

Brilliance of the first six months

The enduring magnetic appeal

# KERALA CALLING

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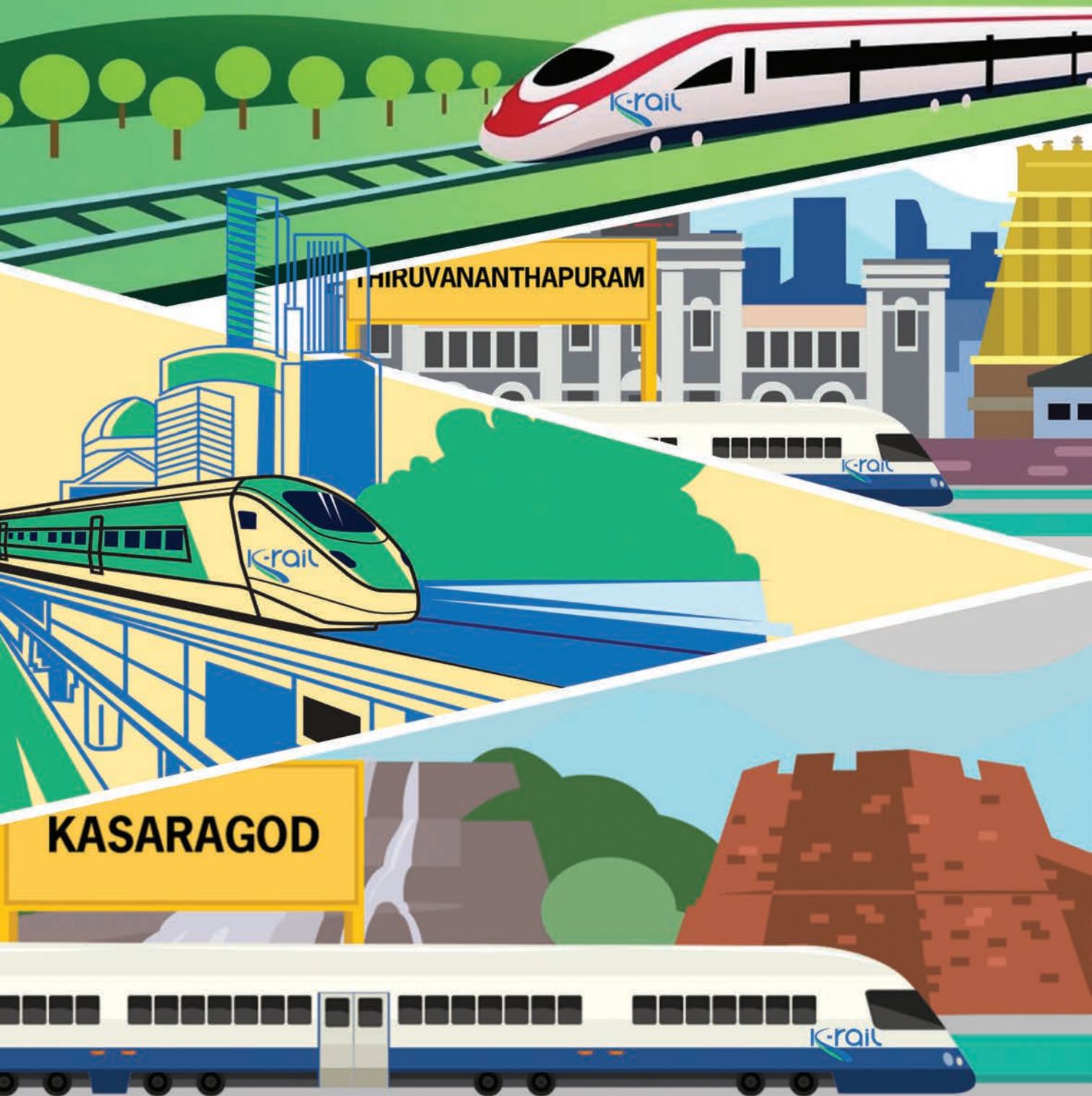
The first six months of Pinarayi Vijayan Government has been marked with many people - friendly measures.



# Decisive Goals...



# TOWARDS A GREENER FUTURE



# Brilliance of the first six months

**T**his month's *Kerala Calling* is like a variegated bead necklace. It has a wide variety of articles that give many pictures of life in Kerala under the care of the LDF government. However, the common thread holding them all together is the fact that despite being battered by destructive floods year after year and put to the utmost strain by the long-drawn-out battle against the pandemic, Kerala is regaining health and moving forward, thanks to the resilient spirit of the people and the commitment of the rulers.

The report on the General Education scenario in Kerala underscores the elaborate plans the government laid down in order to re-open schools as well as colleges and make them safe for students, after nearly one-and-a-half years of online training. The financial sector has, understandably, come under tremendous stress with the state having to suffer the impact of crises in businesses, and pumping all the available resources into combating it. However, the report on the financial health of the state focuses on how the natural disasters and the pandemic have not been permitted to derail the business-as-usual nonchalance of the

government. Many welfare measures have been kickstarted, relief schemes expedited, pensions and other benefits disbursed, and strict measures taken to prevent tax fraud.

The report on the natural wealth of Kerala, especially forests, explains how the state has maintained a sustainable development model by conserving the indigenous flora, promoted afforestation drives, preserved biodiversity, digitized forest boundaries and gone a long way in making the state carbon-neutral. In the field of industries, the major achievements of the government include success in giving a fillip to the MSME, promoting start-up companies, ensuring transparency in all transactions, accelerating projects and incentivizing PSUs. The departments of Tourism and Public Works have launched numerous projects for better maintenance of roads and improvement of the tourist-friendly image of Kerala. The most noteworthy success story is that of Caravan Tourism which has made it possible to combine safety and pleasure. Kerala's efforts in improving the health of its citizens, maintaining law and order, organizing relief and rescue efforts, boosting tourism, alleviating poverty, becoming baby-friendly and so on form the contents of the rest of the articles.

This issue also celebrates the achievement of a man who has mesmerized Malayalis for decades with his honey-sweet voice and tonal flexibility – P. Jayachandran who won the J. C. Daniel Lifetime Award in 2020.

Savour the depth and variety of the verbal pictures *Kerala Calling* has hung in this month's gallery!

**S.Harikishore I.A.S**  
Editor



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KERALA CALLING December 01, 2021\_Vol 42\_No.02



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Christmas



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48 Pages + Cover

# Manifold measures to ensure law & order

**Pinarayi Vijayan**  
Chief Minister

**The most important responsibility of the police is to protect the property and life of the people and thus ensure peace and prosperity in society. Under the LDF government, Kerala has been transformed into one of the states having the best law and order in India.**





**T**he LDF was voted back to power by people on the strength of the various welfare programmes as well as developmental projects it had conceived and executed in the previous term. The government became a model worth following in the eyes of the world because of its successful handling of many crises – deluge, cyclone and the pandemic. Kerala has become the pride of the nation with its exemplary enforcement of law and order. What the government now intends to do is make the model more effective and citizen-friendly.

The most important responsibility of the police is to protect the life and property of the public by maintaining law and order and thus ensure peace and prosperity in the society. Under the LDF Government, Kerala has been transformed into one of the states having the best law and order situation in India. It is a proud achievement that Kerala has been able to free itself from communal incidents, even in the face of conscious attempts to create communal tensions. In addition to carrying out this responsibility, the Kerala Police have played a key role in the rescue and relief missions during the floods and COVID-19 as

well. The most important aspect is that our police force has become a people's force during this period. The Government is committed to improving the performance of an perception about our police force.

Although giant leaps in technology and communication have brought about many positive changes, the tendency to commit crimes using those possibilities is also increasing. During our tenure the Government has taken up several initiatives to develop the technical expertise of the police to deal with technology based crimes. 19 cyber police stations, 3 cyber domes and a high-tech cybercrime inquiry cell have been set up to effectively manage cybercrimes in the State. The Cyber Crime Investigation Division (CCID), which combines 3 cyberdomes and a high-tech cybercrime inquiry cell, is examining the steps to launch the Cyber Operations and Security Division (COSD) for cyber-related investigations.

To reduce and investigate crimes against women, the Government is implementing comprehensive projects. The Women's Police Station, Women's Cell, Women's Battalion, Aparajitha, Pink Police, Women's Self Defense Team and Women's Beat are a few of the steps taken to enhance the safety of women.

The Pink Protection Project launched on July 19, 2021, aims at addressing various issues faced by women, including dowry-related harassment, cyber atrocities and public humiliation. The project combines ten components, including Pink Patrol, Pink Janamaithri Beat, Pink Control, Pink Shadow, Pink Romeo, counselling service and mobile apps to help women.

The scheme provides special training to officers to effectively deal with complaints of violence against women. It strengthens the existing counselling system in women's cells with the help of expert voluntary organisations. Women's Self Defense Group empowers children and women to tackle violence against them and offers free classes at schools, colleges, resident associations and Kudumbasree units. The services of women police officers in all the 19 police districts of Kerala have been made available for such training completely free of cost.

The State Women's Cell has been working at the state level to investigate and take action against violence against women. There are Vanitha Cells in the districts with the same objective. In addition, one women's police station has been set up



in each district. The women's police stations have the same powers as local police stations. Under the State Plan Fund, for the financial year 2021-22, an administrative sanction of Rs. 5.50 crore has been given for projects required for creating a women-friendly environment and raising awareness against gender discrimination, across the State. Janamaithri Policing, has now been extended to all police stations in the state. As part of this intervention, the police were able to take an active part in the relief activities during COVID-19 and floods. To intensify this change, the government has launched the Social Policing project. The Student Police Cadet Scheme is being extended to aided schools as well. It has been making immense contributions in inculcating a sense of law and social responsibility among the students. The SPC scheme is currently functioning in 803 schools. During this academic year (2021-22), sanction has been given to start SPC in 197 schools. One of the major obstacles in expanding the SPC to more schools is the unavailability of trainers from the police. To address this, the government will recruit retired police personnel as trainers for SPC.

To modernise the police force, it doesn't suffice to merely adopt new technologies. It is equally important to adopt an attitudinal change. Accordingly training programmes have been designed to incorporate perspectives on human rights and sensitize officers on issues of marginalised communities. Steps are being taken to further the work done by the previous LDF government to replace the training system that existed during the British rule, with a more democratic one. The training at the Kerala Police Academy is being transformed in such a way as to enable modern policing. During the financial year 2019-20, Rs. 28 crore has been sanctioned for setting up of District Training Centers, Rs 6 crore for setting up of Integrated Training Centers and Rs. 3.5 crore for the development of training related infrastructure, in the Kerala Police Academy.

