

KERALA CALLING

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March 01 , 2022_VOL_42_No. 05



**COME !
INVEST IN
KERALA**

Bridge to prosperity

The recently inaugurated **VALIYA AZHEEKAL BRIDGE** connects **KOLLAM** and **ALAPPUZHA** districts.





Steadfast in our Industrial growth

This issue of *Kerala Calling* seeks to set the record straight. The articles that you are about to read will show you how Kerala has undergone a thorough image makeover, by discarding its old and fusty, regressive tendencies, and reinventing itself to be in tune with the times.

Over the last half-decade, there has been a surge in investments and a boom in business, thanks to a revolutionary change that has occurred in the entrepreneurship-climate of the region. More measures are either on the anvil or in progress because Kerala has declared 2022 as the 'Year of Entrepreneurs'.

Today, the government offers a spate of streamlined online services, many of which are automated, making it easy for investors to fulfil compliance requirements without hassles. As a result of this, licenses for setting up businesses and approvals for projects are issued very speedily, and through a very transparent process. There are checks and balances to ensure no viable MSME gets rejected, and every complaint is rectified immediately and effectively. Infrastructural developments, like improved road- and rail-networks and waterway-connectivity, uninterrupted supply of clean, affordable fuel, faster ICT-enabled utilities, better commercial establishments and so on, have moved in tandem, and this has helped a great deal in providing a supportive ambience.

A wide range of incentives to start businesses in the state are on offer, including tax breaks, subsidies, and access to cheap land. All these facilities, coupled with abundance of water, uninterrupted electricity supply and attractive tourist destinations make the Kerala of today an ideal place for start-ups to take wing, and soar the heights of success. But this is not to suggest that unskilled labour is a neglected category. In fact, Kerala tops the list of states in India that offers the best wages (nearly three times the national average) to its labour force. The analytical piece on the Kerala budget shows how the focus of the government is on introducing reforms for improving the knowledge economy of the state. Also read in this issue an overview of the films that featured in the 26th International Film Festival of Kerala that the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram hosted in the month of March this year.

The articles and reports compiled in this edition will provide all the details of the wave of transformation that is sweeping across the state, bringing the results of progress to the doorsteps of the masses and changing their lives for the better.

S. Harikishore I.A.S.

Editor



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48 + Cover



Come! Invest in Kerala

Pinarayi Vijayan

10

Reforms for Building a Knowledge Economy for Kerala

Dr. Shaijumon C S



Kerala will be a haven for investors: Industries Minister

Aiswarya Thara Bhai

18

Giving 'Nava Kerala' a major push through Entrepreneurship Year 22-23

S. Harikishore I.A.S



Everything is favourable for investing in Kerala

Yusuff Ali M.A.

24

Changing trends
towards innovation
and co-operative's
resilience

Dr.T.P.Sethumadhavan

30

A new facelift for Khadi
& Village Industries

Dr.K.A.Ratheesh

34

Kerala
Handicrafts
to thrive as
tourism
gears up

36

KINFRA
Making giant strides

Santhosh Koshy Thomas

42

A Bystander's Memoir
of a Cancer Journey

Suneetha Balakrishnan

48

Will the
Blasters' Show
Rejuvenate
Kerala Football ?

Sanil P Thomas



26

On a mission to create
Bamboo revolution

Suraj S.

32

Coir Industry on the roll

Hema Sreekumar



40

Nano for all

T.S. Chandran

44

Framing the conflict

A Chandrasekhar



46

Kummatty: Gem of a film

Adarsh Onatt

CONTENTS

Come! Invest in Kerala



The LDF Government in Kerala is committed to transforming Kerala into a knowledge economy and an innovation society. To enable this, in continuation to our interventions in public education during the previous tenure, we are focussing on the higher education sector and bringing in active linkages between the sectors of higher education and industry. This will pave the way for information and knowledge to be transformed into products and services that can make a marked impact in the society.

There is no substitute to industrial development. But to develop industry, it is essential to provide the foundation for it through basic infrastructure. Over the last 6 years, seminal importance has been given to it in Kerala through KIIFB. We have also ensured energy without which industries cannot function through the interventions with regard to the power highway, GAIL pipeline and LNG terminal. We are also providing high speed broadband internet connectivity through K-FON. It is against the backdrop of all this that Kerala is now setting out on a path of industrial development.

Kerala's investment climate has undergone a sea change, in the recent past. Several investment opportunities are available in Kerala, which investors and industrialists can make use of, in a big way. Kerala has a diversified industrial base, ranging from food processing, electronics manufacturing, medical equipment manufacturing, IT and BT, to space technology, aviation, defence and precision engineering. To facilitate such industries further, we have brought in comprehensive legal and administrative changes, so that investors will have a more pleasant experience and investments will remain extra secure.

An elaborate electronic platform called K-SWIFT delivers 83 Government services online, and does away with the need for visiting Government offices to make investments and set up industries. Major departments involved in issuing industrial licenses are already on board to simplify the processes and remove obstacles faced by investors. Close to 1,800 compliance requirements have been already reduced in the State, making it easier for investors and industries. Our Single Window Clearance Board has cleared investments worth more than 4 billion US Dollars in the last two years alone.

