultural trade. For instance value of India's agricultural exports have declined from \$6.8 billion in 1996-97 to \$5.6 billion in 1999-2000.

The investment agriculture has come down from 1.6 percent of GDP in 1993-97 to 1.3 percent of GDP in 2000-01. The farmers are trapped in to debts on account of increasing cost of production and also unremunerative prices. It is sociologically manifested in a large number of suicides committed by them in different parts of the economy.

Due to recent changes in global market, agricultural exports of India witness large fluctuations. This is a matter of great concern. India's agricultural export was valued around \$3.2 billion during 1990-91 to 1992-93 increased to \$6.8 billion in 1996-97. The tempo of growth in agricultural export was short lived and could not be sustained after 1996-97. Agricultural export declined to \$5.6 billion during 1999-2000 and 5.9 billion during 2001-02 compared to 6.8 billion in 96-97. However there is improvement in the year 2000-01 & 2002-03. India's agricultural export during 2000-01 & 2002-03 was \$6 billion & \$6.4 billion respectively. Like other developing countries, India also expected that its agricultural export would increase during the post WTO period. However, realisations were not in compliance with the bench mark.

The percentage share of India's agricultural export to total export has been declining continuously. India's agriculture export share to total export was 16.5 percent in 1992-93 increased to 18.6 percent in 1994-95, 20.5 percent in 1996-97, declined to 13.55 percent in 2000-01 & 12.28 percent in 2002-03.

The Competitiveness of India's agricultural export has suffered because of a huge subsidies extended to the farmers by developed nation in order to protect them from international competition. The declining of India's agricultural export

is a great challenge to the country. India is still an agrarian country and its comparative advantage lies in agriculture sector. In this juncture setting up of agro processing industries provides a vent to release resources created by international trade and assumes great significance.

### Option for agricultural development

Trade liberalisation offers great scope for the development of agro processing industries. The growth of agro processing industries provides crucial farm- industry linkages, which help to accelerate agriculture development by creating backward linkage ie, supply of credit inputs and other production enhancement

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services and forward linkages ie, processing and marketing adding values to the farmers produce, generating employment opportunities and increasing the farmers net income. Agro industries generate new demand on the farm sector for more and different agricultural outputs which are more suitable for processing. Thus, processing industries can lead to new crop and livestock opportunities to the farmers and increase exports.

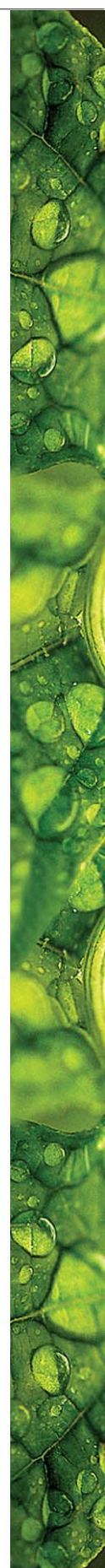
Agro processing activity refers to

commercial agri support activities. The agricultural system can be divided in to several sub-systems such as agricultural production sub-system, agricultural supply sub-system, agricultural processing sub-system and agricultural distribution sub-system. Agro processing which includes food processing activities constitutes the subject matter of agricultural processing sub-system.

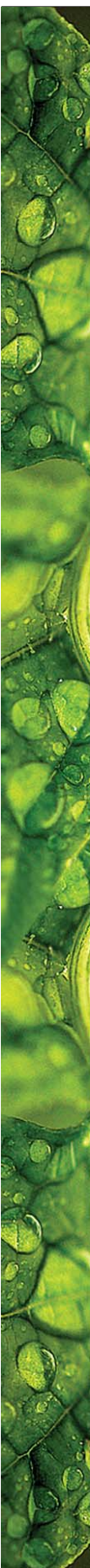
### Structure and growth of food processing industries

During the recent years the food processing industry has become one of the most important industries in India in terms of its contribution income, employment and foreign exchange earnings. There are over 275000 processing units, consisting of all the four types both small and large scale in India. The green Revolution relating to increased production of food grains, the white revolution to milk and blue revolution to fish and other marine food products have given major boost to the food processing sector. The estimated size of Indian food processing industry is of the order of Rs.2,50,000 crores in the four types of processing industries . A large number of tea biscuits, oils of processing units have assets worth Rs.1,25,000/- crore. There is also a medium sized production valued at Rs.3500/- crores. Fruits and vegetables, noodles and various types of snacks valued at Rs.1500/- crores. India's food processing industry ranks fifth in the country in terms of value addition (Southern Economists vol.40, No.18). Also India is the world's second largest producer of fruits and vegetables with an annual production of around 50 million tones of fruits and 70 million tones of vegetables. Only two percent of the total fruits and vegetables produced in the country are processed as against 40 percent in other developing countries put together and 70 percent in the developed countries.

The development of food processing industry would result in enhanced income for farmers apart







from value addition for farm produce. It is calculated that the rate of return in these units is greater than one. It is estimated that for every investment of Rs.10,000/ million the sector could generate employment for 54,000 people. Food processing industries lack diversification mainly because of the lack of diversification in agriculture and partly due to factors like lack of urbanisation and technological sluggishness.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

The growth of agro processing industries will be immense benefits to the country, by raising the agricultural yields creating employment and raising the standard of large number of people in the country especially in rural areas. This sector has tremendous potential for the development of a wide spectrum of industries based on agriculture produce rural skills. The agro processing industry is also very important from the point of view of earning the much needed foreign exchange.

