

KERALA CALLING

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NOVEMBER 01, 2022_VOL_43_No_1



FIFA WORLD CUP
Qatar 2022



BORN TO WIN

BY ROLLING OUT INNOVATIVE MEASURES,
THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS ON A MISSION
TO TAP THE POTENTIAL OF YOUNG FOOTBALLERS.





Setting the ball rolling...

The entire Kerala, irrespective of age and gender, is in the grip of football euphoria as the Qatar World Cup is in the offing.



MOULDING FUTURE FOOTBALLERS



When Maradona conjures up his magic, when Zico zips through the defence, when Messi splits the field dribbling defying gravity, when Neymar and Cristiano Ronaldo wrong-foot the defenders, leaving them hapless like hoodwinked toddlers, there is an ebb and flow of emotions in faraway Kerala.

If you walk along the streets in Kerala, you wonder what the magic that football spells over this state is. There is thickening excitement among people, and streets are empty when a game is on.

Football fever grips the state when the game is kickstarted. The air is so thick with anticipation and frenzy that you can cut it with a knife!

Kerala has never had global football superstars, nor has the game been a goldmine sport like cricket across India but still whenever the ball rolls in a World Cup, the heart of this state forgets to beat.

This edition of the FIFA World Cup in Doha, Qatar—the closest it has come to Kerala—has whipped up the same emotional intensity.

Though we never had global stars, Kerala has had its fair share of legends in the annals of Indian football history—Victor Manjila, T.K.S. Mani, I.M. Vijayan, C.V. Pappachan, V.P. Sathyan, U. Sharaf Ali, Jo Paul Ancheri, Kurikesh Mathew—and, football, in spite of cricket's religion-like following, always has a special place in every Malayali's heart.

The Government of Kerala has kicked in with some wonderful initiatives in the context of the World Cup, mostly to keep youngsters away from drugs and to mould future footballers.

The project named 'Goal' has started in 1,000 centres across the state. In the first phase, 100 children aged between 10 and 12 years will be given training in each centre. The government is trying to get the cooperation of leading countries in football to provide expert training for youngsters—both boys and girls. The first phase of the project in association with the Netherlands Football Association has been completed. Collaboration with world-class clubs like Italy's A.C. Milan and England's Chelsea is also in the offing.

In a matter of weeks, we will know who the new world champion of the beautiful game is. In the span of these few days, Kerala will be under the spell of football magic. Taking full advantage of the spirit of the game, the Government of Kerala hopes to inspire the next generation to dream big, and in the long run, to create its own global stars.

H. Dineshan IAS
Editor

EDITOR

H. Dineshan IAS

ADDITIONAL EDITOR

K. Abdul Rasheed

DEPUTY EDITOR

V. P. Aswathy

EDITOR IN CHARGE

C. Rajesh

ASSISTANT EDITOR

A. Anchitha

ASSISTANT INFORMATION OFFICER

Arathy K.R.

CIRCULATION OFFICER

K.B. Sreekala

COVER DESIGN & LAYOUT

Deepak Mouthatil

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PHOTO CREDITS

I & PRD Photography Division

C.P. Sreelas I & PRD

Ravikumar C.S. I & PRD

K.K. Santhosh Kumar I & PRD

P. Musthafa

V. V. Biju

Vinod Divakaran (InsideQatar)

COVER

M.S. Sreekuttan of Kerala Blasters

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KERALA TOPS PERFORMANCE GRADING INDEX

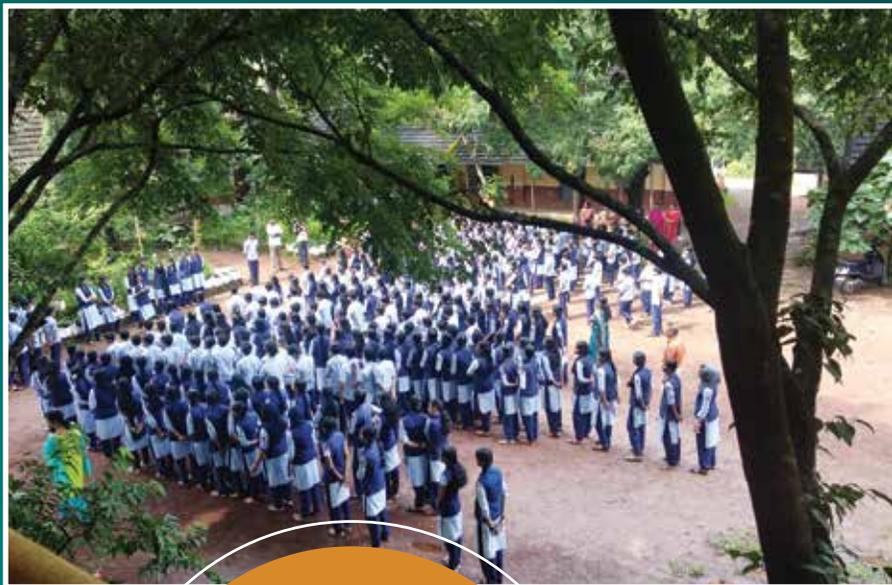


V. SIVANKUTTY

Minister for General Education and Labour

Securing the top position in Performance Grading Index 2020-21 is a recognition of the general education campaign, launched by the left government and the General Education Department to elevate the standards of the public education sector.

The Department of General Education is making strides in improving the quality of education in government schools through popular, democratic, and, secular education. There have been significant changes in the basic infrastructure of the schools under the General Education Protection Mission initiated by the previous government. The physical conditions and academic standards of public schools have improved



KERALA'S EMERGENCE IN GRADING INDEX PERFORMANCE IS A RECOGNITION OF INITIATIVES AND EFFORTS TAKEN FOR ENSURING EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC SITUATION.

Fig 1

Kerala's score in the Performance Grade Index from 2017-2018



greatly. During the pandemic, Kerala became a model for the nation by swiftly adapting to the changes required to continue classes for the students, thereby averting a major crisis. The bagging of the first position in the performance Grading index of the Union Ministry of Education is an acknowledgment of all this excellence.

The state holds the top position in the Performance Grading Index of the Union Ministry of Education for the year 2020-21. Kerala's emergence in Grading Index Performance is a recognition of initiatives and efforts taken for ensuring education for students during the pandemic situation. Knowledge acquisition, opportunities to attain education, infrastructure facilities, cooperation, and administrative process are the criteria considered for determining the index.

Since the launch of the Performance Grading Index during the year 2017-18, Kerala has always been at the forefront of succession. It shows the quality and standard of education ensured by the state government.

THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROTECTION MISSION INITIATED BY THE FIRST PINARAYI VIJAYAN GOVERNMENT AND VIDYAKIRANAM PROJECT IN CONTINUATION TO THAT HAS MADE REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SECTOR

Fig 1. Indicates that the education process and academic standards of the state become more energetic during the pandemic times. Kerala was in the top position for ensuring online education during the pandemic days. We were able to conduct the digital classes in an excellent way. 'First Bell' classes were started through the KITE VICTORS channel in June 2020. VICTERS became the first complete education channel to implement quality education even during the pandemic.

Inclusive education is a remarkable feature of the Kerala model. To get hold of knowledge, one has to be part of the educational process and this has been declared as fundamental rights of children. The government is ensuring equal and the best educational circumstances for students from all sections.

The General Education Protection mission initiated by the first Pinarayi Vijayan government and Vidyakiranam Project in continuation to that has made revolutionary changes in the general education sector. We have to give much importance to students' skill development during the academic period. Along with that, providing opportunities for students in social services during the academic period is under the consideration of the government. The government also has serious visions on labour inclusive education and job along with learning.



A WAR ON DRUGS THROUGH FOOTBALL



M.B. RAJESH

Minister for Local Self Governments,
Rural Development and Excise

As the globe is revolving around football, Kerala is capitalizing on the mood and deriving the maximum out of it for the second phase of the anti-drug campaign. As part of this campaign, the Government of Kerala has envisioned a unique 'Goal Challenge', which starts on 16th November 2022.

Upholding the slogan 'Football euphoria as opposed to the intoxication of drugs', the Government facilitates the scoring of 2 crore goals across

the state. We will conduct this Goal Challenge in as many places as possible including educational institutions, wards of local bodies, public, and private offices, companies, IT parks, neighbourhood open spaces, public spaces etc. The Goal Challenge will end on 18th December 2022, when the final match of the World Cup will be played. The Government plans to make use of the world cup frenzy as a tool for the extensive campaign against drugs.

As part of the Goal Challenge,

a goalpost will be set up in a public space so that anyone can come and score a goal at any time. The message against drugs will be placed adjacent to the goalpost. The motto 'No to Drugs' will be imprinted on the football as well. The name of the goal scorer and the number of goals will be recorded. When the campaign comes to an end, the total goals scored will be exhibited at each centre. The Government has given instruction to local bodies to set up public screening spaces for world cup matches and erect goalposts near these screening centres. Informative videos giving awareness of drug abuse will be exhibited there. Discussions regarding the harmful effects of drug use will be held before the game or during break time.

Football has always been a passion for Keralites. I believe it would not be inappropriate on my part if I divulge a few personal thoughts on football. Much before the world cup matches gained popularity, the love for football started with the local matches played in the backyards and neighbourhoods. As for me, I played my first football match in my village called Kayilyattu in Palakkad district. A relative and neighbour Babu was kind of my first football coach. I started off with a rubber ball worth 20 paise, then another worth Rs 2/. Later, my father bought me a football worth Rs 20 and I felt elated as if I had won the world cup. And this football became the standard ball for all the games in our neighbourhood. And in hindsight, that football literally hurled me from the confines of a rather conservative household to the vastness of the playground and social relations. This game helped me mingle and be one among a group of people. We started Panchami Arts and Sports Club and I became the Secretary of the club and the goalkeeper for the team. My first stint as an organiser was related to football.

My parents agreed to buy television ahead of the 1986 football world cup. As the football started rolling in Mexico, a gallery of enthusiastic spectators formed around our brand-new black and white television. The world cup brought an enormous

change in the social dynamics of my family and a revolutionary change in attitudes as well.

IT PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN MY EVOLUTION AS A PERSON

It is interesting how football played a part in my evolution as a person. In fact, the game of football has also undergone a process of evolution, that from being an elitist game to a game of commoners. The genesis of football traces back to the aristocracy of Britain. From there, football made its way to the people through the workers of Britain's textile factories. The growth of football coincided with the advent of the working class in Britain and their progress. British historian E

against injustice.

SOCRATES - MAKING AN IMPACT OFF THE FIELD AS WELL

Brazil's former captain Dr. Socrates is another person who exemplified how football could be the front line for resistance. Brazil played the 1982 world cup under dictatorship. The country was under the autocratic rule for 21 years. Sports Club Corinthians Paulista, of which Socrates was a member, started a movement called the Corinthians Democracy Movement. As part of the movement, Socrates and the members of the Brazil football team came out into the playing field wearing



Socrates with Zico during the 1982 World Cup

P Thompson stated in his book 'The Making of the English working class that "Everything from their school to shops and chapels to amusements was the battleground of class".

Football grounds were, indeed, spaces of resistance. That is why Maradona became the greatest footballer of all time. Maradona is hailed as a greater footballer than Pele, not only because of his football acumen but also because of his solidarity with the poor and firm stance

jerseys with the words 'Vote on 15th' imprinted, despite objections from the Brazil football association. The writing appealed to the citizens of Brazil to cast a vote in the elections held on 15th November and put an end to the autocratic rule. Thus, he made football ground a platform for resistance and democracy.

Football too is a passion for us. Using football, we can wage a war on drugs.



SETTING LOFTY GOALS

Minister for Sports V. Abdurahiman inaugurates the 'Goal' project

V. ABDURAHIMAN

Minister for Sports,
Wakf and Haj Pilgrimage

Football is the most popular game in Kerala. The state has been a formidable presence in Indian football. However, with all the love for football, we must not fail to admit that Kerala has been lagging behind in building quality players. This needs to be addressed. Focussed on this goal, the government of Kerala is making positive interventions.

It was in the 1930s that football started to get popular in Kerala. The Thiruvananthapuram Central stadium and the Kottayam C.M.S. College were the initial playgrounds. Malabar learnt the game from the British army.

GOAL...

TO NURTURE THE TALENTS OF YOUNG FOOTBALLERS, THE DIRECTORATE OF SPORTS AND YOUTH AFFAIRS HAS STARTED AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT TO PROVIDE FOOTBALL TRAINING TO 5 LAKH CHILDREN. THE PROJECT NAMED 'GOAL' KICK-STARTS IN 1000 CENTRES ACROSS THE STATE FROM NOVEMBER 11 ONWARDS.

With the passage of time, the frenzy and adulation for football have only increased in Kerala.

Kerala has many favourable conditions to excel in this game. Malayalis are physically agile and athletic. If we are able to spot talent at a tender age and give professional guidance to them, we can produce

outstanding players. The government of Kerala is now implementing extensive plans and projects to achieve this goal.

The Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs has started an ambitious project to provide football training to 5 lakh children. The project named 'Goal' kick-starts in 1000 centres across the

state from November 11. In the first phase, 100 children aged between 10 and 12 years will be given training in each centre. Then, in a phased manner, 5 lakh children will be imparted the nuances of football. 100 talented children selected from these centres will be given advanced training. Daily one-hour training will be given and it will be based upon a special syllabus. Now, there are 72 such centres in 8 districts and 71 centres in 6 districts. Besides these, there are training centres started with the co-operation of sports academies, clubs, educational institutions, residents associations etc.

The 'Goal' project is receiving huge participation and support from the public. Enrolment in some centres in Malappuram district has crossed the 100-mark. Many people are coming forward to work as coaches as well. The project, assisted by FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and the All India Football Federation), helps ensure advanced training for coaches and referees and secure a licence.

The sports councils and local self-governments are the implementing agencies for the 'Goal' project. District-level coordination is done by the District Sports Council and state-level coordination by the Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs and State Sports Council. The project is implemented with the wholehearted support of sports councils at the local body level.

The service of former football players is also availed for the project. Former international players like I.M. Vijayan, U. Sharaf Ali, Joe Paul Ancheri, K.T. Chacko and P.P. Thobias selected as ambassadors of the project. Other yesteryear stars are also part of the project. Special consideration will be given to providing coaching licences to former players.

With a vision to provide systematic guidance to kids, three football academies have been set up under the auspices of the Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs and the

State Sports Council. Considering the prospects available for Kerala, valuable support is being extended to women's football as well. Out of the three academies started in the beginning of this year, two are exclusively for women footballers. The Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur academies are managed by the Directorate of Sports. The Kannur academy caters only to girls. The women's football academy of Sports Council is in Ernakulam. 25 children are selected and given training in these centres. Children, who perform extremely well in the 'Goal' project, will be given priority for training in these academies.

We are trying to solicit the co-operation of leading countries in

WE ARE TRYING TO SOLICIT THE CO-OPERATION OF LEADING COUNTRIES IN FOOTBALL TO PROVIDE EXPERT TRAINING FOR OUR YOUNG GENERATION. THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROJECT IN ASSOCIATION WITH NETHERLANDS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN COMPLETED. COLLABORATION WITH WORLD-CLASS CLUBS LIKE ITALY'S A.C. MILAN AND ENGLAND'S CHELSEA IS ALSO MATERIALISING.

football to provide expert training for our young generation. The first phase of the project in association with the Netherlands Football Association has been completed. The next phase will commence soon. Collaboration with world-class clubs like Italy's A.C. Milan and England's Chelsea is also materialising.