All MSME investments are on automated route. Investments upto Rs. 50 crore that are not in areas under the Red Category as classified by the State Pollution Control Board, are cleared automatically. An acknowledgement certificate is issued, whereby exemption is granted

from all kinds of approvals for the first three years. This has resulted in a large number of MSMEs getting established in the State. Around 69,000 MSMEs have been established in Kerala over the last four years. Another 18,000 odd MSMEs were issued automated approvals till January 2022. Over 50% of the registered MSMEs in the State have been established in the last five years. Investments worth more than Rs. 50 Crore are issued permits in a brief span of time.

To streamline inspections in industries we have put in place a Centralised Inspection System (K-CIS) where in industrial units are classified into low, medium and high risk categories and inspections are automatically scheduled based on the risk category. This automated system has done away with even the remotest possibility of error that may occur due to the subjective mental make-up of the officials concerned. These are pointers to the investor friendly atmosphere that exists in Kerala today.

Kerala, with its geographical uniqueness, is fast becoming a logistics hub in South India. With four international airports, we are already a logistics hub for exports to the Middle East and some African countries. High density of rail and road networks enables the seamless movement of cargo and people in Kerala. The inland waterways, being developed from Kasargode in the North to Thiruvananthapuram in the South, will be a game changer for cargo movement within the State. This along with the 17 minor ports will provide good connectivity for cargo movement.

Therefore, the State has renewed focus on the development of the logistics sector and has

prepared a State level logistics action plan for advancing its competitiveness. Various projects are planned to focus on multiple aspects – export and import, multiple modes of transport, and the futuristic trends that would drive logistics demand. The State Government is proposing to establish Logistic Parks with warehouse facilities to bring the distribution of consumer goods closer to the consumption points. Besides, cryogenic warehouses are being planned in Ernakulam district, which will facilitate the large scale export of sea food from Kerala. The two major food parks in Kerala already have 100% land utilisation. Our new and simplified land allotment rules not only address the issue of high land cost, but also bring flexibility in the payment of land lease charges to Government entities.

Efficient transportation is a pre-requisite for industrial development. Through K-Rail's Silverline project we are setting up a Semi High Speed Rail Line over a stretch of 530.45 km from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasargode. It will change the face of consumer transportation in Kerala by leaps and bounds. Kerala is also making concerted efforts in expanding Kochi Metro, Water Metro, Inland Waterways and the Kochi International Ship Maintenance Facility. Minor ports at Azheekkal, Bypore, Ponnani and Kodungalur are being upgraded. Over the years, Kerala has invested heavily in connectivity, communication networks, skill development and infrastructure, giving the State an intrinsic advantage for growth in industry.

We have fast-tracked the development of the Kochi-Bangalore Industrial Corridor.



^ Kerala startup mission

As part of it 1,800 acres are being acquired for developing Integrated Manufacturing Clusters. The first node at Palakkad for manufacturing and the second node at Ernakulam for the development of a Global Industrial Finance and Trade City – GIFT City, is already in progress. This industrial corridor project will facilitate manufacturing, agro processing and export-oriented units. It emulates a sustainable approach comprising 'plug & play' infrastructure and ICT enabled utilities. The Industrial Park led investments have proved to be a successful model and this has encouraged the Government to acquire more land for Industrial Parks. We are in the process of acquiring another 5,500 acres of land in Kannur for an integrated Industrial Park. Our Natural Gas Pipeline is now fully operational covering eight districts, from Ernakulam to Kasargode. We have reduced the VAT on CNG from 14.5% to 5% and made it cheaper. Therefore, industries can now readily utilise clean energy at an affordable cost in Kerala. A gas pipeline extending from Kochi to Palakkad will provide industrial units in Ernakulam, Thrissur and Palakkad with clean energy.

The State Government has already mandated the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) to act as the nodal agency to scrutinise, approve and fund major infrastructure projects. Our target is Rs. 60,000 crore worth of projects over the next 5 years, in sectors such as transport, water, sanitation, energy, social and commercial infrastructure, IT and electronic industry. Between 2016 and 2021, projects to the tune of Rs. 62,500 core were already taken up. The changes thus brought about in the infrastructure landscape of the State have generated significant interest from investors.

We have also embarked on an ambitious project to build a statewide optical fiber network – Kerala Fiber Optic Network (KFON), with a vision to 'transform Kerala into an intelligent, innovative and inclusive society' paving the way for Keralites to have access to a quality digital life. All offices and homes in the State are being connected with broadband internet, at low cost or for free. We have already placed more than 610 Government services online and made life easier for our citizens.

The holistic approach adopted by the Government of Kerala combining industrial development with sustainable development practices is



facilitating the transformation of the state to a preferred investment destination. The top reasons for the same are:

- An ever-growing economy with higher purchasing power parity
- Liberalised and automated industrial licensing
- Strengthening industrial infrastructure through dedicated Industrial Parks
- Enacting new legislations to ease the process of establishing industries
- Emerging logistics hub for the Middle East
- Vibrant innovation eco-system
- Better quality of living with clean water and air

One of the pre-requisites for any industry is the availability of human resources, and Kerala has an abundance of educated youth who are skilled and can carry out knowledge-based high-tech jobs efficiently. The combination of top-notch schools and well-educated citizens makes Kerala an ideal location for businesses. With the service sector's sizeable contribution to the State's GDP, Kerala has immense opportunities in areas such as life sciences, electronics, information technology and bio-technology. Industrial units designed on value chain creation are best suited for the State. Industries where there is a need for highly skilled persons such as defence and aviation are also ideal for the State. In addition, cost of living is relatively low in Kerala, compared to other parts of India.

The Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council (K-DISC) created to continue Kerala's tradition of innovation and excellence in education, is an advisory body that provides strategic guidance to the Government of Kerala on matters related to education policy and planning. Through K-DISC and the Kerala Knowledge-Economy mission (KKEM) we aim to provide employment to the educated by transforming Kerala rapidly into a knowledge economy. Such a society will produce, consume and transact knowledge for its own social and economic development. Utilising the Kerala Knowledge-

Economy Mission we target to provide gainful employment to 20 lakh people over the next five years in various sectors and job verticals.

We are focusing on the 'Ease of Living' of our citizens given the State's availability of good air, water, healthcare and education, along with 'Ease of Doing Business' for investors and industries through an environmental, social, and governance (ESG) focused approach. We strive to provide maximum support to investors and are making concerted efforts to bridge gaps between industry and Government. The Government of Kerala looks forward to working together with industry in the true spirit of collaboration and partnership.

A calm and peaceful atmosphere is essential for industrial growth. In that regard Kerala is best suited for industry as we have the best law and order situation in the country. Kerala is poised to become a destination for industries that manufacture and add value in niche areas. Accordingly, we have declared 2022 as the 'Year of Entrepreneurs', so that investors can be facilitated. Come, invest in Kerala, and be a part of our success story. ■



^ Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal presents the 2022-23 budget in the Assembly



Dr. Shaijumon C S
Economist

Reforms for Building a Knowledge Economy for Kerala

The new budget of Kerala government presented by Finance Minister K N Balagopal for the financial year 2022-23 has focused majorly on 'Third Generation Reforms' to address various structural problems of the economy.

The budget has prepared based on the concept of sustainable development and social justice by ensuring environmental conservation. At the same time, the government is facing a severe financial crisis in the form of drastic reduction of revenue share from central government, decline in revenue receipts due to COVID 19 and increase in committed expenditure. But the budget speech of Finance Minister has proved the commitment of government by showing the intent of taking the Kerala economy to its next level of growth and development through a futuristic approach of policies and programs announced. The budget proclaimed



that the long-term objective of the government is to raise the standard of living of the people of Kerala to the level of a developed middle-income countries over the next quarter to a century. This can be achieved even well before the targeted period because of the favorable conditions of Kerala State like the land blessed with nature's bounty, internationally competent human resources and the infinite possibilities of knowledge economic activities. Finance Minister has attempted to present a new developmental vision which integrates knowledge and production to achieve the status of a very advanced developed state of India. The budget aims to transform Kerala economy into a knowledge-based economy and proposed radical changes in Higher Education sector of Kerala. Knowledge economy needs to be strengthened through

modern and high-quality higher education for increasing the value-added production and thereby the enhanced domestic income of the State. The budget has given special emphasis for Startups, innovation, incubation, modern courses, post-doctoral fellowships, construction of international hostels and setting up of mini-industrial units near colleges. Budget proposed to establish skill parks in all districts with modern facilities and offering skill courses in colleges.

New institutions announced

1. Medical Tech Innovation Park - An amount of ₹100 crore is provided through KIIFB for setting up Medical Tech Innovation Park at Thiruvananthapuram
2. Kerala Genome Data Centre – The Budget has allocated ₹50 crore setting up of a Kerala GenomeData Centre' (KGDC) in line with international models like 'UK Biobank' to generate, curate and publish Genomic Data related to medical, agricultural and livestock sectors.
3. Centre of Excellence for Microbiomes - ₹5 crore for the initial expenses of CEM
4. Centre of Excellence in Nutraceuticals - An expert committee will be formed to prepare a blue print for this nutraceutical project in Kerala.
5. India Innovation Centre for Graphene - It will be developed as a Centre of Knowledge conducting experimental researches on the new technology of Graphene
6. Bio-tech incubation centre at life science park

Transformation to Knowledge economy

Knowledge economy is a system of economic activities are based on intellectual capital and the significant component of value in the economy will generate through knowledge. Kerala Budget 2022-23 aims to make the State into a knowledge hub of the world. The budget announcements of four science parks, 14 skill parks, work-near-home projects for IT professionals, IT corridors along south-north national highway, 20 micro-IT parks, startups and incubation centres, special new and modern courses in universities, translational research centres etc are expected give a strong base for building knowledge capital in Kerala. 5G revolution through K-FON backbone infrastructure will give the necessary fillip to knowledge capital of the State. The important focus of Budget 2022 is the announcement of various policies in creation of knowledge capital in agriculture and industrial sectors. This approach will improve value addition in production sectors and transform Kerala's agriculture and industrial sectors.