We must take a greater advantage of trade generated growth by properly negotiating under WTO regime but at the same time, the domestic reforms have also to be confronted in order to avoid the probable welfare loss to the masses. Well preparedness for the negotiations is an essential component and if fail on that we will miss the advantage of international trade. The strong bargaining power is possible only if developing countries like India form a strong and unbreakable association that can function as a cartel. The agenda which is frequently discussed by SAARC shall have to be rigorously pursued and put it in place. India must as well exert pressure on developed nations to remove the unilateral subsidies on their agriculture sector, which are very much affecting the competitiveness of India's export by making the playing field all the more uneven. ■

The writer is Research Scholar in Economics, Kerala University, Thiruvananthapuram

# Let THE WINDOWS open

**P**ast forty, is time to retrospect? Our house, a very ordinary middle class tiled ancestral house with lush green paddy fields as its boundaries had a window seat, which every member of the family occupied round the clock. At dawn, when the infant rays of sun took its first steps on the green tips of paddy plants, I watched from the window seat the amazing golden tint emerging at its slightest touch. My mother, who was a schoolteacher, had to literally drag me from my window seat. She had very little time to waste watching birds, she told me. My grandmother, as if in a musical chair game, would rush with her pan masala to occupy the seat to watch the growing sunlight. Occasionally she got hold of a hapless passer-by to share a topic of common interest. Grandmother enjoyed every minute of her stay in that seat. But she was forced to vacate the seat when my father entered with his cup of tea and daily Newspaper. The cold breeze, the fresh scent of flowers, the chatter of birds and the occasional passers-by added colour to the stay at the window seat. When others leave for

school and office, my aunt relaxed with her breakfast sitting there. Sometimes on weekends, my mother occupied the seat either to cut vegetables or sew a buttonhole. Being an employed woman she had little time for leisure. Due to his failing eyesight my grandfather had a torrid time keeping pace with topical news. He occupied the window seat after having an early lunch to read his party's newspaper. He often plunged to deep slumber with newspaper on his lap at the very window seat. It all happened a few decades ago. Within a whisker our lives had changed dramatically.

When we planned to construct a house of our own, we searched for a plot with paddy fields in the neighborhood. The person we entrusted with to launch this plot hunt laughed at me and thought I was unrealistic. At last we settled for a plot in a residential area. We built a house with more windows than a house ever had. We share our golden moments occupying the window seats discussing topics as varied as price rise and election of Barak Obama, the





next US President.

I often wonder every time I walk past a house in our colony why the windows are always kept closed these days. Where are those faces that used to peep through these windows eager to catch a glimpse of the world outside? The women, the children, the aged.... May be they are still there-glued to a television set or a computer monitor or lying down on a bed. Last week residents of our colony heard about a theft in broad daylight. The home nurse roped in by the children to look after their aged mother turned out to be a habitual offender. She left the house in the middle of the day with her seasoned friends much richer than she ever was. The family made no complaints. They were more eager

to guard the secret of their mother's mental instability than losing a few grams of gold. What if, the windows were kept open, and her cry for help reached the people next door? Of course, they too should keep their windows open. How long the hotlines, web cameras, the SMS will satisfy the elders' zest for sharing their joys and woes with people they loved?

They need windows –windows through which they can peep into the minds of the people they care for, to share with them a simple worry, a piece of truth, a longing left unfulfilled.

You grieved on reading the story of three little girls who committed suicide inside a classroom. Where were their parents? Didn't they have

mothers who suffered the pain of birth to bring them to the earth? They did not even know their children had mobile phones. In fact the children were communicating with the outside world. I wish parents had more windows inside their minds through which they could sense the heartbeats of their children.

A New Year resolution? Let the windows of inter personal and intra personal communication break open and people start sharing their feelings. Life will be a lot easier than ever it was. Our children will start to trust us a bit more, our women more safe and elders safer.

A very happy New Year! ■

The writer is Assistant Director, Doordarshan.



Entering a new year always brings in hope. When we talk about Indian youth in the coming year this becomes more and more true. We should admit that India's resurgence potential as an economic and a socially responsible power rests on the Indian youth. Statistics like 72 per cent of India's population is below the age of 40, 47 per cent of Indians is under the age of 20 and 10 per cent of the world population is an Indian under 25 is a common assessment of India by all countries now. It is this population of young people which constitutes, for India, a potential demographic dividend.

This predominance of youth in the population is expected to last until 2050. "If not me, then who? If not now, then when?" are lines that can describe the nature of the youth in India, who surely will pave the direction of the nation in the years to come, a direction that will make every Indian proud of their nation. In the post 26/11 attack days we saw Indian youth uniting hands to fight terror and even to criticise unscrupulous politicians. In 2008 we saw youngsters of Indian origin shining on stages around the world - Abhinav Bindra, Saina Nehwal, Tayyiba Dudhwala and Aravind Adiga to name a few. All these show that our youth have the positive energy to act but we should channelise the same for the development of the country and not to divide the country.

In a new global survey conducted by Swedish research and consulting firm, Kairos Future, it was found that the priorities of Indian youth are - work, good career and a position with high status. They are the world's happiest lot with career being their top priority. The young middle-class Indians are much more satisfied with all aspects of their lives compared to other

nationalities. "Indian youth are also strikingly more optimistic about their future and also about the future of the society. The general picture in other countries is that young people tend to be personal optimists but societal pessimists," the study revealed.

But what the youth can expect in the years to come will depend on how well they understand and leverage their rights and how willingly and efficiently they are able to shoulder their responsibilities. What then are the rights and responsibilities of the youth of India?

The National Youth Policy, 2003 reiterates the commitment of the entire nation to the composite and all-round development of the youth of India and seeks to establish an all-India perspective to fulfill their legitimate aspirations so that they are all strong of heart and strong of body and mind in successfully accomplishing the challenging tasks of national reconstruction and social changes that lie ahead.

The earlier National Youth Policy was formulated in 1988. The socio-economic conditions in the country have since undergone a significant change and have been shaped by wide-ranging technological advancement. The National Youth Policy - 2003 is designed to galvanise the youth to rise up to the new challenges, keeping in view the global scenario, and aims at motivating them to be active and committed participants in the exciting task of National Development.

The Policy is based on recognition of the contribution that the youth can, and should, make to the growth and well-being of the community and endeavours to ensure effective co-ordination

between the policies, programmes and delivery systems of the various Ministries, Departments and other Agencies. The thrust of the Policy centres around "Youth Empowerment" in different spheres of national life.

For India to occupy her rightful place in the Comity of Nations and to meaningfully discharge the manifold obligations thereto, it would be imperative to ensure the effective pursuit of youth development programmes which promote personality development and Qualities of Citizenship and enhance commitment to community service, social justice, self-reliance, national integration and humanism, an inclusive view of the entire universe as enshrined in our ancient scriptures. The Policy, therefore, recognizes these inter-related values and principles as its basic premise.