We are taking steps to gradually increase the representation of women in the Kerala Police. As part of this, during the previous LDF government, a women's battalion was formed in the state in 2017 with its headquarters at Menankulam, Thiruvananthapuram. 465 posts were created for the Women's Battalion and the newly formed KAP 6 Battalion, and 161 posts were created in the Civil Police, including 35 for the Scheduled Tribes. In 2016, the strength of women in the police force was 6%, but as the new recruitment is completed, the membership of women will be around 10%. Our goal is to gradually create it to 15%.

As the responsibility of the police force expands and increases, the ministerial sector needs to be further strengthened. 49 new posts have been allotted to the Women's Battalion, Kannur City and Kannur Rural to address the shortage of personnel in the District and Battalion Headquarters which deals with the affairs of the police and the general public. As part of the crime branch reforms, 5 junior superintendent posts have been upgraded to senior superintendent posts.

A police museum has been set up in the name of Justice VR Krishna Iyer, the first Home Minister of Kerala. It sets out the history of the Kerala Police. We intend to develop it into a facility that provides information and copies of historical documents to those conducting research on the police. Such multi-faceted activities are being conducted to improve the quality and performance of the police force. We will go ahead with our commitment to popularise and modernise the police in a manner befitting a modern democratic society.



# A small yet good piece of gesture...

**Rajeev Kumar Choudhary IAS**  
Sub collector, Kottayam



At the entrance of mini civil station Kottayam, a lady named Lilamani has been selling lottery tickets for last 15 years. One day, we provided a chair to her so that she can sit there and sell tickets. This small piece of gesture attracted good amount of appreciation. Meanwhile, we also inquired about her family condition. In this process, we visited her house.

We found that she is the sole bread earner of family, her husband is differently abled ( locomotive) and due to COVID related restrictions, his small vegetable shop was shut down. Even her income became very low because of covid lockdown.

She was requesting rupees 15,000 to open her husband's shop. We approached few civil society organisations and Rotary club Southern contributed by funding 10000 rupees .From RDO office Kottayam , we contributed 3700 rupees. This money was collected and handed over to Lilamani within 10 days of her demand.

Now her husband's shop is also opened and working well. So, now she is having some income from this shop also and able to take care of her family well.

# Clearcut vision and mission

**K. Rajan**  
Minister for Revenue & Housing

The Kerala Revenue Department which gave the world a “Kerala model” through legendary land reforms is marching ahead with more popular and efficient measures. The 11<sup>th</sup> L.D.F government under the leadership of Pinarayi Vijayan’s has initiated various schemes with clear cut direction and people-friendly moves within a short period.





The Department has started implementing a new work culture that gives top priority to peoples welfare. “Vision and Mission” 2021-2026 is a project being implemented in this direction. It is imaginative in its approach and for all, Records for all land all Services to be smart’ are this government’s proclaimed target. The welfare measures of the government have to reach the people without any hassles. For this, the Revenue Department is implementing IT-enabled projects. To make the Department smart and all services are provided through IT-enabled online applications. Action plans are underway to make the functioning of the Department simple and transparent.

The Department has distributed 13,500 pattas within 100 days after coming into power. The survey Department is on a historic move to survey the entire state digitally. Ultra-modern digital types of equipment are being used to finish the surveying works within four years. We expect a large volume of land would be recovered from illegal hands and the same could be passed on to the landless. Village offices which are the basic components of the Department

can be seen as the face of this government. Most of the services from these offices are being delivered online. Paying land tax and application for land conversion fees can be done online. This helps the people to monitor the status of the application online and avoid unnecessarily visiting the village offices repeatedly. Location map fees, agriculture labourers welfare fund contribution, survey map fees, Thandaper registration fees etc can be paid through mobile phones. Moreover, every 1666 village offices have separate official websites. Modified e-payment portal, social security pension module also have been activated.

For transparent and people-friendly governance, officials, commitment and efficiency are of prime importance. The Departments functioning at different levels are being coordinated and making the staff active and efficient is being initiated. The newly formed Revenue secretariat will be functioning as the steering unit of the Department. Top officials of various Departments are holding weekly meetings with the minister presiding over them. File Adalat was held at the secretariat level last month. District, Taluk, Village level adalats will be completed this month itself.

The District assembly system has been implemented. District administration has met in the presence of M.L.A’s and the minister presided over those meetings. The issues raised by the M.L.A’s have been listed constituency-wise by creating a dashboard. M.L.A’s can monitor actions taken over the issues raised by them. Kerala is recently facing continuous natural disasters and calamities one after another. Manmade disasters are also striking the state. 589.5KM coastline, which is nearly ten per cent of India’s total coastline and the fragile Western Ghats also poses disaster possibilities. Disaster analysts say that Kerala is in a multi-hazard zone. We cannot control natural disasters but certainly can minimize losses caused by them. The Revenue Department has decided to hold awareness programs to make people disaster management literates. Volunteers, N.G.O’s, Kudumbasree workers, Students, Service organizations, Libraries, Students police cadets, National service schemes will be included in this scheme.

The Revenue Department will hold discussions with the education Departments probing the possibility of disaster management as a part of the school curriculum. Also, an action plan will be formulated through discussions with other Departments.

# A decisive step to prevent coastal erosion

**Roshy Augustine**  
Minister for Water Resources

In the wake of the recurring cyclones, global warming and impacts in the Arabian Sea, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Chennai National Center for Coastal Research and the State Water Resources Department, for a scientific study as part of the preparation of a comprehensive plan to prevent coastal erosion in Kerala.





The study aims to find solutions to the issues of the coastal regions by monitoring the changes in the coast for two consecutive years, with particular importance to the state of Kerala.

Although the study focuses on ten hotspots with high coastal erosion, the MoU also includes provisions for the study of other parts of the state. Through the MoU, it will be possible to provide timely advice on how to deal with the sea attacks, following the monsoon and to ensure NCCR assistance.

Through this study, it will be possible to come up with sustainable solutions to prevent coastal erosion, one of the major problems the State faces. The agreement also stipulates that the Irrigation Department should provide free training to its employees on modern model study techniques for preventing coastal erosion.

## The new face of Chellanam

A 344-crore coastal protection project for Chellanam has been announced. The project aims at putting an end to the need to relocate Chellanam residents next monsoon and the construction work on Chellanam would be completed without delay. The Government aims to ensure the safety of life and property of the people of Chellanam panchayath and to address sea-level rise and coastal erosion.

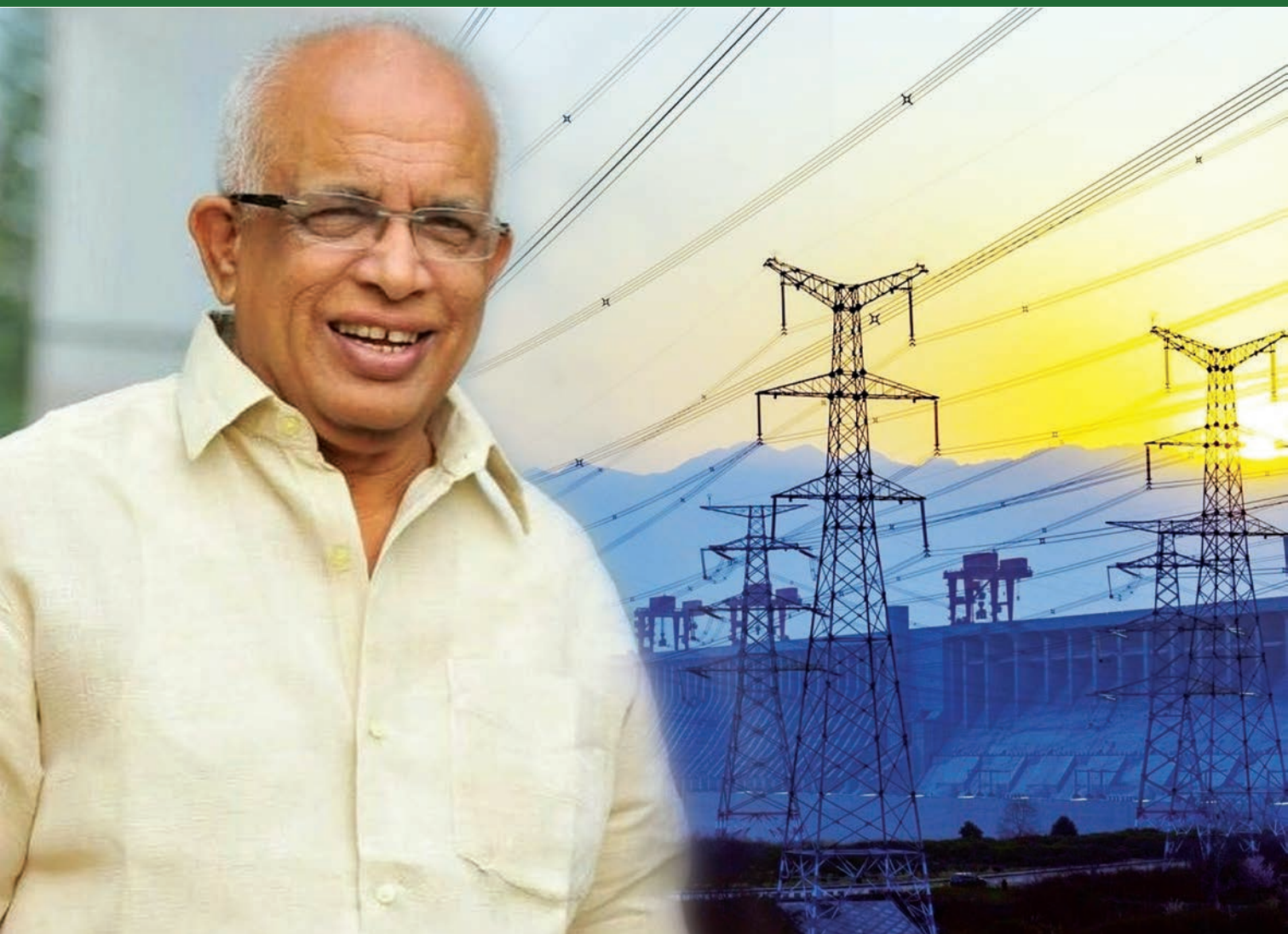
The Government is implementing a remarkable project at Chellanam, a rare coastal region. The first phase of construction will begin on ten hotspots facing severe sea attacks. Rs.5300 crores will be fully utilized within five years for coastal protection. The Irrigation Department, with the help of KIIFB, is implementing a project to set up tetrapods at an investment of 344.2 crores at Chellanam. The first fish village project in the State will be implemented at Chellanam along with resolving the problems of sea attacks. A tourism centre will also be implemented in collaboration with the Department of Tourism.