Rejuvenating the agriculture sector

Policies announced for agriculture sector was concentrated more on connecting knowledge economy to the sector by giving emphasis on value addition, change of approach from crop centric to farm centric, reducing price and climate volatility. Rs 500 crore was allotted for rubber subsidy and Rs 73 crore for coconut promotion. The budget also allocated Rs 100 crore for micro-irrigation projects. Seven Agri-Tech centres are to be set up in the state at the cost of Rs175 crore, and the government would spend Rs 20 crore for a PPP model agriculture marketing company. The budget was also emphasizing to establish a seamless integration of primary and secondary sectors by encouraging

more startups, innovation and incubation in agriculture sector. Value added agricultural mission with a focus to productivity, inputs, agri-technology, training, marketing and finance, will be constituted for fulfilling the aim of increasing the state's domestic production by producing value added products from agricultural resources. New crops will include in the definition of plantation crops. Greater thrust is also given to Khadi and Village industries, Handloom and Power Loom industries.

Industrial sector with new vision

Kerala is to be transformed into an ecofriendly, productive and investment friendly destination for industrial development. Thereby it is aimed to create new employment opportunities and to ensure sustainable economic growth of the state. The motto of industrial development in the state is declared as 'Responsible Industry – Responsible Investment'. Budget has given greater thrust to revitalizing traditional industries which are facing headwinds created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Special emphasis has given to coir and cashew industries with higher allocation. Rs 42 crore earmarked for diversifying coir products. Industry status given to plantation sector and this will accelerate the production and productivity of the sector. An amount of Rs 58 crore allocated for cashew sector. Emphasis will be given to Viability Gap Fund to Local Self Institutions for developing Industrial Parks on PPP mode. Budget has proposed various PPP models for different projects including CIAL model food processing park. A marketing company on the model of CIAL with a capital of Rs 100 crore to market the value-added products

Environment friendly Kerala

Kerala is one of the locations where the adversities of global warming and climate change affect the most. The Budget said the state aims at net-zero carbon emission by 2050, thereby becoming a role model for the nation. Interest subsidy will be given to loans availed by consumers for installing solar panels in their houses in Kerala. Projects proposed for cleaning and deepening various rivers and lakes of the State. The scope of re-use of waste materials in building construction and highways should also be explored. Re-use materials for furniture etc. The Budget said the state aims at net-zero carbon emission by 2050, thereby becoming a role model for the nation. A scheme titled SuchithwaSagaram would be launched to remove plastic waste from the sea and water bodies. A major highlight of the new tax proposals is that the green tax imposed on old vehicles (above 15 years) has been increased by 50 per cent. In addition, a green tax will also be levied on diesel vehicles. From 2023-24 a document named

'Environment Budget' depicting the environment related expenses will be presented.

Rural Development, employment generation and Poverty eradication

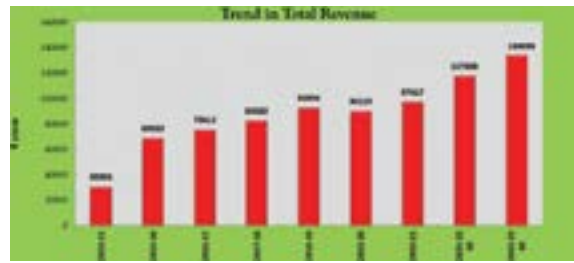
The total outlay for rural development sector is ₹6096.30 crore which is ₹130 crore more than the previous year's allocation. An amount of ₹260 crore is set apart for various activities of Kudumbasree. Budget proposed employment to two lakhs individuals through various employment generation schemes. Employment to 8 lakh youths in the next 5 years by imparting them with necessary job-oriented skill training with the co-operation of Local Self Government under 'NaipunyaKeralam' project. Sustainable product distribution chain will be established for finding markets for Kudumbasree products. An amount of Rs 2,000 crore has been set aside for surviving the threat of inflation and ensuring food security. Rs 500 crore was allotted for rubber subsidy and Rs 73 crore for coconut promotion. The budget also allocated Rs 100 crore for micro-irrigation projects. Seven Agri-Tech centres are to be set up in the state at the cost of Rs 175 crore. The budget also allotted Rs 100 crore for the first phase of extreme-poverty eradication to support 64000 families. Rs 735 crore was set aside for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The budget also allocated Rs 5 crore to the Rainbow welfare scheme for the transgender people in the state. The budget allotted - Rs 260 crore for Kudumbasree, Rs 33 crore for Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). Two hundred twelve crore days of work would be created in the state under the MGNREGA scheme this year, the FM said in his speech. Rs 100 crore was allotted for coastal protection and Rs 10 crore for setting up cold chain centres in the fisheries sector. The second Kuttanad package also received an allocation of Rs 140 crore.

Renewed tourism models

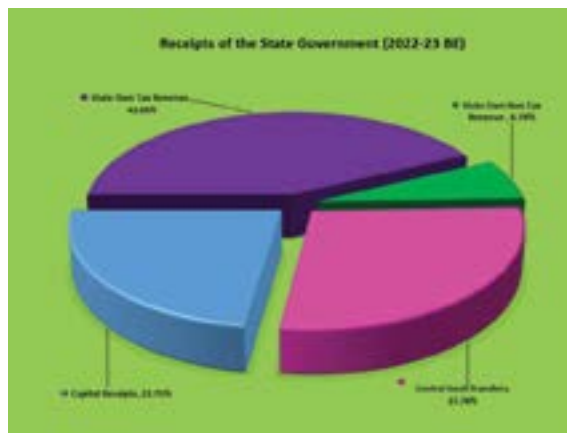
The tourism sector is looking at a major phase change with the presentation of the new budget. 25 eco-friendly tourist hubs will be introduced in the state within 5 years. Rs 10 crore will be allotted for the development of the Eco-Tourism sector. Special projects will be implemented in Kochi to promote more tourists. Rs 180 crore will be allotted for Kochi Water Metro. Rs 10 crore will be allotted for Kochi RO-RO services. An amount of ₹132.14 crore is earmarked for the schemes like 'One Panchayath – One Destination'. Proposed to strengthen the Pilgrim tourism circuits. Villages having rich cultural heritage and where people engaging in manufacturing of traditional craft items will be declared as 'Heritage Villages'. Funds have also been allocated to promote beach tourism and cruise

tourism and to set up airstrips in the hilly districts of Idukki and Wayanad.