The following are the responsibilities as enumerated by the National Youth Policy:

- To contribute to sectoral, family and self development and to promote social and inter-generation understanding and gender equality
- To extend respect to teachers and elders, parents and the family, in consonance with our cultural norms and traditions
- To uphold the unity and integrity of the Nation, maintain peace and harmony, observe Fundamental Duties and respect the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution to all sections of the people
- To respect others' faiths and beliefs in the religious, cultural and social spheres and to different schools of thought and to neither exploit nor be instrumental in the exploitation



of fellow citizens and other persons, especially women

- To promote appropriate standards of ethical conduct in individual and social life, to maintain honesty and integrity of character and be committed to fight against all forms of corruption, social evils and practices
- To preserve and protect the Environment; and
- To commit themselves to create a discrimination and exploitation free environment and to devote their time and energy in nation building activities.

The Indian economy is at tipping point. And the youth of this

country will determine the direction the economy takes. As mentioned earlier, the population under 34 years was around 41 per cent in India. Some experts refer to this large proportion of youth as “demographic dividend”. Others refer to it as “demographic disaster”. So which way will the economy tip? Is our burgeoning youth a bane or boon? In the early 1980s China was in a position that India finds itself today. And China’s current economic boom is said to be the direct consequence of the large proportion of youth in its population. According to some estimates the current proportion of population under 25 years in India is 51 per cent and the proportion

under 35 is about 66 per cent. While the average age of an Indian in 2020 is expected to be 29 years, the average age for China is expected to be 37.

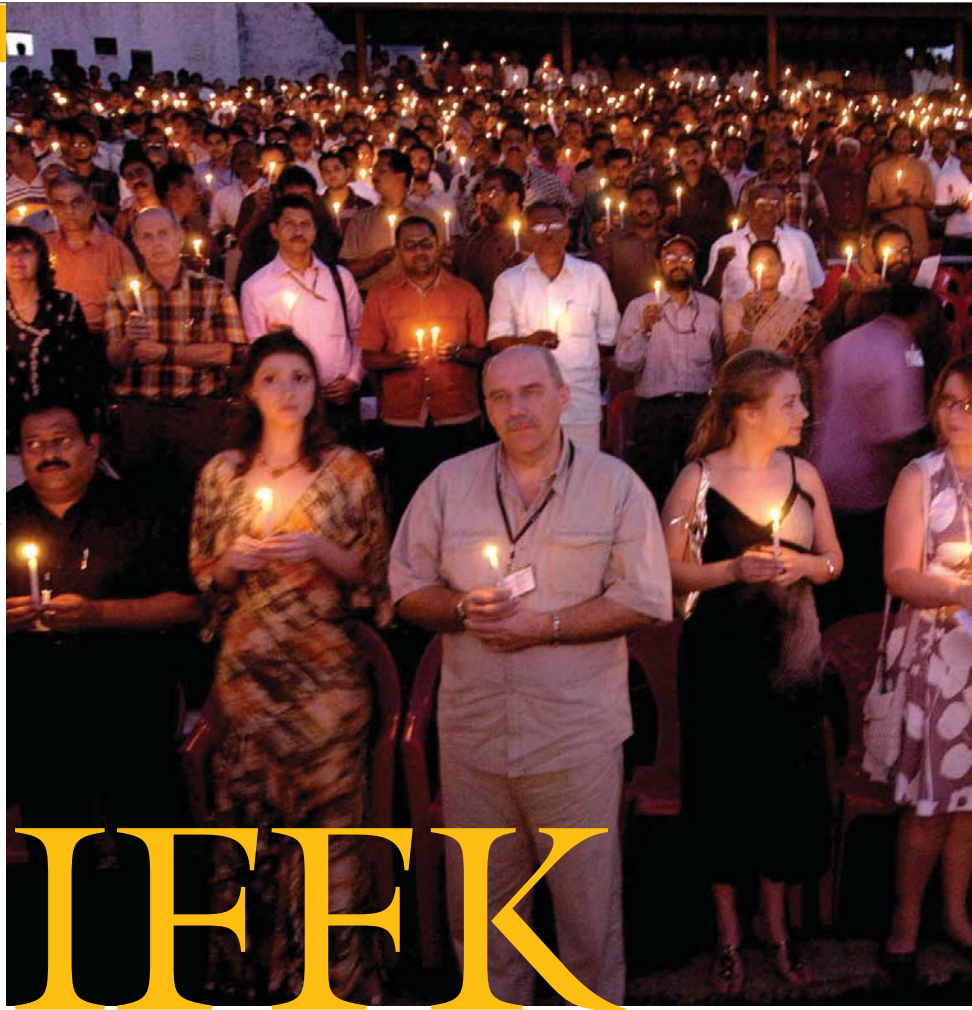
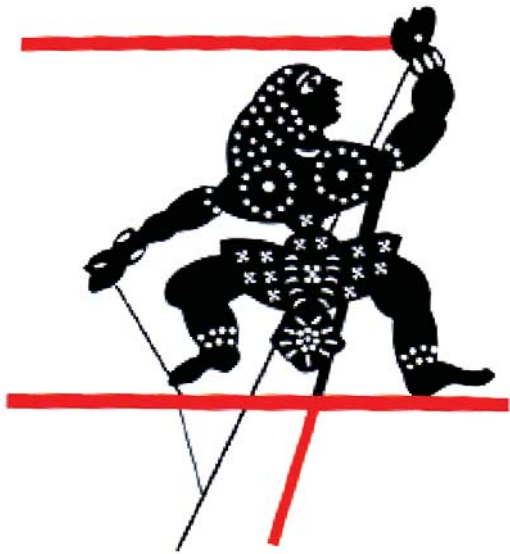
With proper education, job openings and healthcare, our youth are sure to tip the economy in the right direction. Show them right direction, lead and empower them to lead the country, the future will be bright for sure. Let us remember the words of Alexander the Great – “I do not fear an army of lions, if they are lead by a lamb... I fear for an army of lamb, if they are led by a lion.”

The writer is Broadcast Journalist.

# Empower the Army of Lions







IFFK

# reflections and resonances

With a participation of around 8,000 delegates, the 13th edition of the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) held at Thiruvananthapuram recently has crossed all the hitherto records and, no doubt, it can claim the top position in International Film Festivals in terms of attendance. However, how far the mass participation in the film festival has helped the state to inculcate a better film culture is still a question to be debated.