Ahead of the world cup football, the Government of Kerala is organising a programme to promote football. The programme that starts on November 16 aims to score 2 crore goals across the state and the public gets the opportunity to shake goalposts. The

programme is conducted in all the 1,000 centres of the 'Goal' project too. Goalposts are set up in the playgrounds of the Department of Sports and various educational institutions and local bodies. This programme coincides with the second phase of 'Drug-free Kerala' campaign and will be used as a platform to spread the message.

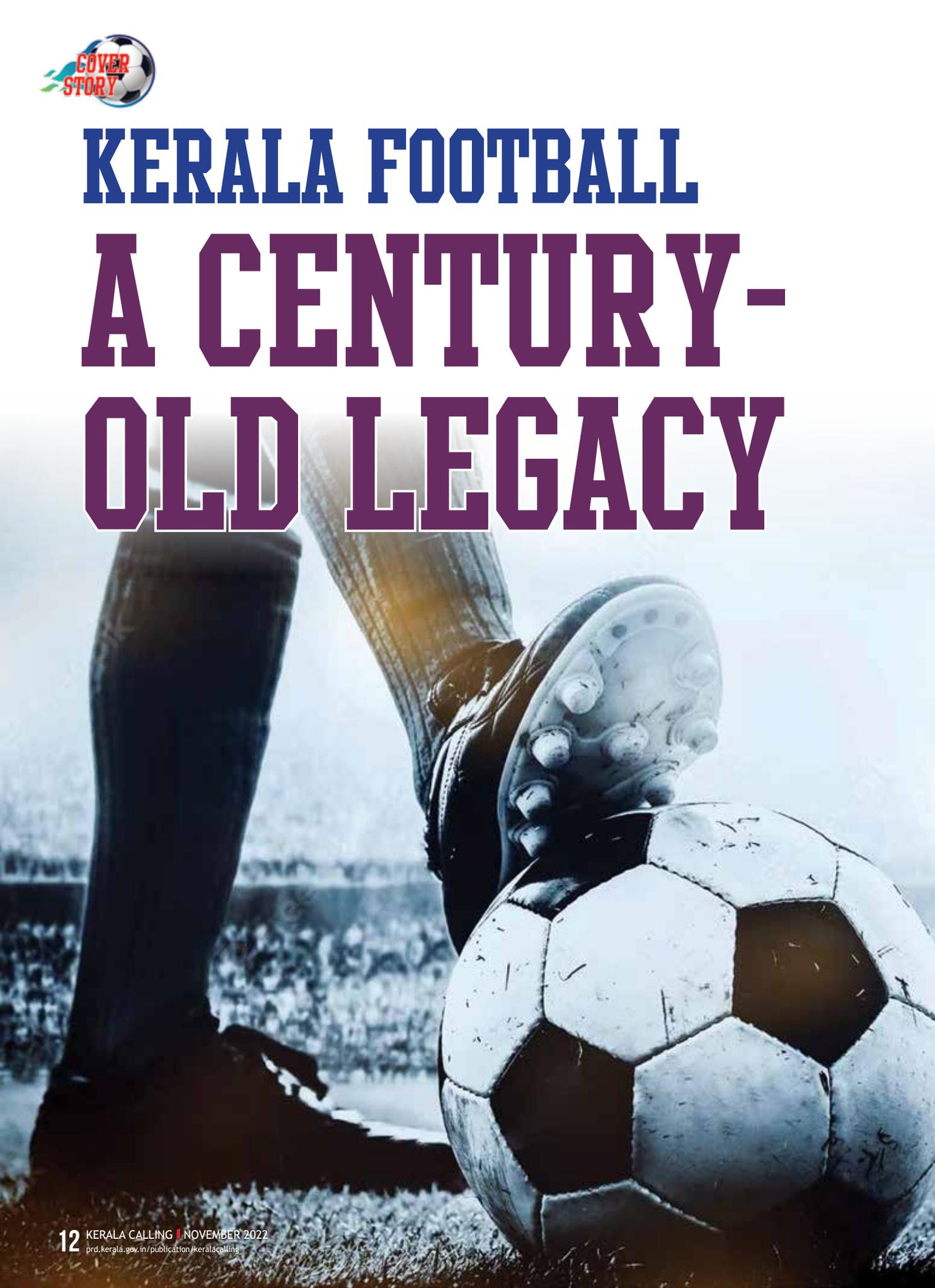
Taking part in competitive tournaments is equally important as training in football. Only then, our next generation will be able to rise up to international standards of the game. Watching good games is also a part of the learning process. Therefore, efforts are underway to conduct national and international football championships in our state.

As an initial step, the national senior women's football championship was held for the first time in Kerala. Malappuram successfully hosted the final round of matches of the Santosh Trophy. Football is featured as a major item in the beach games organised in nine centres across the state during the months of November and December. Talks are continuing with A.I.F.F. to host international championships here.

Football holds a prominent position in the infrastructural development taken up by the government of Kerala. Around thirty football grounds are being developed as part of the projects funded by the KIIFF. Good quality football grounds have been prepared at G.V. Raja School, Pathanamthitta Kodumon E.M.S. Stadium, Thalassery stadium, Chittoor College, Alappuzha Preethikulangara, Koothuparambu, Kalpetta Manavedan stadium, Neeleswaram E.M.S. stadium etc. In the past six years, around fifty football grounds have been developed using the fund from the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs. As the 'One Panchayat, One Playground' project gets underway, the state will have hundreds of football grounds. These infrastructural development projects will bring a sea change in Kerala football. In the short run, we hope to be the leading state in India with regard to football.



KERALA FOOTBALL A CENTURY- OLD LEGACY





SANIL P. THOMAS
Sports Journalist

Incredible talent, spirit-lifting performances, seven national titles, six Olympians and many legendary players who have represented the nation, and spectators who are crazy about the game. These are Kerala football in a nutshell. The game bears an incredible history in the State that started at the end of the 19th century and continues to thrive even today.

History says modern football was introduced in Kerala when His Highness Sri Moolam Thirunal Maharaja ruled the Travancore Kingdom. 'Thalappanthu kali' (head ball) was the much sought-after game at that time. Prof. Bishop Boyle, Head of the Department of Chemistry at the Maharaja's College -High School for boys (present University College) came to see youngsters playing 'thalappanthu' in Puthenkachery ground (now Central Stadium). Being a football player with the Oxford University earlier, Bishop Boyle was captivated by the enthusiasm of the youth, and he taught them football. Next time, when Boyle came back from England, he brought half a dozen

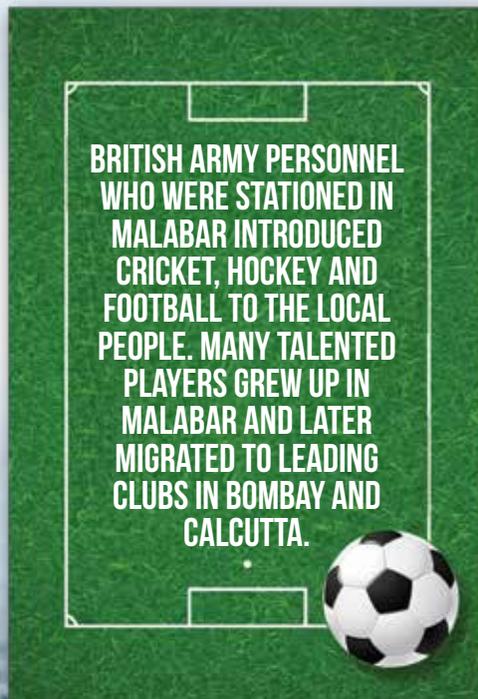
footballs as well. He formed a college team. St Joseph's School also came out with a football team. This all happened in the first decade of the twentieth century. Prof. Boyle left India in 1911. Prof. Blose who came as HOD of English at Maharajas College took over the project. By 1913, teams from outside Thiruvananthapuram started coming to play football with Maharaja's College. Travancore Government started the Sri Moolam Cup football tournament as part of Sri Moolam Thirunal's birthday celebrations.

But it is believed that football was played at Kottayam way before this, towards the end of the 19th century. It is noted that football was played at Kottayam CMS College in 1884-85 and in 1895 CMS College and YMCA football teams came into being.

In 1909, Union Club started the Jubilee football tournament. Prof. Square and Prof. Asquith of CMS College popularised football in Kottayam. It was they who made the Collegemali ground in Nagampadam which later became the Nehru Stadium. K. Chandy, former Mysore Divan and his brother K. Jacob, former Judge etc were members of the CMS College football team.

British Army personnel who were stationed in Malabar introduced cricket, hockey and football to the local people. Many talented players grew up in Malabar and later migrated to leading clubs in Bombay and Calcutta.

In 1935, Divan C.G. Herbert built Maharaja's ground in Kochi for football. The Rama Varma tournament began soon. The real football spirit could be witnessed in Kozhikode and Kannur. West Hill ground became the football nursery in Kozhikode. All-Star Rifles, Somerset Light infantry, Dorset Regiment etc were the military teams based there. In the three decades from 1930 to 1960, prominent clubs like Seaside Gymkhana, Lucky Stars, Spirited Youths, Brothers etc came into being in Kannur. The super clubs of Calcutta, Bombay, Goa and Mysore had Malabar players aplenty. Indian military teams also had many Malabar players. MRC Wellington dominated many all-India tournaments with almost half of their team comprising Malayalees, especially Kannur players. Leeladhar Shield matches



BRITISH ARMY PERSONNEL WHO WERE STATIONED IN MALABAR INTRODUCED CRICKET, HOCKEY AND FOOTBALL TO THE LOCAL PEOPLE. MANY TALENTED PLAYERS GREW UP IN MALABAR AND LATER MIGRATED TO LEADING CLUBS IN BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA.



**From the Nehru Cup football held in Kozhikode in 1987
Photo: P Musthafa**

between Malabar and Kannur were of a high standard and in 1954 one such match was abandoned halfway because a huge crowd took over the ground. Another attraction was the matches between Malabar and Hyderabad Police. In fact, these matches paved the way for many local stars to get into leading clubs in India and later into the Indian team.

Town football club which later became CTFA emerged in Pathanapuram in 1950. Mavur Jawaharlal Club in Kozhikode was formed in 1969. Udaya Sports Club was launched in Cochin in 1964. There was Town Club in Alappuzha and Traders and Flying Arrows in Cochin with aspiring football talents. Young Challengers, Malabar Hunters and Universal were the popular clubs in Kozhikode.

CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF SECULARISM

Physical education expert Prof. K.R. Krishnan Nair wrote that in Travancore, caste ruled the roost in

football clubs as there were teams for different castes. Only one or two clubs had people from all religions. But the scenario was entirely different in Kottayam where Kottayam Meeran formed Hindu Muslim Christian Club popularly known as HMC in 1934. Like that MusHind club came into being in Kozhikode in the mid-1930s. The team once tied MRC for a draw in Durand Cup.

There was a family football club by the name of Kattil Brothers based in Thiruvalla in the 1940s. In Sevens tournaments, five Kattil brothers used to get into the team. Dr A.G. John, who owned over 50 acres of land, built a football ground and tennis court for his children. In Thrissur Palace maidan (present Municipal Stadium), Thrissur Athletic Association started a football tournament in 1925 as Cochin Maharaja Sri Rama Varma donated a silver cup.

TRAVANCORE-COCHIN

TEAM KERALA MADE THEIR DEBUT IN 1957 AT HYDERABAD WITH PETTA RAVI AS CAPTAIN. KERALA BEAT MYSORE AND LATER SURRENDERED TO SERVICES IN THE QUARTER-FINAL.



FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Under the leadership of Lt. Col. Goda Varma Raja, the father of Kerala sports, Travancore - Cochin Football Association was formed in 1942 and got affiliation from the All India Federation in 1946. In 1952, the team made its debut at Santhosh Trophy held in Bangalore. The barefooted team led by K.P. Vijayakumar lost to Mysore 1-4. Most of our players were from the Young Challengers team, Petta.

Team Kerala made their debut in 1957 at Hyderabad with Petta Ravi as

captain. Kerala beat Mysore and later surrendered to Services in the quarter-final. In 1955, G.V. Raja brought Varghese Ninan Thomas from Bombay to train the Travancore team and thanks to him we could upset Mysore. To expose our lads to international football standards, G.V. Raja organised Russia-India match in Thiruvananthapuram in 1955. It was held in the University stadium on February 16. Indian team played as Raja Pramukhan eleven. FIFA allows only international referees to control matches and since there was no one available here in that category, G. V. Raja, with his influence in Delhi, got national referee T.V Thomas from Thumpamon promoted to the status of an international referee. The order was signed by the Indian president who was the patron of the All India Football Federation then.

CORPORATE SUPPORT FROM THE 1960s

Kundara Alind formed a football team in the early 1960s and many players got a job in the company. It was a turning point. It brought results as Alind won four trophies in 1968. FACT Aluva came out with a football club in the mid-1960s. They brought

in Olympian Simon Sunder Raj from Thanjavur as coach in 1968. When Kerala won Santosh Trophy for the first time in 1973 at Kochi, the team was captained by T.K.S. Mani from FACT and the coach was none other than Simon Sunder Raj. The football scenario in Kerala changed when Premier Tyres, Kalamassery came out with a highly talented team in 1972. In between Titanium, Thiruvananthapuram launched their team in 1962. SBT had its first lot in 1965. Customs and Central Excise formed a team in 1974 and Kannur Keltron in 1977. Further, KSRTC, KSEB, Cochin Port Trust etc also created football teams. In fact, the 1970s was a golden era in Kerala football as the aforesaid teams won many All-India tournaments. FACT and Premier Tyres were real threats to the much-established super teams of Bengal and Goa. And this competitive spirit that developed among Kerala clubs helped the state to build an excellent team for the nationals. When Kerala had their maiden Santosh Trophy title triumph the players from FACT, Premier Tyres, KSEB, KSRTC, Port Trust etc. especially from the first two teams, played a pivotal role.

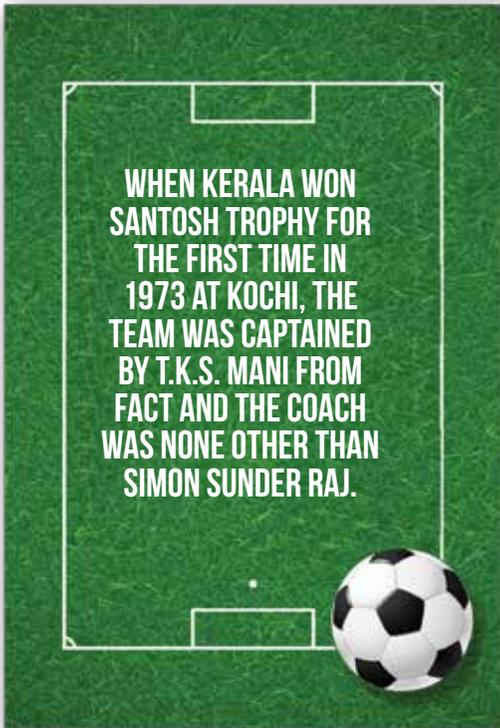
THE PROFESSIONAL ERA STARTED WITH FC COCHIN

FC Cochin, the first professional Club in Kerala was formed in 1997 and they won Durand Cup in that year itself. State League Championship was started in 98-99. Winning the state league title, FC Cochin took part in National League. Till 2002 they played National League. Then came FC Calicut in 2001, Viva Kerala in 2004, followed by Malabar United, Josco FC, Quarts Soccer, FC Kerala, Kovalam FC and Gokulam Kerala FC. Gokulam excelled in I-League where as Kochi-based Kerala Blasters became our symbol in Indian Super League. The yellow jersey was well received by the young generation in Kerala.