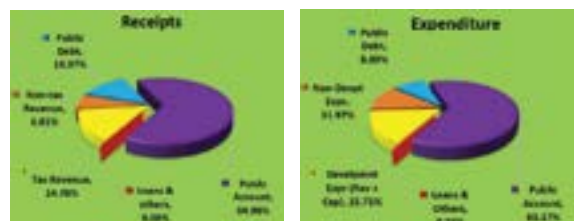
The size of the budget presented was Rs 1,73,588 crores, which is about Rs 11,555 crores extra expenditure when compared to BE 2021-22. The Budget expects Rs 39,117 crores as fiscal deficit for 2022-23, which is about 3.91% of GDP. Finance Minister expects a robust economic growth in the upcoming financial year and which in turn improves the tax and non-tax revenue of the government. When compared to BE 2021-22, the budget expects an increase in share of central taxes worth Rs 5,000 crore extra in BE 2022-23. In this budget also, government is heavily dependent on KIIFB funding. All the new projects announced would be funding by off-budget source KIIFB. The budget expects only Rs 630 crores as additional revenue mobilization. Finance minister has missed the opportunity for mobilizing additional tax and not tax revenue resources for reducing the debt burden of government through large, committed expenditures. The government has shown the courage of spending more when its revenue sources are reduced, at the time the economy is largely in need of public expenditure for boosting demand conditions. ■



Receipts of the Government



Overall budgetary position



Debt outstanding





^ P. Rajeeve - Minister for Industries



Aiswarya Thara Bhai
Freelance Journalist

Kerala will be a haven for investors: Industries Minister

Kerala's industrial ecosystem is undergoing massive changes, with new industries being introduced and investors getting more and more opportunities to do business inside the state. In an exclusive interview, P. Rajeeve, Industries Minister of the Government of Kerala, shares with us the latest policies and schemes the government has in store to make Kerala an investor's hub and to promote responsible investment.

What is your vision for Kerala in terms of industries?

Our vision in simple words is responsible investment and responsible industry. The motive is undoubtedly to attract more investments and generate employment. Before framing crystal clear steps to aid business in their endeavours, we have had meetings with organisations, small scale businesses, Kerala management associations, chartered accountants, as well as other stakeholders to understand how the legislative process can be made more lucid. The goal is to have a very transparent and investor friendly environment for industry in Kerala.

Kerala is often considered to be filled with bureaucratic hassle and perceived to be "unfriendly" to business, especially with reference to ease of doing business. Kerala is in the 28th position currently in state ranking for ease of doing business. How do you intend to bring Kerala into the top five ?

A comprehensive research has been conducted to understand what the road blocks are when it comes to ease of doing business. It is true that the licensing system needs some reforms, as some of the provisions and requirements are outdated and not in line with the need of the hour. We can proudly say that change is in order - the last Assembly session passed a new Act, which will allow anybody to start out in an industry with a simplified process. For example, if the investment is above 50 crore rupees, all the licences required to do business will be given as a composite licence within 7 days after submitting the application with all relevant documents.

A rule has been finalised for this provision and an online mechanism will also be provided soon for its seamless functioning.

Now, suppose if the investment is for less than fifty crores, then anybody can kick start an industry without licences for the first three years. Within Six months from the end of this three year grace period, relevant licensing should be done. This is mainly targeted at reviving the MSME sector. There will also be sound grievance redressal mechanisms where all grievances can be submitted before a committee. This committee will ensure that the grievance is cleared within 30days, failing which the concerned officials in charge will have to pay a penalty of Rs. 50/day up to a maximum of 10,000 rupees. This statutory grievance mechanism has the capacity of a civil code, and the power to make sure disciplinary

action it's taken against the concerned department for unnecessary delays.

What are the major challenges our state faces in terms of developing its industry?

In terms of challenges, there are many, especially when you look at it from a legislative perspective. We have to move with a fresh outlook and weed out what is outdated. Like I mentioned, we have constituted a committee to revisit the existing laws and rates to understand which ones are impractical and irrelevant. The committee recently submitted their report, along with their recommendations to simplify the procedures so that we can establish more and more industries within the state.

Secondly, educated unemployment is one serious issue we are facing now. The point is moot- we need more employment, and this can only come in with a thriving industrial sector. The conditions for such an ecosystem is not hard for Kerala. We have high indicators of development, good climate, excellent governance, there is law and order. Clearly we needed an action plan to speed things up. That's why we have several programs in place which have produced exemplary results.

The Meet the Minister program was a milestone for our government in terms of grievance redressal. What are some of the programs that are targeted at entrepreneurs?

