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FIGHTING THE SOCIAL MEDIA BATTLE

How social media is shaping the narrative in Kerala elections

R. S. Varun

In an era where social media has taken over the traditional graffiti, posters, and hoardings, all the major parties have tightened its social media presence so as to gather maximum votes, especially from the youth in the upcoming assembly elections. Although the presence of posters and hoardings are still in existence, all the three fronts have extensively employed the use of PR and social media teams for the purpose of polarising the voters.

Having CM Pinarayi Vijayan as their face of polls this year, the LDF expects to capitalise on its people centric government and the welfare measures they have been taking on every tough occasion starting from Ockhi, to multiple floods to COVID-19. The decentralisation of powers to the local

self government during the tough times landed them in a trailblazing victory in the local body elections. The LDF has been doing its PR right from its beginning days of assuming power. They have used the existing PRD system of the government as well as its own party mechanism to boost its image. An RTI response revealed that a hefty sum amounting close to 90 crore rupees has been spent from the government funds for this purpose.

They have launched an app named 'Chem-bada' exclusively for its supporters regarding details of the election process. As CM Pinarayi Vijayan quotes "There is an upsurge in favour of the left", it is understood that the Left Democratic front is confident of

retaining its incumbency with its collective strength.

UDF has been a late entrant into the PR scene. Although they have a decent social media presence over all plat-

forms, it was not enough to convince the voters into believing in their ideologies.

However when the elections were near, candidates have been working on the personal level to improve their social media presence so as to publicize their personal achievements and promises.

One prominent example that can be pointed out from the Congress party is that of Dr. Shashi Tharoor who is already a social media celebrity thanks to his pan Indian appeal and exemplary

story skills. He has effectively used his social media profiles for campaigning of various UDF candidates across the state. Kerala also witnessed was a face off between CM Pinarayi Vijayan and former CM Oommen Chandy, regarding the development and welfare activities carried out during their respective tenures.

Neither UDF nor its leaders could capitalise on any allegation

they put forth, including the gold smuggling case which allegedly had

connections with the Chief minister's office. It has to be read that the governance and efficient use of PR outsmarted all these allegations.

However the top party executives are in trumping the LDF.

Dreaming to take advantage of the shifting Nair and Ezhava community votes, and hoping to capitalise on its increasing vote shares year by year, the NDA would mostly like to project itself as a pro-development front, highlighting achievements of the Union government, and giving promises of establishing premier central government institutions in Kerala. With a strong PR network in hand, it is also trying to picture the present state government and the op-

position as anti-Hindu citing their stance in the Sabarimala issue.

The BJP is also a well organised party in terms of their internet presence. Its highly efficient IT cell has handed them victories in the Lok Sabha as well as in

assembly elections of various states. They have launched an exclusive WhatsApp number through which it circulates campaigning material.

They have also managed to bring senior party leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the purpose of campaigning for various candidates. Even though it would be too optimistic to assume that the NDA will be a strong third front, they cannot be undervalued having witnessed their performance in the recent years.

High on hopes...



A few candidates and parents waiting outside the premises of Greenfield stadium | Photo : Jomon P.

Army recruitment rally concludes

Bharath Mohan

Kariavattom: The army recruitment rally conducted at The Sports Hub here, came to an end on March 12. The rally jointly organized by the Army Recruitment Offices at Thiruvananthapuram and Calicut had began on 26th February.

It saw the participation of over 55,300 candidates over 91,000 registered, for various soldier categories.

The rally was conducted in accordance with all COVID-19



District Collector Navjot Khosa flagging off the army recruitment rally

protocols, said District Collector Navjot Khosa. Over 300 police personnel were employed for managing the crowd in accordance with the COVID protocols alone.

Temporary accommodations were pro-

vided at nearby schools. Medical teams were deployed by the Health Department for emergency healthcare purposes.

They were also equipped with ambulances to meet medical needs.

Transport facilities using special schedule buses were offered by the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation.

Additional services were also conducted from all districts.

The recruitment for Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, and Idukki was conducted till March 5, and those for the Northern Districts were held from March 6 to March 12

The candidates who are found to fit in physical and medical category will have to appear in a written test in the month of April 2021, the Defence PRO for Trivandrum, tweeted.

An ode to all women on this women's day

Chithra Kadambath
Sulthana S. S.

Kariavattom: The ladies hostel committee along with the department's union celebrated the International Women's day at University of Kerala, Kariavattom campus here on March 8. Several programmes were held as two sessions at the Aquatic Biology Seminar Hall titled Senora 2k21. The motto of the programme was 'Be the fire to inspire billions'.

The first session began at 2pm, inaugurated by writer V. S. Bindhu, who gave a talk on Women Empowerment, followed by a speech by Dr. Seema Jerome, Associate Professor of the Department of Malayalam, University of Kerala. She delivered a lecture on 'gender equality and higher education'.

Dr. Jeena, Resident medical officer of the University Health Cen-

tre, delivered a felicitation speech. The event also honoured Ms. Maya, who has been working as a security staff at the campus.

The second session of the programme began at 8.30pm, with a welcome speech by Hridhya Unni, hostel committee member and was presided by Shyni.P.S, the secretary, ladies hostel old block. The programme was inaugurated by Sreemayi Sri, secretary, Oasis Cultural Society. She delivered a talk on the topic 'The importance of equal rights without gender discrimination'. That was followed by the felicitation speech by Omana, Warden of the campus Ladies' hostel. The warden along with Sreemayi Sri honoured the staff of the ladies' hostel and also the prize distribution for the winners of poster making competition was also carried out.

The official programme of the second session came to an end by a vote of thanks by Anuja.B, hostel committee member of the new block. This was followed by the cultural programmes of the students from the hostel and also from various departments of the campus.

As UN Women announced the 2021 International Women's day theme as, "Women in leadership; Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world", we can hope for the same in the very near future and let all this be the beginning of the celebration of womanhood, every day.

Gender Talk: The Campus Litmus

Kariavattom: 'Feminism includes many other spectrums of thoughts and it is all about inclusion' said Dr Arathy Ashok, Assistant Professor, Government College, Chittoor.

She was delivering a talk titled *The Campus Litmus* organized by the Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala on the occa-

sion of International Women's Day.

Dr Arathy opined that the word 'feminism' is often received in a wrong sense in our society. She also shared some of her experiences with the students.