SIX OLYMPIANS BEGAN WITH AMATEUR CLUBS

The Indian football team took part in four Olympics from 1948 to 1960 and six Keralites played in the Indian Olympic team. All six got into the Indian team from Bombay or Calcutta but five of them started their football career with amateur clubs in Kerala. Thomas Mathai Varghese





WHEN KERALA WON SANTOSH TROPHY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1973 AT KOCHI, THE TEAM WAS CAPTAINED BY T.K.S. MANI FROM FACT AND THE COACH WAS NONE OTHER THAN SIMON SUNDER RAJ.

(ThiruvallaPappan, 1948 Olympics), PBA Saleh (Kottayam Saleh, 1952), S.S Narayanan (1956, 60), Abdul Rehman (1956), O. Chandrasekhar (1960) and M Devadas (1960) are the Olympians from Kerala. Narayanan took up football in Mumbai. Though Kerala has produced dozens of international football players these six players stand a cut above others with their Olympian label.

FESTIVAL SEASON IN KERALA

For many decades, Kerala celebrated a football festival season with about half a dozen All-India tournaments every year. Leading clubs from across the country took part

and superstars of Indian football were in action. They got an abundant fan following in Kerala. Nagjee Trophy in Kozhikode (1951), Mammen Mappilai Trophy in Kottayam (1954), Chakola Trophy in Thrissur (1955), Sri Narayana Trophy in Kannur (1960), G.V.Raja Trophy in Thiruvananthapuram etc attracted huge star value and mammoth crowd.

Nehru Cup international football tournament was hosted in Kerala six times. Later in 2007, the E.K. Nayanar Gold Trophy International football tournament was launched.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN KERALA

When we talk about the FIFA World Cup of any category, Kerala has only one name to talk about, K.P. Rahul who played for India in the under-17 FIFA World Cup in 2017. But when we speak unofficially, we have a woman player who had played in World Cup. Of course, it was an unofficial World Cup, but that was before FIFA took up women's football. It happened in 1981 in Chinese Taipei. That was the second unofficial World Cup for women. Sarasamma Lalitha from Muttakkara was twenty then and assisted Santhi Malik to score against Germany. India tied Germany one in a

group match but Germany went on to win the Cup.

Kerala women's football got another name to be proud of - Bentla Decoth. She represented India half a dozen times and was one of the referees who officiated at the Athens Olympics in 2004. Later in 2008, she officiated in FIFA Under-20 women's World Cup held in Chile.

Women came to football in Kerala in the mid-1970s. Olympian Kittu who came as a coach here took the initiative to form Kerala Women's Football Association in 1975. Shaji C. Oommen, M.R.C Krishnan etc. trained the girls in Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur respectively. K.P. Sharada teacher and Dr Macy Oommen and later Aniyamma Joseph took up the organisational roles.

Calicut University conducted inter-collegiate tournaments and Thalassery Brennen College got a good team. Kerala took part in the first women's nationals in Lucknow in 1976. Before women's football came under AIFF, Kerala had excellent results. They won the national junior title seven times and the sub-junior title twice. And in 1991, Kerala women became national champions beating Bihar in the final. And, when it became official, Kerala finished runners-up in 2006. Now with Gokulam Kerala FC forming a women's team and doing well in the National Women's League things can be changed. Mevallur, near Piravom has been bringing up so many women footballers. As of now, it seems there is a bright future for women footballers in Kerala.

WHEN SOCCER FEVER HAD ITS GRIP ON ME

Monologue of a football fan

THE VISUAL OF KOLINDA REPEATEDLY CONSOLING LUKA WITH HUGS AS HE CAME TO ACCEPT HIS MEDAL AT THE AWARDS CEREMONY REMAINS ACHINGLY FRESH IN MY MEMORY.



SARANYA BHUVANENDRAN
Journalist

Call it unfortunate, but I too belonged to the majority of girls who, as part of an unspoken rule, were barred from football grounds. In those days, hardly any girl got to experience the joy of hanging out with friends to play cricket, football, or badminton to later make a dash for home as the sun sets.

THE PICKLED MANGO FOOTBALL

My relationship with football began in primary school in the last lap of the 90s. I studied at the Nedumangad Girls Higher Secondary School. There was a Physical Training teacher called Stalin, an ex-army man. The minute he commanded that we close our books and follow him to the school grounds, we happily obeyed. Once we reached the sports room, Stalin sir told us to pick whatever we liked. Our eyes always fell on the football. By the time we had blown enough air into the ball, it would have gone from resembling a shrivelled, pickled mango to a balloon. The next hour would be spent scampering after the ball with no rules or cards to hold us back.



My first experience of the World Cup was the 2014 edition in Brazil - the one where Germany defeated Argentina 1-0.

DEAREST LUKA AND HIS CROATIA

During World Cup 2018, while everyone chased the boys in yellow or

blue, I was curious about the lithe, light-eyed player Luka Modric from a small country called Croatia. The country, relatively new after being divided and weary from unrest, has a population of just 40 lakh. President Kolinda Graber-Kitarovic who came to the stadium to show her support and this player who seemed to communicate to the world with his magical footwork were the things that drew me to Croatia.

The country reached the finals that took place on July 15, 2018, at Luzhniki stadium through sheer determination. It was the day that the world was divided into two - France or Croatia. I too expected a miracle, just like Kolinda. But the results were disappointing. At 4-2, the cup went to France again. The visual of Kolinda repeatedly consoling Luka with hugs as he came to accept his medal at the awards ceremony remains achingly fresh in my memory.

Despite the loss to France, Croatia left the World Cup with its head held high. It was the captain who won the FIFA best men's player award and the Golden Ball award. The people of a nation torn by war and conflict stood tall before the world. Modric surprised everyone by winning the Ballon d'Or award.

Modric represented Croatia at three World Cups - 2006, 2014, and 2018. He has 23 goals and 24 assists to his credit. The Real Madrid superstar has announced that the 2022 World Cup will be his last.

I wait this time too, with bated breath, for Croatia...and for Luka as he kisses the World Cup in his red-and-white chequered jersey.



GOALS GALORE IN MALABAR SOCCER

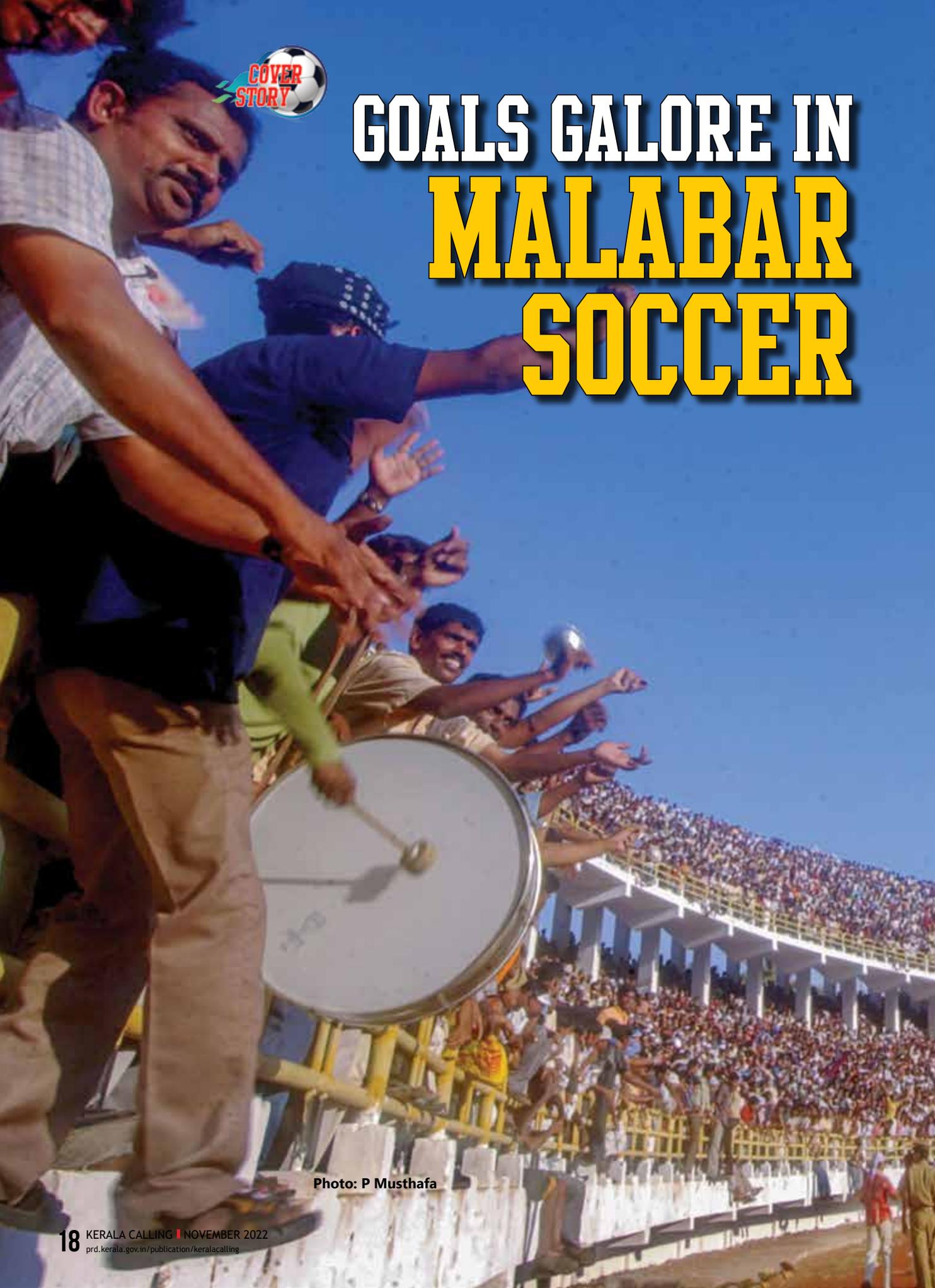


Photo: P Musthafa



K. ABUBACKER
Former Resident Editor of MalayalaManorama

A conversation between two players at the final match of the Asian Games held in Manila in 1954. A Pakistani player asks an Indian player, "Which part of India are you from?"

"South India."

The conversation continued.

"Where in South India?"

"Malabar."

Suddenly switching to Malayalam, the Pakistani asks, "What's your name?"

"P.R. Antony — Perantharappalli Rappai Anthony."

Hugging the opposing team's striker, the Pakistani says, "I am also from Malappuram. Melmuri Kuzhivitta Kalathil Moideenkutty. A member of the Pakistan Air Force."

Another story:

Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman arrives at Kuala Lumpur Stadium to inaugurate Merdeka Tournament in 1959. While introducing the players, an Indian player extends his hand to the chief guest and says, "I am Rahman." The PM replies with a smile, "I am also Rahman — T.A Rahman, Tunku Abdul Rahman." The Indian responds, "Sir, I am also T.A.

Rahman — Tazhathery Abdu Rahman." This Rahman from Kozhikode was the formidable force in the Malabar defence line-up when it reined in the Hyderabad City Police team who were defending champions of the Mumbai Rovers Cup in 1954. He also holds the distinction of being a member of the Indian football team that reached the semi-finals of the Melbourne Olympics, the only Indian team to achieve this feat.

Here are some other players who ought to be reminisced for their contributions to football in India:

S.S. Narayanan, a native of Ottapalam who passed away last year in Mumbai, is the only Malayali footballer to have participated in two Olympics. C.P.Soman from Kannur got into the Indian team through the Mumbai Central Railways and toured Russia in 1955. M.Jayaram, who played the Asian quadrangular in 1953, played for the Indian team. He represented the Indian Navy's team and was the first person from Kozhikode to play football for India. C Mustafa from Kannur guarded the Indian goalpost in Malaysian Merdeka for five years.

ISL

Some of the stars who have emerged from Northern Kerala include Muhammad Rafi of Kasaragod, Anas Edathodika of Malappuram and Sahal Abdu Samad of Payyanur. V.P.Sathyan, a native of Muzhupilangad,

Thalassery, wore the armband of the captain of Indian team 10 times.

SINGLE DISTRICT

Back when the northern Kerala region from Palakkad to Kasaragod was considered as a single district of United Madras State, the best players like ChattaBhaskaran, N.T. Karunan and G. D'Cruz played for Bangalore Muslims, Kolkata Mohammedans, and Kolkata Rajasthan, respectively. K.P. Krishnan played for Mumbai Tatas and Kozhikode native K.Balagopal headed the Tamil Nadu team for over 10 years. In the fifties, the Malabar district team defeated the Madras district and went on to win the Leeladhar Shield.

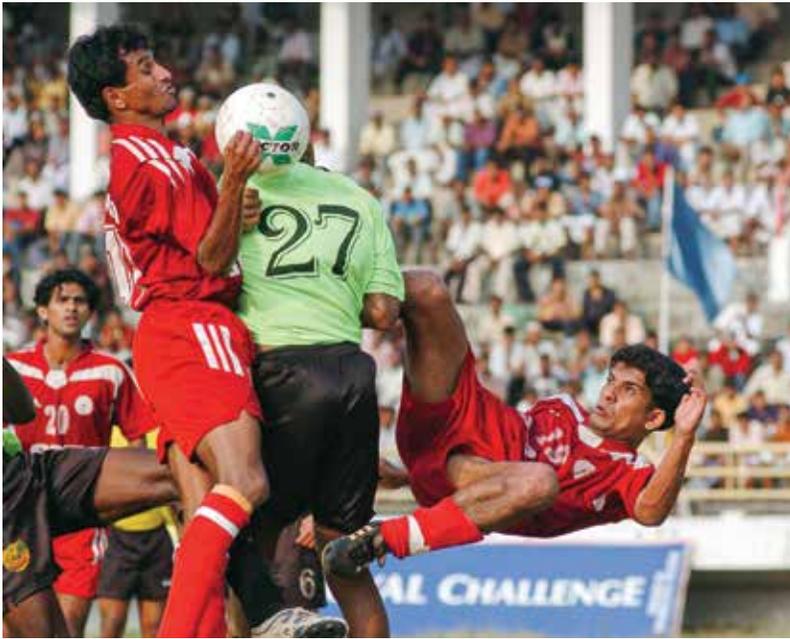
MDFA

Following this enthusiasm, the



THE STORY GOES THAT ONLY THE FOOTBALLS RETURNED AND THE TEAM MEMBERS HEADED BY KANNUR LUCKY STAR'S MADHAVAN NAMBIAR OF NILESWARAM, INCLUDING ANTONY, PURUSHOTHAMAN, RAHMAN, MUHAMMADALI AND HAMSA WERE ABSORBED BY LEADING CLUBS IN INDIA.





clubs of Malabar joined together to form Malabar District Football Association. Fr. J.M. Vergottini, an Italian priest settled in Kozhikode, P.P.Ummer Koya, Haridas Govardhan Seth, T.Abubacker, N.T.Karunakaran, S.M. Ibrahim and O.V. Ahmed initiated the formation of the Association.