The opening film, *Laila's Birthday*,

directed by the Palestinian director Rashid Masharawi, set in Romella in Palestine exposes the post independent scenario and confusions of the Palestinians. The film is an eye opener to the political climate prevailing in present-day Palestine with all its intricacies and inhuman conditions.

## Competition Films

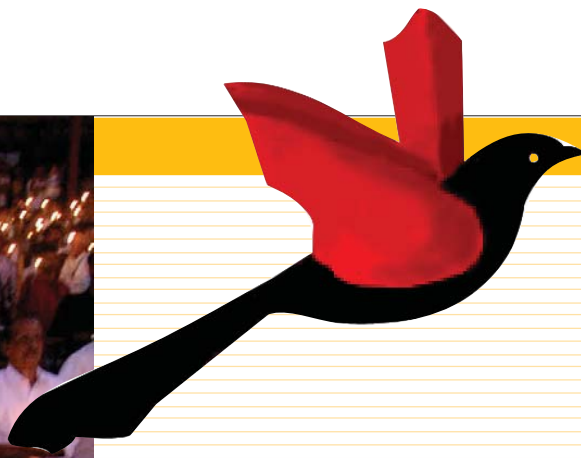
The competition section could attract a bunch of filmmakers from Asia, Africa and Latin American countries. The jury had a tough job to select films from an array of

distinctive works of art. 14 films competed for the Suvarna Chakoram including *Firaq* from Hindi, *Gulabi Talkies* from Kannada and *Adayalangal* and *Akasagopuram* from Malayalam. A good number of these films were stunningly brilliant with fresh narratives and attempts of realisation.

## Malayalam and Indian Cinema

Apart from *Vilapangalkappuram* and *Manchadikkuru*, all the films included in this section had a commercial release. Still they do not have all the characteristics of





mainstream cinema. In a sense the festival was instrumental in bringing out a debut director in Malayalam, Anjali Menon, with her film *Manchadikkuru*. The Indian section had the entries like *Yarwng*, a film by Joseph Pulinthanath, made in the Kokborok language of Manipur, *Kanchivaram* by Priyadarshan and *Barah Aana* by Rajah Menon. Section titled 'Indian Masters in Action' has screened the latest films of veteran Indian filmmakers, Shyam Benegal, Buddhadeb Das Gupta and Ketan Mehta.

#### World Cinema

This section is always considered as the highlight of IFFK. It was true

for its 13th edition too. A cross section of world cinema with all its varied visual explorations ranging from the classic Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman (*Saraband*) to the contemporary Turkish filmmaker Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Three Monkeys*) was presented. *Son of a Lion* (Australia), *The Good Life* (Chile), *Juju Factory* (Congo), *Kangamba* (Cuba), *Emptiness*

(Czech Republic), *The Class* (France), *White Night Wedding* (Iceland), *The Song of the Sparrows* (Iran), *Bird Watchers* (Brazil), *Tokyo Sonata* (Japan), *Breath* (South Korea) and *Bad Habits* (Mexico) were some of the other outstanding entries.



## IFFK-2008 Awards

**Suvarnachakoram** for the Best Film in Competition (Rs. 10 Lakhs)

*Parque Via* (Mexico) directed by Enrique Rivero

**Rajatha Chakoram** for the Best Director of the film in Competition (Rs 3 Lakhs)

Mariana Rondon (Director of *Postcards from Leningrad*)

**Rajatha Chakoram** to the Best Debut Director (Rs 2 Lakhs)

Huseyin Karabey (Director of *My Marlon and Brando*)

**Special Jury Award** to Nandita Das

(Director of *Firaq*)

**Special Jury Award** to *The Yellow House* (Directed by Amor Hakker)

**Audience Prize Rajatha Chakoram** (Rs. 1 Lakh)

*Machan* (Directed by Uberto Pasolini)

#### Other Awards

FIPRESCI

**Award for the Best film in Competition**- Post Cards from Leningrad

**Award for the Best Malayalam**

**Cinema** - *Manchadikkuru* (Directed by Anjali Menon)

**NETPAC - Award for the Best Asian film** in Competition-

*My Marlon and Brando* - **Award for the Best Malayalam Film**-

*Adayalangan* (Directed by M.G.Sasi)

**Hassankutty Award**

Best Indian Debut Director instituted by Ms Mira Nayyar in memory of her Assistant Director Late Hassankutty (Rs. 50,000)-

Anjali Menon (For the film *Manchadikkuru*)



# Suvarna Chakoram

## PARQUE VIA

Mexico/2008/35mm/Colour/86/  
Spanish

Parque Via is the directorial debut of the Mexican filmmaker Enrique Rivero.

With only a very few characters, Parque Via is an exploration into the loneliness of a middle aged servant, Beto, who is addicted to his daily chores repeated in the same tone and rhythm. He has a pathological fear for the exterior and seldom goes out. He knows that the landlady, for whom he takes care of the house for the last couple of years, is intending to sell it and he has no option but to leave. Eventually his fear comes true and the lady sells the house leaving a lump sum for him to lead a life of his own. Though compassionate, he is not in a position to accept the ever-expected situation, which makes him react differently.

Through Beto, Enrique Rivero has tried to analyze the culture of fear that is in the air in Mexico. By virtue of certain pre-determined modes, one has a space marked in this universe and when it is lost, he is utterly bewildered. This is unerringly portrayed in the film with a very novel but poignant treatment and maturity of visuals and sound track.



# Rajatha Chakoram

## POSTCARDS FROM LENINGRAD

Venezuela/2007/35mm/Colour/90'/Spanish

A very complex film in structure where time and space is constantly oscillating between past and present, Postcards from Leningrad has a background of Venezuelan Guerilla war of 60s. A young Guerilla girl in Venezuela, during the uprising of 60s, gives birth to her daughter on a Mother's Day. She has to flee with the child and the never-ending trauma follows. The little girl, La Nina, is abandoned and the parents disappear to their hideouts. In the village, La Nina gets the company of her little cousin Theo. The children re-live the adventures of their guerrilla parents, building a muddle filled with superheroes and strategies. The terrific countenance of the guerrilla war is, however,



not hidden in the fragmented games enacted by the children. The title Postcards from Leningrad is an icon. In those times, in Venezuela, a post card from Leningrad symbolises that the guerilla fighter is no longer alive to return home. The little La Nina narrates the story. The

film uncovers as the disjointed memories of childhood. There is no chronological order in the time frame, quite typical of a child in remembering the past. The filmmaker Mariana Rondon reiterates that the film is highly autobiographical.