The Department of Water Resources has also introduced e-tap, a novel initiative to submit online applications for new water connections. Applicants can scan the related documents and upload them while applying for the new connection. After examining the applications, the staff from the section offices will come and inspect the premises. All the information will be made available through SMS and the estimated amount can be paid online. Self-meter reading is another innovative system, launched by the Department to mark the water meter reading by the beneficiaries themselves. An SMS including the link will be sent to the beneficiaries once the bill is generated in the water authority office. By using this link one can easily mark the water meter readings.

# Great strides in the power sector

**K. Krishnankutty**  
Minister for Electricity

**Kerala's power sector is poised for robust growth drawn upon the recent global experience of energy transition towards more green generation, high-quality transmission and distribution and sustainable commercial moorings involving the principles of accessibility, inclusiveness and public support for weaker sections of the population.**





The KSEBL has recently contracted about 200 MW of solar power at its record lowest purchase price of Rs. 2.44 per unit by adopting stringent negotiations with the vendors. Rate offered could be reduced by 50 paise per unit, thereby facilitating a commercial advantage of about 450 crores to the people of Kerala during the next 25 years.

Another strategy the utility has commenced is to take a hard review at its costlier PPAs concluded earlier at over deposit periods and see whether those completing the contracted periods and those having infirm contracts be exited in favour of potentially cheaper medium-term contracts.

If the costlier central generating stations and long-term supply contracts can be reviewed, there may be a commercial advantage of Rs. 1000 to 1500 crores to KSEBL in the next 10 years. These initiatives along with contracting of cheaper power could result in a nominal tariff providing relief to the people recovering from income slumps and inflation after Covid and more productivity and investability to industries and commercial enterprises budding growth in the coming years.

Along with these policy innovations, the State Government have also encouraged KSEBL to strengthen its traditionally firm hydro power portfolio which at the moment has a capacity of 2200 MW. Apart from the 193 MW of small and medium hydro projects being developed, KSEBL has been asked to speed up the DPR for

the Idukki Golden Jubilee Second Powerhouse Project estimated Rs. 3060 crores with a promise of about 800 MW of additional generation from the existing Idukki Dam system. The pre-feasibility of the project has been concluded favourably and involves a new intake well near Kulamavu Dam with the construction of about 5 Km. of underground tunnelled water conductor system with a cavern powerhouse equipped with four 200 MW State of the art generators. The project is likely to be commissioned in 6 financial years as the tunnelling work is expected to take 30 months upon deploying advanced technology.

Similarly, the Board is also revisiting augmenting the Moozhiyar powerhouse of the Sabarigiri Power Project with an additional capacity of 300 MW. The constraints identified in the inspection report made in 2019 are being revisited and the Board is actively considering engaging National consultant to examine feasibility. Together the KSEBL can augment its native strength in hydro potential to about 4000 MW to serve as the peak time backbone of Kerala's power system when its demand is likely to enhance to 40,000 million units per annum by 2040.

On the renewable energy front, the Power Department has formulated an ambitious plan to make rooftop solar system mandatory for buildings above 100 Sq. meters of plinth area with a provision to remit a one-time cost to a statutory authority to be formed where building owners are unwilling or such development is unviable because of structural constraints.

The fund so developed is to be made use of for either erecting or contracting cheaper mega solar power stations. The project aims to erect/construct 3000 MU of solar power station in line with the manifesto of LDF Govt. in the power sector.

Besides the solar mission, the utility has been asked to expedite the 200 MW Soura Project supported by the Government of India with a 40% subsidy for rooftop solar development. About 35000 homeowners are likely to benefit in the year 2022 from the augmented execution of Soura project which was delayed due to contracting difficulties. Now 38 vendors are executing the project full stream.

Similarly, the KSEBL has taken efforts to identify the barren land required to develop 40 MW of generation through ground-mounted solar allowed by the MNRE, Government of India under the PM-KUSUM project. Together the subsidized schemes will benefit the homeowners and farmers of the State imparting them prosumers of power giving remunerative income from these investments. If all homes with suitable rooftops venture into part-power generation which can be integrated with a grid the adoption of e-mobility in the State will also be easier.

With the coordination with e-mobility, an average income family of Kerala along with solar power generation made at a cost of about 1.5 lakhs per family may yield benefits of Rs. 15,000 to 20,000 per month due to the reduced cost of fuel consumption and also additional units which can be mobilized for use of qualified kitchen pieces of equipment reducing the working hours of homemakers. The investment will pay off within 3 to 4 years.

# A turning point in restoring forest land

**A.K. Saseendran**  
Minister for Forest & Wildlife

The Kerala legislative assembly approved a new policy for restoring forest land.







**K**erala is blessed with a unique landscape and geography, which includes abundant rain, enough sunlight, moderate humidity, and the Western Ghats, one of the extreme biodiversity hotspots in the world. Kerala society has a great commitment towards nature which helps to preserve natural resources. But the exploitation of natural resources is increasing in Kerala also. Here is the significance of the restoration of natural forests.

Forest has an inevitable role in controlling floods due to heavy rain and drought due to climate change. Sustainable development can be achieved only by conserving natural wealth amidst all the construction processes. The government decided to implement new policies in this circumstance. The main objective of this policy is the step-by-step afforestation of government-owned depleted forest, acacia and eucalyptus plantations, and trees with stunted growth, natural disaster risk areas, and river beds. It also assures the scientific maintenance and production of trees such as teak, sandal, etc.

50% of the profit gained from selling the raw materials of the industrial plantations was utilized

for afforestation-based activities and the rest for the maintenance of the sustaining plantations. Plants that are not suitable for our ecosystem such as Lantana, Mikania, etc. will be removed immediately and conserve indigenous species. Steps will be taken to construct ponds and water bodies within the forest. The government also plans to implement policies to conserve sacred groves which are the abodes of biodiversity.

The presence of tribal people will be assured in the conservation programs, modern education, and infrastructure for their upliftment and creating livelihood. The government will aware the tribes of their safe rehabilitation for protecting the biological services of the forest, preventing wild attacks and natural calamities.

The department will conduct a digitalization on the forest boundaries and surveys the actual boundaries with border stone installation to prevent the usual altercation regarding the boundaries. More forest stations, vehicles, weapons will be launched.

Rejuvenation of Naturally important mangrove forests under the private owners will be annexed by the government with proper reimbursement. Greeneries outside the forest area will be maximized by planting more trees in private properties. The trees will be legally exempted from the normal forest rules by making formal laws with the consent of related departments. Transforming the Panchayats, municipalities, and corporations as carbon neutrals will come under this project.

With the corporation of coastal peoples and the Local Self Government Department, the government will initiate to plant suitable saplings in coastal regions. This project includes creating small forests in schools, cities, and private properties. The policy will aim for the restoration of forests with sustainable development. With this announcement, Kerala will become the first state to commence restoration of a forest by a policy. This will be a milestone in the history of Kerala.

The resolution aims the clarification about the state regions from the western ghats to coastal regions, and the protection of biodiversity, water conservation, prevention of climate change, man-wild conflicts. The policy also comprehensively addresses the challenges faced by humans in existence. The policy commences an extensive long-term social responsible scheme. Kerala's model of forest restoration will be a breakthrough landmark for humanity.

# Coastal shipping -a cost-efficient opportunity

**Ahammad Devarkovil**  
Minister for Ports, Museums and Archaeology

Kerala bestowed with approximately 590 km long coastline along the entire length of the state, bordering 9 out of 14 districts with 17 non-major ports and a major port at Cochin offers Coastal Waterways an edge over other modes in Kerala. To reduce the burden on inland transportation and to benefit from the cost-efficiency, there is a growing emphasis on using coastal shipping as a mode of transportation for moving domestic cargo as well as passengers across the states.



Coastal Shipping offers significant social benefits on account of less transportation cost, less pollution, less fuel consumption and more cargo-carrying capacity/unit fuel consumption. It also significantly reduces climate costs as well as accidents and congestion. The government of Kerala has decided to provide the necessary boost to coastal shipping with an aim to ease the burden on road-rail transportation and to reduce overall logistics costs. The government have approved a report submitted by M/s Deloitte and also the Business plan for implementation in this regard. According to the Strategic Road Map of M/s Deloitte, approximately 6.72 million tonnes of cargo can be diverted to Coastal Mode in the initial phase. Though the sector is proved to be an economic mode of transport compared to others, many disadvantages prevailing specific to the state retards its development and the shippers are not able to achieve the economies of scale as desired. As per the report, around 20,000 trucks bring goods to Kerala every day from other states and 2,000 trucks carrying goods from Kerala to other states can be taken out from the road gradually. The process requires wholehearted support from different sectors and hence the Department has introduced the following schemes /measures to achieve this objective.

### Cargo incentive scheme

The project is aimed at diverting a few specific cargo/commodities like food grains, construction materials like cement, granite, marble, ceramic tiles, cashew nuts and kernels, fertilizers and chemicals like soda ash moved into the state from the east and west coasts. The cargo incentive was introduced for cargo loaded/unloaded at any of the non-major ports & moved along the Kerala coast between Manjeswaram

& Pozhiyoor.

In the initial stage of the project, a cargo incentive was offered at the rate of Rs.1/ton/km for moving the cargo in waterways along the Kerala coast, loaded/unloaded at a non-major port in the State.

### Rebate in port dues

Handling charges at various minor ports in the State are very high compared to other States. A subsidy of nearly 50% was offered in terminal handling charges for coastal shipping to attract more shippers and to share the burden of loss incurred by them. The reduced handling charges offered for one year between 2016 has helped in attracting cargo movement through Azhikkal & Beypore ports and to create confidence among shippers about the commitment of the Government of Kerala in developing the Coastal Waterways. Still, a comprehensive pricing structure is to be arrived at, for the non-major ports for making the ports business-friendly. This Government is examining this issue with the support from Kerala Maritime Board.

