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# KU to Partner in EU Funded Project

Swathikrishna M.  
Thiruvananthapuram

The University of Kerala has been nominated as a partner in the European Union funded Ecomarine Project. As a part of the project, the department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries will receive a project support fund of €1,10,427 (nearly One crore).

Ecomarine Project is an international venture for networking universities, to work on specific projects. It focuses on improving the management and operation of marine conservation. University of Cyprus,



The Ecomarine Project Team in Spain

which coordinates the project is collaborating with higher education institutions in India and Malaysia. The project aims to conduct specific researches in the field of

marine conservation and facilitate the establishment of marine laboratories in higher education institutions. The project emphasizes on 3 major areas of research. Ocean mon-

itoring by using satellite data, remote sensing and drones is one area of focus. Ocean monitoring through remote sensing simply means capturing and analyzing images of

the ocean via satellites and aerial imagery.

The research aims to document the amount of microplastics in the coastal regions, specifically in west coast shores of Kera-

la and Lakshadweep. The third goal is to examine the health of marine ecosystem by blue carbon monitoring.

Blue carbon refers to the amount of carbon dioxide captured by the ocean and coastal ecosystems. The first phase of training took place in Spain and the second phase will be conducted in Greece.

"We have great hopes from the project. It intends to develop a marine laboratory and impart training and capacity development of researchers," said Dr. Biju Kumar, Head of the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries.

## An Endeavour to Nurture Young Talent

Edna Joseph  
Thiruvananthapuram

Varnachirakukal, a cultural fest organized by the Women and Child Development Department for children living in Child Care Institutions, was held at the Government Women's College, Vazhuthacaud from 20th to 22nd January. The event was inaugurated by the Health Minister, Veena George. Several cultural and literary events were held at five different venues on all the three days of the festival. The participants were divided into sub-junior, junior and senior categories.

A total of 22 competitions, including group dance, oppana, fancy dress, skit, folk song, mappila pattu, pencil sketch, clay modelling, drawing, story, poetry and essay writing were conducted. Pottery making was demonstrated by artists from the Kerala Arts and Crafts Village, Kovalam. A Tech Fest introducing futuristic technologies was the major highlight of the programme.

The children were acquainted with virtual reality and augmented reality by the Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP). 3D printing, robotics, holograms and other advanced technologies were also introduced. The enthusiasm of the participants and audience added vibrance to the events.

## Data Protection Bill, The question of privacy

Swathikrishna M.

Three months after withdrawing the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill from the Lok Sabha, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has drafted a revamped legislation.

The draft was put up for public consultation until 17 December, 2022 and the final version is expected to be tabled in the budget session of Parliament in 2023. The Bill was first tabled in the Lok Sabha in 2019, when the opposition raised several concerns.

During that time the Supreme Court had unanimously declared right to privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Later, the Bill was sent

to a Joint Parliamentary Committee which suggested recommendations. Consequently, the Ministry would have to redraw the contours of the legislation'. The Bill outlines the rights and duties of 'digital nagriks' or citizen while laying down the process and rules of data collection when it comes to companies.

The revised Bill addresses several sticking points in the previous one which were opposed by the global tech companies and caused an industry pushback. The purpose of the legislation, as mentioned in the draft is to provide for the processing of digital personal data in a manner that recognizes both the right of an individual to protect



their personal data and the need to process personal data for lawful purposes.

The entire Bill is based on seven key principles based around the data economy, data accuracy, storage limitations, data safety and the purpose of data collection.

The Bill also imposes heavy penalties for violations of any provisions of the legislation which will be decided by the Data Protection Board of India designated under the new law. However, the orders

of the Board can be challenged in a High Court. The IT ministry has stated that all these principles have served as the foundation of personal data protection legislation in a number of jurisdictions.

It also said that the actual implementation of such law has allowed the emergence of a more comprehensive understanding and personal data protection that balances individual rights, public interests and ease of doing business, especially for start-ups.

# Rendezvous with a Visionary

*Dheena Dasthageer is an IAS officer of the 2021 batch from Thiruvananthapuram. She is currently working in the Odisha Cadre. In conversation with **Aziya Shammad**, Dheena recalls her preparation journey and talks of her aspirations as a new entrant to the service.*

## 1. What was your most memorable moment of LBSNAA training?

The duration of my training at LBSNAA was 9 months, of which the first three months of training was a foundation course (FC), common to all civil service trainees. Each day was a memorable one, filled with new learning experiences. Bharat Darshan, a 45 day pan India tour, was especially mesmerizing. During the FC, we had a Himalayan trek. We also visited a village in the Balrampur district of Uttar Pradesh. During the training period, I met many people from different walks of life. The beauty and climate of Mussoorie in Uttarakhand was breathtaking.