The one-hour program concluded with an interaction section featuring a Q&A session with the students and faculty.

New ideas for Navakeralam enrich CM @ campus

Senate hall witness youth voices

Col. Anishmon M. S.

Thiruvananthapuram: Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan's student interaction programme, titled 'Nava Keralam Yuva Keralam' was held at the University Senate Hall here on February 8. The programme, intended to gather suggestions from

P.P. Ajayakumar, Planning Commission Vice Chairman Dr. V.K. Ramachandran and other dignitaries.

Mr Pinarayi Vijayan, on his address added that the youth's ideas are not only courageous but also useful in formulating further development of the society



CM Pinarayi Vijayan speaking at the function

the students regarding the higher education sector was attended by Minister for Higher Education, Dr. K.T. Jaleel, Vice Chancellor of the University of Kerala, Dr. V.P. Mahadevan Pillai, Pro Vice Chancellor Dr.

In his conclusive address after hearing around 40 students, he signed off by adding that all the suggestions would be considered with due respect on consultation with experts in the respective sectors.

CeLK for Linguistic Justice and Preservation of Endangered Language Communities

Hanna Parveen S.

Kariavattom: The Centre for Endangered Languages of Kerala, situated within the Department of Linguistics, University of Kerala is established with an objective to preserve and promote endangered and indigenous languages which are in the verge of jeopardy. UGC has sanctioned CeLK at 8 deemed universities and central universities along with the facilities for extensive multimedia documentation with a research wing and language documentation studio to analyze and encode the speech of the narratives. The coordinator of CeLK, Dr. S. Prema, explains that the main advantage of documentation is that it can be preserved and revived and can be used for the purposes of cultural transmission and shar-



Elicitation and documentation studio at CeLK

ing important medicinal data. She also shared that tribals have an inhibition to speak their own languages. Another objective of CeLK is to change their attitude and to get them familiar with their own language and also to make primary education in the language unlike mainstream languages followed on the places like Odisha.

CeLK is provided with an air-conditioned editing lab for editing sound and visuals which has a

special UPS and server facility made available with 7 seated working lab facilities. It is also provided with a mini-conference hall that can seat up to 40 people and can be used for classes, seminar, video conferencing and live streaming. They also have hardware and software for documenting, editing, analyzing sound and visuals. The facilities are also open for documentation to all researches and faculty at the University.

PARSEC sparks young minds

R. S. Varun

Kariavattom: The science day celebrations of the Department of Physics, University Of Kerala titled *Parsec* was held between 24- 26 February in the campus. The programme was inaugurated by Dr. Sibi K.S. Assistant Professor and Head of Department of Physics, University Of Kerala. Following which an ice breaker session by ELOISE, Physics Club, Department of Physics was held.

An online treasure hunt event titled *Zicada 2021* was conducted for students of all departments where Shine Baby, a student of the Department of Archaeology emerged winner.

The highlight of the event was 'Focus', a multiple-session programme

intended to impart knowledge and practical experience regarding three major equipments related to Diffraction, Magnetometry, and Spectroscopy to 30 students from different colleges, under the title *Super 30*. The programme also featured invited lectures from eminent personalities like Shri. A V Sathish, Scientific officer, Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (Kudankulam), and Prof. Avinash Khare, Department of Physics, Savitribai Phule Pune University, who gave a special invited luminary lecture.

A trip to the Trancore Observatory, Film show and a sky walk were the key events of the final day following which the programme concluded with an address by Dr. Sibi K. S.

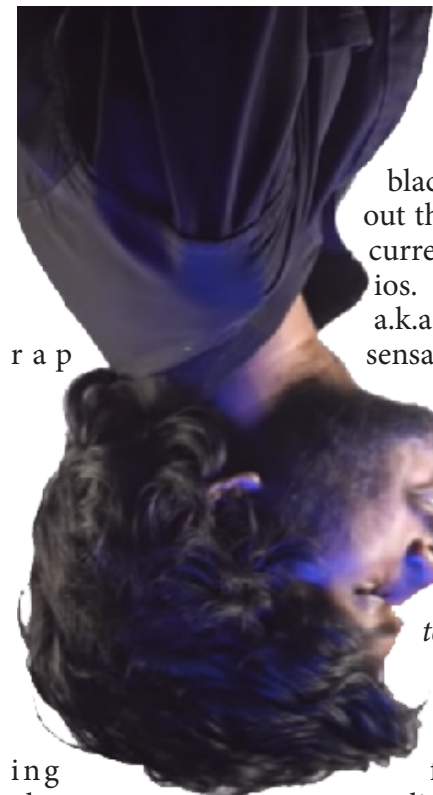
Aloha celebrates inclusiveness

Sulthana S. S.

Kariavattom: The Master of Social Work students, Department of Sociology in association with the Departments Union, University of Kerala, Kariavattom Campus, celebrated the world social work day titled Aloha on March 16.

The celebration, based on the theme 'Ubuntu: I am because we are' focussed on strengthening social solidarity and global connectedness and empowerment of the differently abled. The celebration featured a set of events including a theme dance, special talks, solidarity walk, an exhibition and sales of hand made products made by differently abled. The exhibition was conducted in association with 'wecreates', an NGO which trains and empowers the differently abled.

'I am a politician who talks through music': A conversation with Vedan



Karthika T.

A fierce young man in the black outfit, pointing out the most unpleasant current political scenarios. Hirandas Murali, a.k.a. Vedan, is the new sensation of Kerala.

'The one who picked swords owns half the land'

'The one who picked the words is anti-national, a terrorist.'

Telling the haunted tales, the 26-year-old hail from Thrissur has politics in his art. Both of his indie raps 'Voice of Voiceless' and 'Bhoomi Njan Vazhunidam' talking about the rights of the oppressed, have created waves with its intense lyrics. It is a smack on the casteist and religious divide the world has created.

Why did you choose the name Vedan?

I did not choose the name Vedan myself. I was a naughty kid, just like any other boy. So, I got this moniker 'Vedan', and nobody recognized me by my real name Hirandas. And yes, I thought I will take it as my stage name.

How was the journey from Hirandas to Vedan?

I am still in the journey from Hirandas to Vedan. I haven't reached Vedan yet because half of the things that I want to do are still incomplete. I have just started. I am on my path towards Vedan.

Rap is a music genre that is not much familiar to

the Malayali audience. So how did you develop an interest towards rap?