### Capital investment

Govt. has incurred at least Rs.100 crores as capital expenditure through the years for establishing Liebherr cranes, Multipurpose forklifts, Reach Stackers, Weigh Bridges, Hydra cranes, Tugs etc. at the non-major ports at Kollam, Azheekal and Beypore. In addition to these, the Govt. has also incurred expenditure for maintenance and capital dredging, cost recovery to customs and EDI facilities.

The existing marine structures like channel, basin and wharves were developed to cater to low draught bulk vessels in light of the operational trends in these ports in the past. Now the infrastructure in these ports has to be modernized to achieve required capacity expansion as an alternative transport mode and thus transform the state into a multimodal transportation hub. thus transforming the state into a multimodal transportation hub. Subsequently, Department is focusing on developing facilities like permanent Customs Clearance /EDI, Immigration and Plant Quarantine facilities at these ports.

The rebate in dues might attract more operators so that the idle infrastructure developed by the state at these ports can be made into operational. The lack of production centres in Kerala is the reason behind the lacuna in securing adequate return cargo. Hence port-led industries have to be developed. GOK is making positive steps in this direction. The government has accepted the development of Ports & Coastal Shipping as a major policy initiative and Department is moving ahead with initiatives to make the ports business-friendly.

### Critical milestones achieved

GOK with the active support of KMB could introduce regular services to Beypore Azhikkal and Kollam. In the last 5 months, 27 voyages with 2200 containers have taken place among these ports.

From January onwards, the introduction of one more service is in the pipeline. The KMB is planning to operate two services per week between the non-major ports.

As a major port under the GOI, Cochin port has introduced tariff concession to the coastal cargo to help the state in this initiative to encourage the coastal Cargo movement in the State. The feasibility of operating Ro-Ro service connecting ports of Vizhinjam, Kollam, Cochi, Beypore & Azheekal is also being examined, which can attract multi-modal transportation agencies into this movement.

# Giving a new sense of direction

**Antony Raju**  
Minister for Transport

For a department that had a bleak future, Minister Antony Raju's efforts come as a whiff of fresh air. The minister and his team are trying to stop the KSRTC Department from running at a loss even if it may not immediately be able to reap a profit.





The biggest challenge before the minister is to bring the public back to using KSRTC buses, like in the pre-Covid days. The minister has succeeded in spreading the awareness that just like public education and public health, KSRTC is a service sector and not one intended for profit-making. It is such a thought that gave birth to 'Gramavandi', a transport service that will ply through the rural areas of Kerala with local self-government institutions bearing the cost. Small 18, 24 and 32 seaters will be put into effect for the purpose. It is expected to resolve the transport issues prevalent in Kerala at present.

Opening up the 100+ fuel pumps in the state's KSRTC bus depots is also expected to generate income for the Department. The initial response has been positive, going by results from the few pumps in the cities and towns that are now open for the public. It is also an opportunity for employing ex-staff of the sector in the pumps.

The 'bus on demand' bond service for transporting government employees and other regular commuters, came as a huge relief during Covid. By plying through routes as needed by regular commuters and school authorities, the initiative gained immense popularity. Such visionary measures provide hope in reviving the sector.

The Samudra Bus initiative, exclusively for fisherwomen, allowed them to commute from stops near the seaside to spots where they sold fish in the city and to return, free of charge.

Through the 'Shop on Wheels' initiative, buses that were no longer in service are to be revamped and used for small-scale businesses such as shops and eateries. Government companies such as KTDC, Milma, HortiCorp, public-sector oil companies, Kudumbashree and others are currently using this mode.

Computerising the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) is another change that has given much respite to people who previously depended on agents to get their documents in order. Those who are unfamiliar with the online process can approach any Akshaya Centre for the same. Vehicle owners were also given extended timelines for tax payment or the amounts cancelled for a fixed duration to lighten their burden during the pandemic.

The MVD also introduced a Students Transport Protocol, yet another first for any state in India when schools reopened after the pandemic.

The Department has also implemented a system to book traffic offenders wherein cameras using artificial intelligence are installed along footpaths instead of stopping commuters on roads. This has been followed on national highways, MC Roads and other state highways as well to reduce road accidents. An accident-free Kerala under the campaign 'Safe Kerala' has been envisioned.

The Department also aims to make the design of ambulances uniform and standardize charges so that the public can benefit. This is apart from ensuring that ambulance drivers are qualified and experienced, and trained in providing first aid and etiquette.

The Kochi Open Mobility Network, a first anywhere in the world, brings together different modes of transport in a single city.

The Kerala State Water Transport Department was given new life, after being provided with solar-powered boats for transporting the public and for tourism purposes.

The minister has also been focusing on bringing about improvements in his own ward in the capital city Thiruvananthapuram.

In yet another first which earned him plaudits, the minister approved the dismissal of MVD employee Kiran Kumar, whose wife Vismaya committed suicide because of harassment over dowry.

# Kicking off a new sports culture

**V. Abdurahiman**

Minister for Sports, Wakf and Haj Pilgrimage

Steps have been taken to implement a constructive sports policy for the overall sports development in Kerala, the basic principle of the policy being "Health for All".





As part of the enhancement programs, the quality and selection of sports academies have been significantly improved. Steps are being taken to put together expert trainers to bring better results in the field. The previous government had kickstarted training programmes at the school level to find athletic talents at early stages. These schemes will be restarted soon now that the COVID controls have been relaxed.

The Government's announcement for playgrounds in all panchayats will be officially put into action from this financial year. Steps are being taken to form a Sports Council at the local body level. A 1000 crores infrastructure development plan is being implemented in the sports sector of the State, put together by the KIIFB Fund and the Sports Department fund. When the plan gets completed, Kerala will become the top state in the country in terms of sports infrastructure. It is crucial to make effective use of these facilities and maintain them in good condition.

The Sports Kerala Foundation (SKF), a public sector undertaking, was set up under the Department of Sports to carry out development, maintenance and other sports activities. SKF merged with the engineering department under the Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs. All construction work approved by the Government and carried out by the Sports Engineering Department was handed over to the Company. The SKF will also be responsible for

overseeing the activities under the Sports Department with the assistance of KIIFB. SKF will also handle organizing competitions, preparing sports training facilities, providing expert training to athletes and coaches, and providing physical fitness programmes to the general public.

Football is one of the most popular sport in Kerala. Three football academies were started under the Department of Sports to promote football. Two of the academies under the Directorate of Sports and Youth Affairs were started at Kannur and Thiruvananthapuram and the academy under the State Sports Council at Ernakulam. The Kannur and Ernakulam academies were established for girls as part of promoting women's sports. The Directorate's Elite Residential Academies functions at G.V. Raja Sports School in Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur Sports School. The Women's Football Academy under the Sports Council is located at the Panampilly Nagar Stadium. The academies work in collaboration with professional clubs. There are 3 teams in the junior and senior categories at the Kannur and Thiruvananthapuram academies. Along with students from sports schools, the academy also includes students who excel at the grassroots training program, 'Kickoff'. The senior team consists of the best alumni from both schools and a bunch of selected best footballers. Along with highly qualified and experienced trainers and technical directors, the academy also includes a team manager, physiotherapist and fitness trainer. At the State Sports Council's Women's Football Academy at Panampilly Nagar, admissions are open to 20 children under the age of 14.

The G.V. Raja Sports School, which was taken over by the Sports Department in 2017, has been upgraded to international standards through renovations. Upgrading works of 16 crores were completed here. The first phase consisted of a football turf, hockey turf, indoor stadium, 2 boxing rings, a sports life fitness center and judo mats. The second stage involved a 400-meter synthetic track with 8 straight lines and a synthetic long jump pit.

Facilities including interactive classrooms, state-of-the-art lab equipment, furniture and a conference hall were also provided to facilitate online education and enhance learning. The hostels have also been renovated. The pension of disabled athletes has been increased to Rs.1300. The annual family income limit for pensioners has also been increased to Rs 1 lakh. At present, the income limit was Rs 20,000. Steps have been taken to invite new pension applications. The pension committee will be convened soon to decide on the same. Visits are being made to all the districts of the state, as part of directly understanding the various topics and needs in the field of sports. The visits have been completed in the districts of Ernakulam, Kozhikode, Kollam, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kasaragod, Kannur, Thrissur, Idukki and Thiruvananthapuram. Regular meetings with sports organizers, district administrators, athletes, and coaches are being held without fail. Steps are being taken to address the problems of sports in the respective districts accordingly.

# Supplying in abundance

**G.R. Anil**  
Minister for Food & Civil Supplies

Many people – friendly measures have been implemented for the last 6 months.







## Ration cards for all

People living on the streets and on government land were provided ration cards on the basis of their Aadhaar cards and self-attested affidavits as proof instead of permanent address ID cards. Transgenders, who are not included on any card at present, were also issued ration cards.

## Kerala model for hunger-free india

'Subiksha Hotels', with lunch priced at Rs. 20 have been opened. The initiative will be expanded to other constituencies within a time-bound period.

## Mobile ration stores for tribal areas

A mobile ration supply programme has been launched for remote tribal settlements in districts such as Thiruvananthapuram, Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram and Wayanad.

## Priority cards for the deserving

According to the National Food Security Act 2013 priority categories such as AAY-PHH consumers come to 1,54,848. Apart from qualifying for ration cards, it also helps meet the demand to be prioritised on the many welfare programmes of the state government. Even if they did legally qualify before, it could be made possible only by avoiding those on the priority list. As a solution, soon after coming to power, the government provided those with priority cards to surrender them. Those who were illegally in possession of such cards could return them without having to face legal action and instead, resort

to corrective measures. It allowed a fair chance to those who were more deserving to avail of the benefits. The response has been overwhelming with around 13,499 AAY (yellow) cards, 85508 PHH (pink) cards and 63,476 non-priority subsidy (blue) cards being returned so far. Apart from this, 17121 yellow cards and 153047 PHH (pink) cards have been categorised and issued. It became an effective method to overcome the limitations of the process at the national level.

## Smart cards, smart shops

The distribution of pocket-sized ATM-format ration cards started from November 2nd. Smart ration cards will be made ready to coincide with the first anniversary of the government in office in June 2022. Utility bill payments, small-scale money transactions will be available on these cards. It will also have the facility to be scanned using QR code on the POS machine at ration stores.