## 2. What changes have you noticed in yourself during your IAS journey?

I have witnessed many positive changes within myself. Being in the public sphere, I realised the importance of patient listening, which is an important aspect of good communication.

## 3. Can you mention one remarkable aspect of working in Eastern India?

I have been in Odisha for the past 5 months. It is a beautiful state which offers various opportunities in administration. The Government of Odisha has contributed immensely to the development of sports, especially hockey. I got the opportunity to be a part of the Men's Hockey World Cup hosted by Odisha at Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. It was a great experience for me.

## 4. What similarities did you notice between Kerala and Odisha?

Odisha is a coastal state like Kerala. There are many similarities in the cuisines. We both are fish and rice lovers and use mustard and curry leaves in our food. Hence, I didn't feel any difference. In fact, Odisha has become a home to me now.

## 5. What do you love the most about being a female IAS officer?

Being a woman officer, there are many areas



Dheena Dasthageer IAS

where I can work more. We can hear and understand certain sections of the society much better. I can put my effort there a bit more.

## 6. What do you think of as the most essential qualities of an IAS officer?

Since I'm a new entrant to the service, I think it is too early for me to answer this question. It can be better answered by someone with more experience. But I humbly feel that one should always strive to be a public servant of the 'civil' kind. While working for the people, one has to listen to them and make timely and carefully considered decisions. Apart from that, one has to be humane, humble, patient, and attentive.

## 7. Did you face any challenges at work?

I am now in my probation phase. Hence, I'm getting many opportunities to know closely about the various aspects of administration. In this phase, I'm focusing more on the challenges an officer can face on the ground. One challenge for me is learning to speak Odiya. I am satisfied with my progress as now I can read, write and understand the language, and even speak a little.

## 8. How has technology influenced the sphere of administration?

Since administration is a part of society, it changes as the society progresses. One change has been e-governance. It has made many procedures simple, effective and hassle free service. This has ensured transparency and accountability in governance.

# Understanding 'Period Poverty'

Alisha Peter

Menstrual equity is not a luxury but a basic necessity. According to the World Bank, over 300 million women menstruate around the world every day. Around 500 million lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

Menstruators are forced to resort to unhygienic alternatives. Makeshift products like rags, hay, ash can take a toll on their physical and mental health. Scotland made history as the first nation to guarantee free universal access to sanitary products.

It is essential that when we talk about period poverty; we remember that menstruation is not just a woman's rights issue.

Not all menstruators are women, and not all women menstruate. Non-binary, trans men, and other gender-diverse individuals can also experience menstruation. Thus, we need to widen the circle of research to help people facing the consequences of this issue. Period poverty refers to the lack of access to menstrual hygiene

products and education to certain sections of the population, often due to financial constraints.

Poor menstrual hygiene can lead to severe health risks like Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI), Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs), Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), future birth complications and even infertility.

Affordable menstrual products should be a human rights issue. Even subsidizing these products would be a great help to the low-income groups. In Scotland, 1 out of 4 girls have experienced period poverty.

The Scottish Parliament unanimously passed The Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act 2021, which guarantees access to free menstrual hygiene products from assigned local authorities and education providers.

The Scottish Government has set the standard for other countries by eradicating the taboo and economic vulnerability surrounding menstruation.

Will other countries follow in their footsteps?

## PRODIGY 14.0: The Economist's Campus

Uthara S. Karyavattom

The 14th edition PRODIGY, the annual fest conducted by the Department of Economics, was held on 11th and 12th January, 2023. The programme was inaugurated by Dr Vasuki IAS, Labour Commissioner, on 11th January.

More than 250 students from various colleges across Kerala participated in the event. A total of 9 events were conducted

ed in two days. Every event offered attractive prizes ranging from 3k to 10k. The competition events included the PRODIGY-personality contest, quiz contest, Treasure hunt, best economist, SWA.LE; investigative journalist, channel surfing, IPL auction, Scrap Bazar and The Cosmopolitan. The fest was kick-started with a penalty shootout at the Centre Circle of the campus on 9th January.

## Legislative Assembly Becomes Reader's Paradise

Uthara S. Thiruvananthapuram

The capital city hosted the International Book Festival between 12th and 15th January, 2023.

The fair was held at the Kerala Legislative Assembly in connection with the centenary celebrations of the Assembly library. It was inaugurated by the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Bhairavan, an elephant, greeted the

visitors at the fair on the inaugural day. The festival was well organised and worth watching. The major highlight was the inclusion of the general public.

The fair covered a vast area with a plethora of books from popular publishers like Mathrubhumi, Malayala Manorama, DC books, National Book Trust etc. A total of 124 national and international publishing

homes participated in the festival.

Publications of various books and magazines was held on the venue. Book lovers from all over the city arrived to experience in the wonder of books.