## Documentaries and Short Fictions

The festival provided enough space for outstanding documentaries and short fictions along with feature films. Another Planet, Songs, Colours and Market, Paper Clips, The East wind, Blessed Virgin and Megatron need special mention.

## Retrospectives

Retrospectives give a chance to have a second look at the works of Masters, both classic and contemporary. Alan Resnais, the great master who was in the initiating group of the French New Wave in 1960s and Amos Gitai, the acclaimed Israeli filmmaker were on the list. The film enthusiasts had another chance to view the classics like Hiroshima Mon Amour, Last Year in Mariaenbad and Night and Fog or the comparatively newer films like Same Old Song and Private fears in Public Places. Amos Gitai in his films like Promised Land, Free Zone and Disengagement is on the endless quest of the limits of human, social and political existence of man.

## Master Strokes and Contemporary Masters

Fernando Birri, better known as the 'Father of Latin American Cinema' and Bharathan, the visual connoisseur of Malayalam Cinema were presented in the package titled 'Master Strokes'. The 'Contemporary Masters' section included Karen Shakhnazarov (Russia), Idrissa Ouedraogo (Burkina Fasso), Samira Makhmalbaf (Iran) and Fatih Akin (Germany). A cross section of the happenings in contemporary world cinema could be projected and put to test through this package. Samira Makhmalbaf, who happened to be in the International jury too, was well accepted through her films like Blackboard, At Five in the Afternoon and Two Legged Horse. Four recent films from Russia were selected for the 'Country Focus'.

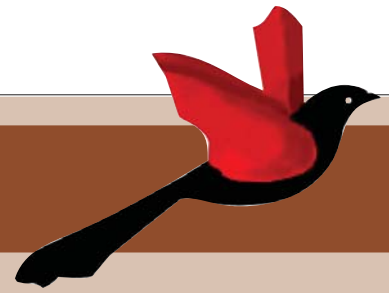
## New Sections

One of the highlights of this year's film festival was the introduction of three new sections namely 'Looking Back- 50 Yesars Ago', 'Reels& Music' and 'Kick Off: Football Films'.

What happened 50 years before in world cinema? It was the thrust of the package which, undoubtedly, has given



## Karen Shakhnazarov Search for Variety Triggers the Jump



The leading Russian Film maker Karen Shakhnazarov explained that he looks for variety in his every film and that is the reason for his jump from one style to the next. He was in Thiruvananthapuram to participate in the IFFK.

Karen Shakhnazarov emphasised on the exigency of a more aggressive direction pattern focusing the Russian Market. The mastermind did not forget to mention about Raj Kapoor and how a whole generation of Russian filmmakers looked up to him and the Indian Cinema. He said that he was against the idea of the existence of third world films and remarked that this demarcation affects the world film industry itself. Karen's *The Vanished Empire*, *Rider Named Death*, *Day of The Full Moon*, *We are from Jazz* and *Winter Evening* were screened before the movie lovers in Thiruvananthapuram.

When asked about his view on Indian audience he commented that all the audience around the world were the same and that the cultural

and other differences won't make much of a change in the way the viewers accept films. He also stated the need for better relations between Indian and Russian film industries.

Karen Shakhnazarov was born on July 8, 1952 in the city of Krasnodar (southern Russia). His family moved to Moscow and his father Georgy Shakhnazarov became a top Communist party apparatchik and a close adviser to Mikhail Gorbachev. As a boy, Karen liked drawing and staged plays in a school theater. In 1975 he graduated from Moscow School for Cinematography where he studied film directing under Igor Talankin. For two years he worked at Mosfilm Studios as a director's assistant. He made three short films before he debuted in 1980 with his first full-length feature *Kind Men (Dobryaki)*, a low-key comedy about an ambitious and cynical careerist.

Karen Shakhnazarov is a leading Russian Filmmaker, producer and screenwriter with a true sense of modernity. His ability to effectively

punctuate significant moments is paralleled only by his capacity to entertain enabling his audience to empathize with a variety of characters. Shakhnazarov's films are well known to both Russian and foreign spectators. Karen Shakhnazarov received the People's Artist Award of the Russian Federation (2002), the State Award of the Russian Federation, Lenin Komsomol Award (1986), Vasilev Brothers State Award of RSFSR (1988), and member of the European Film Academy. In 1975 he graduated from the Film Directing Department of the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography. Since 1976 he has been a film director of the Mosfilm Studios and from 1991 to present time, Shakhnazarov has served as Chairman of the "Courier" Studio of Mosfilm Cinema Concern. He has managed to pull the studios out of a long-term crisis and revive it as an attractive production facility for movies and TV-series.

**Gautham S**

the prospect to view the works of great masters. It was an occasion to revisit Ingmar Bergman (*The Magician*), Luis Bunel (*Nazarin*), Andrzej Wajda (*Ashes and Diamonds*), Bert Haanstra (*Glass*), Satyjit Ray (*Jalsaghar*), Jacques Tati (*My Uncle*) and Jack Clayton (*Room at the Top*), all made in 1958. The films on the celebrated musicians of all times, Bob Marley, Bob Dylan and Rolling Stones were the hot cakes for the music lovers. So are the documentaries on the soccer legend Diego Maradona in the 'Kick off' section to sports fans.

### Homage

Youssef Chahine (Egypt), Jules Dassin (France) were paid befitting homage along with director P.N.Menon, Script writer K.T. Muhammad, Actor-Director Bharat

Gopi and the actor Reghuvaran.

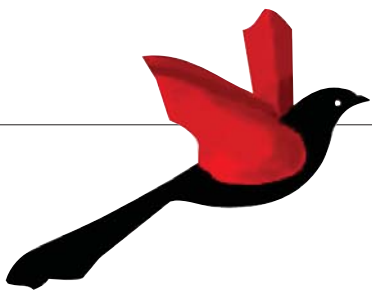
The Israeli Filmmaker Amos Gitai delivered Aravindan Memorial Lecture, the annual event of IFFK. On the academic end, IFFK in association with Praxis Centre for Screen Writers, Canada and with the support of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute has organized a four day Screen Writing Workshop and a Press Mentorship Programme in association with FIPRESCI.