## Hand-in-hand with farmers

Kerala is now procuring paddy from farmers at the Minimum Support Price (Minimum Support Price) and distributing it as rice to the public making it a model programme. A tie-up with Supplyco mills to collect paddy from farmers was the norm with the payment made when the receipt was produced at the bank. After the new government came to office, talks with those in all sections, mill allotment and deployment was completed in advance. While in many places across the country farmers are paid the central price of Rs.19.40, in Kerala, farmers are paid Rs.8.60 in addition to Rs.28 per kilo.

## Progressive market interventions

### Mobile supply stores

Kerala has a successful retail distribution system in place with the 1600 plus Civil Supplies Corporation outlets apart from the statutory ration process. In May 2016 when the LDF came to power, the new government kept their promise as mentioned on the election manifesto that the prices of 13 daily use items will stay consistent. It has remained so since the past five years. There was an increase in prices in a phased manner from November this year. The Kerala State Civil Supplies department adopted emergency measures in such a scenario. All the taluks in the state have five mobile supplies distribution shops on the move. Over two days, these vehicles will visit 10 centres each. This allows the public in over 800 centres to buy subsidy items and other supplies without having to go to Supplyco outlets. It became a huge success as an emergency temporary measure to face the rise in commodity prices. By the end of the drive to 11 districts, Rs.37,30,946 worth sales had been made.

### Supplyco ventures into online sales space

For the first time in Kerala, Supplyco's online shopping and home delivery services are set to begin from three outlets in Thrissur. From January 1, 2022, services will be available within all corporation limits, from February 1 in all districts, and from March 31 all over the state. Milma, Horticorp, KEPSCO and Matsyafed products will be available through this network. An app developed specifically for the purpose, Supplyco Kerala, will be available on Playstore from December 11.

# Innumerable welfare schemes

**K.N. Balagopal**  
Minister for Finance

The government under Pinarayi Vijayan has completed its initial six months. The government has successfully implemented innumerable welfare schemes even when the threat of COVID loomed large. The government could accomplish almost all the promises mentioned in the second COVID package of Rs.20,000 crores.





**A** well-acclaimed project, which is a model for the nation and other states, has been executed by the government. Relatives of a victim who died from COVID and come under the BPL category will be given monetary benefits of Rs.5000. If the family was dependent on the deceased, they will receive the amount which will be credited as direct benefit transfer for three years from the initial payment.

Fisher families who have faced distress because of natural calamities or COVID in October-November will receive an aid of Rs.3,000. A total of Rs.47.84Cr will be used to make the one-time payment to one and a half lakh such families. Fisher families who are part of the Punarageham housing project have been excluded from land registration stamp duty.

Security pension and welfare board pension are being disbursed on time. At least Rs.900Cr is being received by close to 55.86 beneficiaries. The financial assistance scheme 'Ashwas' which was implemented via KFC and KSFE was successful. Those who leased government buildings were exempted from rent till December 31, 2021.

Newly-assigned salaries and pensions are also being distributed on time. An additional Rs.14,000Cr has to be set aside to meet pay reforms. Pending amounts were settled (approximately Rs.2,500Cr) and the improved pension deficit of Rs.2,600Cr has also been cleared. The upgraded pension of university officers, salaries of homeo college teachers, and municipal contingent staff were dispatched. Anomaly cells, formed by the finance department to look into any shortcomings have started their duties. With the opening of Sree Narayana Guru Open University, the 15th under Kerala University, 118 vacancies were created apart from 1500 other posts. Fifteen thousand candidates got placements via PSC.

Rs.9018 Cr was spent on various Onam benefits. Pending salaries, pensions came to Rs.5715Cr, Rs.800Cr for the bonus/festival advance of government staff, Rs.100Cr for bonus/advance of various offices, Rs.1700Cr for social security pension, Rs.147Cr for delivering Rs.1000 for staff of various departments, Rs.30Cr for salaries of various boards and Rs.526Cr for Onam kit were allotted. Rs.1400Cr was given for the reviving KSRTC. KIIFB has sanctioned Rs.1000Cr for elevating state roads, bridges, IT, education, health, drinking water, irrigation, transport, tourism, sports, education and energy sectors. In addition, Rs.1395.01Cr was allotted to three stretches which were added to the KIIFB land acquisition pool. Apart from Rs.5374Cr granted in the past for the same purpose, the total amount now made available is Rs.6769.01Cr.

The state GST department introduced innovative measures to prevent tax fraud. Some major reforms have been introduced in the insurance sector as well. 'Oruma', a scheme helmed by the State Insurance Department was previously restricted to Kudumbasree staff but now the government is trying to make it available to other departments. Eight buildings have been completed to function as treasuries. A system was introduced whereby lottery agents could remit the price of lottery tickets along with the GST online. 'Vidyasree' was launched via KSFE for granting monetary assistance to students who needed to buy laptops and mobile phones during the Covid period.

The government is humbled and gratified in leading the development and welfare of the people even in the midst of such challenging times.

# Towards a wise, healthy Kerala

**Dr. R. Bindu**

Minister for Higher Education and Social Justice

In a bid to raise the standard of the state's higher education sector to that on par with its general education, many new programmes were inaugurated.





The LDF government took charge in 2021 with a plan in place for its Nava Kerala Mission. Besides implementing and widening the scope of several welfare programmes, creating more employment opportunities for the state's citizens has remained a priority for the government. The emphasis is on transforming Kerala into a knowledge society firmly rooted in a just system. Some of the important milestones the LDF government has achieved over the past six months are mentioned below.

### Higher education of global standards

In a bid to raise the standard of the state's higher education sector to that on par with its general education, many new programmes were inaugurated.

A Higher Education Reforms Commission was formed with Dr. Shyam B. Menon as the chairman to study and suggest reforms in the field of higher education in the state. Two more commissions were set up to overhaul rules and revamp the examination system in universities respectively. Many of the recommendations made by these commissions are already being implemented. Progress has also been made on the decision to establish 30

autonomous intra-university self-governing study centres of international standard. A sum of ` 100 crore had been set aside for this purpose in the 2021-22 state budget. Besides, another ` 500 crore was allotted by the KIIFB to develop basic infrastructure facilities for these centres. The first such centre has been dedicated to space scientist the late Dr. Thanu Padmanabhan. It will provide education in astrophysics and astronomy at the post-graduate and PhD levels.

Many initiatives have been launched as part of the Let's Go Digital programme that aims to tackle the issue of digital divide in the state. The Digital Enablement for Higher Education programme seeks to bring the teaching, learning, assessment and examination procedures across all higher education institutes in the state under one umbrella learning management system. As part of this, the 'MOODLE' open-source learning management system and servers for this purpose are being made available in all colleges.

### No barriers for the marginalised

The Barrier-Free Kerala campaign was launched by the LDF government with the aim to convert our public spaces into emulatable examples of social inclusivity.

The new sign language developed by the National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH), based on Malayalam language, was recognised the world over. At present, many hearing-impaired people in the state communicate through sign language developed from the alphabets of the English language, movement of their lips, and by writing in the air or on the body. The new method opens them up to another way of communication. This initiative by NISH was no mean feat. Kerala congratulates sign language experts and hearing-impaired faculty members Arun Gopal, Sandeep Krishnan, and alumni Rakhi Ravindran for this achievement.

A campaign was launched to ensure gender equality and social justice in higher education institutes. Experts were invited to conduct workshops and impart training. The programme was undertaken after making sure that complaint redressal cells and gender justice forums in university campuses have been functioning effectively.

The launch of a toll-free helpline number called the 'Elder Line' (14567) for the elderly, the achievements by NIPMR (National Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation) in carrying out virtual rehabilitation treatments for patients, the opening of showrooms with equipment relevant to the differently-abled at affordable prices, and many such initiatives for the betterment of society have been made over the past six months by the departments of higher education and social justice.

# Rearing a new culture

J. Chinchurani

Minister for Diary Development and Animal Husbandry

The Pinarayi government is six months into its second innings. The LDF government was able to continue another term because of the people-friendly programmes that were implemented by the first government and its interventions made on behalf of the people. The first government was particular in that it executed each policy mentioned on the election manifesto. New programmes are also planned. In the last six months, numerous policies have been confirmed at the Department level. Two such initiatives that deserve special mention are Mobile Tele-Veterinary units and Kerala State Dairy Management Information Centre (KSDMIC).





## Mobile tele-veterinary unit

These units are being introduced to bring veterinary care in emergency situations to the doorsteps of farmers who raise animals. Two units have been allotted for Ernakulam and Kannur districts. It is being set in motion at a cost of Rs.2Cr under the Rebuild Kerala programme. The lack of facilities to shift disease-inflicted animals to the necessary hospitals and the challenge of transporting large animals has been creating a dilemma in veterinary care. The need for diagnostic equipment during diagnosis of animals was also a cause for concern. The Department of Animal Husbandry executed the plan to solve these two issues. The mobile units are equipped with the most-modern portable x-ray unit, tele-medicine software and cranes to support cattle that cannot stand. Animals can be given improved care with advanced diagnostic systems and tele-veterinary services. Information regarding the farm animals can be communicated remotely to experts sitting in labs and universities. One such unit has been successfully implemented in Kollam district. Three employees including a veterinary

surgeon are being allotted for each unit. The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) designed the units based on the needs of the Department of Animal Husbandry. The units can be called during emergencies on 24\*7 basis to provide quality care within the shortest time at minimal cost. Approval has been granted for bringing out 12 veterinary ambulances under the RKI programme. It is hoped to include more such programmes that are of benefit to farmers who work in animal husbandry. Dairy production is a sector that is directly influenced by Kerala State Dairy Management Information Centre (KSDMIC) to ensure sustainable village development. It has uplifted this sector from one that merely provides a livelihood to one that creates numerous job opportunities. While in the past it was only a few farmers who engaged in cattle rearing, now the field sees educated youth and NRIs who invest in the sector. It is a need of the times to equip cattle farmers with the necessary means to face new challenges by centralising information that can be accessed to design new programmes. Training centres under the Department of animal husbandry are coming into shape to support the growth of the sector in many parts of the region. Such centres help to disburse information among laymen and execute and monitor programmes in an effective manner. The Department is striving to reach information to cattle farmers about development of grass fodder, the use of traditional types of fodder, production and consumption of value-add dairy products, data collection through information technology, integrated farming methods, empowering co-operative units, scientific dairy farming, and the like. KSIDMIC has been started to design programmes for the development of farmers through the data analysed on them, to save such data for reference and to use for research. The government has set aside Rs.50L for this purpose. The centre in Thiruvananthapuram operates under the Deputy Director (Planning). The animal husbandry Department secretary is the chairman of the advisory committee. Moreover, other members include the Chief (Agriculture) State Planning Board; Agriculture Development Director, Finance Joint Secretary; Dean of Kerala University and Animal Science University and MD, Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation. The centre is expected to provide guidance to farmers and those stepping into the field. KSIDMIC will be useful to make information available through technology, exploring the possibilities of development and creating job opportunities, which can be accessed through the Department's web portal.