The book fair was organized at the ground floor of the Assembly complex. It is a five storey building with three underground floors. There were sessions in the

viewer's gallery where officials explained the functions and features of the Legislative Assembly to the visitors. The Central Hall is the most elegant and majestic, with ornamental teak and rosewood paneling.

The building provides a visual treat with the elegant lighting during the nights. There were demonstrations of the book fair outside the main gate.

# Different Art Center: The Living Embodiment of Magic

Edna Joseph

Thiruvananthapuram

'A life with love is magic'; says the opening message as one steps inside the school for children with special abilities at Magic Planet.

Located in Kazhakkootam, Thiruvananthapuram Different Art Center (DAC) was launched by Magic Academy, in association with Kerala Social Security Mission, Government of Kerala.

The project aims to empower differently abled children through a combination of education, training in different art forms and a platform to showcase their talents.

Different Art Center has seven performance venues, each dedicated to the training and exhibition of a specific art form. Beethoven Bungalow is the stage for music performances, where differently abled singers enthrall the visitors with their music. Jaleo Mahal is



A live instrument performance at Different Art Centre

the space for dance performers, while Angelo's Artree nurtures those who have a passion for painting. Camille Cascade is for the ones who have a taste for acting, cinematography and editing.

Scientia, a project launched by Magic Planet in collaboration with the Western

University of Health Sciences, California, is dedicated to promoting scientific research by differently abled children.

Charisma, a platform to provide employment to the mothers who accompany their children, is another crowning accomplishment of DAC. They are

trained in skills like tailoring, candle making and other handicrafts. This enables the mothers to earn a living from the sale of handmade products.

Different Art Center was inaugurated on 7th November 2019 by the Chief Minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan. The genesis of this venture was

the establishment of Mpower, a group of 10 children with disabilities, who received special training in magic. They became the brand ambassadors of Anuyatra, a campaign launched by the Kerala government in 2017, for transforming the state to a disabled-friendly one.

## An ever expanding venture

DAC currently trains 200 students. The ultimate aim is to provide them with employment and facilitate their social integration.

With this purpose in mind, the Universal Empowerment Centre (UEC) was set up. It consists of three theatres; Magic of Darkness, a stage for the visually challenged, Magic of Silence, for the hearing impaired and Magic of Miracle, for the performers with locomotor disability.

UEC is equipped with a specialised Therapy Centre which provides therapy to 8 children every day. There are eight departments; occupation therapy, sensory integration, dental, physiotherapy, psychotherapy, audio, speech and virtual reality.

All services are provided free of cost. UEC also houses Different Sports Centre, Horticulture Therapy and Research Centre.

Photo : Bibin Asok

## Why do Courts need vacation?

Edna Joseph

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju recently made a statement regarding the 'long vacation' of courts and the 'inconvenience it caused to petitioners'.

This was followed by an announcement from the Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud that no vacation Benches would be available in the Supreme Court during the winter break. This reignited a debate on whether the courts should close for vacations considering the staggering load of pending cases.

The Supreme Court of India works for around 190-195 days a

year. The High Courts function for roughly 210 days, and trial courts for 245 days.

The apex court has an annual summer vacation of seven weeks, along with a week-long break each for Dussehra and Diwali and two weeks during winter. During this time, vacation Benches are constituted to hear matters of urgency.

While there is no specific definition as to what an "urgent matter" is, the court generally admits writ petitions, constitutional cases and litigations involving bail, eviction, death penalty etc. Several judges have flagged the mis-

conception that judges stay in ultimate comfort and enjoy their holidays.

Around 50-75 matters are listed for hearing in the Supreme Court every day. Judges need to study voluminous files before passing orders. The time during vacations is also utilized for writing judgements and conducting research, which is not possible during working days.

Matters such as conflict of verdicts between High Courts and jurisprudence from other countries also needs to be considered while delivering judgements. Apart from that, judges also



Supreme Court of India

participate in national and international seminars and conferences during vacations.

Attorneys have frequently argued that in a profession that demands intellectual rigour and long working hours, both from lawyers and judges,

vacations are much needed for rejuvenation.

"Every word that a judge speaks affects the lives of the people, and there are matters of life and death," said Advocate Devadatt Kamat, in an interview to The Hindu. It

is not possible to work at a greater speed because of a voluminous workload.

The system of vacations should be assessed based on the efficiency of the judiciary rather than the number of working days.

## The Overburdened Indian Judiciary

Over the years, more people and organisations have been seeking judicial remedy. However, the Indian Judiciary is reeling under a tremendous load of pending cases. As of May 2022, around 4.7 crore cases are pending in different levels of courts across the country. 87.4 percent of them are pending in subordinate courts, while 12.4 percent are in High Courts. The Supreme Court of India has more than 71 thousand pending cases, out of which many are awaiting disposal for over a decade.