AN EMOTION, A CULTURE

In Northern Kerala, football became more of an emotion and culture than a mere game. Matches were held in Kozhikode, Kannur, Thalassery, Palakkad, and Malappuram as tournaments for Mohammad Abdurahman Memorial, Nagjee Football, and P.K. Nair Gold Cup were held. Venues were developed at Mahe, Valapattanam, Areekode, and Perinthalmanna. Teams from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Burma arrived to play as Malabar witnessed national and international matches.

SPORTS WRITING, EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS, IMMORTAL IMAGES

Mushtaq heralded sports journalism in Kerala while Vimcy set new standards. K.Koya wrote till the

age of 80. K.P.R. Krishnan, A. Paul, Bhasi Malaparambu, V.Rajagopal, and Kamal Varadur continued the legacy. Komatil Raman Menon, P.K. Padmanabhan Nair, T.Damodaran, and C.P.Sreedharan held the audience spellbound with their running commentaries par excellence. While Peethambaran and Neena Balan's photos of the team were preserved for posterity, T. Narayan, M.R.Menon, A.Ramanujam and P. Mustafa's lenses captured many historic blink-and-miss moments.

C.P.Mahmood of Kannur, C.P. Sadashivan, Chatta Vasu and others formed the Brothers Club while Dr. P. Madhavan and N.T. Karunan supported Spirited Youths, and Olacheri Kunjambu promoted Lucky Star.

CAPTAINS

Malabar rose to prominence in 1954 with the selection of a formidable district team. A.D. Parthasarathy, a respected coach from Chennai, trained MDFA in the Rovers Cup held at the Mumbai Cooperage. The story goes that only the footballs returned and the team members headed by Kannur Lucky Star's Madhavan Nambiar of Nileswaram, including Antony, Purushothaman, Rahman, Muhammadali, and Hamsa were absorbed by leading clubs in India.



Photo: P Musthafa



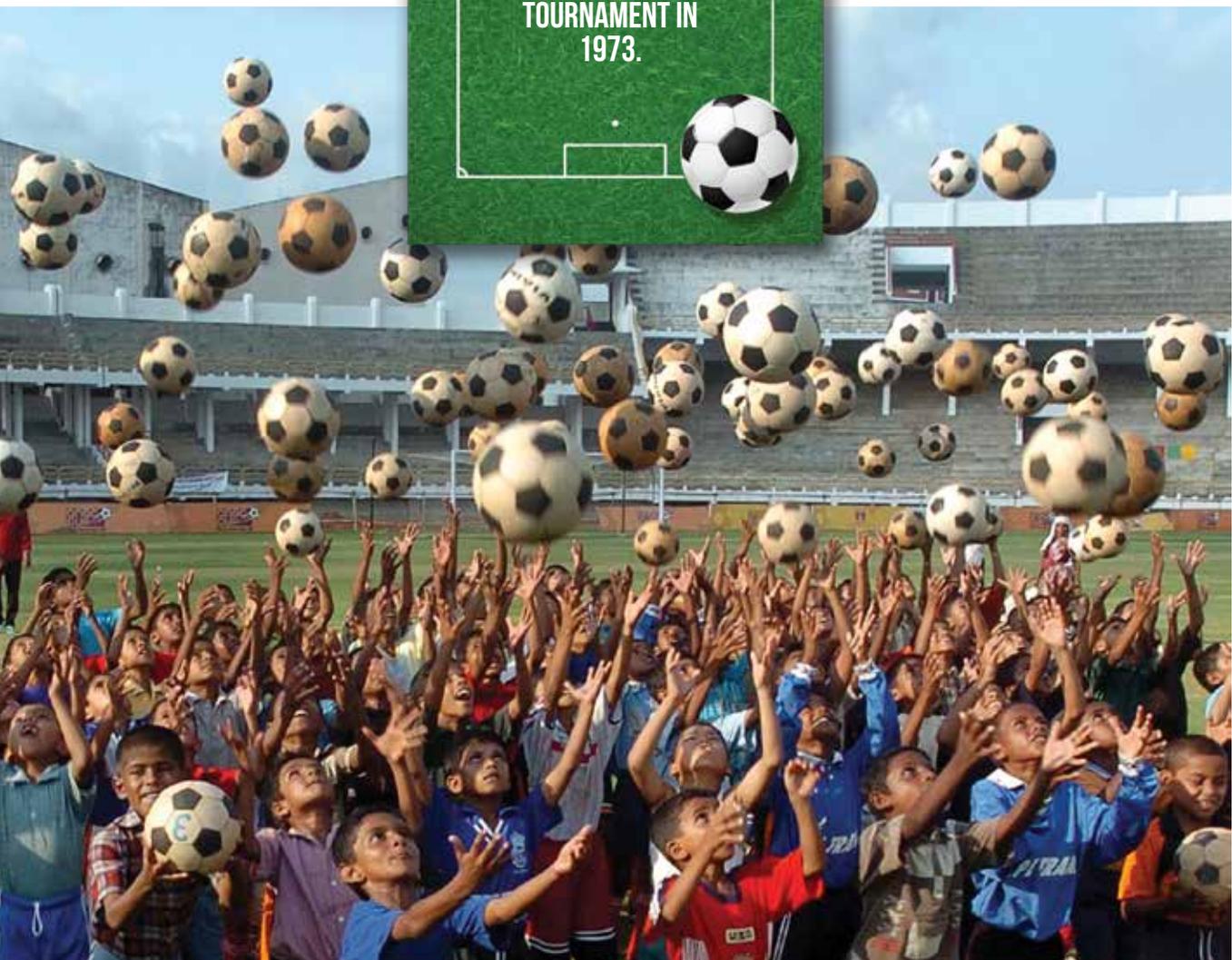
BOOTBALL

Even as the rest of India hesitated to think beyond barefoot football, the Malabar League was held by a Malappuram team called Moidu Rubber Estate. Junior football was introduced in 1963. N.T.Karunakaran and Chatta Bhaskaran

started running club leagues even during the monsoons. Later, C.P.M. Usman Koya, Victor Manjila, K.P.Sethumadhavan, Premnath Philip, N.M.Najeeb and Niaz Rahman served as coaches.

Malabar contributed three players from Kozhikode to the Indian team at the Merdeka tournament in 1973. Calicut University won the Ashutosh Mukherjee Shield in a university football tournament. Even a school from Malappuram could stand tall in the Little Durand cup in Delhi. This region gave birth to the Indian captains who helped Kerala win the Santosh Trophy five times. Even the women's team of Gokulam FC emerged victorious from here.

Thus, Malabar has been a cradle of football in Kerala and contributed immensely to the growth of football in India.



SANTOSH TROPHY



Captain TKS Mani with Santosh Trophy in 1973

THE TROPHY THAT MADE MALAYALIS IMMENSELY HAPPY



ABI T. ABRAHAM

Senior Journalist

When Indian football lovers revel in the glory of the World Cup, without intentionally foisting, certain questions and comparisons emerge. Why, Indian football, once a dominant force in Asia, is now in the 107th position in the FIFA ranking? Why, India, which was a force to

reckon with in Asian tournaments like Merdeka Cup in the 1950s and 1960s, is plummeting to these depths? Was it the mismanagement of the All India Football Federation that hindered the evolution of Indian football? Or is it the paucity in the physique and skills of the players that held India back? Why were

foreign coaches like Akramov and Constantine not able to dribble Indian football to the top echelons of sporting history?

Questions galore. But for the average Indian football fan, who is continually served with mediocrity, Santosh Trophy holds a special position, even though it's a far cry from the standards of European football. Especially for the fans who are above fifty years. For them, Santosh Trophy is an innate nostalgia. One cannot discard the exuberance of former footballers and middle-aged fans when Kerala grabbed its seventh Santosh Trophy title at Payyanad Stadium in Malappuram earlier this year. The history of the cup is replete with instances of football anecdotes with local flavour. But the fact remains that unlike in earlier occasions, after the initial din, there weren't any perceptible ripples subsequent to Kerala winning the title under the leadership of Jijo Joseph.

KERALA'S MATCHLESS PERFORMANCE IN THE SANTOSH TROPHY

Capitan T.K.S. Mani's hat trick in the finals against Railways in 1973, when Kerala won the cup, is part of Kerala's Santosh Trophy folklore. It was Simon Sundararaj's footballing acumen that spotted and vouched for Mani as captain, which triggered the road to the maiden title. Mani later attributed the credit for three goals to excellent passes provided to him by Najmudeen and T.A Jaffer.

It took another 19 years for Kerala to lift the Santosh Trophy again. Jaffer who initiated the move for the cup-winning goal for Mani to score was the master craftsman who prepared the Kerala team for its second title. When V.P.Sathyan, the midfield general of Kerala football, steered the team to title in 1992, he was already a legend in the making. Moreover, he was the captain of the Indian team during that period. Meanwhile, Jaffer became the first Malayali to win Santosh Trophy as



V P Satyan



Jo Paul Anchery



Kurikesh Mathew



I M Vijayan



U Sharaf Ali



C V Pappachan

a player and as a coach.

Next year too it was Kerala's turn. Jaffer's too. Kurikesh Mathew, not in class with Mani and Sathyan, was catapulted to their stature, just because it was under his leadership that Kerala won the third title, in 1993. Kerala had in its ranks players of the calibre of I.M.Vijayan, V.P.Sathyan, U.Sharafali, C.V.Pappachan, K.T.Chacko, and P.P.Thobias. It was, in fact, the Kerala teams which won the Santosh Trophy in 1973, 1992 and 1993 that happened to be the core of the Indian team as well.



P.P. Thobias

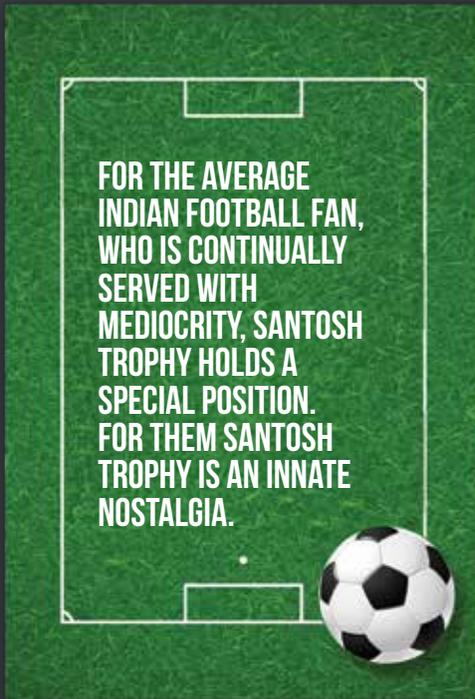
V.Sivakumar was not a player par excellence, compared with his contemporaries. He is remembered more as the captain under whom Kerala won the fifth title in 2001 than as a player with great midfield skills. Ignatius in contrast excelled for his club and state as a striker and had the glory of scoring in the final match against Punjab in Kerala's fifth Santosh Trophy title (2005). It was through his golden goal that Ignatius achieved this feat. He may be the last captain who would have basked in the glory of a title win. Even though Kerala won the title two more times (2018 and 2022), the aftermath of the pleasant after-shock was missing. Rahul V. Raj and Jijo Joseph were not as celebrated as their predecessors.

This is an indicator of the times. The sad harsh reality is that when clubs and corporates take over, the age-old regional-romantic duels cease to exist. As everywhere in the world, big corporates have penetrated far into merchandising sports in India too. Indian Premier League has cut

short the sheen of domestic cricket in India, including Ranji Trophy tournament, in recent years. So it may be only natural that the advent of the Indian Super League has diminished

the relevance and rustic charm of Santosh Trophy.

When Asian teams like Japan and Korea, who were once on par with India, were galloping ahead in tune with the standards of the world, Indian football was palpitating. Rather than being an expression of the football ethos of a state, Santosh Trophy turned out to be a low-key affair, preceded by a two-month camp of cutting and slicing of a jumbo probable team list. It is at this juncture that the corporates who sensed the emerging market in football recreated franchise structure in India. The path ahead for the Santosh trophy seems to be grim. It might stay marked as an event in the yearly football fixture of AIFA and may be played ritualistically year after year. How long can the Santosh Trophy and I-League tournament co-exist with the cash-rich Indian Super League? It's anybody's guess...



VP Satyan (no.6), captain of the Kerala Team, celebrates Kerala's victory in the 1991 Santosh Trophy



MARADONA, MESSI AND NEYMAR

FOOTBALL IS NOT JUST A GAME FOR KERALITES, IT IS MORE OF AN EMOTION ENGRAINED IN THEIR BLOOD AND SOUL. IT IS NOT EASY FOR OUR PEOPLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION OF WHO'S THEIR FAVOURITE INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALLER. IT WOULD BE LIKE ASKING WHO'S BETTER- PELE OR MARADONA?, A QUESTION THAT WILL EXIST AS LONG AS FOOTBALL EXISTS! NO ONE CAN DENY THAT PELE IS THE KING OF FOOTBALL. BUT NO ONE CAN DENY THAT MARADONA IS THE GOD OF FOOTBALL EITHER!



SHAJI JACOB
Sports Journalist

For the sake of argument, we could say that statistics are in Pele's favour. He is a star who won three World Cups from 1958 to 1970. He is the striker who led Brazil to victory by scoring crucial goals in the 1958 and 1970 World Cup finals. Pele also leads Maradona in the number of goals scored. But nevertheless, Maradona will always remain the God of Football for us Malayalis. The legend has only won the World Cup once for Argentina, in 1986. The two goals he shot in the first match against England in Mexico are historic. The first goal was a handball that escaped the eyes of the referee. Maradona later called it the hand of God! He has never apologised for this goal ever, never had he regretted it either. No football enthusiast would have forgiven it if it was anyone but Maradona! The second goal he scored in the same match, running across the field with the ball, and single-handedly kicking it into the post is yet another history. It is called the goal of the century! And for good reason. He later led Argentina to kiss the World Cup in a tumultuous victory.

But Maradona was unable to retain the title in the 1990 World Cup. He could not score a single goal in the tournament either. After the first two games in the 1994 world cup, Maradona was prohibited from playing after testing positive in the drug test. Even though he tried a hand to become a trainer after retirement, he was unsuccessful. Eventually, he had to seek treatment for addiction. He passed away at the age of 60 in 2020. His third death anniversary will cross dates with the world cup at Qatar this year. But no matter

what Maradona did, football fans will never hate him. That is the power he holds over his fans over years, not something most players in the world enjoy.

The Qatar World Cup shadows three superstars that have earned their place in the hearts of football lovers across the world. The Argentinian captain Lionel Messi, Brazilian lead Neymar and the heartthrob of Portugal, Cristiano Ronaldo. Their faces have covered towering cut-outs all over Kerala, grabbing the attention of even the official FIFA website. The irony lies in the fact that these three legends have never won the World Cup. They have conquered most of the titles except that one cup!



Among the three, Messi is Kerala's Messiah! The question persists as to who's the best- Neymar, Messi, or Ronaldo. Ronaldo leads in terms of the number of international goals including clubs. The number is a whopping 701! Whereas it's 695 for the Messiah! Messi has played in the 2014 world cup finals, losing to Germany for a goal, while Ronaldo has not gone beyond the semis in the world cup. This is their last World Cup. Whoever takes their team to victory in Qatar will carve their names forever in the hearts of football fans across the globe. If Messi wins the cup, he will be hailed as the greatest footballer of all time, even crossing Maradona in the charts of time and ball!