I have a lot of things to express to the world. When I realized my identity as a Dalit, I tried to understand the struggles my people have to face. And I realized the fact that my community is still considered as slaves by the society. Rap is just a medium I use to talk against this injustice we face.

How is the world in Vedan's point of view?

The world, in my view, is quite problematic. We live in a world where majority of humans are still treated as slaves, where there is no freedom for women, where people die out of hunger. So we talk against such problems, and try to bring changes from our small circles.

Have you come across any discrimination?

I was surrounded by discrimination all throughout my life. After a certain age, I realized the oppression that I am facing. And I was born in a colour that is visually uncomfortable to most of the people in

this society. India is also one of those countries where the highest numbers of cosmetic products are being sold. So in a country like this, I have gone through every problem that a dark-skinned, Dalit have to face.

There are many who question the necessity of SC/ST reservation claiming that casteism is not as prevalent as before. Your opinion?

People should think why reservation is still important. Casteism is still prevalent and India is a country where majority of the people face caste discrimination. So it is important for people to learn why reservation is much needed.

How do you see the current Indian political situation as a representative of the youth?

These days, youth are being very much conscious about the current Indian political scenario. The current political situation is quite sickening because there are a lot of religious and casteist discriminations happening around. I am happy

that many young guns from Kerala are raising their voice against such issues.

Looking at your social media, it seems that you have a particular fondness towards Tamil.

My mother is a Sri Lankan Tamil. So I inherited this Tamil individuality from her. My roots lie in Tamil.

To what extent have Casteless Collective and Oorali influenced you?

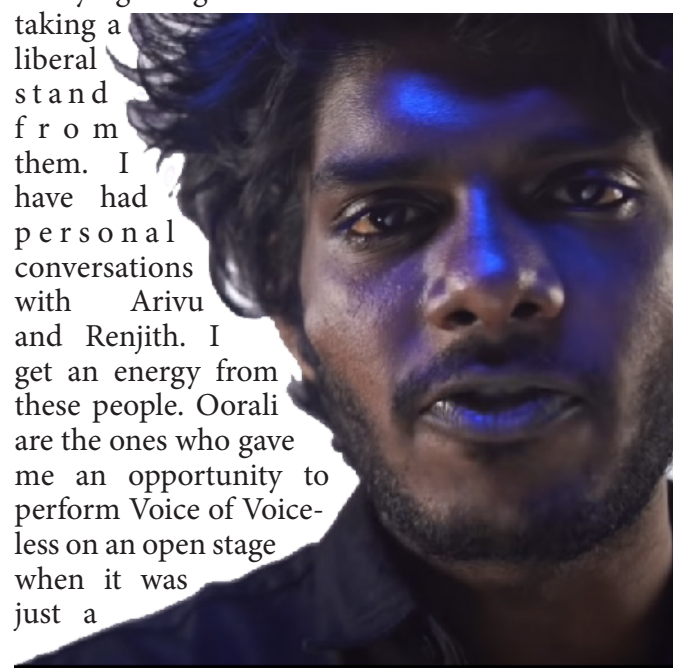
Casteless Collective is able to discuss Dalit politics with seriousness and great depth. I have learned this intense way of saying things and not

taking a liberal stand from them. I have had personal conversations with Arivu and Renjith. I get an energy from these people. Oorali are the ones who gave me an opportunity to perform Voice of Voiceless on an open stage when it was just a

hum in my mind, and I am obliged to them for that opportunity.

What is your biggest dream as a rapper?

I am not a good rapper. There are a lot who rap with better flow than I do. So I don't consider myself as a rapper. If I am not able to rap, then I will convey my politics through an other art form. I am a politician who makes music. I don't know if I have succeeded as a rapper. I think I am successful to some extent as people are giving an ear for the politics I speak.



Beyond the obstacles...

Chithra Kadambath

The power of sports in bringing people together as well as its unique ability to provide physical, social, and economical development benefits makes it the best platform for inclusion and adaptation of all types of individuals, especially to the ones belonging to the differently abled section of society.

Vinu Narayan K and Abdul Munaz K are two of them who, beyond all their physical disabilities, are using sports as a tool to answer the stigma associated with a differently abled person

being a sports enthusiast. Sports knows no disabilities, and that was the fact that fueled them realize their potential that they are not the 'disabled



Rising stars: Vinu and Munaz

ones', but the 'differently abled' ones.

Vinu, a student of the Department of Hindi, University of Kerala, Kariavattom campus. Born at Ottapalam, as the only son of his parents, he has done his schooling all over India owing to his father's army background. It was

from the sixth month of his birth that he suffered from pneumonia as a result of which his left body got paralyzed. After a treatment of around 18 years, he was able to recover a lot much. Due to all these, he was brought up in a way that always kept him reminded that his body has some disabilities. But he tried his best to get out of all those chains of restrictions, as a result of which he pursued the sport which inspired him to live. There was a person who lent him a helping hand and introduced him to the leather ball cricket matches at college level. It was during his post

graduate days that he received more exposure to cricket, by his selection to the state cricket team. He always excelled in the field of bowling inspired by his role model Lasith Malinga.

Munaz, a sociology student at the campus has been living his dream playing in the Ranji circuit since 2018, where he was appreciated for his abilities in fielding. He, with his efficiencies points out that one with a problem with his eye can also see and build his own victorious world'. Munaz was totally blind by birth, after which he was able to recover partly due to a sur-

gery at the age of two.

Interested in sports since his childhood, he always tried to get himself exposed to the field of cricket, which he considered to be his best sport. Munaz learned about blind cricket from his friends at the blind school. He practiced there for around one year and was selected to the district blind cricket team in 2010 and then to the state team in 2012 which subsequently paved his way to the national team.

His journey to the Indian cricket team was one of the best memories in his life. As a result of his meticulous hard

work, he got a golden chance to play the bilateral series held at Colombo in 2018. He also got an opportunity to be the captain of Kasaragod cricket team and the Nagesh trophy and the vice-captain of the state cricket team. He was brought to this field by several co-players and many people who were differently abled as well as some of the best cricket players for whom cricket is something more than life. He dreams about the day, when he represents the nation, just like now but as a recognizable and proud player admired by millions!

It's been a year...