According to the former Chief Justice of India N V Ramana, the lack of sufficient judges was intensifying the problem of pending cases. The district courts in India have a total vacancy of 5,850 judges. 775 judges are working in the High Courts against a sanctioned strength of 1108. There are six vacancies in the Supreme Court out of the sanctioned strength of 34. India's subordinate judiciary faces an acute shortage of courtrooms, sanitation facilities and residential accommodation for judges and court staff. When the pandemic induced lockdown forced an abrupt transition to virtual hearings, nearly two-thirds of the lower courts lacked digital infrastructure. Only 27 percent of subordinate courts had a computer with a video-conferencing facility at the judge's dais, causing a hindrance to the hearing of cases.

The Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for Districts and Subordinate Judiciary was set up to address the lack of judicial infrastructure. However, the under-utilization of funds, lack of accountability and communication gaps between the Centre and States continues to delay infrastructural development. An inordinate delay in justice delivery has a negative impact on judicial credibility. It specifically affects the socially and economically marginalized communities. They lack the financial means to pursue lengthy trials, making justice inaccessible to them. The delay in justice delivery translates into prolonged incarceration of undertrials.

There is an urgent need to improve the judge-to-population ratio to reduce the workload on judges. The Supreme Court has constituted Vacation Benches in the summer break, formed Special Benches to dispose of labour disputes, cases dealing with motor accidents, and old criminal appeals. 'Arrears Committees' have been set up in High Courts to deliver verdicts in cases pending for more than five years. The government has also set up tribunals and fast track courts for the disposal of cases. The establishment of an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism can reduce the staggering workload on the judiciary. ADR uses methods like arbitration, mediation and negotiation for resolving legal disputes. It allows for the flexibility of procedure, saves time and money and facilitates amicable resolution of disputes. Judiciary is the bedrock of a constitutional democracy. It is imperative that everyone who approaches the court retains faith in its ability to render justice. An overburdened Judiciary can hardly perform this function well. Hence, addressing the issue of pending cases is crucial.

# On the Question of Marital Rape

*"It would be tragic if a married woman's call for justice is not heard even after 162 years"*

- Justice Rajiv Shakdher

Alisha Peter

"A man is a man; an act is an act; rape is a rape, be it performed by a man the 'husband' on the woman 'wife'." - Karnataka High Court.

In India, marital rape is still not a criminal offence but only a misdemeanor (as protected under IPC section 375). The Supreme Court seeks response of the Centre on a bunch of pleas pertaining to criminalization of marital rape.

A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud had asked the Union government to file its response on the issue by 15th February and the final hearing on the petitions would commence from 21st March.

Exception 2 of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) states that non-consensual sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, who is not under 15 years of age, without her consent, is not rape. On 11th October 2017, the Supreme Court of India



increased the age to 18 years. A Division Bench of the Delhi High Court delivered a split verdict on 11th May, 2022. This appeal was filed by Khushboo Saifi, one of the petitioners before the High Court.

A Division Bench of Justice Rajiv Shakdher and Justice Hari Shankar failed to agree on the constitutionality of Exception 2 to Section 375 of IPC. While Justice Shakdher, who headed the division bench, favoured striking down the marital rape exception as be-

ing "unconstitutional" and said "it would be tragic if a married woman's call for justice is not heard even after 162 years" since the enactment of the IPC, but Justice Shankar disagreed. He said "the exception under the rape law is not unconstitutional and was based on an intelligible differentia".

On 23rd March 2022, a single judge bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna of the Karnataka High Court refused to drop rape charges framed by a trial court against a

husband under Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code.

The Bench added that this exemption is against the principle of equality enshrined under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. The Court stated that marriage is no license for unleashing a brutal beast.

"The institution of marriage does not confer, cannot confer and should not be construed to confer, any special male privilege or a license for the unleashing of a brutal beast."

## The Soaring Threat of Light Pollution

Bibin Asok

When we hear the word 'pollution', we seldom associate it with light. How can light be a pollutant? It's not tangible like solid waste and has no odour like smoke, it's just plain old light.

Artificial lamps, fairy lights and fire crackers are an inseparable part of festivals. We rarely think about the polluting effect of these lights. Light pollution makes the night sky appear completely dark.

The light from the lamps and households floods the sky, making natural stars invisible to the naked eye. Lights contribute to 6 percent of global

carbon emissions. Too much light unknowingly affects with human health, wildlife and also disrupts our view of the celestial bodies. An increased amount in night light lowers melatonin production, which results in sleep deprivation, stress, anxiety, and other health problems.

Artificial light can disrupt the sleep-wake pattern governed by the day night-cycle also. Light pollution not only affects the humans it also disrupts the natural order of most living beings. Sea turtles are an excellent example for how artificial light at night disorients animals that



try to move at night. They wander inland facing the night light rather than to the sea. Consequently, they either die of dehydration or predation.