The superiority of any festival mainly depends upon the packages it could showcase.

In this respect, the festival may brag of its remarkable standard as it presented a cross section of the contemporary world cinema. Kudos to the organizational masterminds too.

The newly introduced reservation system was highly commendable and it helped the real cineastes to view the films of their choice without any pressure. Even though audience participation was poor in the deliberations, the Open Forum and the Meet the Director Programme provided a platform for interactions with the film personalities. As usual, the disturbances of mobile phones and the anarchist behaviors of certain delegates caused havoc, but it never crossed the limits. The idea of making the festival popular is laudable, but basic screening quality is to be ensured in every theatre rented for the same. It is high time realised that a festival complex with state-of-the-art facility is the only alternate solution. ■

The writer is a film director.



# Women Directors in Spotlight

The film arena once again witnessed a host of films from successful women directors. This year's IFFK showcased internationally acclaimed creations of women filmmakers. These talented filmmakers have already carved a niche of their own in the film industry. What made watching their movies more interesting was that it explored a variety of themes such as love, war, humour, realism etc.

The most prominent among the women directors who participated in this fest were Nadine Labaki from Lebanon, Annamarie Jacir of Palestine, Marjane Satrapi from Iran, Ishtar Yasin from Russia, Lucia Murat from Brazil and Samira Makhmalbaf of Iran.

Nadine Labaki who hails from Lebanon is an actress cum director. A prominent figure in the arabic music video industry, Nadine is usually credited for bringing artists into the scene. She made her feature-film debut through *Caramel* which was a sensation at International film festivals and a box office hit. This movie is a romantic comedy that deals with five Beirut women who gather at a beauty saloon and it portrays love, sexuality, tradition, disappointment, and everyday ups and downs. Labaki has a unique style of direction exploring new territories.

The director of award winning films like *Until When*, *A Few Crumbs for the Birds* and *A Post Oslo History*, Annamarie Jacir from Palestine is a new face of Independent Cinema.



Director Anjali Menon (Film *Manjadikkuru*)

Jacir's film *Salt of this Sea* which is the story of an American woman who travels from Brooklyn to Israel to see the land her Palestinian ancestors were evicted 60 years ago, was screened in the fest. This movie has been submitted to the 81st Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. Jacir has a line of direction, which is both informative and thought provoking.

Marjane Satrapi is an Iranian and French contemporary graphic novelist, illustrator, film director and children's book author. Her animated movie *Persepolis* based on the critically acclaimed autobiographical graphic novel *Persepolis* was another attraction of this year's fest. The film

follows the life of young Marjane against the backdrop of the Iranian revolution. The film won the Jury Prize at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

'El Camino' the debut movie of the Russian director Ishtar Yasin was presented in this fest. Winner of both the FIPRESCI prize and the Special Jury Award at the Guadalajara Film Festival, it is the story of two hapless Nicaraguan children set out on a journey to find their mother across the border in Costa Rica in *El Camino*.

Brazilian director and member of the competition section jury Lucia Murat's 'Another Love story' was also featured. It portrays the parallel





# Cinema A Visual Medium ?

Cinema is popular as a visual medium. But this statement needs a rethinking when one meets Narayanankutty, a visually handicapped movie buff. Film is one of the most popular media among all age groups. When one thinks of whiling away time one of the first entertainments that crosses his mind will be a movie time. The film festivals held in our State is a large venue for the movie buffs. Offering a palette of films that deal with almost all the topics under the sun, the festivals surely keeps the movie enthusiasts cheerful. This year's International Film Festival of Kerala, like all other years, could help doing the same. The different kind of audience who watch the films is what makes it stand out.

Narayanankutty, a prominent viewer at IFFK, has joined this year

too with his mother, his all time support. Letting the mind travel through the background music and the dialogues, Narayanankutty understands the mood of the film. In cases of other languages, his mother prompts him what is happening. He has his strong viewpoints on the versatile medium. He says that films are a medium to invoke a moral meaning or a positive message to the society. Through films, one can express his own views or even try to propagate a new outlook to the society. If he gets a chance to make a movie, he would surely take one that would express the values he wants the society to understand.

The mother and son who prefer to watch humour, make it a point not to miss a single film that releases. The duo who enjoy more of comedy films,

saw 20Twenty on the very first day of its release and enjoyed the humour of the film. Narayanankutty likes Sathyan Anthikad's films for its closeness to the characters, Blessy and Major Ravi. He says that he liked 'Kurukshetra' more than Major Ravi's debut film.

This B.Ed student at Government Training College is also a classical music student. He loves participating in quiz programmes and believes participation is important than success. When asked about the films he liked in IFFK, he mentioned about 'Kini and Adams' and 'My Marlon and Brando'. He had come to see the film festival keeping aside all his assignments and other college works. While stepping down from IFFK'08, Narayanankutty is anxious to return for the festivals in the coming years.

**Winnie J Panicker**

existence of violence and a strong sense of music and contemporary dance in a slum.

The acclaimed Iranian filmmaker and script writer Samira Makhmalbaf's *Blackboard*, *At Five in the Afternoon*, *Two Legged Horse* etc. were screened. Her movies attracted huge crowds and was screened to packed houses. Her films have won many awards including the Grand Prix Jury award at the Cannes

and the UNESCO Award at Venice Film Festival. Samira who started her film career at the age of 17, was also the youngest Jury Member of this Festival.

Anjali Menon, Nandita Das, Mehreen Jabbar, Andrea Papini were some of the other women directors under the limelight. Nandita Das won the Special Jury award for her directorial venture. *Firaaq* and the FIPRESCI award for the best

Malayalam film went to Manjodi Kuru, directed by Anjali Menon at this year's fest. She also bagged the Hassankutty award introduced this year for the Best Debutant Indian director.

This refreshing array of movies created by women captured the imagination and enthralled the film enthusiasts turning the whole experience into a memorable one.

**Gayatri A Nair**



## Another Strong Tsunami likely within 30 Years?

Another tsunami-triggering earthquake off Indonesia is "extremely likely" in the next 30 years and may claim a higher toll than the 2004 surge that killed more than 220,000 people, according to a study in the journal *Science*.