"From 12 midnight, the whole country will come under complete lockdown. I ask that you please stay where you are. If we are not sincere in the curfew for 21 days then the country will fall back 21 years. For 21 days forget about venturing out. Stay home. Just do that one thing." Today, 2021 March 25, marks a year since India witnessed this hasty announcement. A year since 1.3 billion of us entered one of the strictest and most prolonged lockdowns the world saw last year. And one year later, with 159k deaths, we're the third in the table of the world's worst affected by COVID 19. And so, the question still stands, was that lockdown really worth it? Even if it was, for a country like ours, a lockdown wasn't just a solution for our new found problem, it was a whole new problem on its own.

The COVID crisis and lockdown has, in fact, widened every inequality that persists, be it the wealth gap or the education gap. And how this will reflect in the post-COVID society, is yet to be seen.

The black swan event hit the Indian work force harder than ever, or, than anyone else. When the government curbed the freedom of movement, that wasn't it for the poor. They were denied the freedom to carry out their profession, trade or occupation of their choice. They're left stagnant and unemployed for months with bare minimum and no support from the government at all. Ultimately, it was their right to life and personal liberty which was in question there. Remember those scenes of hundreds and thousands of migrant labourers walking all way to their native places? It will continue to haunt history for a while. According to the reports by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), about 14 crore lost their jobs and the unemployment rate rose to 26% by April 2020 itself. So, the question still stands, how many more years might it take for the nation and its people to recover from this?

The abrupt transition from traditional classrooms to online learning left millions behind in terms of education as well, exposing the widening digital divide in the country. The underprivileged were practically denied the right to education, which even led to student suicides in many a places. Bridging the same looks like nothing but a mammoth task in front of the government.

The lockdown also blurred the line between home and workplace with a new normal, that is, 'work from home'. For better or worse, this redefined every norm of work, workplace and working hours.

And then, India, during lockdown, wasn't just battling COVID 19. The uncertainty, unemployment and the unthinkable that kept happening, of course fuelled an increase in the number of mental health concerns in the state. The major mental health issues reported were stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, denial, anger and fear. Children and older people, frontline workers, people with existing mental health illnesses were among the vulnerable in this context. COVID-19 related suicides have also been increasingly common. Globally, measures have been taken to address mental health issues through the use of guidelines and intervention strategies. The role of social media has also been immense in this context. Confined within the four walls, people irrespective of age, wealth, caste, creed or gender was fighting severe anxiety, stress, depression and other mental health issues which can have a long term effect in the society.

"During the lockdown, we put more effort in containing the people than containing the virus" opined Lalit Kant, scientist and former head of epidemiology and communicable diseases at the ICMR. And we couldn't agree more. And, now its time to contain the repercussions of the lockdown.

the politics of words

Cheeru P.

“Why is it man made? Why can't it be people made? Why is it not human made?” Remember the video that was circulating in the social

media, where, a little kid calls out the inherent everyday sexism in our language? When we dig deeper, we can find countless examples of the problematic and divisive nature of words or, languages in general. The use of 'transgender' as a noun or 'transgendered'

as an adjective, labelling someone as homeless or an illegal immigrant instead of emphasizing that as their action or situation, frequent use of words like crazy, OCD etc. kind of, weighing down the gravity of the situation, all the prejudice we see in real life translate to language as well. And this isn't just about being politically correct, but about being more inclusive.

Language, in a way, directly reflects how a society look at things. It's not too long ago we started addressing 'differently abled' or 'specially abled' this way, instead of terms like 'handicapped', 'blind', 'deaf', 'cripple' etc. Or, a rape 'victim' as a rape 'survivor'. Or, reporting

suicides as 'death by suicide' instead of a crime that's 'committed'. In the latter cases, the language seems to put the blame on a particular individual. Arguments can still be made on how inappropriate even the new usages are, and of course, there should be. The downgrade is when we fail to notice and discuss these word politics.

It's a long way to go before we unlearn everything, and call out every casteist, sexist, racist slurs and everything offensive we consider 'harmless' jokes. But that journey is important. The less discriminatory and more inclusive the language, the better. For, time and language can reflect and influence each other.

MILLION DOLLAR PIXELS

Joel M. George

The internet is on fire as a digital exclusive artwork, Beeple's 'EVERY-DAYS: THE FIRST 5000 DAYS' has sold at Christie's Auction House for a mind-boggling sum of USD 69 million (INR 4,99,85,01,450). Many artworks have been sold for far more higher prices. But what makes this sale special is that the winning bidder is not going to receive an artwork, instead they will get an "NFT- Non-Fungible token". Last week, billionaire Elon Musk appeared to be selling a recent tweet of his as an NFT. Musk's tweet, including his caption, clip and song, was listed for sale as an NFT. Excitement around NFTs has skyrocketed during the pandemic, as enthusiasts spend enormous sums of money on artworks and other items that exist online, with some selling to tens of millions of dollars. What are NFTs? Why is everybody are going gaga over it?

In Economics, a fungible item is something with units that can be readily exchanged like money. A non-fungible asset means that it has unique properties so that it cannot be interchanged with something else. A NFT or

"Non-Fungible Token" is a 'one-of a kind' asset in the digital world that can be bought and sold like any other piece of property, but they have no tangible form of their own. Instead, it is a unit of data on a digital ledger called Blockchain, where each NFT can represent a unique digital item and thus they are not interchangeable. They are used to commodify digital creations such as digital art, videogame items, memes, and music.

In the past few months, the NFT scene has changed from a niche market to a mainstream business with heavy players. But it is common knowledge that, anybody can download any piece of digital art or music from the internet with a single click. Then what is the significance of buying NFTs by paying, huge sums of money?

When asked to explain NFTs, Duncan, founder of Nifty gateway, used this analogy: Imagine you owned a pair of expensive Air Jordans. If Nike went out of business, those sneakers wouldn't suddenly disappear from your closet. Why should digital

goods—like a Fortnite skin or an original Beeple—be any different?

More than the buzz around them, NFTs have widespread applications. They are giving content creators more power than ever before. If you are an artist, NFTs have a feature that you can enable that will pay you a percentage every time the NFT is sold or changes hands, making sure that if your work gets super popular and balloons in value, you'll

reap some of that benefit. If you

are a collector, NFTs work like a speculative asset that can be sold for a profit, given, its value goes up. And the benefit of buying NFTs also include supporting the artists you like. Nike has patented a method to verify sneakers' authenticity using a NFT system, which it calls 'Cryptokicks'. WISEKey International Holding, a leading cybersecurity, AI, and IoT company, announced the development of its NFT application built on highly-scalable blockchain infrastructure that secures, authenticates and proves ownership of digital and tangible assets.