Light pollution is also caused by the artificial satellites which

are in low earth orbit, causing the light to reflect back to earth. Studies have shown that satellites and space debris has increased the brightness of the night sky by at least 10% over natural light levels.

# Karyavattom Campus; A Students' Paradise



Twinkle B. S.

Karyavattom

Karyavattom campus of the University of Kerala is one of the oldest university campuses in India. It is a 450 acre campus which is literally a paradise for students.

The campus is dotted with numerous picturesque spots such as 'Ooty', 'Srilanka', 'Hymavathi' pond, 'Spiral tower' etc. The campus library, with a collection of over 7,000 well organised books and a subscription to over 60 periodicals, is one

of the most prominent attraction. 'Ooty' is a frigid place whereas 'Hymavathi' pond unfolds the fearsome dimensions. Some people believe that it is a place where the murder of a woman took place. These spooky stories attributed to the mysterious place will give you major goosebumps.

From the top of the 'spiral tower' water tank, in the North campus, one can enjoy a remarkable view of the surroundings, up to the Greenfield stadium. 'Srilanka',

located at the end of the road in the South campus, is a small circular grassy plot.

Bicycles, battery-operated buggies and electric scooters are also available on campus. It aims to promote eco-friendly transportation, thereby reducing the carbon footprint. The 'Chola', a scenic spot with green arches, traditional swings and the sensory gardens lined with Sapota trees located across the campus, gives both pleasure and peace to the specta-

tors. A butterfly park is set up near the Environmental Studies department, to conserve local butterfly species and provide students with an opportunity to observe them in their natural habitat. A weather station kept in the middle of the garden measures humidity, daily air temperature, wind direction and soil moisture. About 30 species of butterflies inhabit the garden.

The 'Miyawaki' in the North Campus, is an artificial dense forest created by the students with native plants. It is the method of afforestation developed by the Japanese Botanist and plant ecology expert Prof. Akira Miyawaki. Sacred groves are preserved on campus to provide awareness on biodiversity conservation. An aesthetic art surrounded by vines and blades of grass, known by the name, 'Vanadevatha' is another elusive attraction. 'Valkinar'; is a special kind of well in which one can get down and walk around. The campus has numerous varieties of plants and trees, attached with labels, detailing their local and scientific names.

## KU Researchers Trace Link Between Cholesterol And Hair Growth

Aziya Shamnad

Karyavattom

Researchers of Kerala University Karyavattom Campus have identified a link between cholesterol and hair loss.

A study conducted by the Zoology department and the Advanced Centre for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research in Cutaneous Biology (AcREM-Stem) in the University have discovered that the inhibition of cholesterol biosynthesis causes permanent damage to hair follicles by promoting fibrosis.

The research has been published in the Journal of Endocrinology and Reproduction. It laid stress on the role of cellular cholesterol (or endogenous cholesterol that is synthesised in the body) in hair growth, formation of hair follicles and the overall health of the skin.

It found hair follicles with overactive fibrogenic responses to undergo tissue deterioration and dis-

rupted homeostasis (ability to maintain internal stability in an organism).

The research team, which was supervised by Assistant professor P. Sreejith of the Zoology department, comprised S. Najeed, T.M. Binumon, S. Surya and L. Nikhila.

According to Mr. Najeed, the lead author of the study, the research findings suggested that cholesterologenic changes lead to cicatricial alopecia, an inflammatory hair loss disorder. It permanently destroys stem cells in hair follicles and causes scarring (or fibrosis).

The research also established the significance of angiotensin, a peptide endocrine hormone, in hair follicle cells.

The scope of study has been widened to assess the extent of impact of statins (or cholesterol-lowering drugs) on hair loss. The researchers have collected inputs from 30 grama panchayats in the State as part of University.

## G-20 to hold 215 meetings all over India

Aziya Shamnad

India's G-20 presidency began in December 2022. As part of it, a total of 215 G-meetings including a leader's summit and foreign ministers meeting will be held.

Additionally, 57 working group meetings, 46 engagement group meetings and 4 G-20 Sherpa meetings will be conducted. Four meetings will be focused on promoting the tourism sector alone. Thiruvananthapuram will be one of the G-meet venue in South In-

dia. The theme of the meet is "Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam" or "One Earth, One Family, One Future."

India sees the presidency as a huge opportunity at the global level.

The nation plans to shed light on areas such as climate change, women empowerment, inclusive equitable and sustainable growth.

India is focusing on 'LIFE' - a lifestyle slogan by PM Modi at the Glasgow Climate conference - as a high-level principle in the development and

agricultural working groups and across all workstreams.

Considering the creation of a new working group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience, India is planning an engagement group on global ecosystems for startups. Green Hydrogen will be a significant contributor to India's Energy Transition working group pitch.