Researchers studying changes over the past 700 years in coral reefs near Indonesia's Mentawai islands found evidence the region is due for a quake as big as magnitude 8.8, and that a smaller temblor last year is probably a harbinger of bigger ones.

A large shock would set off a tsunami that would strike cities and towns in western Sumatra, scientists led by Kerry Sieh of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena said in the study.

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago and forms part of the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and geologic fault lines surrounding the Pacific Basin. The archipelago lies in a zone where four tectonic plates meet. Those plates constantly

shift, sometimes causing earthquakes that can produce tsunamis.

The 2004 tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean, devastating coastal communities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and other countries, was caused by a 9.1 temblor in a fault seismologists call the Sunda megathrust. There have been hundreds of earthquakes in Indonesia since then, including a 5.9-magnitude quake reported in the Kepulauan Mentawai region by the U.S. Geological Survey.

## Arctic Sea Ice decline Continues

In September, Arctic sea ice coverage reached the second-lowest level recorded since the dawn of the satellite era, according to observations from the NASA-supported National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado. While slightly above the record-low set in September 2007, this season further reinforces the strong negative trend in summer sea ice coverage observed during

the past 30 years. In March, when the Arctic reached its annual maximum sea ice coverage during the winter, scientists from NASA and the data center reported that thick, older sea ice was continuing to decline. NASA developed the capability to observe the extent and concentration of sea ice from space using passive microwave sensors.



## Wild life is Longer

Zoo elephants don't live as long as those in the wild, according to a study sure to stir debate about keeping the giant animals on display.

Researchers compared the life spans of elephants in European zoos with those living in Amboseli National Park in Kenya and others working on a timber

enterprise in Myanmar. Animals in the wild or in natural working conditions had life spans twice that or more of their relatives in zoos.

The Detroit Zoo in 2005 sent its two elephants, Winky and Wanda, to a refuge in California because officials felt being on display was too confining. Winky, 56, died

earlier this year; Wanda, 50, is thriving.

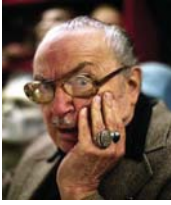
The researchers found that the median life span for African elephants in European zoos was 16.9 years, compared with 56 years for elephants who died of natural causes in Amboseli park.

Zoo elephants don't live as long as those in the wild, according to a new study.

Ancient armoured amphibian had world's



## 'Sci-Fi' Forrest J Ackerman dies



Forrest J Ackerman, who influenced a generation of young horror-movie fans with Famous Monsters of

Filmland magazine and spent a lifetime amassing what has been called the world's largest personal collection of science-fiction and fantasy memorabilia, has died. He was 92.

Ackerman, a writer, editor and literary agent who has been credited with coining the term "sci-fi" in the 1950s, died of heart failure at his home in Los Angeles, said John Sasser, a friend who is making a documentary on Ackerman.

As editor of Famous Monsters of Filmland, Ackerman wrote most of the articles in the photo-laden magazine launched in 1958 as a forum for past and present horror films.

## Girls' Taste Buds Superior to Boys'

Girls have better taste buds than boys, according to a study conducted by the Danish Science Communication and the University of Copenhagen, health24.com reported.

The study, which included nearly 9,000 Danish children, found girls were better at recognizing concentrations of sweet and sour tastes.

Boys need about 20 percent more sweetness and 10 percent more sourness in order to recognize the taste, the study found.

"We also asked the pupils to count 'taste buds' or organs of taste on the tongue," said



Michael Born Frost, associate professor at the department of food science at the University of Copenhagen.

The study also discovered that 1 in 3 school-aged children prefers drinks without sugar. However, boys do have a sweeter tooth than girls, the study found.

### oddest bite

A peculiar amphibian that was clad in bony armour prowled warm lakes 210 million years ago, catching fish and other tasty snacks with one of the most unusual bites in the history of life on Earth. The creature called *Gerrothorax pulcherrimus*, which lived alongside some of the early dinosaurs, opened its mouth not by dropping its lower jaw, as other vertebrate animals do.



## Team explores death on Mt. Everest

An international research team led by Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) investigators has conducted the first detailed analysis of deaths during expeditions to the summit of Mt. Everest. They found that most deaths occur during descents from the summit in the so-called "death zone" above 8,000 metres and also identified factors that appear to be associated with a greater risk of death, particularly symptoms of high-altitude cerebral edema. The report has been released online by British Medical Journal.

"We know that climbing Everest is dangerous, but exactly how and why people have died had not been studied," says Paul Firth, Department of Anesthesia, who led the study "It had been assumed that avalanches and falling ice - particularly in the Khumbu Icefall on the Nepal route - were the leading causes of death and that high-altitude pulmonary edema would be a common problem at such extreme altitude. But our results do not support either assumption."

The overall mortality rate for Everest mountaineers during the entire 86-year period was 1.3 percent; the rate among climbers was 1.6 percent and the rate among sherpas was 1.1 percent. During the past 25 years, a period during which a greater percentage of mountaineers climbed above 8,000 metres, the death rate for non-Himalayan climbers descending via the longer Tibetan northeast ridge was 3.4 per cent, while on the shorter Nepal route it was 2.5 percent.









## Elegance of a moment

The hair split of a moment can conceive the cute of any form of art. **Haris Kuttippuram** manifests that elegance after his presence at the mega Asian school fest that staged recently in Thiruvananthapuram.







## Ezhimala Naval Academy Yet another feather in Kerala's cap

**EZHIMALA NAVAL ACADEMY** claimed to be the largest in Asia, has been dedicated to the Nation, on 8th January by the Prime Minister, Man Mohan Singh.

Dedicating the Academy to Nation, the Prime Minister said that the Indian Navy has a key role in protecting the country from threats coming across the sea. He said, "the modernisation of the Indian Navy will go ahead and the number of naval exercise we had with our friendly countries has helped the Navy a lot." He also said that the Government of India would take all necessary measures to ensure that the Coast Guard and the navy are fully equipped to protect the seas and ocean around us.