There are other worthy stars and teams at the world cup too. Karim Benzema and Mbappe are the spearheads of France, the previous cup holders. Both the players have a huge fanbase in Kerala. Either of them could take their team to victory. They are equally spectacular players. Then there's Germany, England and Spain to add to the competition. A new star could

rise in Qatar, like the unexpected striker of Italy, Paolo Rossi, conquered the hearts of millions in the 1982 World Cup. Let's wait and watch the ball roll with bated breaths and a thumping heart!





K.N. Balagopal, Minister for Finance, inaugurates the Kerala Pavilion



I & PRD Director H. Dineshan IAS at the Kerala Pavilion

IITF-2022 GOLD FOR GOD'S OWN COUNTRY

Kerala wins the Gold Medal for the best pavilion (State and Union Territory category) in the India International Trade Fair -2022 organised at Pragati Maidan in Delhi. The Kerala Pavilion was inaugurated by Minister for Finance, K.N. Balagopal.

PHOTOS

**Ravikumar C.S. I&PRD
K.K. Santhosh Kumar I&PRD**



I & PRD Additional Director K. Abdul Rasheed receives the Gold Medal for Kerala





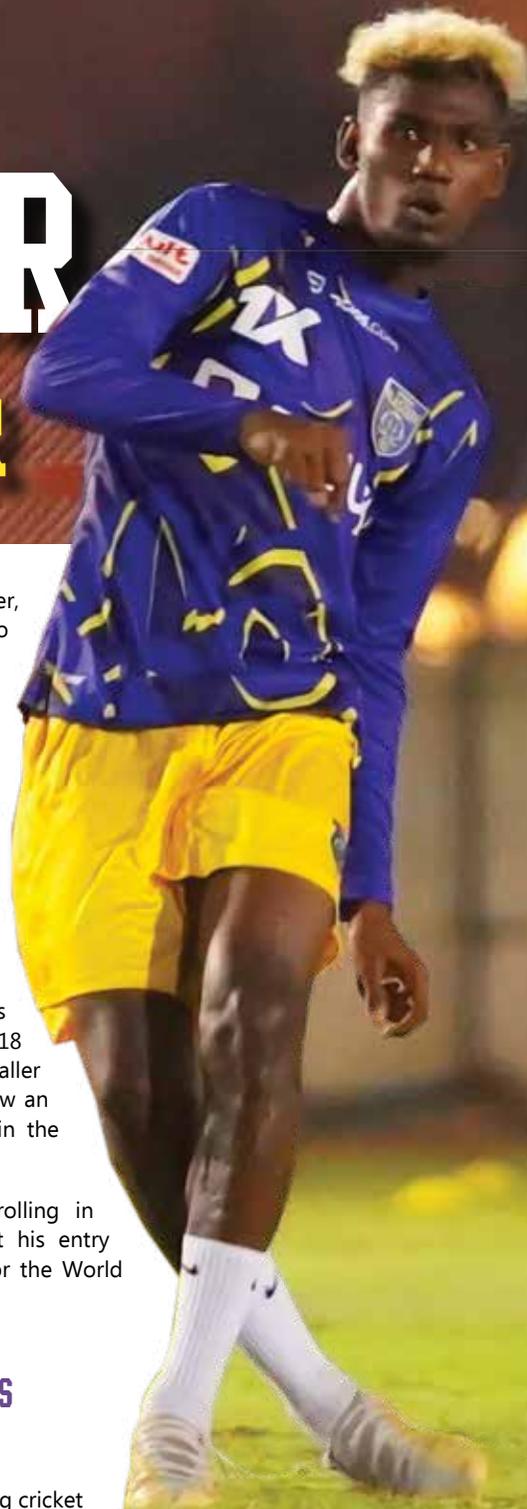
A.K. Saseendran, Minister for Forest & Wildlife at Kerala Pavilion





THE RISING STAR

FROM RAJAJI NAGAR



ANSAR S RAJ
Sports journalist

M.S.Sreekuttan, an emerging football star, born in Rajaji Nagar in Thiruvananthapuram is Kerala's proud icon in ISL football. His journey to the dream jersey was not so easy and was quite tough at times. M.S Sreekuttan's ultimate dream is to reach the Indian team through professional football.

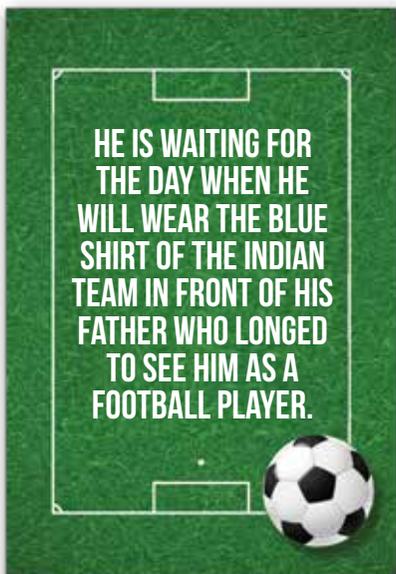
Sreekuttan's journey is backed by the lost dreams of a father who went from

one football ground to another, looking for opportunities to watch and play but could not make it anywhere. Manikuttan, M.S.Sreekuttan's father, who did not even have the resources to buy boots for himself, nevertheless encouraged his son to play football and he is on cloud nine now at his son's hard-earned success. "I'd rather see you kick a ball around with your feet than get a job after studying", Manikuttan told his son. Sreekuttan has just turned 18 but he is a professional footballer now. Sreekuttan's father, is now an employee of a petrol pump in the city.

With the World Cup rolling in Qatar, Sreekuttan talks about his entry into football and his hopes for the World Cup.

SUPPORT OF THE SPORTS COUNCIL

Sreekuttan started playing cricket and football at his school Thampanoor U.P.S near Rajaji Nagar. But the turning point in his life was a selection trial held at the Central Stadium. It was the trials to the sports council hostel. The council





coach Dinesh saw Sreekuttan's talent and selected him. And with that, Sreekuttan shifted to the sports hostel in Pathanamthitta. His studies continued at the SC Seminary High School, Thiruvalla. There he learned the game under the coaches Shiju and Jinu. He got admission in Malappuram MSP School for his grade 11. It was at MSP that the next turning point in his life happened. The Khelo India School Games. There, Sreekuttan caught the eye of the Kerala Blasters reserve team coach, Tomak. After the game, when Tomak asked if he would like to join him, Sreekuttan only had to ask his father for a one word 'yes'. After a week of trials, he was selected to the team and played in the Kerala Premier League for the reserve team of Blasters. He attended pre-season camp this year. Although he was selected as a member of the main team, he trains with the reserve team.

SAHAL- A FRIEND INDEED

Sreekuttan was in India's top league professional club the Kerala Blasters team before he even turned 18. The atmosphere was completely different from his familiar life with his peers at the sports hostel. It was initially quite hard to understand and adjust to the strict discipline and rules of the professional club, but someone came to his rescue.

Superstar Sahal Abdul Samad. Sahal, the leading figure of the Kerala Blasters and the Indian team, was Sreekuttan's roommate. Sahal helped him understand everything important during and outside of training. "Sahal was always there to answer my doubts and he became my brother. The support given by other Malayali Blasters players such as Bijoy Varghese and Nihal were also great", says Sreekuttan.

BLUE JERSEY-THE ULTIMATE DREAM

Sreekuttan says that it is his



ultimate dream to reach the Indian team through professional football. He has just started his journey. He has reached so far with his hard work, perseverance, and dedication. There is still a long way to go. It will take a lot of effort. Tying football boots is not just fulfilling his dreams. He is waiting for the day when he will wear the blue shirt of the Indian team in front of his father who longed to see him as a football player.

ARGENTINA - AN EMOTION

Sreekuttan's hero is Lionel Messi and his father's idol is Diego Maradona. They both unanimously say that Argentina is an emotion that has been handed down over generations. Sreekuttan saw Argentina play for the first time in the 2010 World Cup. The father's and son's heroes lined up for Argentina at the World Cup in South Africa. Maradona as the coach and Messi as the captain. The excitement knew no bounds as Argentina entered the mind of the six-year-old boy who watched the games with his father on the screen of Rajaji Nagar.

Although Sreekuttan is busy in training with the Blasters team, he wants to watch Argentina's game on the big screen in the shed of Rajaji Nagar with his father and friends.



M.M. JAFAR KHAN
Journalist

Football reflects all the stages, feelings, and fears of life. Joy, sadness, disappointment, hope, rant, conflict, drama, and ups and downs are the same in life and games. Malayalis are also trying to overcome social identity crises through an aesthetic match. People copy the passion and charm of the game in their lives. Football unites a nation, transcending caste and religion.

World Cup Football, it's the ultimate dream of soccer players and fans. The once-in-four-year event brings back memories and gives wings to dreams. It is one of the most coveted tournaments as teams and fans prepare and wait for it for four years. One of the most celebrated footballers from Kerala, IM Vijayan, compared Malayali fervor for football to their passion for 'Thrissur Pooram.'

Like people across the globe, Malayalis too love the game, and their



WHEN FOOTBALL MIRRORS LIFE ITSELF



passion for soccer is beyond words. It's time for them to celebrate. ISL, I-League, and Santosh Trophy are the little joys of Keralites. In Kerala, football is a celebration of love, brotherhood, fearlessness, sympathy, and independence for them.

The last four decades witnessed how cricket monopolized India's sporting arena. It has become a fever and fashion with the support of television channels and commercials. But Kerala continued to embrace football and hosted ticketed and non-ticketed tournaments.

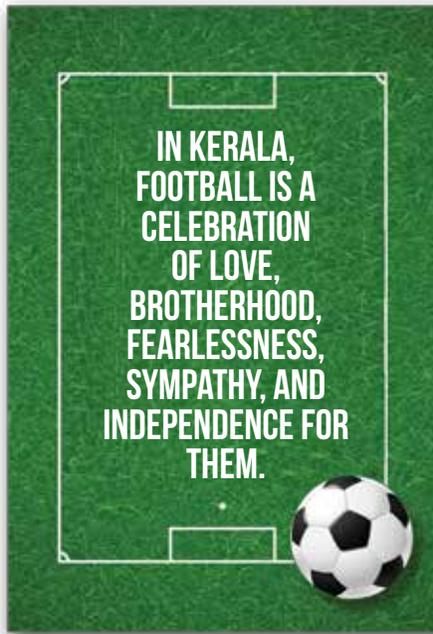
The British introduced football to Malayalis along with volleyball, basketball, and hockey. While the natives stayed away from the British during the freedom fight, the invaders thought the game would bring people closer.

In the early days, the Malayalis watched the game from the stands. Then they learned the game, and with time, played friendly matches with the British.

The natives often played barefoot against the British in boots. Eventually, rubber balls replaced the balls made of plantainleaves and the cover of its stem. Local people started playing real football at a much later stage.

Natives found football economically friendly as it demanded

just a ball and no other equipment. The structure of the games was also less complicated. Moreover, the game brought 22 people onto the field, thus building a brotherhood.



Non-availability of football grounds in Kerala encouraged a unique version of the game — Sevens. After the harvest, sandbanks in the middle of rivers and school grounds in summer become the venue for Sevens.

Be it rain or shine, in Kerala, the game is played throughout the year.

Here, World Cup football is a national event. Huge cut-outs of the favourite stars, boards, banners, flagpoles, and flags of various countries can be seen everywhere. Cut-outs of Messi, Neymar, and Ronaldo installed in the river at Pullavur in Kozhikode district have recently won the appreciation of FIFA.

DURING THE WORLD CUP

Betting has become a favourite activity, and it takes place at every nook and corner of the state. Movies make way for matches. World Cup matches are shown live on big screens. NRIs working in the Middle East schedule their return to their native places during World Cup season. They watch the matches with family and friends. Malayalis prefer to watch the game at halls, clubs, and other temporary facilities where they can come together. The victories of their favourite teams are followed by lavish dinners, and they mock the defeated team. The fans are everywhere, and they bet on their favourites. But with true sportsman spirit, they appreciate champions.

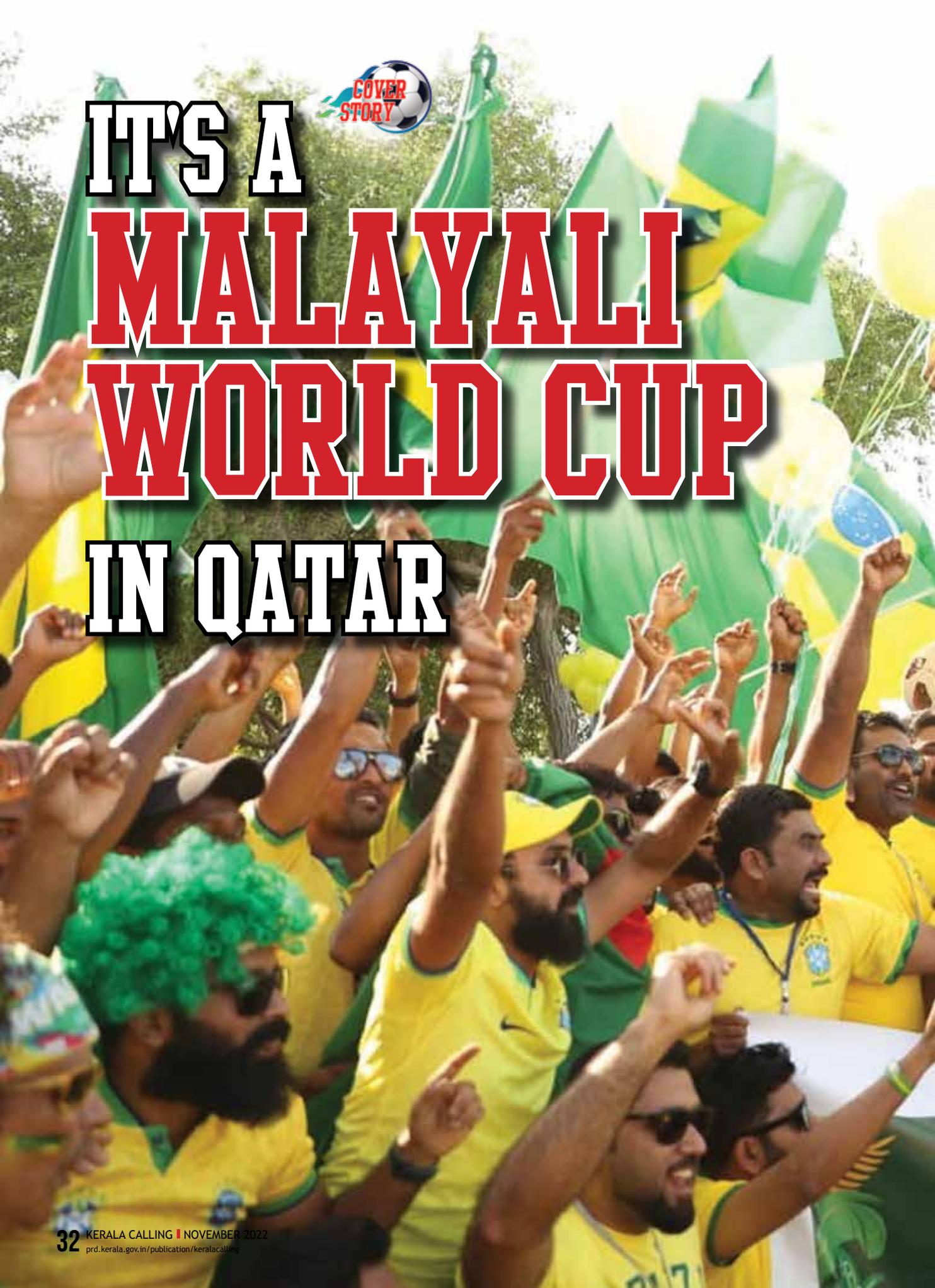
It's the game that ultimately triumphs. That's the magic of football.