India is expected to highlight its proposed National Hydrogen Mission and push for support for decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors such as fertiliz-



ers, cement, steel, long distance transport etc. Climate issues will be a focus area.

Steps will be taken to strengthen circular economy, sustainable public procurement, climate resilient Blue Economy, coastal stability, green tourism to help achieve sus-

tainable development goals. Digital Economy and a possible global initiative on an institutional Digital Health Framework will be discussed.

On Agriculture, focus will be given on small and marginal farmers, enhancing food security through

steps such as exempting World Food Programme, purchasing from restrictions and use of digital space for improving productivity. On the matter of Culture, prioritization will be given to digitalization of cultural heritage.

The meetings are expected to be held across all states and Union Territories in nearly 55 locations from Leh to Kavaratti, Srinagar, Imphal, Kevadia and Khajuraho to Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram

# 'Surya Kiran' Aerobatic Display Delights Onlookers



Photos : Aziya Shannad



## Utama: A Masterpiece of Bolivian Cinematography

Bibin Asok

The film UTAMA meaning 'our home' in Quechua language was awarded the Suvarna Chakoram by the jury of International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) in December 2022. The director of the film Alejandro Loayza Grisi spoke to the audience mostly in wide shots. He portrays the beauty of Bolivian highlands in a remarkable manner.

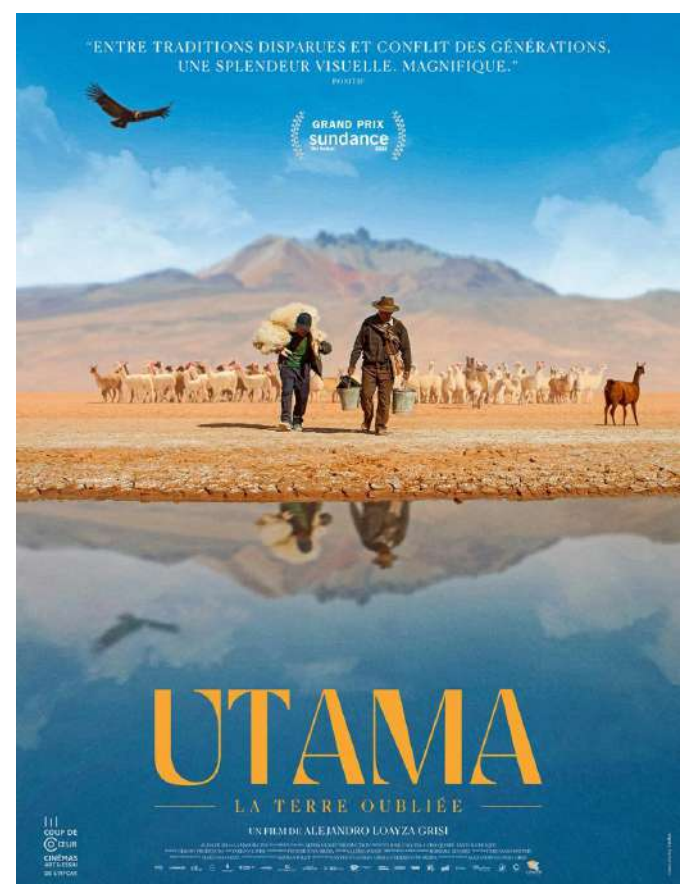
The protagonists in the movie are a couple in real life. They are non-professional actors who live in the highlands. Grisi found them while he was scouting for shooting locations and cast them in the lead role. This gave more authenticity and life to the frame.

The film focuses on Virginio and Sisa an old couple living in the Bolivian highland. Their daily routine is based on traditional gender roles. For instance, the wife is responsible for collecting water from faraway lands while the husband grazes the llamas. When Clever, their grandchild, comes from the city to stay with them, he finds that his grandfather Virginio is sick. Clever tries to convince his grandfather that he is too old to live in these harsh conditions. Clever wants them to move to the city for treatment and a better standard of living.

Although his intentions were genuine, Clever fails to understand that for Virginio and Sisa, it's not about where they live, but where they die. And they are concerned that when they are gone, there won't be anyone left in their family to speak the indigenous Quechua language or live their traditional way of life.

The film mostly talks about the term privilege. Virginio wanted to die amongst the culture and tradition of his land, where his entire life was spent. When Clever says that "you can't walk anymore" Virginio responds that, "walking keeps me alive". This shows that the way of life which he had followed all his life gave him purpose and meaning. Virginio is often asked for the reason he refuses to leave those harsh lands for a more comfortable life Virginio counters with arguments like, 'What will I do in the city when I come there' and 'Why should I move there just to die.'