The Defence Minister, A.K. Antony,

attending the function said, establishment of Navac in Kerala was a landmark in the history of the country and of the Defence forces. He also said, the establishment of Navac and the development of the proposed Kannur airport would give a developmental face-lift to Kannur and Kasaragod districts.

The Chief Minister, V.S. Achuthanandan said, the Union Government's decision to set up Navac here had been received by the people of Kerala with great enthusiasm. Navac for training Naval personnel had greater significance in the backdrop of the increased threat of terrorism attacks; he said, adding that the State Government had spent Rs.50 crores for developing infrastructure

for the Academy.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Suresh Mehta, Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahammed, Opposition Leader, Oommen Chandy, Minister, P.K. Sreemathy, P. Karunakaran MP were also present at the function.

The Academy at Ezhimala in Kannur district, the foundation stone for which was laid way back in 1987, by then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, has become a reality after 22 years.

The nearly 2,500 acre sprawling academy is situated in a promontory that was the capital of the ancient Mooshika Kings. It was a flourishing seaport and centre of trade in ancient Kerala and one of the major battlefields during Chola, Chera war in the 11th century.



## Ration Cards get new look

**RATION CARDS** get a new look with the inclusion of the photo of the cardholders. The laminated cards will be distributed within three months all over the state, said V.S. Achuthanandan.

The Chief Minister launched the new cards by handing over a card to the Opposition Leader Oommen Chandy at Putharikkandam Maidan on 24th December 2008. Seventy lakh cards, which include 50 lakh APL category cards and 20 lakh BPL category cards, are ready for distribution. The APL category cards are blue in colour, while the BPL category ones are pink. The distribution is expected to be completed by February.

Achuthanandan said a system would be in place to redress the complaints about the cards. Food and Civil Supplies Minister C. Divakaran in his presidential address said that the district supply officers would rectify complaints and errors of any in the ration cards.



# Indian History Congress

## CHIEF MINISTER V.S.

Achuthanandan has said that perpetrators of terrorism and communalism are trying to undermine secular and composite cultural traditions. Inaugurating the 69th session of the Indian History Congress (IHC) on the Kannur University campus at Mangattuparamba, Achuthanandan said that terrorism and communalism had caused untold miseries worldwide.

Observing that they posed a grave threat to humanity, he said their practitioners were afraid of the past which upheld humanitarian values nurtured through the interaction of diverse communities. "The Taliban attack on the Buddhist centres in Afghanistan, the demolition of Babri Masjid and the U.S. destruction of historical monuments and cultural heritage of Iraq are examples of this attitude," the Chief Minister said adding that democracy, and not terrorism, was the answer to fascism.

Terrorism and communalism were promoted by globalisation and liberalisation. While liberal thinkers of the 19th century glorified history as the unfolding of human freedom, globalisation had rendered this concept a meaningless myth.

"We have reached a situation in which no country can stay away from globalisation," he stated. The Chief Minister said the IHC as a collective of historians had always stood against divisive tendencies such as terrorism, communalism and parochialism. He also recalled the IHC's tradition of fruitful interaction upholding the ideals of secularism and democracy.

IHC president K.N. Panikkar presided. Historians Irfan Habib and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Calicut University Vice-Chancellor Anwar Jahan Suberi, M.G. University Vice-Chancellor Rajan Gurukkal, Kannur University Pro Vice-Chancellor K. Kunhikrishnan, M. Prakasan, MLA, and IHC secretary B.P. Sahu were present.



## Kerala wins Silver

**KERALA** has once again brought home appreciation in the form of a silver medal in the recently concluded India International Trade Fair in New Delhi. Kerala was the focus state in the two week long fair in which infrastructure development and women empowerment were the theme points. Three-dimensional representation of the proposed Vizhinjam Transshipment Container Terminal, Kochi Metro Rail, Smart City etc. have won the minds of many visitors. The State received trade enquiries to the tune of Rs 300 crore. Kerala has got gold medal 13 times and silver medal six times since the inception of the fair.

Sheela Thomas, Secretary, Information and Public Relations Department, received the medal from Jayaram Ramesh, Union Minister for Commerce.



## Three New Volvo Buses

**THE KERALA** State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) introduced daily services using three new Volvo buses Thiruvananthapuram. Of the three Volvo buses, two will be deployed for operating services to Bangalore and the third to Ernakulam. The Volvo services were flagged-off by Minister for Transport Mathew T. Thomas the KSRTC's Central bus station on 17<sup>th</sup> December.

Procured at a cost of Rs.70 lakh each, the body of the bus is designed as per international standards and can be raised and lowered up to 15 cm. by the driver so that passengers can board and alight without any hassle. Tubeless tyres are a unique feature of the buses. Electronic air suspension is another salient feature. KSRTC sources said the telescopic shock absorbers would ensure comfortable journey. The bus has the BS III CRDI rear engine that generates less noise and complies with Euro III norms. Push-back seats that can be adjusted, electronic braking system, reading lamps for each passenger and spacious luggage boot are the other features.

## Democracy in full bloom

When Sutharyakeralam, an innovative initiative of the Government of Kerala, aimed at bridging the gap between the Public and the Government and thereby ensuring transparency and efficiency in the functions of the Government was started, the democratic India wondered, if not the whole world.

The major objectives of the project were the automation of Chief Minister's Grievance Redressal Cell and convergence of all the available forms of communication to redress the grievances of the citizens. It was, and is, a great success.

Now with Nava Keralam, Kerala once again shows the way to the world. This is a live interactive programme in Doordarshan Malayalam, introduced by Information and Public Relations Department for the public to interact with all Ministers of Kerala other than the Chief Minister.

Like that of Sutharya Keralam, Nava Keralam also opens up a new window for public to interact with ministers and to invite their attention to the problems faced by the public. The programmes are telecast on every Thursday 5.15 pm in live and are recast on the same day at 9.30 pm and Friday at 10.00 am. Public can call to 0471-1707072 or 0471-1707062 between 5.10 pm and 5.55 pm every Thursday to this programme.

In the near future, the project will extend its horizons to the field of mobile technology and is expected to make use of the immense potential of SMS facility. The paradigm of democracy is extended to technology too - for the people .....







**State's Honour:** Kavita Karkare wife of Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Hemant Karkare who was killed in the recent attack in Mumbai receives a present from Chief Minister V S Achuthanathan. Minister M A Baby is also seen.