Is this a bubble?, a question to be reckoned. David Gerard, author of 'Attack of the 50-foot Blockchain', said he saw NFTs as buying "official collectables", similar to trading cards. "There are some artists absolutely making bank on this stuff... it's just that you probably won't," he warned. "The same guys who've always been at it, trying to come up with a new form of worthless magic bean that they can sell for money".

As opposed to the proof-of-state blockchain used by Bitcoin, most of the NFTs use less efficient a proof-of-work blockchain. A proof-of-work blockchain is a form of cryptographic zero-knowledge in which one party (prover) proves to the other (verifier) that a certain amount of computational effort has been expended for some purpose of mining.

The choices we make in the NFT scenario will have long-lasting consequences. The eight figure auctions prove that the players have heard it. But, are we paying a worse climate crisis, for art we pretend to own? Or, are we going to build upon this technology to a sustainable future? Perhaps, we'll find out in the coming years.



THE HIMALAYAN CRISIS

THE INDIA CHINA BORDER CRISIS: PROGNOSIS AND WAY AHEAD

Col. M. Swathi Kumar

Chinese government on 10 February 2021 had announced a phased withdrawal of both the armies from the Pangong Tso area in Ladakh (J&K) after 10 months of remaining in an eyeball to eyeball situation. The crisis erupted in the midst of COVID pandemic which even saw unprecedented violent clashes unseen in the last 45 years. The savage episode on 15th June in Galwan Valley resulted in the loss of lives on both sides.

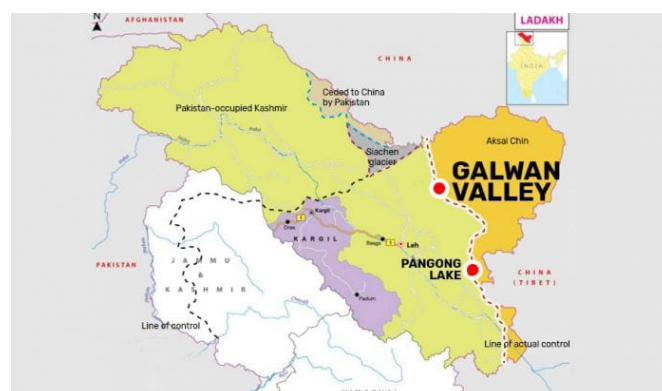
The focus of the present crisis is in sectors of Pangong Tso Lake area (north and south banks), Depsang, Hot Springs, and Gogra Heights. Standoffs at the culmination point of respective patrolling points have been a common feature of the border management on the LAC (Line of Actual Control). On 15th June a border standoff at the Galwan Valley spiralled into a bloody clash in which Indian Army lost 20 gallant soldiers. This clash resulted in mutual deployment of the armies at Pangong Tso Lake at the edge of the Chinese perceived claim line. Indian Army

in response carried out a surprise action in last week of August occupied strategic heights on the South Bank in the Shivalik ranges as a leverage to the belligerent posturing by the Chinese on the northern bank. This action drove home the point that the hostilities will not be painless and that the communist leadership should weigh its options with care. This move also signalled to China that the Indian army is not the Indian Army of 1962 in terms of equipment, morale & leadership.

Genesis and the Reasons for Present Crisis

The Genesis of the border crisis of 2020 predates the situation as a result of differing perceptions LAC since 1962 conflict. In the last decade there were numerous border standoffs the last one being in Doklam in 2017. The aim of these probing actions was to establish themselves as the sole Asian power. Some analysts have opined that the plausible reasons for this aggressive action by China in the spring of 2020 are as follows. Firstly, the trifurcation of J&K in Aug 2019. Secondly

the relentless infrastructure development by the Indian Govt in Eastern Ladakh to include the 220km Darbuk-Shyok-DBO Road. Thirdly India's continued opposition to China's ambitious Belt & Road Initia-



tive (BRI) and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is a threat to the sovereignty of our nation. Fourthly, India's decision to back demands for an international inquiry into origins of COVID in China.

Tackling the Situation: 'All of the Nations' Approach

'Unprecedented Challenges require Extraordinary efforts', hence the government adopted the 'All of the Nations' approach undertaking various economic and diplomatic measures alongside the unwavering border

posture adopted by the armed forces. On the trade & Commerce front it had banned 59 Chinese apps including Tik Tok, blocked its road & infrastructure investments, curbed Chinese investments in key sec-

tors including 5G trials. On the diplomatic front India has shed its inhibition and aligned with the like-minded countries to form credible and potent alliances particularly with QUAD countries (India, USA, Australia & Japan). These measures further strengthened the resolve of the Indian army and it deployed additional reserve troops, including artillery guns & tanks. At the National level the requisite changes in policies along with matching budgetary allocations have been made to make the country self-reliant (Atmanirbhar) in various spheres and reduce

our dependence on China. All these combined efforts clearly indicated in no unambiguous terms that the country as a whole is prepared for a long haul, being spearheaded by the troops of the Indian army.

After ten rounds of corps commander level talks both the nations on 10th Feb announced the phased disengagement in the Pangong Tso area. The disengagement and withdrawal from other areas were to be discussed in subsequent meetings. The same was conveyed by the defence minister in the parliament, much to the criticism of the opposition parties which have alleged that it is a blunder to vacate the Heights occupied on the South Bank without negotiating the disengagement of the troops in the Depsang and other sectors.

Way Ahead

Many political observers and strategic thinkers have opined that there the two key factors which enabled the current truce are as follows:-

First, change of guard in USA and President Biden's endeavour to mend his relationships

with China and foster and strengthen the ties with India.

Second, the strategic alliances and the active role played by the QUAD countries to dominate the South China Sea posed a serious threat to the hegemony of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The disengagement and withdrawal of troops from the Pangong Tso Lake is a win-win situation for both the nations to convey to their domestic audiences. However, the proximity of Chinese troops in the other sectors including Depsang, Gogra Heights and Hot spring areas is a matter of concern. India needs to be watchful of giving any further concessions to the Chinese government both diplomatically and on economic front before any kind of lasting solutions including status quo ante is achieved in these areas. Needless to say the Indo-China ties are destined to be dynamic and an uneasy calm is bound to prevail for times to come. The Dragon and Elephant will jostle for space and continue to confront, compete and cooperate selectively in the overall interest of their nations.