# More modern employment opportunities

**M.V. Govindan Master**

Minister for Local Self Governments, Rural Development and Excise

The Left Front has a long history of people's participation in governance. In this new phase of Nava Kerala construction, a sustainable development model is being realised under the Pinarayi government. Focusing on enhancing welfare activities for the poor, modern employment opportunities are being created for future generations.







## Extreme poverty alleviation programme

Of the three projects implemented by the LSGDs, the most important is the Poverty Alleviation Campaign, a major item in the Left Democratic Front's election manifesto.

The government has initiated programmes like Asraya, Poverty Free Kerala and Hunger-Free Kerala for identifying the very poor within five years, implementing survival programmes, and bringing them into the mainstream.

Many wonder why they were not included in the previous schemes. The reality is that they do not feature in traditional poverty surveys due to their extreme social isolation, nomadic existence and mental illnesses.

## Services at the door

The term "people's government" literally comes true when services reach the doorsteps. In the light of the experience of door-to-door service launched by 50 local governments, a state-wide programme will be launched. Mustering, preparation of

applications for assistance from the CM's Disaster Relief Fund, delivery of social security pensions, emergency medicines, palliative care and issue of life certificates are services now available through the door-to-door service.

Other services will be launched under the supervision of a committee (chaired by a local government ward member) that includes an Asha Worker, a Kudumbasree representative and volunteers. The process of recruiting volunteers through Local Self Government Institutions is in progress.

Door-to-door service will provide support to senior citizens, the disabled, the bedridden, and the differently-abled. No government in the history of the country has ever implemented such a level of public service.

## Kudumbasree for women's empowerment

The activities of Kudumbasree have had a significant impact on the empowerment of the most underprivileged women.

With the attainment of the ability to earn income on their own, the status of women has also improved.

At present, Kudumbasree has about 45 lakh women members. However, the advantages do not reach all. Young ladies who have been unable to join the neighbourhood for various reasons are offered the option to join now. In all local government wards, auxiliary groups of 18 to 40-year-old women are being created. These groups will discuss the need for educational progress and skill development in workplaces, the prospect of finding new jobs and the prevention of job loss due to marriage.

Kudumbasree Women's Auxiliary Group supports women's empowerment, their family's economic growth, and social upliftment by finding solutions to social issues, like dowry and domestic violence, enabling the youth to come together to participate in the development activities of the country, and providing a venue for vigilance committees for Intervention in Women's Social Issues, emancipation from alcoholism, and the Department of Culture's Samam programme. The aim is to raise awareness of various livelihood schemes implemented by the central and state governments and to enable women to establish sustainable lifestyles.

# A mission with a vision

**P.A. Mohamed Riyas**  
Minister for PWD & Tourism

In a fast-paced world, the government goal is to ensure a solid foundation for the PWD Department in this swiftly gripping world. Mission PWD was launched as a means to translate this into action by generating innovative policies, their timely implementation and winning the confidence of the public. The mission will be led by an expert team at the state level. An Infrastructure Co-ordination Committee has been created at the district level with the District Collectors in the position of chairperson.





At the initial stage, priority will be given to the timely implementation of projects. Maintenance is the need of the hour as the state faces heavy rainfall. The Department is handling diverse projects like running contracts, DNP discharge, working calendar, project management system, e-office, modern technology for road construction and climate cell.

So far Rs.273.41Cr has been allocated for road maintenance. Considering emergencies because of the rain, more money has been sanctioned this year. Last year, it was Rs.180Cr. An amount of Rs.119Cr has already been approved for emergency maintenance. Rs.17 Cr has been delivered to 77 roads which come under the discretion of KIIFB.

### Publicising maintenance periods

The PWD Departments of our state have been providing a minimum guarantee for their projects taken up in the state. So, these roads and efforts related to them must stand the test of time. Contractors have been assigned responsibility for the projects for a given period. This is the defect liability period wherein if a road, bridge or building faces any damage during that period, the contractors will have to be answerable.

The PWD manual states that it

is compulsory to observe the DLP. It also mentions that the security guarantee provided at the time of the contract can be withdrawn only on completion of 28 days of the DLP which is a legal responsibility as well.

An inspection of the roads under the DLP showed that contractors have tried to maintain their roads well, with some exceptions. It is why the government has decided to ensure transparency.

People should be made aware of DLP roads in their respective areas, the information for which should be conveyed through official websites and DLP boards installed along the roads. Details of the maintenance period and the names of the officers responsible for the same will be displayed. Not all portions of a road need come under DLP. This depends on the work allotted. If a DLP road has developed a pothole, the contractor can be called up. If the person is unavailable, the engineer can be contacted next. Both of them will be updated right away and the damage rectified immediately. Close to 2514 projects come under the DLP scheme. The boards will be installed in a phased manner on all roads.

### Running contracts method

There was no system in place to keep track of maintenance of roads for which the DLP had expired. The Running Contracts method was adopted by the government as a solution as otherwise, taking stock of all the potholes, getting approval and then calling a tender was often a long process. Under Running Contracts, the responsibility of road maintenance is given to a contractor for a year. Any damage occurring to that respective road in that period will come under the responsibility of the contract holder and the authority in charge.

In the first phase, a Running Contract system will be implemented for the protection of 2481.5km of roads under 117 projects for which Rs.137.41Cr has been allotted.

### Tourism

Post Covid, the focus is on resurrecting the tourism sector. After the houseboat, Kerala Tourism has gifted the caravan to the sector as a means of exploration of the state. Journeys to unexplored destinations through caravans is one such way that tourism can be promoted without damage to the environment as otherwise it would require hotels to be built.

The caravan also ensures safety in these times for those who prefer to travel in small groups. Food can also be arranged from the regions as well as get acquainted with local folk forms. The tourism Department is offering tax rebates and installments for those tour operators who wish to invest in caravans.

# Sowing seeds of prosperity

**P. Prasad**  
Minister for Agriculture

Since this government came to power, there has been tremendous progress in the Department of Agriculture.





**Some of the initiatives brought forth by the government are:**

### **Marketing and value-added products**

An amount of 4.24 crore has been disbursed to 5635 farmers under Kerala Farm Fresh Vegetable-Based Price Scheme to ensure base price. The Department of Agriculture and VFPC has launched 44 new FPOs. 4220 tonnes of fruits and vegetables were procured and distributed through 2000 Onam markets. 100 new city markets were opened. 4527 farmers' meetings were held and 72338 farmers participated.

### **Welfare schemes / new schemes**

96480 farmers were made members of the crop insurance scheme. 23.70 crore was distributed as compensation to the farmers. An amount of 54.73 crores was disbursed to 52988 farmers under the Natural Disaster Relief Scheme. An amount of 11.63 crores was disbursed under the free electricity scheme for small and marginal farmers. 237.74 crore has been

disbursed as pension to 250994 farmers till October 2021.

### **Promotion of vegetable cultivation**

78 lakh vegetable kits and 249 lakh seedlings were distributed free of cost to expand and boost vegetable cultivation. As if now, 42000 hectares of land have been cultivated and 5.746 lakh metric tons of vegetables have been partially harvested. As part of this, vegetable cultivation was carried out on 24000.85 hectares during the Onam season when there is high demand for vegetables in Kerala and 3.726 lakh tonnes of safe vegetables were produced. 1004 rain gutters and 216 family drip irrigation systems were installed. Under the vegetable development scheme, 926 pump sets, 1667 plant protection equipment and 41136 grow bag units were distributed.

### **Expansion of paddy cultivation**

Through Kerala State Seed Development Authority, the Department of Agriculture distributed 4914.260 MT high-quality paddy seeds to the farmers. 392.340 MT of paddy seeds were distributed free of cost from the reserve stock of the Department of Agriculture to the farmers who had lost their sown paddy due to natural calamities. A production bonus of 2.668 crores was disbursed to paddy farmers. An amount of 18.567 crores was distributed to 4436 farmers for the purchase of agricultural machinery. Paddy was cultivated on 58096.677-hectares land. An amount of 4367.16 lakh was disbursed as a subsidy to the farmers.

### **Coconut production enhancement project**

As a part of the activities of the Coconut Development Council, high quality 8,27,813 tall, 22,361 short and 1,18,888 hybrid coconut saplings were distributed to the farmers at subsidized rates (Rs. 50, 50, 1 and 25 respectively). 84 coconut villages were allotted. The Coconut Development Board distributed 1.5 crores to farmers for boosting coconut production. Eco-friendly cultivation was implemented on 31000 ha. During the 2nd year of the Organic Home Scheme, an amount of 15.08 crore was disbursed to 14426 units.

# Loving salute to the budding aviators

**K. Radhakrishnan**

Minister for the Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, Devaswoms

*I write this by feeling the joy of flying into a sky that knows no limits...*





**F**ive children from the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes category are scaling new heights with the help of our government. This momentous leap forward is being taken by a new generation from a section of society that once did not even have the right to utter the word 'education'. The five of them came to my office yesterday to say 'Thank you'...rather...to tell me that such children should be given such opportunities. Isn't that the sincerest form of gratitude?

These young friends who will be taking off soon are Saranya from Wayanad, Sankeerthana from

Kannur, Vishnuprasad from Kozhikode, Adithyan from Alappuzha and Rahul from Thiruvananthapuram. The Scheduled Caste Development Department has dispensed between Rs.23L and 25L in the form of fees and scholarship for these children who gained admission to the Rajiv Gandhi Academy for Aviation Technology.