Kerala is the Indian state from where the highest number of football fans have gone to watch the Qatar World Cup live this year.





IT'S A MALAYALI WORLD CUP IN QATAR





FAIZAL HAMZA
Journalist

No Indian has ever been able to set foot in the highest echelons of football. The question as to why we couldn't find 11 individuals out of 130 crore people who could play competitive football at the highest level remains unanswered. This pertinent question that we had been asking ourselves has now started to reverberate from various quarters.

The pictures of huge cut-outs of Lionel Messi, Neymar and Cristiano Ronaldo erected in a river in Pullavoor in the district of Kozhikode created waves not only in India but even in faraway lands. The pictures were shared even on the official social media pages of FIFA. Pullavoor has now become a global iconic symbol of Qatar world cup football. Nothing less can be expected from Kerala where a fan frenzy over football is beyond comprehension. Where else could one see members of the cabinet challenging each other over Argentina and Brazil and Members of the Legislative Assembly taking sides over favourite teams? How can one not ask why, in spite of the dizzying fandom, India is not able to play in the World Cup? There is only one answer to this. Though we fall short in terms of the nuances of a good game, in a football frenzy, we have always been world champions.

This is most true in the case of Keralites. Long before Nainavalappu, Therattammal and Pullavoor, we found a place for ourselves on the international football map through hero worship than heroes.

The Qatar world cup is a one-of-a-kind chance for Malayali fans to see their heroes up close. Football idols like Messi, Neymar and Ronaldo who could be seen only on television screens will be in flesh and blood right before the eyes of fans. And one thing is for sure, the all too familiar Portuguese, and Spanish chants that echo in the stadiums during world cup matches will be outshined by enthusiastic slogans in Malayalam this time. The fervour of galleries during Sevens football tournaments in Malappuram will be replicated zealously in the stadiums of Qatar.

Unlike the last 21 football world cups, Malayali presence will be felt in the galleries of Al Bayt, Lusail and Al Thumama. The wildest of dreams are unfolding into reality for quite a lot of Keralites residing in Doha. There are many who have set aside considerable amounts from their meagre income to buy match tickets. Malayali fans have made good use of the offer of 40 Qatar Riyal tickets available only for Qatar residents.

For the Qatar world cup, Malayalis are not only the cheerleaders in the gallery. But they are an integral part of the organising core team. Malayalis were part of the infrastructural development for the World

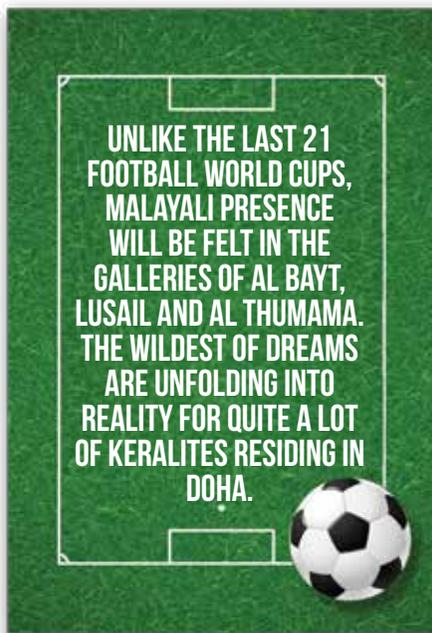


Photo: Vinod Divakaran (InsideQatar)

Cup. Moreover, there are several Malayalis in key positions in the core team of organisers called the Supreme Committee. In fact, it is doubtful if so many Malayalis would be part of an organising committee if a world cup was conducted in India. There's a reason for this large presence of Malayalis in the organisational part of the world cup. To understand this, just take a look at the demographic figures of Qatar. Qatar is only as big as the Malappuram district. The total population is 30 lakhs, out of which 7 lakhs are Indians. Malayalis constitute around 4 lakhs. The natives of Qatar amount to only 3, 60,000. This implies that Malayalis are more in number than the natives in Qatar.

THE MALAYALI TOUCH IN SEATING

Qatar has built eight stadiums



for the football world cup. Beautiful galleries have been set up in all these stadiums for football fans. The seating

arrangements in these galleries come in different hues and forms. Malayali fans can sit firmly in these seats as all these seats have been built by a company named Coastal Qatar, owned by a Keralite. From the inaugural venue of Al Bayt to Lusail, the venue of the final match, Malayali companies have been part of construction in many stages. Indian company, L & T was the co-builder of Al Rayyan Ahmed Bin Ali stadium.

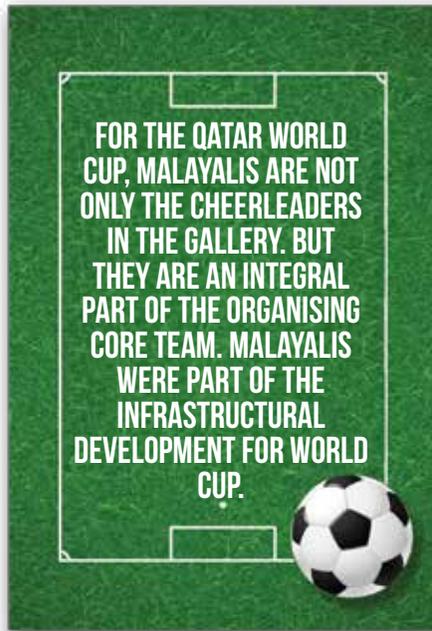
IN THE DRIVING SEAT

Board any of the multi-coloured world cup special buses in Qatar and you will find someone who looks familiar. The majority of the drivers in world cup special buses are Malayalis. Malayalis are also serving in key positions in the operation wings of public transport services like Metros and Trams in Qatar.



MALAYALI TO GUIDE YOUR WAY

You will get a taste of the Malayali world cup right from the moment you set foot in Doha international airport or Hamad international airport. Right from the airport to the world cup stadiums, the Malayali community plays an integral role in the organisation and management of the world cup. It is my personal understanding that Malayalis were a significant part of even the interview boards which selected volunteers for the tournament. Similar is the case with the Hayya centre which handles the services related to spectator access cards known as Hayya cards. Most faces in the counters are Malayalis. Malayalis are galore in the World Cup media centre and accreditation centre. I'm sure we will get to see a number of Malayali kids as ball boys in inaugural events and matches.



WORLD CUP OF ASIA

The Government of Qatar has stated unequivocally that this is not merely the world cup of Qatar, but it is

the world cup of Asia. These words are a reflection of the care that the Arab country showers towards immigrants. And it has been availed to the maximum by none other than the Malayali community.

No matter who lifts the World Cup in Lusail on 18 December 2022, the real champions of this tournament will be Qatar for the sheer effortlessness with which the country dribbled the COVID crisis and the economic sanctions to make this tournament happen. And Malayalis can proudly stake claim for a share of this credit for the hard work and dedication they have put in this enormous endeavour.

The fervour of galleries during Sevens football tournaments in Malappuram will be replicated zealously in the stadiums of Qatar. Do not be astounded if you hear someone calling out in the stadium 'Hello there Messi, I am from Kozhikode' in a colloquial Malabar accent.



Photo: Vinod Divakaran (InsideQatar)

EXCLUSIVE

JOURNEY OF ONE TIME AND IT WILL LAST FOR A LIFETIME

NAAJI NOUSHI, A MOTHER OF FOUR, HAILING FROM THALASSERI IS CONQUERING DISTANCES AND INCHING TOWARD QATAR. NOUSHI, A PASSIONATE TRAVELLER, VLOGGER, AND YOUTUBER, STARTED HER SOLO TRIP TO QATAR BY DRIVING HER 'OLU' (MAHINDRA THAR). SHE IS THE WORLD'S FIRST PERSON TO SET OFF TO FIFA WORLD CUP BY ROAD. THE CREDIT OF THE WORLD'S FIRST MAHINDRA THAR VANLIFE IS ALSO OWNED BY HER. IT WAS THE REALIZATION OF A DREAM WHEN TRANSPORT MINISTER ANTONY RAJU FLAGGED OFF THE JOURNEY FROM THE VILLAGE PANCHAYAT.

IN A TETE-A-TETE WITH **A. ANCHITHA** ON THE PHONE, NAAJI NOUSHI SHARES THE UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE OF HER ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY





A. ANCHITHA
Assistant Editor, I&PRD

The turning point in my life was getting a driving license. It gave wings to my solo drive dreams. At first, I started driving from Edapalli to Thalassery, my hometown with my little children. As days, weeks, and months passed, I eyed long distances and started driving to Chennai, Bangalore, etc, and in no time distances shrank before me, and decided to drive along across India.

Driving to Qatar in my Olu (Mahindra Thar) has been one of my most cherished dreams. Football has been in my blood ever since I watched Messi's FIFA world cup match when I was just 17 years old. Messi's birthday falls on the 23rd of June 1987 and mine on the 24th of July 88. It is amazing that many things are related to a single digit. My aunts are really football frenzied and their bluster for goals in true football spirit has always made me awestruck. Naturally, as a young player with long hair and a fair face, with an unparalleled passion for the game, Messi started standing out in our hearts. And it goes on. If we look at Messi's matches to date, I think the eyes of the world have been dribbling behind Messi's magical run-up for the ball!

Even though I had accomplished an all-India trip, Everest base camp, the Lakshadweep trip, etc., I had been dreaming of a Middle East solo trip, as I am a resident of Oman for the past 7 years. I usually take breaks for three to four months in between the trips and give myself some time to think and plan my future trips. This is my 4th travel series. The plan for this trip started last July. As an expatriate, proud Malayali, and football enthusiast, I wanted to cover FIFA exclusively just because this world cup is close by.

In FIFA's history, I think, nobody has dared set out to watch the world cup match by crossing over many countries by road. By doing so, I

wished to script history. The first of a kind, who explores the roadways to watch the greatest sports carnival in the world, the FIFA world cup. To pursue this further, I looked forward to many sponsors and by the first week of September and mid of October, I found some who were ready to travel with my dream. Meanwhile, necessary modifications were made to 'Olu' (my Thar vehicle) and converted it into more travel friendly. And thus I kicked off my solo journey on October 15th.

As a globetrotter, I have gained lots of experience from each

pumps to park the vehicle sometimes at night.

The advantage of van travel life is that there is no need to search for safe hotel rooms. The van itself is a safe place to sleep. The back seats of the Mahindra Thar were removed and converted into a campervan so much so that essential kitchen and bed facilities were easily added to it.

While I was entering the Maharashtra border, I met some pilgrims. Even though they and I didn't know either Malayalam or Kannada we shared our happiness and smiled



at one another. I happily shared some water, food, and Thalassery sulaimani with them. The diversity of our country where many people from different religions, languages, and customs are residing in various walks of life amazed me. This is one of the unforgettable incidents that I want to cherish and stood close to my heart.

As I am hailing from the Malabar area, naturally I always have had a love for football. We can see many football enthusiasts with ultimate spirit in Kannur, Kasargod, Kozhikode, and Malappuram districts. I was not able to participate in school tours as my family was not able to meet the expenses. Today travelling on my own too, a solo trip to watch the FIFA world cup is something I couldn't ask for more. My biggest support is my spouse and mother. With this expedition, I am trying to demonstrate that India is a secure country for female solo travellers.

expedition. This time, I am more excited as it is a unique one. The van has basic facilities. I sleep in it just as I do in my own bedroom. In the mid-noon time, park the vehicle by the side of some nearby villages or roadside and cook food. Sometimes, I sleep in tents and that is very comfortable. The best part of the solo trip is cooking and sleeping. Some people residing in the village areas will come and give a look just out of curiosity but there was nothing to be anxious about. And I chose petrol



IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE

1986 MEXICO WORLD CUP



RAMESH MATHEW

Ex-Staff Correspondent,
Gulf Times Newspaper, Qatar 2002-2018

Every generation of passionate football lovers across the world has its own heroes and the sports

followers in India, including football-crazy Kerala, are no exception.

Though one is not quite sure of the popularity of World Cup Football among Indian fans prior to the replacement of the Jules Rimet Trophy with the FIFA World Cup in Germany in 1974, (remember there was no live TV telecast of the event in India until the 1986 edition) those following the sport for more than 45 years have little doubt that our countrymen are second to none as far as their interest in the World Cup is concerned.

Certainly, this kind of enthusiasm and the growing popularity of professional soccer among our youth have made India one of the most favourite marketing points of FIFA in the last 15 years. The introduction of the Indian Soccer League (from 2013 onwards) has helped maintain the tempo for almost a decade and these kinds of football activities are fast turning our country into a popular sports destination at the world level these days.

Many people of my generation



in Kerala may perhaps have their very first memories of a World Cup from the 1974 Championship onwards. The names of such legends as German Franz Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller, and Sepp Maier, and Netherlands' inspirational Johan Cryuff and Johan Neeskens invade our minds quite too often even after almost half a century. However, legendary Brazilian Pele who had retired four years earlier (in Mexico, 1970) after an amazing performance that saw his South American country winning their third World Cup in 12

years, continued to figure on top in every discussion on football, featuring Malayalis even in the middle of the 1970s... No wonder even in the 52nd year of his hanging the boots, even those football fans who had only heard of his exploits, continue to adore this sensational footballer.

The football interest of our people started growing from strength to strength and the 1978 FIFA Cup in Buenos Aires heightened the passion of Keralites further. Malayalam newspapers competed among themselves with remarkably good coverage and agencies' reports and photos were massively used to give a better visual appeal to their sports pages those days.



More than the victory of the host's Argentine national team under Daniele Passarella against repeat finalists Holland, the circumstances under which Brazil was eliminated after an apparently "fixed" encounter between the home team and Peru are still remaining fresh in the minds of many sports lovers of Kerala. The entire football fraternity of our Kerala was seen bemoaning the exit of Pele's successors. The impressive debut of North Africans Tunisia who stunned Mexico 3-1 is also fresh in their memories. The championship in Buenos Aires was the last with only 16 teams in the fray. For the next 24 years,





there were as many teams and the number rose to 32 from 2002 onwards.

The coverage of the World Cup in our language media went up considerably as each edition passed. Realising the pulse and ever-growing interest of Keralites in the event, our newspapers also started relying on the side stories from some of the Kerala-born journalists based in Gulf countries who had the fortune of covering such mega-events. This was apparently the trend between 1982 and 1994. One name that needs special mention is Babu Mathar of Gulf Times (in Qatar) who reported at least three World Cups and as many Olympic Games. Also those reports from Bhasy Malapparambu, an engineer from Kozhikode, who has covered no less than seven editions of the World Cup so far.

While the championship held in Madrid (1982) helped generate more interest in the World Cup among the country's football fans, really speaking it was the 1st Nehru International Gold Cup in Kolkata held at the start of that year which served as a catalyst to Indian soccer lovers familiarising with some of the top names at the global level. Italy's triumph under goalkeeper Dino Zoff and Paulo Rossi's heroics are still remembered by scores of sports lovers here.