Ragging: The Hidden Evil behind the campus limelight

Bharath Mohan

A mix of hope, fear and anxiety goes on in a fresher's mind on the first day of college. Even though ragging is much condemned upon nowadays; it is still considered as a college tradition or a rite of passage rather than a crime. Everyone talks about the after effects or consequences of ragging. No one talks about the motive behind it or how it can be reduced systematically. The definition of ragging is: "Any act of physical or mental

abuse (including bullying and exclusion) targeted at another student (fresher or otherwise) on the ground of colour, race, religion, caste, ethnicity, gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, appearance, nationality, regional origins, linguistic identity, place of birth, place of residence or economic background.

The history of the best educational institutions in India is blackened with traumatic cases of brutal ragging, especially in Engineering and Medical Colleges. Ragging is an old and

cruel practice, prevalent since the British era. Although, initially, it was limited to English colleges and universities eventually, it spread to Indian educational system as well. It started in its mild form in the 8th century AD during the Olympics in Greece. Later the armed forces of several countries and several student organizations in Europe and the USA started practicing this ritual. During World War I, ragging underwent a massive transformation. Students who returned from the war and re-joined college

brought with them the techniques of severe ragging practiced in army camps.

The most common psychological motive behind this is some sort of inferiority complex. It derives a sadistic pleasure or showing off power, authority or superiority by the seniors over their juniors.

Each individual is different and how each person reflects upon each incident is different. Some people consider this as a fun way of interaction or a rite of passage. While some are left traumatised forever and

left with crippling psychological trauma and post-traumatic stress disorders due to which promising careers are nipped in the bud.

Educational institutes must take measures to sensitize students on the hazards of ragging. A policy of 'Zero Tolerance' on ragging is essential. All students need to have a "Ragging Free" record as a prerequisite for completing their academic qualifications. Every educational institution should have an in-Campus Counsellor. It can host various activities which help college

students to break the ice.

Following a Supreme Court order, a National Anti-Ragging Helpline was created to help the victims and take action in cases of ragging. The main feature is that the complaints can be registered anonymously.

Let's hope for a better tomorrow and a time when students are able to study in institutions without fear in their minds. In order to have able-bodied and healthy-minded future citizens of India, we need to eradicate such practices.

70mm to 5 inch

Hari Krishnan M. S.

A roller coaster ride that is continuing for more than 100 years. The ride of a religion, a religion which can bring people together across states, castes, age. A religion which can make emotions of people fall together and predominantly the religion what most of the people follow blindly. The religion called 'Cinema'.

The big leap in technology is not a new issue in cinema. Cinema evolved from black and white to color to high level visual effects with which a full fledged 150 minute movie can be made with the use of computer generated images.

Similarly, the places where we watched the movies also changed as time passed by. The very

old single screen cinema theatres to new multiplex theatres. There were competitors for theatres as well. The television which has a whole lot of privatized channels for entertainment is giving many options for the viewers to VCR's which has become a memory now. VCRs helped in watching the movie of our own choice at whatever time we wanted to VCD's to DVD's to the Blu-Ray to the heart-throb OTT platforms. OTT platforms are growing as each day pass by. This created a degree of convenience which theatres cannot provide the viewers with. The viewers can watch the film they want at their convenience place whenever they need.

So how can theatres stand by itself when OTT platforms provide you with this much con-

venience? This question should be given a really good thought. Is only a good story enough? Viewers can watch a good story on a mobile

for big screen experiences. The Baahubali series, and the Marvel universe are just some examples for them. None of the film lovers would like to

get movies but the ambience of a cinema hall is the deserving and the best part for these kind of movies.

Collective Viewing Experience

Watching a Rajinikanth movie waiting for Thalaiva to appear on screen for a very long time and with the bang bang BGM, he arrives. The emotions, the cheer, the crowd and the entire theatre erupts which cannot be made in front of a mobile screen.

These changes have already started happening in our country whereas in Hollywood it started years before. The cinema to be experienced in theatres as the technology has advanced in a huge way, the movie should provide a more to the audience. The more the more is provided, More the rush to the theatres shall continue.



but what can it make to attract the viewers to theatres then? The only way to get people to the theatres was to add more than the natural story telling. As many opinions said, there are 3 main ways to make people get to the theatres.

Big Screen Watches

There are movies which are released only

watch those films in a 5 inch mobile screen as it demands the 70mm quality. These movies can never be enjoyed in mobile screens.

Immersive Experience

Horror genres and paranormal science fiction movies can be brought under this one. These movies may not normally be a big bud-

MOVIE REVIEW

A technically refreshing, 'half-baked' movie that still manages to entertain

Jomon P.

Debutant director Jofin T Chacko's 'The Priest', starring Mammootty in the lead role, is a movie that you must watch at the theaters. However, that doesn't mean that the movie is on par with the other classics of the same genre that have been made in Malayalam cinema. Megastar Mammootty plays the titular role of the priest, Father Carmen Benedict, who also works as an investigator. One day, with the help of a girl (Saniya Iyyappan) he comes across a series of suicides in the Alatt family, which he suspects to be murders. This leads him to young Ameya Gabriel (Baby Monica), who seems to have

a few mysteries of her own.

The Priest has the making and quality to become one of the finest horror-thrillers (an underused genre in Ma-



layalam cinema) well, at least in the first half. Unfortunately, the latter half seems tedious and repetitive. The first few sequences of the second half tries to get the movie back into track,

however, a sloppy and predictable narrative fails to deliver a desired impact in the climax. The backstory too, falls short of a convincing end that would have justified the drama you had watched unravel. Mammootty performed flawlessly, alongside Manju Warrier, and Nikhila Vimal. Baby Monica, pulled off the vulnerability and emotion of the character with ease.

The Priest stays true to its genre and includes great visualization and performances that makes you glued to the big screen. If you're a fan of a dark thriller with horror elements and can forgive the narrative drawbacks, The Priest is a perfect pick for the weekend.

Blending colours of heritage and flick

Karthika T.