The government, under the programme Wings, has decided to provide such assistance to all students from the SC & ST community who make it to the Academy. Five Scheduled Caste and two Scheduled Tribe categories of students (maximum 5+2=7) will be given the opportunity for availing state-sponsored benefits to the Commercial Pilot Licence Course in each batch. Under the Wings programme, Rs.1.75 Cr can be transferred towards the Aviation Academy to meet academic expenses. In the past, only one student from the scheduled category could qualify for the scholarship. It was then revamped as Wings.

May there be more wings that fly the skies.... may more faces break into smiles...a loving salute to these five aviators.

# Making the State more and more investment - friendly

P. Rajeeve  
Minister for Law, Industries & Coir

The Government is committed to establishing an investment-friendly ambience in the State and this has been reflected in the past six months' measures taken by the Industries Department.







**I**t was undoubtedly the all-encompassing change brought about by the Left Democratic Government that encouraged the people of Kerala to give it a second chance. The second term of the LDF government is in full swing despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The government allocated a sum of 1416 crores to micro, small, and medium scale industries which were financially at a major loss due to the covid pandemic. This step gave hope to upcoming and existing entrepreneurs in the state. The government is committed to establishing an investment-friendly atmosphere in the state and is campaigning to bring better investments to the shores of Kerala.

The amendment of the industrial laws is an example of the major initiatives taken by the government to promote industrial development in the state. It was a monumental proclamation when the government announced that any startup with an investment of 50crores or more could get a green flag, to start their business after completing their proceedings, in just 7 days. No licences are required for MSMEs within a budget of 50 crores, for 3 years. The government also took due consideration to look into the complaints put forth by industrialists about the outdated laws and practices that rust and corrode the system and has taken ample steps to update them.

The government is working tirelessly

to make the inspections in industrial establishments transparent. The K-CIS system that was brought about gave a rough response to this initiative. More than five lakh companies have registered under the scheme until now. 1464 inspections were completed through this system in four months. In line with the passing of rules for industrialization, an event called 'Meet the Minister' was planned to understand the problems of investors and to inform the industrial world of the changes in the laws and regulations. Out of the 1377 complaints received through 'Meet the Minister' held in ten districts, 930 were immediately resolved and special instructions were given for further action on other complaints. As an initiative to implement the event on a micro level, 'Meet the Investor' program was organised to work directly with entrepreneurs and discuss their plans and offer help with a follow-up. The State received a promise of investments worth 7,000 crores from this scheme. "Responsible Industry, Responsible Investment" is the approach motto the government follows while inviting new investments into the state. Over 4700 MSMEs were started in Kerala during the first six months of this government, with over 673.49 crore investment and 23,332 new jobs.

In addition to attracting private investments and MSMEs, public sector protection is also a priority of the government. Master plans have been made to upgrade and modify the traditional institutions of the state by 2030 on a short-term, mid-term and long-term basis, and prep it to serve the state better. Under the "Responsible Industry Responsible Investment" policy, there will be an additional 9467 crore investment when 175 projects across 41 public sectors are completed. There will also be an increase in the annual turnover from around 3300 crore to 17538 crores, with over 5467 new job opportunities.

While the central government is accelerating its privatization policies, the state of Kerala is adopting alternative policies. When the centre decided to privatise the central public sector institution, Hindustan Newsprint Limited, the state decided to take over it without handing it over to the private sector, and launch it under the name "Kerala Paper Products Limited". The state also took an advanced initiative to register a company in Vellore under the name Kerala Rubber Limited, to launch value-added products based on rubber.

As a mark of its progress, Kerala has also maintained its first position in the recently published Sustainability Development Index of the Niti Ayog Committee. The main consideration in the index is the progress made in industrial development and Kerala is a proud beacon of achievement in this index. The government is taking all the necessary steps to continue this progress. As a part of this process, 2022 is to be observed as the year of entrepreneurship. The state hopes to launch one lakh new MSME units during this period and is all set to achieve its highest industrial goals with the motto 'Your Initiative, Our Pride'. 2022 will be the year that Kerala finds a place of its own on the map of industrial development.

# A new lifeline for fishers

**Saji Cheriyan**

Minister for Fisheries, Culture & Youth Affairs

'Punargeham' has been introduced to rehabilitate members of the respective community whose houses were prone to sea erosion and stayed within a distance of 50m from the sea. The initiative gave beneficiaries the option to buy land and have a house constructed, buy a plot that already contained a house or find a plot of land for the residents to build a block of apartments.





**W**e now bear witness to the sea and the shore becoming a threat to the very fisherfolk who earn their livelihood from it. Unpredictable weather patterns and subsequent erosion along the coast led to the fishers losing their houses to the sea, forcing them to seek shelter with extended family or at government relief camps. This is when the first Pinarayi-led government came to power. In a pioneering move in the country, the Pinarayi government conceptualised a plan to rehabilitate fisherfolk and in a model initiative, relocated 192 families to flats in Muttathara. The programme also enabled a payment of Rs. 10L for the rehabilitation. After fisherfolk welcomed the initiative with open arms, a major initiative called 'Punargeham' at a cost of Rs.2450

Cr, was introduced to rehabilitate members of the respective community whose houses were prone to sea erosion and stayed within a distance of 50m from the sea. The initiative gave beneficiaries the option to buy land and have a house constructed, buy a plot that already contained a house or find a plot of land for the residents to build a block of apartments.

According to the programme which began in 2020, 815 beneficiaries found plots of land on which houses were constructed and they began life afresh. Beneficiaries numbering 1,943 have registered as beneficiaries, opting for plots. One hundred and twenty-eight flats in Karod in Thiruvananthapuram, 20 in Beemapally and 128 in Ponnani in Malappuram have, by now, been handed over to beneficiaries. The construction of a block of flats in QSS Colony in Kollam is now in its final phase. The construction of the complex of 114 flats can be completed and handed over by January 2022. Besides this, 784 flats in Manappuram in Alappuzha, West Hill in Calicut, Koyyipadi in Kasargode, Niramathoor and Ponnani in Malappuram, and Karode and Valiyathura in Thiruvananthapuram, have been given authorization to function.

The LDF government is focused on creating a harmonious coastal society that offers fishers stable shelter, security and confidence. It is hoped that creating an organic barrier around the shore will, to an extent, prevent the occurrence of sea erosion and other natural calamities.

# Rewriting history

**V. Sivankutty**

Minister for General Education and Labour

November 1<sup>st</sup> is celebrated as 'Keralappiravi', ie, the birthday of the state of Kerala, every year, but the day had another significance this time. Our school students, who had been at home for more than a year and a half, started attending school from this day onwards.





**D**ue to the pandemic, it was not possible to open the schools and conduct classes. The health security threat posed by COVID-19 on one hand and the concerns of parents on the other - both had to be addressed for schools to be reopened. More than 45 lakh children had to attend schools in the state and this could only be implemented safely with proper planning, preparation and execution.

The Department of General Education successfully took up the challenge in collaboration with other departments including Health, Transport and Local Self Government. This could only have been possible with the wholehearted support of the general public. Parents were convinced that digital/online classes were not an alternative to physical classrooms. The Department held discussions with experts on how to prepare a large safety net for children. Several levels of discussions were held with students organisations, teachers, local bodies, trade unions, political parties, people's representatives

and officials to make sure that no section of the society was left out from participating in the preparations.

Days before the reopening, cleaning and disinfection activities were carried out on all school campuses across the state. Precise guidelines were prepared and released before the reopening and assignments were divided between the various stakeholders. Transport guidelines were issued in collaboration with the Department of Transport. Teachers and non-teaching staff were instructed to be double-vaccinated. Primary, 10th and 12th classes were reopened on November 1st, 2021.

Notwithstanding the limitations, Kerala's schools reopened in a festive mood. To bring children back to their usual exuberance, classrooms were energised with their favourite songs and stories.

The State's school reopening following such extensive preparation was unprecedented. The support offered by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and others strengthened the activities.

A big level of applause is to be rendered to the state's children who had been locked up in their homes for more than a year and a half, continued on the path of learning despite this, and got back to their classrooms with utmost excitement this year. Parents also need to be congratulated on providing physical, mental and emotional support for the children. How can we not talk about our teachers at this stage? The hard work and dedication of our teachers gave a lot of impetus to the Department of General Education during the pandemic.

November 1st, 2021 became a historic day for Kerala. The fact that the schools are functioning well with no unfortunate incidents reported so far is testimony to the excellence of our planning and preparation. Once again, I am thanking each and everyone who participated in this initiative and made it a grand success.

# Winning hearts by upholding social responsibility

**V.N. Vasavan**  
Minister for Co-operation & Registration

The co-operative sector is on a successful journey as it breaks all barriers, winning hearts by upholding its priority for social responsibility.



While there were deliberate attempts from some power centres to demoralize the board, the sector has always supported the cause of the people. The most recent such example has been the intervention by the Co-operative Sector in the Milk Co-operative Societies. It brought real farmers to the fore.

Farmers have to head primary dairy groups and apex bodies. The amendment has been made to ensure democracy in the boards wherein those with cattle farm animals and those who regularly supply milk to societies ought to occupy such positions. The tenure has also been fixed so that people don't occupy the same positions for long periods of time. For the first time in history, women's reservation was also introduced. Women will also have the opportunity to be selected as president, vice-president in the sector.

Kerala Bank is progressing as a means of financial support for the common man in Kerala. After completing its first economic year successfully, it has seen a growth in deposits of Rs.5,660Cr. There was a 9.27 percent increase in transactions. Once the ongoing IT integration is complete, there will be better efficiency. The benefits, including that of low interest rates, will be shared with the co-operatives of Malappuram district who chose to remain independent from Kerala bank. Allegations raised by the opposition were laid to rest in the legislative assembly by providing convincing replies. The main concern was around that of audit systems. The co-operative department had already taken some remarkable measures to safeguard the auditing process by breaking with convention. It demanded the presence of a high officer from the CAG office in order to solve the problem. Such an officer was provided and the audit department was strengthened under him. Team audit was conducted

instead of audits by individuals. Audit reports and other reports can now be accessed by anyone online. It has been implemented by the Co-operative Audit Monitoring and Information System scheme. This transparency in the system reduces corruption and other malpractices. The department has successfully implemented all the promises mentioned in the 100 Days Programme.