THE INTRODUCTION OF THE INDIAN SOCCER LEAGUE (FROM 2013 ONWARDS) HAS HELPED MAINTAIN THE TEMPO FOR ALMOST A DECADE AND THESE KINDS OF FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES IS FAST TURNING OUR COUNTRY INTO A POPULAR SPORTS DESTINATION AT THE WORLD LEVEL THESE DAYS.



However, the World Cup awareness of an average Kerala football fan started to shoot up phenomenally only after Doordarshan started its live telecast two days after the Mexico edition began in June 1986. The league match between Brazil and Algeria was the first live World Cup match witnessed by our fans. For the first time, our fans could watch several big names in our drawing rooms.

The trend is continuing in every edition since then and an average football follower in Kerala these days knows so well who is who in world football. That itself has been the greatest contribution



HOWEVER, THE WORLD CUP AWARENESS OF AN AVERAGE KERALA FOOTBALL FAN STARTED TO SHOOT UP PHENOMENALLY ONLY AFTER DOORDARSHAN STARTED ITS LIVE TELECAST TWO DAYS AFTER THE MEXICO EDITION BEGAN IN JUNE 1986. THE LEAGUE MATCH BETWEEN BRAZIL AND ALGERIA WAS THE FIRST LIVE WORLD CUP MATCH WITNESSED BY OUR FANS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, OUR FANS COULD WATCH SEVERAL BIG NAMES IN OUR DRAWING ROOMS.



of the live telecast.

Championships were held in Italy (1990), the USA (1994), France (1998), Korea/Japan (2002), Germany (2006), South Africa (2010), Brazil (2014), and Russia (2018) and our fans could witness the arrival of scores of talented players and also the fall of many others over the last 36 years. However, the championship starting in the tiny Gulf Sheikdom is very special for our fans as this is the first-ever time the event is coming so close to our country. Also, the LNG-rich host country is extremely familiar to countless Indians for many reasons.

The small Gulf territory houses no less than 700,000 Indians and Malayalis, as elsewhere in the Gulf are the single largest group among the Indians residing there. Needless to be said, thousands of Keralites in Qatar and many more from Kerala are leaving no stone unturned to get a real feel of the Fifa Cup, at the 8 stadiums of Qatar.



INTERVIEW

INDIAN FOOTBALL HAS A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

I.M.VIJAYAN

THE QUINTESSENTIAL FOOTBALLER OF INDIA WHO DOESN'T NEED ANY INTRODUCTION. BE IT SPEED, PASSING, GOALS, OR ASSISTS, HE BECAME INDIA'S NUMERO UNO, LONG BEFORE TECHNOLOGY POWERED THE GAME. THE UNASSUMING LAD FROM THRISSUR WENT ON TO DON THE INDIAN JERSEY AND NOW ADORNS THE POST OF THE CHAIRMAN OF ALL INDIA FOOTBALL FEDERATION TECHNICAL COMMITTEE—**I.M. VIJAYAN**. FROM THE SOUTH AFRICA WORLD CUP IN 2010, VIJAYAN HAS WITNESSED SEVERAL WORLD CUP MATCHES AND HE IS NOW IN QATAR TO PARTAKE IN THE WORLD CUP FRENZY.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW OF I.M. VIJAYAN BY RENOWNED SPORTS JOURNALIST **KAMAL VARADUR** IN QATAR ON THE SIDELINES OF WORLD CUP 2022.



Photo: C.P. Sreelas, I&PRD

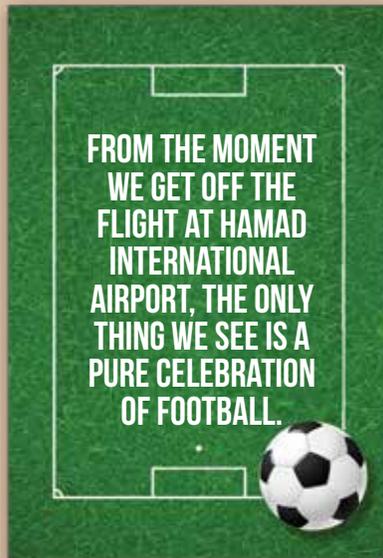
HOW IS QATAR? WHAT IS THE VIBE THAT YOU ARE GETTING HERE?

Marvellous. Qatar had completed the preparations months ago and they were enthusiastically waiting for this moment. All eight venues are awesome. I have been here so many times before for various programmes. But this time it is different. From the moment we get off the flight at Hamad International airport, the only thing we see is a pure celebration of football. I have been witnessing world cup matches since South Africa World Cup in 2010. Every country is a wonder. Brazil in 2014, Russia in 2018, and now Qatar.

We have a lot to learn from each of these countries. See, Qatar is a small country. This country turned to football around the same time as me and my friends were taking the first lessons of the game in nearby playgrounds. But they catapulted to prominence as Gulf Cup champions in next to no time. Now they have become Asian champions. I believe they will spin some magic in this tournament as well, as it is happening on their home turf. We saw that in Russia too. They reached the quarter-finals in the 2018 world cup even though no one expected it. I remember both of us watching the game together. Similarly, Qatar is strong – at the organisational level and in the field.



Kamal Varadur with I.M. Vijayan



WHO ARE THE FAVOURITES IN THIS WORLD CUP?

Nothing can be predicted and that is the beauty of this game. The majority of the teams are excellent. I have been an ardent fan of the Argentinean team ever since I saw the legendary Maradona in action at the 1986 world cup. That doesn't mean I have an aversion to Brazil. They are a brilliant team. Messi is the number one player in the world today. He is playing his last world cup. All those who are passionate about football would love

to see Messi win the world cup. It has to be Qatar. Messi is in terrific form. He has been playing exceptionally well for P.S.G. this season. And we all saw how he brought his A-game for the warm-up match in Abu Dhabi a few days ago.

WHEN WILL WE BE ABLE TO SEE INDIA PLAYING WORLD CUP FOOTBALL? WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES?

I am asked this question frequently. Recently, the head of FIFA has commented that India is a sleeping lion in football. We definitely have a bright future. India has a history of playing in the semi-finals of the Olympics football tournament led by Rahman. In our times too, we could play really good football. Now with the advent of ISL, there are a lot of positive changes. The next world cup will be held in America, Mexico, and Canada. Instead of the current 32 teams, there will be 48 teams competing for the world cup next time. One among them should be India. We have now hosted two FIFA championships. FIFA Under-17 world cup 2017 and FIFA Under-17 women's football world cup 2022. Both were organised admirably. I believe we have great potential in the organisational aspect too.

THE MALAYALI PRESENCE IN THE WORLD CUP

THE PROXIMITY OF QATAR TO KERALA GIVES TENS OF THOUSANDS OF MALAYALIS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS A WORLD CUP MATCH.



D. RAVI KUMAR

Managing Editor
(Inside Qatar)
Supreme Committee for
Delivery & Legacy

FIFA WORLD CUP QATAR 2022

The Qatar World Cup is the first World Cup where so many Malayalis are involved, directly and indirectly. For the first time in the history of the World Cup, the Stadiums will be resonated with Malayalis' untiring passion for the game.

There are many firsts for the Qatar World Cup – it is the first World Cup in the Middle East and the Arab world; it's the first time the tournament is staged in winter; it will

be for the first time women's referees will officiate matches, etc.

This is also the first time the World Cup is coming so close to Kerala. The proximity of Qatar to Kerala (just 3-1/2 hours by flight) gives tens of thousands of Malayalis once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness a World Cup match. Out of nearly 8 lakh Indians in Qatar almost 6 lakhs are from Kerala and a large number of them are involved with the World Cup in one way or the other.

According to an estimate, almost 50,000 tickets are sold in India, with Malayalis being the majority, numbering about 40,000. Added to this, about 50,000 tickets have been purchased by Malayalis living in Qatar and other Gulf nations. Though their loyalties are divided mainly between Brazil and Argentina, there are a sizeable number of

Malayalis supporting Portugal, England, Germany, and Belgium. "It's so exciting to be here, I didn't expect this kind of support from the people of India. I am thrilled to see this," said Leandro, a Brazilian living in Doha.

Abdul Rahman from Kozhikode, a hardcore Argentina fan, said, "Qatar World Cup is once-in-a-lifetime chance for fans like me to see big stars like Messi in live action."

Fan group, Argentina Fans Qatar (AFQ), has die-hard Argentina fans from various nationalities, but they have a sizeable number of Malayalis in it. Muhammed Ismail, a Malayali TV technician in Qatar, has been a member of the Argentina Fan Group. "The first time we in Kerala saw a live telecast of a World Cup was during Mexico in 1986. All these years I've been watching World Cup only on TV, but now I will watch all Argentina matches," he said.



Photo: Vinod Divakaran (InsideQatar)

Abhilash Chacko from Kottayam, who works as an artist-cum-graphic designer in Qatar and designed some official World Cup souvenirs, is Malayali who got an opportunity to be associated with this mega event. Abhilash's designs include decorative items for majlis (Arab living room), other traditional items reflecting Arab culture, kids collection items etc, and all these products have become a big hit in the market. "The World Cup gave me a great opportunity to showcase my talent and I feel proud and fortunate to get this opportunity," said Abhilash.

All the streets of Qatar are adorned with colourful flags and World Cup branding banners and posters. Most of Doha city's skyscrapers have larger-than-life digital images of star players displayed on them.



GROOMING FUTURE STARS

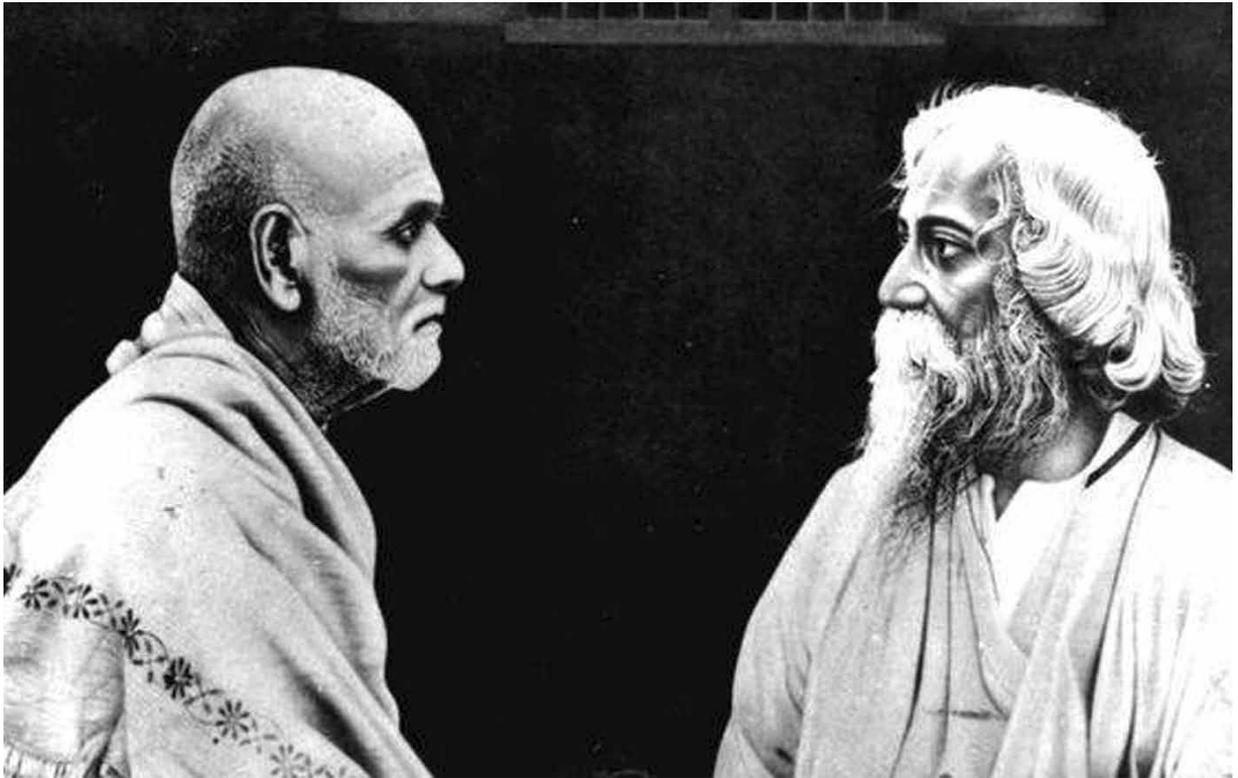


A.R. MEHBOOB

Senior Journalist

Malabar Special Police, a unit of Kerala Police, is gearing up to set up Football Academy to mould players from the state. Children aged 13 years will be given training in Football Academy. The state will be divided into four zones for selection. Selection camps will be held at Thiruvananthapuram Chandrashekhara Nair stadium, Thrissur Police Academy ground, Malappuram Koottilangadi M.S.P. ground, and Kannur police ground. 50 students will be selected for advanced training at Football Academy. Their formal education will be continued in M.S.P. Higher Secondary School and accommodation will be provided in the sports hostel inside the M.S.P. camp. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced the establishment of the Football Academy in 2021 on the occasion of the centenary of the Malabar Special Police. I.M. Vijayan has been appointed as the Director and Chief Trainer of the Football Academy. Binoy C. James is the Technical Director of the Academy. U Sharafali and Kurikesh Mathew are the chief patrons. The children will be trained under C. Shimjith, Harshal Rahman, K.P. Siddique, T.P. Mohammed Basheer, C.P. Sooraj, Ahmed Junaid, and Mohammed Abdul Rahman.

The M.S.P. school team has won several school-level championships in and out of the state and has twice been a finalist in the Subrato Cup. Former Indian player K.V. Santhosh IPS is the current M.S.P. Commandant.



The historic moment: Sree Narayana Guru and Rabindranath Tagore

RENDEZVOUS OF TWO SUBLIME MINDS



**SAJEEV
KRISHNAN**
Senior Journalist

// You are what you think." Swami Vivekananda's words reflect how our thoughts make our lives and take us to greater heights. The intrinsic waves created by thoughts connect and unite people who are destined to tread the same path.

It is human to think. However, noble thoughts are invariably engendered by great seers. Attaining the divinity of a sage is poetic. A sage is a poet and a visionary. Lofty ideas imprinted in poetry were put forth by sages like Valmiki and Veda Vyasa and in modern history, it manifested in Sree Narayana Guru. Their wisdom enlightens and makes the world a better place. Rig Veda urges us to be human beings first and then to create divine beings. This thought reflects

in Narayana Guru's poetry when he inspires humanity to first develop compassion, then devotion and piety. Guru's works reflect the true notion that worship is, in fact, actions sans self.

Rabindranath Tagore is one such personality who has ingrained divinity in modern Indian poetry. He has been a proponent of boundless spiritual humanism. The Nobel Prize winner appealed to the worshipers to emerge out of the dim sanctum sanctorum of

temples, and seek God where the poor farmer toils hard in the ground, come rain or shine.

In India, the renaissance began in the knowledgeable societies of West Bengal and Kerala. Now we are celebrating the centenary of the coming together of two great minds who took birth in these two states and through their soulful words guided its people and grew to be their dearest Gurus. The meeting took place at Sivagiri Mutt on November 15, 1922. Guru and Tagore crossed paths in the journey of enlightenment and they shared the conviction that education is the key to the progress of the human race, and it could eliminate divisiveness and prejudice. Education can lead the world to conform to the idea of being one family or 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.'