The movie also dwells on the adverse effect of climate change, the stubbornness of old age and the traditional life of the Quechua community. The movie was Bolivia's Oscar entry. It has also been screened at several international film festivals.



Poster of the movie UTAMA

# Theyyam: The Dance of Spirits

Shyamjith C.

Karyavattom

Fear and anticipation gripped the audience in the open auditorium of Kerala university as a live Theyyam performance unfolded on campus on 25th November 2022.

The performance was organized by the Students Union of the University. Yet another theyyam season had begun, and the shrines in North Malabar, where the ritual is performed, were all set for the festival where man becomes God and showers blessings on his devotees. Theyyam is a ritual involving an

intricate mix of dance, theatre, music, and religious rituals.

It is popular in northern Kerala, mainly in the North Malabar region of Kasargod, Kannur and Wayanad where it has been widely practised for years. The artist is seen as the deity himself. They showcase extraordinary power, through difficult martial arts and extraordinary feats like walking on fire. Being spoken to by God himself provides immense validation to an ordinary person. The season lasts upto seven months and winds up by the end of May every year.

"Each Theyyam performance portrays a story of the transformation of ordinary people into Gods. Theyyam season formally begins in the last week of October, on the tenth day of the Malayalam month of Thulam and lasts till the beginning of monsoon.

This ritual is performed by the artists belonging to Malaya, Pulaya and Vannan community. It portrays Gods like Vishnu, Shiva, Chamundi and has the tradition of questioning the Brahminic hierarchy.

In the campus performance, which featured pottan theyyam,



Live Theyyam performance at Kerala University, Karyavattom

the fiery passion of the performers was vividly captured. The dance takes the viewers on the same plane as the devotees who

watch the Theyyam artist perform risky acts. The programme was a novel experience to the students and provided them

with a glimpse of the culture of Kerala. The three hour long show bestowed a spiritual atmosphere on the campus.

## Anti drug messages reverberate at KLIBF inauguration

Gouri Krishna

Thiruvananthapuram

The inaugural function of the Kerala Legislature International Book Festival (KLIBF), on 9th January with the tagline 'Reading is an addiction', echoed anti-drug messages emulating the state government's anti-drug campaign.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and writer T Padmanabhan inaugurated the fair.

T Padmanabhan, said that he has always used his writings to denounce the ill effects of drugs, but some other writers have done otherwise. "Even the most respected writers of my generation have glo-

riafied the use of drugs in their works. But I never did so.

I have also raised my voice against it, that's why I was called old-fashioned. Now, drugs are becoming an epidemic in our society. If this situation continues, our future generations will suffer.

The government's fight against drugs needs to be supported. Mr. Padmanabhan commended the Kerala Assembly's effort in organising the week-long literature festival.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that reading is an addiction, which is beneficial and harmless.

If people get used to finding happiness in such creative ways, the danger that drugs pose to the society will be greatly reduced.

"Many prominent writers and cultural figures including EMS Namboothiripad, Joseph Mundassery and Kadammanita Ramakrishnan have been the members of this Assembly. It is our State that elected writers like SK Potekkat to the Parliament. Such events will help cement the relationship between politics and literature," he said.

The Chief Minister praised Mr. Padmanabhan for his contributions to Mala-

yalam literature, with his writings spanning more than seven decades. "Whenever democracy and secularism were in crisis, he used his writings to defend constitutional values," he said.

Speaker A N Shamsa, who presided over the function, said that the aim is to make KLIBF one of the biggest book festivals in the world.

As a part of further democratization efforts, the Assembly Library has been opened for membership to the public.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan said that it was a pleasure to see so many students participate in the book fair on the first day itself.

"Inculcating the habit of reading among the youth is one way to keep them from becoming apolitical," he said. More than 100 publishers and famous writers participated in the book fair.

Book launch, creative discussions, book signing events and panel discussions were the major highlights of the event.

## Deepika's Besharam Rang in Saffron Controversy

Aziya Shammad

Bollywood Director Sidharth Ananth's recent movie 'Pathan', starring Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone in lead roles stirred up a major controversy as the actress appeared in a saffron bikini in the song "besharam rang". It is said that the title of the song "shameless color" and the use of the colour saffron has disturbed the religious sentiments of a certain community. Consequently, there was an outcry against the movie. The colour is said to represent the identity of saints and symbolizes sacrifice and penance. Meanwhile, Vineet Jindal, a Supreme Court Advocate filed a written complaint with the Information & Broadcasting Ministry for the same. The complainant sought to ban the release of Pathaan till the correctness of the "objectionable song". Vineeth said in his letter, "This song is vulgar and obscene, and against Hindu



Deepika Padukone

sentiments. Deepika is wearing a saffron bikini and sarong. Deepika Padukone and Shah Rukh Khan have hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus by performing an obscene dance on 'Besharam Rang' warning saffron color and presenting the song in an offensive manner." While saffron outfits have been worn by actors for decades in sensuous ways, this the first time there has been an outcry against the same. Pathan is a 250 crore budget movie featuring Shah Rukh Khan as the protagonist. The song has become viral on social media. Pathan hit the big screen on 25th Jan, 2023.