Payyanur: The International Folklore Film Festival of Kerala (INFF-FOK) concluded on 21st February of 2021. The event organized by Kerala Folklore Academy was held on the 19th, 20th and 21st at the Payyanur Shanthi Cinemas. The programme was aimed to showcase the significance of folklore all over the world, as it is considered a common asset to all. Screening folk arts and culture through a new age medium like film and passing it on from one generation is a necessity today.

World films including those from Latin America, Africa and regional movies like Kummatti, Thottam, Kari etc. were the highlights of the fest. It also featured programmes by renowned folk-art groups in India. 'Manganiyar Folk' from

the dunes of Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, one of the most soulful and purest forms of music was performed by Deene Khan on the second day. Considering themselves as the descendants of the Rajputs, they are known as the folk musicians of the Thar desert. Their songs are passed down through generations as a form of the oral history of the desert.

One of the finest sounds in the Indian indie scenes, 'Gauley Bhai' also took over the stage with their folk-rock. The collective formed in 2017 is an attempt to preserve the alienating folk art and culture from the present society.

Such fests, if regularly conducted would surely attract lots of international attention to our regional art forms, marking Kerala's prominence in the world cultural map.



The Meme Culture; Impact of Memes in Kerala

Jomon P.

There was a time when “Dashamoolam Damu” and “Vasu Annan” trolls ruled the social media, particularly in Kerala. Memes are a global phenomenon and each meme and its content varies with different context, area and culture. In India, you may not find another community like the Malayalee that pretty much speaks the language of memes when they have to express something using humour. Art forms like ‘Chakyaar Koothu’ and ‘Ottam Thullal’ which uses satire, social criticism, humour, and sarcasm were originated in Kerala, as a tool to criticize the rulers and kings of those times and to spread social messages. Being one of the most influential tools in the 21st century, memes or trolls are widely used to en-

ertain and inform the general public focusing on humour as well as the contemporary socio-political issues.

Meme (Troll) culture in Kerala

One of the reasons why the meme/troll pages are popular in Kerala, is due to Malayali's love for sarcasm and humour. Adding to the fact that, the way memes engage or relate with the people, with topical subjects with an essence of humour are always accepted by the general public.

Meme pages stand for social causes too. The 2018 Kerala floods saw many meme/troll pages temporarily stopping their memes and humorous content and shifting focus on spreading awareness among the general public.

Through their information and accessibility, they were able to provide information on people stranded due to the rain and the requirements in the relief camps. They also did their part in educating people on handling the post-flood scenarios by resuming posting related content on their pages.

Memes (meme pages) really gained their momentum during the COVID-19 period, as they came as a silver lining to people who struggled with mental health issues like depression and loneliness. When the pandemic forced the channels to resort only to informational content and the lockdown resulted in theatres being shut down, People were

able to spent time by enjoying or creating meme content which they saw relatable, informative and entertaining. This reflected in the further growth and popularity of meme culture in Kerala resulting in huge reach and popularity of meme pages irrespective of the content and language.

Popular meme platforms in Kerala

Each meme pages vary based on its content and nature of memes. Some meme pages focus on political correctness or political information, whereas others may focus on films or related content. Then there are pages who focuses on every aspects of the society. There are several social media platforms or meme pages that produce and posts content on a daily basis based on socio-political events. International Chalu Union (ICU), Troll Malayalam, Troll Mollywood, Offensivent Malayalam Memes,

Dankmemes Malayalam etc, just to name a few. These pages come up with memes (depicting an incident or about a public figure) which are of sarcastic nature within minutes the news breaks.

The history of ICU (a page having around 900k+ likes and followers) goes back to the days of social networking site, Orkut, it was started as a college group and later migrated into a Facebook page.

Kerala's meme pages or content is not limited only in Malayalam language, since the Malayali audience knows and enjoy pop culture in and around our society, there are also meme pages which produce meme content in and around the world. Dank Memes Malayalam (DMM) and Offensivent Malayalam Memes (OMM) are two English meme pages from Kerala which also publishes humorous contents and is the first of its kind.

Even the Kerala police uses memes or trolls as a platform for awareness to the public. The Kerala Police's page is highly

responsive to messages and has been in the forefront during Kerala floods rescue operations. The friendly replies given by the admin of the page is helping the Kerala police department to gain acceptance among the public.

However, the line between a joke and being hurtful is very thin. There have been many cases and allegations of defamation against memes and meme pages. Memes are also known to directly or indirectly affect the persons or events involved with them. So, there is a need for constant evaluation and analysis, mostly on its content, since memes are a part of our lives and are a tool that can be propagated anywhere around the world.

Be that as it may, there is no denying the fact that the average Malayali's tolerance and ability to take a joke is the reason for internet memes being popular in this state, and will continue to flourish.

BOOK REVIEW

Shuggie Bain - A Honest, Brutal, and Gritty Tale

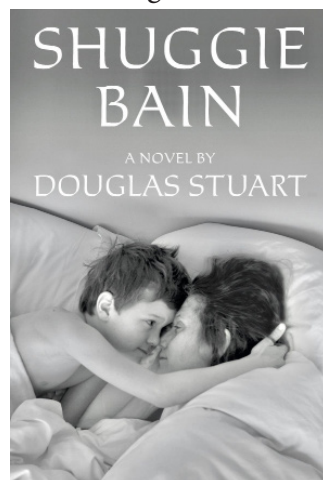
Hanna Parveen S.

Scottish American writer Douglas Stewart Booker Prize winning debut novel Shuggie Bain is a tragicomedy semi autobiographical tale published in 2020 that tells us the bare experiences of poverty abuse and alcoholism in Scotland and texture revised Glasgow and its surroundings. It is a tragic portrayal of growing in a government imposed poverty that is capable of processing both visceral anger and human warmth at the flip of a page.

The love and loy-

alty of Shuggie to his alcoholic mother Agnes and her brave attempt to fight those problems is a heart wrenching part of the novel where there is deprivation there is also humour and where there is cruelty, there is also care. Their enduring love, the life and death of Agnes is shown through the eyes of Shuggie, where he never gives up and lives a life that must have been unbearable. The tone is surprising and sentimental which stops into a mushy swirl. It is a vividly descriptive novel with touches of dark humour and the characterization and

seen setting both captures place and time. Even though it can be a



hard read, the story will stay longer in our minds. The writing enables us to see the poor estates and bleak lives in vivid detail.

It is sure that we would still be at a hollow emptiness feeling after finishing the book.