The Meet the Minister program has been successfully conducted in 11 districts where ministers and bureaucrats sat together to address grievances immediately, and were able to resolve a lot of issues quickly as well. For entrepreneurs and industrialists, we have Meet the Investor and Meet with Ideas programs. Meet the Investor program aims at investments over 100 crores, ministers and IAS officers will sit together, where the investors can submit their projects and request any help,





clarification and feedback from the gov't side. If both sides are in tandem, a nodal officer will be allotted to handhold the project.

The Meet with Ideas is primarily targeted at start-ups, in the manufacturing sector, IT and agricultural industry. By these initiatives, we can identify new opportunities and attract more investments into the state, a more ESG approach I would say. Other challenges we have are that of land scarcity, and we cannot tolerate a polluted industry. We have to keep our state pristine and make sure it is a sustainable industry that we facilitate.

2022-23 has been declared as the Year for Enterprises, where the tagline is Youth Investment- Our Pride. Our goal is to have 1 lakh enterprises newly established in the state this year. We are on the move to hire 1150 interns, who are MBA graduates, to be trained and get practical knowledge in the workings of enterprises. This will be implemented at the panchayat level.

How does the government intend to build up an entrepreneurial flair in students and youths?

Higher education is one area where the government is going to bring in a lot of reforms. Academia is irrevocably linked to industry. Some of our courses have to be restructured according to the needs of the industry, because the industry is dependent on academia to produce skill sets that are required for them and our students have to find employment after they are educated. Our goal is to produce a Knowledge Society, which will lead to a Knowledge Economy. Thus knowledge becomes the capital with which we build a sound industrial system.

Our focus areas currently are electronics, pharmaceutical, medical, food processing as well as IT and tourism sectors. 1000 Investor Clubs will be established in schools to raise awareness and nurture the entrepreneurial mindset of our students. KINFRA, KSIDC, SIDCO and other industrial parks and estates will be rebranded to international standards. Industrial clinics will be established where new entrepreneurs who need to be educated about the nuances of the industry will be trained and supported.

Our role is to recognize symptoms and give solutions as far as industry





is concerned. We have Tech Pinnacles at the district level where technology is managed and companies will get remuneration from the government too. It will be a complete transformation, right from modernising processes of traditional industries to maintain efficiency and increase productivity.

What plans have the government formulated to increase productivity within industries?

Our PSUs have to move forward with the motive of profit making and reduce production cost. Now, the difficult and inevitable part of this is that wages should not be reduced when this exercise is carried out. So we have decided to enhance productivity by formulating a master plan for each and every unit we have, which PSUs are supposed to execute within six months. An expert committee has been commissioned to evaluate and analyse these master plans and prepare roadmaps to implement them in a short term, medium-term and long-term time frames. We are expecting the committee's report this month, and are sure this exercise will provide financial and functional autonomy with

accountability to PSUs.

A recruitment board will also be constituted for recruiting workers, right from MD level for PSUs, to ensure quality and transparency as well. A refresher course was recently done by IIM-K for the MDs of PSUs. We will be working closely with apex educational institutions to ensure that our managerial personnel are up to date on the latest trends and methods.

The government has also been very active in promoting women entrepreneurs. What are the opportunities for women starting out as entrepreneurs?

We have several schemes for women entrepreneurs. Mainly, the KSIDC will provide subsidised loans as well as training for those who want to start their own businesses. We also have provisions for transgenders and individuals from marginalised sectors to flourish in the business spectrum. We are also looking at the potential of Kudumbashree in the productive sector and are working on schemes to scale it up.





Giving 'Nava Kerala' a major push through Entrepreneurship Year 22-23

Director of Industries and Commerce Department S Harikishore I.A.S. speaks to *Kerala Calling* about the rolling out of this ambitious project which could change the face of MSME sector in Kerala by creating a favourable atmosphere for enterprise.

One of the remarkable announcements made by the state government as a part of its 'Nava Kerala Mission' (the initiative to create a new Kerala) is the creation of 20 lakh jobs in five years. As a part of this initiative, the financial year 2022-23 will be celebrated as 'Entrepreneurship Year' and a lot of incentives have been announced in Kerala Budget 2022 in this regard. 'My Enterprise, Nation's Pride' is the motto of this programme. With the aim to achieve the set targets of establishing one lakh MSMEs this year, a major campaign at the grassroots

level will kick-start from April this year to promote and support entrepreneurship.

In all the local bodies across the state, one-day classes will be held to give general orientation to all those interested in starting an enterprise. State Industries department will be leading and coordinating this campaign which has two phases including classes for orientation along with subsidy and licence fests in the first phase and the implementation phase by providing incentives like subsidies, low-interest loans and various other aids.



What will be the focus area of the 'Entrepreneurship Year' campaign and apart from the orientation classes how the government will go about attaining the goal of setting up enterprises and creating jobs?

In phase one, all those who are interested in starting an enterprise will be given orientation and skill training in the classes that will be held in all the 941 local bodies and 93 urban local bodies in the state. There will be 50 members in a batch to attend the classes which will start in April 2022. Classes will be on topics like how to get the licence, what are the subsidy schemes to start an enterprise in sectors like production, service and trading. A successful entrepreneur will share his experience during the training. In more than a thousand local bodies there will be two or three batches of aspiring entrepreneurs attending these sessions. In that way, not less than one lakh persons will be given classes in the first phase in April.