Tagore had reservations about teaching within the four walls of a classroom as he felt the walls represented conditioning of the mind. Like the ancient Gurukul system, he wanted to form a university where classes were held in the open air, under the shades of trees, where man and nature entered a close harmonious relationship. As the desire to constitute Visva-Bharati became too intense, Tagore approached people with his thoughts. He travelled around the world with his dream. Guru, who sat in meditation in a southern corner of the country, supported Tagore wholeheartedly. The aforementioned intrinsic waves of Tagore's noble thoughts must have brought him before Guru, whose encouragement and blessings might have helped the Nobel laureate achieve his dream of making the world-renowned university, Visva-Bharati, a reality.

Plenty of anecdotes stand testimony to the success of institutions that were constituted with Guru's blessings and funds. Visva-Bharati is one such prominent institution. Once, during the early days of November 1922, Guru asked his disciple, Bodhananda, whether he had heard

of Tagore's Visva-Bharati. He replied that the poet was travelling worldwide, intending to form an educational institution resembling the ancient Indian Gurukuls. Guru asked for a note on Visva-Bharati. And Bodhananda obtained a news report and read it out to him the next day. "It is the same idea I have," said Guru. Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan who entered the room were astonished to hear the words of Guru as they had come to seek his permission to invite Tagore. The coincidence was magical. Tagore

disapproved of the extravagance in the welcome arrangements and was of the opinion that maximum funds be collected to give to Tagore. He remained confined to the Ashram. Torrential rain destroyed all decorations, and doubts were cast on Tagore's arrival. The disciples then bowed their heads in devotion before the Guru. The rain stopped, and Tagore came.

In a pure and serene ambience created by nature, Tagore offered prayers at the Sarada Mutt, where only water and flowers were used to perform rituals. He was always fascinated by Sarada Mutt. He had immense respect for Guru's idealism.

Guru opened the doors of his Mutt for Tagore. They sat facing each other on the veranda of the Mutt. Tagore could decipher the radiance of knowledge within Guru and bowed. Tagore later recorded that of all the seers and sages he had met, he had never seen anyone greater than or equal to Sree Narayana Guru. The inner divinity became distinctly clear to the poet who perceived it with a pure heart.

Tagore was offered tender coconut water, coconut apple, and tender coconut pulp. What dish could be more delicious for a lover of nature? Creative ideas come to those who think differently. Nobody could bring the different ideas and concepts that the Guru introduced into the realm of spirituality. Not all people can accept and acknowledge these viewpoints and intentions. When Tagore said, "you opened the eyes of people," Guru replied ingeniously, "Their eyes are open. But they do not see anything". Tagore was able to comprehend the meaning of these words without translation.

The meeting had a tremendous influence on both Seers' life. Guru's spirituality and Tagore's poetry converged at this point. Guru once again convinced his disciples that wisdom is in knowing the needs of the needy and helping them.

**WAY BACK IN 1922
NOVEMBER 15, TWO GREAT MINDS
OF INDIA MET EACH OTHER. WHEN
THE NOBEL LAUREATE CAME TO
MEET SREE NARAYANA GURU
ON THAT DAY AT SIVAGIRI MUTT,
WORDS OF WISDOM STARTED
POURING OUT**

was coming to Kerala to receive a donation for Visva-Bharati from Mulam Thirunal, the maharaja of the erstwhile Travancore.

"Tagore had long ago expressed his desire to meet the Guru. This is the time," said Kumaran Asan. Guru responded that a casual meeting did not make sense and that what Tagore needed was huge funds. "Do you have money?" asked Guru. "Nothing is impossible with your blessings," replied Asan. Guru did not respond.

Taking Guru's silence as permission, his disciples made elaborate plans to invite Tagore. Guru

LET HEARTS

LEVITATE

THE ULTIMATE FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL IS HERE AND KERALA IS SEEPING INTO THE WORLD CUP FRENZY. MEANWHILE, A SIMILAR PASSION OF KERALITES IS SLOWLY BREWING IN THE BACKDROP. EVEN AS FOOTBALL STARTS ROLLING ACROSS THE WORLD, THE CURTAINS ARE SET TO BE ROLLED IN THE MOVIE THEATRES IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM FOR THE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF KERALA.



ARATHY K.R.

Assistant Information Officer
I&PRD

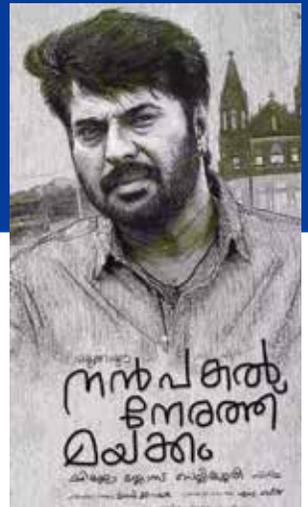
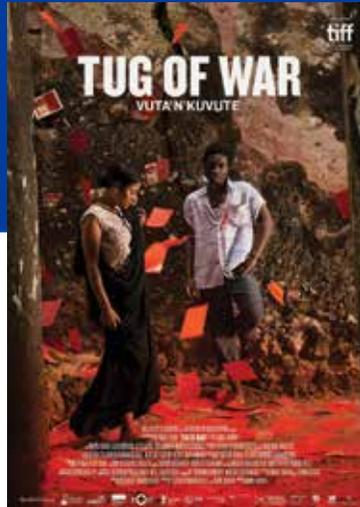
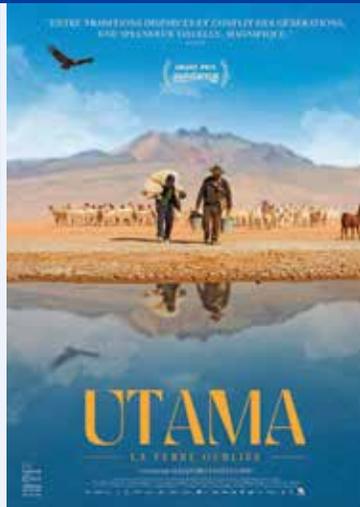
How impatiently have the film buffs been waiting for this moment! With the pandemic playing havoc, IFFK was scaled down in essence in the last two years. This time around, IFFK is back to its legendary glory. The 27th edition of IFFK will be held from December 9 to 16. Over 180 movies from around 70 countries will be screened in 14 theatres in Thiruvananthapuram.

MESMERIZING MELANGE

Movie aficionado scan delight in the assortment of world films included in the category of International Competition. And the illustrious list is enough to make us swell with pride as two Malayalam films find place in it.

- Hoopoe (Iran) directed by Mehdi Ghazanfari
- Kerr (Turkey) directed by Tayfun Pirselimoglu
- Concerned Citizen (Israel) directed by Idan Haguel
- Cordially Yours (Brazil) directed by Aimar Labaki
- Alam (Tunisia) directed by Firas Khoury
- Convenience Store (Russian/Slovenian production) directed by Michael Borodin
- Utama (Bolivia) directed by Alejandro Loayza Grisi
- Memoryland (Vietnam) directed by Kim Quy Bui
- Tug of War (Tanzania) directed by Amil Shivji
- Klondike (Ukraine) directed by Maryna Er Gorbach
- Like An Afternoon Dream/ Nanpakal Nerathu Mayakkam (Malayalam) by Lijo Jose Pellissery
- Declaration/ Ariyippu (Malayalam) by Mahesh Narayanan
- A Place of Our Own/Ek Jagah Apni (Hindi) by





Ektara Collective

- Our Home/Eikhoigi Yum (Manipuri) by Romi Meitei Mayanglambam

SAVOUR SERBIA

Six Serbian films are slated to be screened in the category of Country in focus.

- Working Class Heroes by Milos Pusic
- Far As I Can Walk by Stefan Arsenijevic
- Father by Srđan Golubovic
- Oasis by Ivan Ikic
- Cross in the Desert by Hadzi-Aleksandar Djurovic
- The beheading of St. John the Baptist by Sinisa Cvetic

HEED TO THE UNSPOKEN!

For the sheer uniqueness of experience, one segment that cannot be missed this year is the category of silent

movies. For the first time in IFFK, the poignancy of silent movies will be interspersed with scintillating live music. Recreating the silent film era and transporting the audience to an out-of-the-world experience will be Jonny Best, the Resident Pianist at the British Film Institute's Southbank theatre.

This segment comprises five films:

- Nosferatu by F. W. Murnau
- Foolish Wives by Erich von Stroheim
- The Woman Men Yearn by Curtis Bernhardt
- The Phantom Carriage by Victor Sjöström
- The Parson's Widow by Dreyer

MULTIPOTENTIALITE KERALA

The Malayalam Cinema Today section has a plethora of divergent works of art including:

PREMIERE OF THE MASTERS

For the first time in the history of IFFK, the works of masters of world cinema will have their India premiere here. This distinguished list includes:

- IFFK's favourite Kim Ki Duk's last movie Call of God
- Another festival favourite Bahman Ghobadi's Four Walls
- Hirokazu Koreeda's The Broker
- Fatih Akin's Rheingold

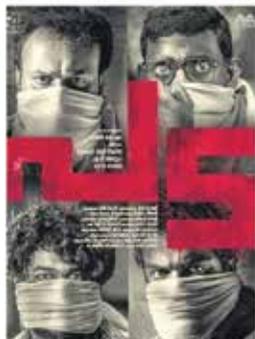


MUST WATCH MOVIES (WORLD CINEMA)



- Boy from Heaven by Tarik Saleh
- I have Electric Dreams by Valentina Maurel
- Leila's Brothers by Saeed Roustayi
- Rule 34 by Julia Murat
- My Neighbour Adolf by Leon Prudovsky
- Prison 77 by Alberto Rodriguez
- Nightsiren by Tereza Nvotova
- Harka by Lotfy Nathan
- Piaffe by Ann Oren
- Aftersun by Charlotte Wells

- Yes by Sidhartha Siva
- Thousand and One lies by Thamar KV
- Great Depression by Aravind H
- Dhabariquruvi by Priyanandanan
- Normal by Pratheesh Prasad
- Pada by Kamal KM
- Freedom Fight by Dr. Akhil Anilkumar, Kunjila Mascillamani, Jithin Issac Thomas, Jeo Baby, Francies Louis
- The Left Overs by Amal Prasi
- The Husband, The Wife and Their Two Dead Sons by Satish Babusen and Santhosh Babusen
- The Quarrel by Sanalkumar Sasidharan
- The Hounds and the Runners by Rarish G
- 19 (1) (a) by Indu V S



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF MURNAU

The Retrospective section features the outstanding works of German director F W Murnau including

- Tabu: A Story of the South Seas
- Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans
- Faust
- The Last Laugh
- Nosferatu



Plenty of popular movies have been included in this year's schedule. So the organisers have kept ten slots empty for the re-screening of movies that are in most demand. This genuine receptiveness of the audience reaction along with the management of programmes and the handling of guests has made IFFK the best film festival in India, says Deepika Suseelan, Artistic Director of IFFK. "And this time around, we have made it mandatory for all the films in the international competition to have their representatives present here. The jury will also be in full attendance. So the IFFK will be more magnificent than ever before", adds Deepika.

Humanity has gone through a lot in the past two years. And we certainly deserve a festival of emotions, expressions and colours. The revival of the long-lost camaraderie of film buffs, the synergy of endless movie discussions, the blissful experience of witnessing the brilliance of moviemakers, coupled with the latent emotions of the past two years will definitely make this edition of IFFK a cathartic experience. Let the lights be turned off and let the signature film roll out. Let hearts levitate.

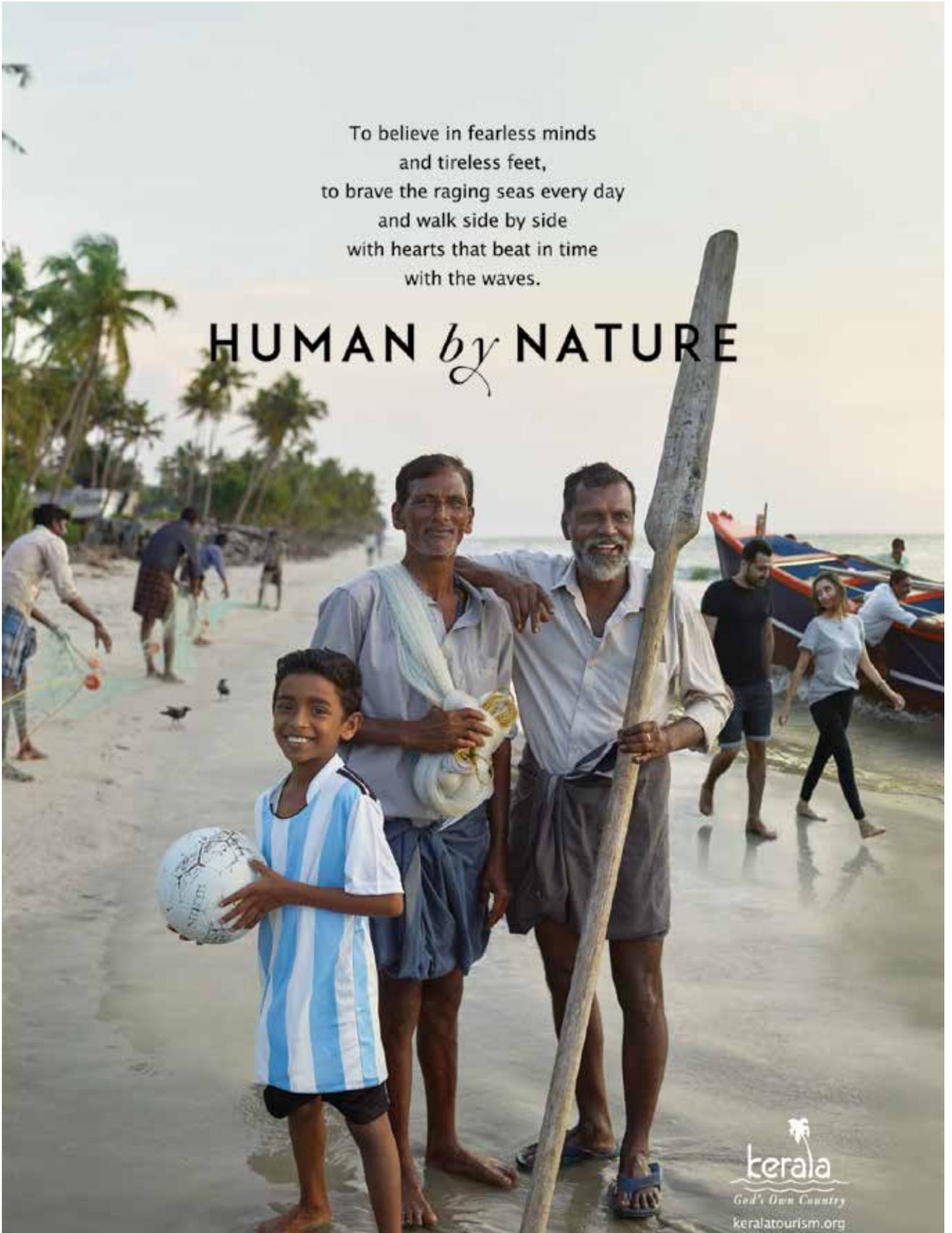


FIFA WORLD CUP
Qatar 2022



To believe in fearless minds
and tireless feet,
to brave the raging seas every day
and walk side by side
with hearts that beat in time
with the waves.

HUMAN *by* NATURE




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