The Author gives a deep cut through the layers of the complex relationship between Shuggie and Agnes in an resolute manner and how he hopes to save his mother from her dark side and his battles on his life desperate to the Glaswegian sense of masculinity. This book takes us to a plethora of emotions which hooks our minds into lots of questions like - Will Shuggie have a normal childhood? Will Agnes get a release from her

unending cycle of alcoholism and poverty? and why didn't Shuggie abandon his mother like his other siblings and own father did.

Shuggie Bain is a tough novel with 430 pages of blistering slice of reality. It is a highly relevant story in current scenario especially for those who believe that politics does not affect common people. It's a reality check of how politics at the high-level can trickle down to the lower section in the society and destroyed families, childhood, and dreams.

Shuggie Bain is set in the backdrop of Thatch-

erism era, which was typically characterised by the wholesale privatisation, which further led to the vanish of government subsidies and imparted the working-class. This industrial massacre in Scotland paved way for a society that struggled with mass unemployment, drugs alcohol, violence and prostitution.

Hard to read but very engaging. In a nutshell, we could say that the novel is brilliantly portrayed, flawless depiction and raw characters in a story weaved with intimacy, intensity, delicacy and beauty.

SPORTS
ROUNDUP

Bharath Mohan
Hari Krishnan M.S.

After a relentless February, cricket shifted to fifth gear in March with teams and players from all over the world stepping on the ground. The final test of England and India took place on March 4th at newly inaugurated Narendra Modi Stadium. India won the series (3-1) and the *Man of the Series* was bagged by Ravichandran Ashwin. The two nations locked horns in five T20Is in the same venue, where the series was won by India (3-2).

The Afghanistan vs. Zimbabwe test series was drawn (1-1) where Sean Williams was awarded

the *Player of the Series*.

The T20 series between both the nations was whitewashed by Afghanistan (3-0). Karim Janat of Afghanistan was adjudged the *Player of the Series*.

The Road Safety World Series, conducted to raise awareness about the road safety. The series featured notable retired players from India, England, Sri Lanka, West Indies, South Africa, Australia and Bangladesh. India Legends defeated Sri Lanka Legends by 14 runs in the finals to clinch the title on 21st March. The iconic Sachin Tendulkar emerged leading run scorer of the Tournament.

Football

Mumbai City FC (MCFC) emerged champions of the Indian Super League, having defeated ATK Mohun Bagan (ATK) in the finals held in Fatorda Stadium, Goa on 13th March. MCFC were also the winners of the League Winners Shield. Thus, Mumbai City became the first club to win the ISL championship title as well as the premiers. Bipin Singh scored a late-winner to lead MCFC to their maiden Indian Super League (ISL) title.

ATK's Roy Krishna, was adjudged the Hero of the League while FC

Goa's Igor Angulo

won the Golden Boot. ATK's Arindam Bhattacharya piped Mumbai City's Arindam Singh to win the Golden Glove award, while Lalengmawia of the NorthEast United was adjudged the Emerging Player of the League

Premier league

The goals of Bruno Fernandes and Luke Shaw's helped Manchester United trump Manchester City in the derby.

Manchester City tops the league with 71 points, with Manchester United in 2nd position with 57 points. With Leicester

City coming in 3rd position.

Serie A

Inter Milan tops the league with 65 points. With AC Milan within close range, with 59 points and Juventus in 3rd position with 55 points.

Champions league

Recently, the Champions League draw for both the quarterfinals and semi-finals took place. Chelsea, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich,

and Manchester City found out their potential routes to the final.

Real Madrid will face Liverpool in the Champions League quarterfinals.

Tennis

Novak Djokovic wins historic ninth Australian Open title to become the second player in history to lift nine trophies in a single Grand Slam. Japan's Naomi Osaka defeated USA's Jennifer Brady to clinch the title.

Daria Kasatkina the former world No. 10 becomes the first Russian woman to win the St. Petersburg open.

CARTOON CORNER



Concept : Jomon P | Art : Hanna Parveen S.

R.S. Varun

13 April 2013 was the date when an 17-year old Sanju Samson had his first knock in the IPL for Rajasthan Royals. There has been no turning back for him since then as he rose to captaincy for the same team. Similar is the case with Kerala cricket as a whole. Even though S. Sreesanth had made his debut in international cricket years before it was Sanju Samson with his exploits who made Kerala cricket a topic of discussion again. It is slowly gaining momentum again. Thanks to the recently concluded Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (VHT) which saw the rise of a few more superstars from Kerala cricket. With the likes of Mohammed Azharuddeen, Vishnu Vinod and Sachin baby bag-

ging contracts with IPL teams, it is sure that Kerala's rise in the cricketing circuit is gaining new heights.

Things were not the same for Kasargodean Mohammed Azharuddeen till 18 February where he could tick off one of the items off his wish list, to represent an IPL team. The 26-year-old namesake of former Indian skipper Mohammad Azharuddin made heads turn with his 54 ball 137 vs Mumbai during SMAT, was indeed a game changer for his life as well. For someone hailing from the remotest parts of Kerala and having lost his parents at a very young age, brought up by his siblings, his story is too inspirational for the youngsters to emulate.

The inclusion of Kerala domestic stalwarts like Sachin Baby, Jalaj Saxe-

na, K.M Asif, and Vishnu Vinod, and the half Malayali veteran Robin Uthappa to mainstream IPL teams brings pride to the Kerala cricketing fraternity as a whole. Now all these players long for is a permanent inclusion in the playing eleven.

No write about Kerala cricket shall be concluded without mentioning the contributions of the Indian internationals Tinu Yohannan and S. Sreesanth whom in fact marked a prominent spot for Kerala in the cricketing map with their hard work and perseverance, despite fighting the regionalism and bias during their peak times.

The role of Kerala Cricket Association (KCA) should not be forgotten, for their efforts to build a better cricketing infrastructure across

Kerala, like building domestic level grounds all across different districts of Kerala and maintaining a world class international stadium, which in turn is an expensive affair. The attempts they have been taking to conduct regional leagues and bringing in Senior and A-team international matches is commendable and helpful in bringing up new talents in the international arena, or at least till the IPL. However, the recent criticisms regarding its Central Kerala bias has gained strength due to its loose stance in the recent army recruitment rally issue which led to the loss of a India-South Africa Women's ODI series to Lucknow. Let us hope the association comes of all the brickbats against them to grow stronger in the national scene.

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