Initially, it was intended to kickstart 25 co-operative groups but 29 groups registered all of which were then given the go-ahead. The groups are involved in various fields, from waste management to IT enterprises. Ten women's groups were allotted Rs. 5L for making COVID-resistant equipment. The co-operative department joined hands with frontline workers in their efforts against the pandemic. The department offers the pulse oximeter at a price of Rs. 750 via Consumerfed when it was sold for more than Rs.3,000 at pharmacies and companies. Private distributors immediately fell in line, bringing the price down to Rs.500. The exploitation by private monopolies came to an end as Neethi Pharmacy Stores too began to sell the equipment at an affordable price.

An interest-free loan scheme called Vidya Tharangini was executed by co-operative groups for students to buy tablets and phones as the mode of teaching switched to online. More than 80,000 different educational loans were made available all over the state.

The promise was to give jobs to 10,000 seekers. But before the completion of the 100 days programme, 16,628 jobs were generated in the co-operative sector. When 191 permanent appointments were made, 16, 627 job opportunities were made available.

Applications have been invited for appointments in the agriculture sector and co-operative department. Appointments are to be made to close to 1000 positions.

The Paddy Procurement, Processing and Marketing Co-operative Society was started by the sector with a capital of Rs.310 Cr. As part of the society, rice mills will be constructed in the Kuttanad and upper Kuttanad regions. The intention is to conduct direct procurement of rice from the farmers with Palakkad being the exception as an active co-operative group is already involved in such a process.

The care home initiative is proof of the co-operative department's social responsibility. The first project as part of the initiative was the Pazhayannur Kairali flat complex which became a home to 40 families. The project will now extend to Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Palakkad, Kozhikode and Kannur. In the initial stage, 2,091 homes were constructed of which 2,073 homes were completed and the final 18 are in the final stages. A joint effort along with LIFE Mission, those who lost their houses in the catastrophic floods and other natural calamities will have priority in this scheme.

Profits from the Co-operative Department, contributions from members, and honorariums from office bearers will be contributed towards this project. The Co-operative Department has implemented many schemes in association with the public in the last six months.

An amount of Rs.22.33Cr was given from the Co-operative Member's Consolation Scheme in December. Applicants from different districts in Kerala, numbering 11,060 were allotted Rs.22, 93, 50,000. The scheme is designed for members suffering from serious diseases. All the applications upto now have been settled. Money from the consolation fund was allotted for the second time during the tenure of this government. Rs 23,94,10,000 was allotted for 11,194 applicants in the first phase. The amount was allotted after considering all the applications during that time. Applications received later were considered in the meeting held on December 1.

# Health@fingertips

**Veena George**

Minister for Health & Woman and Child Development

E-Health Services, introduced with the intent of utilising the benefits of information technology in the health sector, is now fast becoming a reality.







Close to 350 hospitals have, by now, adopted the E-Health Services initiative. Of this, 150 of them were executed during the tenure of the present government. Activities are on to introduce the services in another 300 hospitals.

E-Health Services allows an outpatient to avail all services online from start to finish. An OP ticket can be taken online right away or booked online in advance. Queue management has been set in place for all services including OP clinics, pharmacy, laboratory and X-ray. Diagnosis reports and results can be made available to labs and doctors. This does away with the need for patients to carry their treatment reports around. It then becomes possible for hospitals to function in a paperless mode. At present, 157 hospitals are functioning the paperless way.

E-Health Services aims to collect the data of patients from each region in the most accurate manner possible which will be stored centrally and accessed for further consultations. Digitally linking government hospitals also ensures efficient services. From services provided at primary health centres to multi-specialty hospitals, E-Health Services has developed 56 modules that enable simultaneous access.

The crowds and delays experienced at government hospitals in the outpatient department, consultation rooms and laboratories, will be resolved with the introduction of IT services in administration. The service makes the process of the patient going for various tests, then to the doctor's room, getting the diagnosis done, then purchasing the medicines prescribed from the pharmacy a simple one using E-Health Services. By avoiding the paperwork and registers, the workload of public health workers is greatly reduced as they can access the necessary information from E-Health Services thereby providing the public with exemplary service. The many services now available to the public and related accounts will be through a single-window facility doing away with many difficulties that now exist in the system. It also helps to identify deserving beneficiaries. A systematic process is put in place for the certificates and applications.

All details will be accessible by the public through the web portal which is to be launched very soon. This will include all information related to health, hospitals and specialties in each place and online appointments.

This initiative is being implemented in full compliance with the electronic medical records standards laid down by the central Ministry for Health and Family Welfare. The software includes the data of innumerable medicines and various medical equipment that has been converted as per the international coding system.

The E-Health Software modules have been developed after thorough frequent discussions with doctors, nurses and paramedical staff. The E-Health Project Management Unit that comes under the Department of Health is responsible for developing the elaborate and complicated software and its error-free functioning.

All the hospitals with the E-Health facility have a queue management system in place so that crowding can be avoided. Many hospitals have successfully managed their queues with advance token booking, online OP registration and OP token display.

Tokens can be booked in advance while doctors can refer patients from one hospital to another at hospitals with the E-Health system in place. The public can also take tokens through the mobile app of the web portal. This will bring about a considerable change in the health sector. The objective is to implement E-Health Services in all government hospitals within the tenure of the present government.

# The enduring magnetic appeal

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan  
Music Critic



When the J. C. Daniel Award for 2020 was awarded to the singer P. Jayachandran, all of us felt joy in our hearts because, like in the previous years, the prestigious award had reached the most rightful pair of hands.



Among the illustrious league of playback singers currently active in the field of Malayalam film industry, he holds the position of a reverend patriarch. But even today, Jayachandran is the indisputable prince of melodies, considering both his musical repertoire and beauty of rendition.

If the late thirties of an athlete's life mark the autumn of his/her career, they form the spring season of an artist's. Even so, at the age of 77, Jayachandran continues to amaze us. As he stands and sings on the stage, it looks as if his singing career has only stepped into the phase of youth. If we try to unlock the secret of his enduring magnetism, we encounter an ordinary man whose heart is full of childlike innocence, and whose love for music is as strong as his love for life; an ordinary man who has undergone no formal training in classical music, and who puts on no airs. And precisely because of that, the music that pours out of his soul has a divine radiance to it. His voice has the touch of God. When he sings, it is as though God Himself has sent a gandharva to our midst. Indeed, Jayachandran is Kerala's very own singer, the possessor of a melting



voice, God's gift to the world of Malayalam melody.

Jayachandran entered the field of playback singing through the film *Kunjali Marakkar* for which he sang a lyric penned by P. Bhaskaran and set to music by B. A. Chidambaranath. But it was another film *Kalithozhan* (1966) that came out earlier for which he sang two, utterly different solo numbers – the soulful “Manjalayil mungi thorthi” and the humorous “Tharunyam thannude thamarapooanathil”. Both were the products of P. Bhaskaran’s penmanship and G. Devarajan’s musical genius. *Kunjali Marakkar* was released a year later, and carried a duet – “Oru mullappoo maalayumayi” – that Jayachandran sang along with Prema. It was not long before Jayachandran stood bathed in astral glory, singing hit songs in four south Indian languages scored by great music composers. Yet, although he has a legion of fans, Jayachandran leads the life of an ordinary man.

Once he was asked about how he succeeded in bringing such tonal perfection to his songs. The answer was as distinctive as it was serious. According to Jayachandran, the link between the meaning of a song and its literary quality has to be organic. It is when the music composer sets it in a raga, which does justice to this spirit, that the song attains tonal perfection. And when a singer, who has a deep understanding and command of the language, renders it with sensitivity,

he or she is able to convey the tonal nuances to the listeners.

Another unique feature of Jayachandran the playback singer is the sincerity of his style. He adheres strictly to the gamaka protocol, refusing to introduce sangatis on his own. All the phrases flow with liquid grace as he sings. That may be the reason why not a single young singer has been able to imitate him. Jayachandran the singer has only followers and admirers. He has no imitators.

Jayachandran is comparable to Maharajapuram Santhanam the great Carnatic musician in terms of richness of tonal quality and restful grace of presentation. Santhanam was famous for rendering classical music in a simple manner with his mellifluous voice and natural modulation. Jayachandran has been able to bring his sensitivity to both poetry and visual aesthetics to bear upon his singing style, and give a pearly sheen to his songs. And his audiences have always been quick to savour and hold the songs close to their hearts.

Jayachandran was born on 3 March 1944 to Ravi Varma Kochaniyan Thampuram of the Kochi royal clan and Subhadra Kunjamma of the Paliyath family. Shortly thereafter, the family relocated from Ravipuram in Kochi to Irinjalakkuda, the cradle of temple arts, in Thrissur district. From a very young age, Jayachandran started training in mridangam (an indigenous percussion instrument of Kerala), and it can be said that Irinjalakkuda played a major role in shaping the artist and aesthete in him. He married Lalitha, a native of Thrissur. The couple have two children, Lakshmi and Dinanath.

“Poove poove pala poove” (Devadoothan), “Aakaasha deepame” (Joker), “Ariyaathe ariyaathe” (Ravanaprabhu), “Ponnushassinum” (Meghamalhar), “Onnu thodaanullil” (Yaatraakkarude Shraddhakku), “Vattayila pandalittu” (Yaatraakkarude Shraddhakku), “Aarum” (Nandanam), “Viral thottaal viriyunna” (Phantom), “Va vavo vave” (Ente Veedu, Appuvinteyum), “Neyoru puzhayaay” (Thilakkam), “Enthe Innum Vanneela” (Gramophone), “Kannil kannil minnum” (Gowrisankaram), “Aalila thaliyil” (Mizhi Randilum), “Swayamvara chandrike” (Chronic Bachelor), “Azhake kanmaniye” (Kasturimaan), “Nee manimukilaadakil” (Vellithira), “Kallayi kadavathe” (Perumazhakkalam), “Kannum nattu kaathirinnittum” (Kathaavasheshan), “Aaraarum kaanaathe” (Chandrolsavam), “Venmukiletho” (Karutha Pakshikal), “Aalila kaavile” (Pattaalam), “Nanayum nin mizhiyorum” (Nayika), “Sharadaambaram” (Ennu Ninte Moideen) and so on are the hugely popular songs that Jayachandran sang from 2000 onwards, either as solo or as duet numbers.

There is perhaps no need in this short piece to attempt an analysis of each of the songs that Jayachandran sang before 2000. The simple reason is that they have already gained a permanent place in the hearts of song-lovers. Let them flow on uninterruptedly in those

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