The next step will be to provide assistance to a subset of 20,000 or 30,000 persons who will be willing to start an enterprise out of the one lakh who attended the classes held as a part of the campaign.

In what way guidance and technical advice will be provided to those who come forward to start an enterprise?

A lot of preparatory and background work has been done to make the programme a success. We are keen on supporting, guiding and assisting entrepreneurs who become part of the programme. 'Responsible

Industry – Responsible Investment' is our motto. In connection to this scheme, the government will embark on a plan of action which includes nearly 20 different activities.

First and foremost will be the formation of government policy to facilitate and promote entrepreneurship. Kerala State MSME policy is in the pipeline. Private industrial parks will be set up to provide land for entrepreneurs and multi-storey galas will be built for infrastructure with the view to improve the business eco-system and infrastructure.

What will be the role of interns who will be trained and paid by the Industries Department in every local body as a part of the programme?

The interns will assist the entrepreneurs and will create awareness about the programme among the public. They will also facilitate the availing of bank loans and subsidies for entrepreneurs. As many as 1,175 interns will be posted across the state for the tenure of one year. In the months of April and May, the classes and training will be provided and then in the implementation part, interns will be given the task of providing assistance for starting at least 12 enterprises in a month in their panchayat/ local body. Interns will also help in providing loans from cooperative banks for the entrepreneurs. If 12 enterprises can be set up in a month, over a period of 10 months, there will be 120 enterprises. In that way, in 1000 local bodies across the state, a total of more than one lakh enterprises can be set up over a period of one year and we have embarked on such a target-oriented programme.

In what way MSME Clinics will help entrepreneurs?

The MSME clinics will help the entrepreneurs in marketing, matter related to finance and will also provide legal aid. They will also provide advice on export. There will be a panel of experts in as many as 12 different fields to assist the entrepreneurs. For converting micro enterprises to small or medium enterprises, loan schemes will be made available for finding capital and working capital.

PSU under state and central governments will be encouraged to buy MSME products, common facility centres can be set up on the land held by PSUs, more industrial clusters will be set up as a part of MSME Cluster Development Programme of the central government. The state government will also start such clusters. 'Made in Kerala' brand will be launched. The existing B2B portal will be strengthened and besides that, for online marketing, a B2C portal will also be set up.



What is the role of the Industries Department in implementing the programme and in what way other departments will get associated with the programme?

It is not a programme conducted by the Industries Department. However, our department will coordinate the programme with the support of other departments. In the licence, loan and subsidy fests organized as a part of the 'Entrepreneurship Year', arrangements will be made to provide licence to enterprises related to other departments as well. All the government departments will be made part of the campaign to promote entrepreneurship.

How will the centralised data system introduced as a part of the programme function?

There is centralised software in place for monitoring the enterprises started under different departments and their progress. The details of enterprises started by different departments in different local bodies will be entered in the database. The industries department will be an umbrella department coordinating various activities and will provide leadership for the campaign. The interns posted in each local body will be entering the data into the centralised software system.

What are the other notable aspects of the programme?

There will be three special loan schemes with a 4% interest rate. Apart from this, there will be a MSM loan scheme with the same interest rate. The concept called OLOP (One Local Body One Product) is also a part of the programme. Licences will be given through KSWIFT, a portal will be set up for marketing using BECKN Protocol, special support will be given for export promotion and utilization of central government schemes are also part of this programme.

What are the major announcements for the programme in Kerala Budget 2020?

Funds needed for the 'Entrepreneurship Year' have already been allocated in the budget. It is targeted to create one lakh new enterprises by the joint effort of various departments and around 3 to 5 lakh job opportunities can be provided. For this, an amount of ₹120 crore has been earmarked in the budget.

Funds for previous year's budget provision for the Industries sector was ₹1058.38 crore which now stands enhanced to ₹1226.66 crore. An amount of ₹7 crore is provided for 'One Family One Enterprise' Scheme.

Apart from this, an amount of ₹7 crore is provided for Innovation Acceleration Programme. An amount of ₹20 crore is allocated for providing various support to small scale food processing units. As many as ₹11.40 crore is earmarked for financial assistance to upgrade microunits to small units and small units to medium units.

Nano-enterprises are to be promoted in the state. It is planned to provide margin money grant to loan linked projects of such entrepreneurs. Margin Money Grant will be provided for the projects with a working capital up to ₹10 lakh. Priority will be given to differently-abled persons, ex-servicemen and those who belong to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe communities.

An amount of ₹2.25 crore is provided for margin money grant to nano units and ₹1 crore for the interest subvention. An amount of ₹2.30 crore is provided as assistance for export promotion.

It is imperative to start more job parks in the state to create more employment opportunities and present needs can't be materialized by government parks alone. As a solution to this, private industrial parks need to be promoted and an amount of ₹20 crore is earmarked for this in the budget. ■

(Compiled by Nidhin TR, AIO of I&PRD)

Thus speak the entrepreneurs

The Government of Kerala has been pro-active in taking up many initiatives to energise and stimulate the business environment in the State. It has rolled out many policy reforms to clear hurdles for investment and accelerate industrial growth.