Inaugural ceremony of the Kerala Legislature International Book Festival



## In Memory of Brazil's Football Legend

Nandana D.

Brazil's legendary football player Pelé passed away at the age of 82. He had been battling with cancer, as well as kidney and heart problems. Pelé was hospitalised on November 29. He had been receiving hospital care since September 2021, when a tumor was removed from his colon. His daughter, Kely Nascimento, confirmed his death in an Instagram post, sharing a picture of the family holding hands with the late football giant.

Widely regarded as one of soccer's greatest players, Pelé spent nearly two decades enchanting fans and dazzling opponents as the game's most prolific scorer with Brazilian club Santos and the Brazil national team. As his health deteriorated, his travels and public appearances became less frequent. He was often seen in a wheelchair during his final years and did not attend a ceremony to unveil a statue of himself, representing Brazil's 1970 World Cup team. Pelé spent his 80th birthday privately with a few family members at a beach home.

Born on October 23, 1940, in the small Minas Gerais town of Três Corações, or "Three Hearts", Edson Arantes do Nascimento learned the game from his father, a semi-professional player whose promising career was derailed by a knee injury. With sublime skills and a winning smile, he scored a world record of 1,281 goals. He is the only player to have won the World Cup three times. Pelé's 1,281 goals in 1,366 games, as tabulated by FIFA's website, came at a startling rate of 0.94 per match. Some of those were friendlies or came in games played as part of his military service. He was just as prolific in official tournaments, with 757 goals in 812 games. Pelé played 114 matches with Brazil, scoring a record 95 goals, including 77 in official matches.

## World Cup Fever Strikes Campus

Shyamjith C.

Karyavattom

For the past month, as the World Cup was played out in Qatar, the global soccer tournament became the centre of attention of the students, faculty and staff on the Kerala University campus.

During the off hours, it was a common sight to see groups of students crowding around the screen in the open auditorium, ready to erupt into cheers or

outrage depending on the outcome of the game.

Others viewed the match on television in the campus hostels. The campus Students Union also organised 'FIFA FAIR', a fan festival with enthusiastic participation of students. The fair was coordinated by the Union Chairman along with faculty members. The campus radiated the excitement of a stadium for a month, and the

# India's crowning victory at Greenfield Stadium

Shyamjith C.

Karyavattom

Centuries from Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill lit up Greenfield International Stadium, as India destroyed a clueless Sri Lanka with a record 317 run win in the third one day international to sweep the series.

Pacer Mohammed Siraj (4/32) blew away the Sri Lankan top-order as India packed up the visitors for 73 in 22 overs.

Kohli remained not out on 166 off 110 balls, while Gill struck 116 off 97 deliveries. Opting to bat after winning the toss, opener Gill and skipper Rohit Sharma (42) put on 95 runs in 15.2 overs, before Kohli struck his 46th ODI century and 74th century in international cricket to consolidate the Indian innings.

Kohli and Gill shared 131 runs for the second wicket. It looks all good for Indian team in the early part of this World Cup year.

Shubman Gill is showing that he is a consistent option as Rohit Sharma's opening partner, Virat Kohli seems to have got back to scoring centuries for fun the way he used to do be-

fore 2020, KL Rahul showed his value in the middle order.

Then we come to the bowling, where Mohammed Siraj is proving to be a lethal weapon in the powerplay and it will be quite interesting to see the Indian pace attack whenever Jasprit Bumrah returns. Kuldeep Yadav has shown yet again just how good an option he is. Sri Lanka may have performed a little worse in this match, but they did put up a good fight in the previous two, particularly in the second one. However,



The Indian Cricket Team at Greenfield stadium, Karyavattom

we will surely get to see India tested more comprehensively in their upcoming series against New Zealand, the No.1 ranked ODI team in the world. Even though India bagged a tremendous victory in Thiruvananthapuram, the non usual sight of half-filled stadium bothered the players a bit.

Kerala Cricket Association (KCA) had cited several reasons for the low ticket sales. This included the CBSE exams, Sabarimala season and the waning interest for the 50-over format. The controversial statement of the

Sports Minister of Kerala regarding the heavy price for tickets had resulted in a stir earlier. This might have adversely affected the number of audience who came to watch the match. Nevertheless, the excitement of the spectators was paramount. A massive cut-out of Mahendra Singh Dhoni took pride of place outside the stadium. People sporting painted faces, blue jerseys resembling the Indian team and groups of fans eagerly taking selfies and discussing the progress of the match, were the major highlights.

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