With a conducive environment for entrepreneurs to grow and flourish, Kerala is witnessing growth in terms of MSME units' registration. According to the Statistics available with CII, the State has a total of 1.41 Lakh registered live MSME units and out of which 68,000 of them have been registered in the last five years. Just before the pandemic, that is in 2019-20, 13,695 new MSME units were started in Kerala with an investment of ₹1,338.65 crore and generated employment for 46,081 persons.

The Government of Kerala especially in the last 4-5 years has put in dedicated efforts to ease the process of doing business in the State and as a result Kerala's Industrial climate has improved. Initiatives such as dedicated toll-free number for investor to provide information on investment related queries,

Investment Facilitation Centre in KSIDC, Kerala Single Window Interface for Fast and Transparent clearance (KSWIFT) are some of the good initiatives which the previous Government had started. The enactment of "The Kerala Investment Promotion and Facilitation Act, 2018" by amending 7 Acts related to clearances of various Departments and Agencies has helped in bringing in transparency and accountability in the functioning of the administration.

Completion of Gail Pipeline and Edamon - Kochi transmission line project, Formation of Kerala Bank, Formation of Kerala infrastructure investment fund board (KIFB) has been some of the landmark achievements of the LDF Government. Some of the key projects which the Government has announced such as Finance and Trade (GIFT) City will be a game changer in State's infrastructural growth and economic development.

Sreenath Vishnu

Former Chairman CII Kerala, Executive Director Brahmins Foods India Pvt Ltd

The laws put forward by the Kerala government in the recent times are helpful for those who wish to setup and start new enterprises in the state. Investment Promotion and Facilitation Act, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Facilitation Act, KSWIFT portal, centralized inspection system, toll free enquiry, facilitation centre, MSME Clinic, grievance redressal cell, store purchase laws, private industry parks etc are some of the prime interventions and laws framed by the Government to avail hassle-free licence and other facilities. The Government has given major initiatives and efforts in making Kerala an industrial-friendly state. This is the right time to

start a business in Kerala as the State is beginning to observe 'Year of Entrepreneurs'. This is the right time to start new investments and I wish that many new entrepreneurs would join this. Best wishes for the 'Year of Entrepreneurs'.



M. Khalid

State President

Kerala State Small Industries Association (KSSIA)

According to NITI Aayog Report (SDG) 2020-21, Sustainable Development Goals Index, Kerala ranks tops with a score of 75 points. During the past few years Govt. of Kerala and especially Industries Department has come out with far reaching reforms to attract investment in the State.

Some of the remarkable reforms include Kerala Single Window Interface for Fast and Transparent Clearance (KSWIFT), Kerala Investment Promotion and Facilitation Act, 2018, amending the 7 Acts and 10 Rules, Investment Promotion and Facilitation Cells, Invest Kerala Portal, Kerala Micro and Medium Enterprise Facilitation Act, setting up Industrial Clinics, Setting up State and District Grievance Redressal Committees. Kerala is often placed among the top 5 ranks in the India Skills Report 2018.

The Government has taken various steps for elimination of redundant regulations, simplification of clearance procedures, reduction in timelines for clearances, established Standard Operating Procedures. State government has also identified priority sectors as the key drivers of growth and to nourish investment and growth in the Sector.

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), the apex body of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the country has been always supportive to the initiatives of Govt. of Kerala and Industries Department and has partnered with Govt. of Kerala on various initiatives to promote investment in the State and shall continue to extend our whole hearted support and co-operation in this endeavour. State with advantages of abundant skilled labour, excellent industrial infrastructure, connectivity and industry friendly rules and regulations, the State has all the potential to become one of the most sought-after destinations for investments.

Deepak L Aswani

Chairman

FICCI Kerala State Council





Yusuff Ali M.A.

*Chairman & Managing Director
Lulu Group International and Vice-Chairman NORKA Roots.*

Everything is favourable for investing in Kerala

Our Government under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has been taking proactive steps which has consistently attracted investments and generated employment in our State.

The recent UAE visit of the Chief Minister and delegation including the Minister of Industries to showcase the investment opportunities in our State to the world attending Dubai Expo was a highly successful one. The Kerala Pavilion in Dubai Expo presented Kerala's potential and opportunities to global investors. Government of Kerala deserves all praise for its initiatives to showcase Kerala as an investment destination to the whole world.

During the UAE visit, the Chief Minister and delegation had highly successful meetings with the Rulers as well as high-ranking UAE Ministers and the Chairman of the Federation of UAE Chamber of Commerce, Arab Chamber and



It is highly commendable that our Government is positioning Kerala as a favorable destination for industrial investments and encouraging private investments in all sectors.

Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce.
I was also privileged to be a part of these meetings. I can say with conviction that the meetings served its purpose in helping

**I request entrepreneurs and investors to capitalize the opportunities Kerala offers and to invest either as a single investment or as a consortium.
I encourage everyone to become strategic partners in the growth and development of our State.**

to present the changing situations and trends in Kerala which was highly essential. There is no doubt that these proactive steps of our Government will attract investments to our State.

As we all know, one of the necessities to attract investments is the state-of-the-art infrastructure and the State is providing quality infrastructure with benchmark of global standards for attracting Industrial investments. It is highly commendable that our Government is positioning Kerala as a favorable destination for industrial investments and encouraging private investments in all sectors.

I am sure the intervention of the Government in our State's industrial sector and the overall pro-active steps being taken by P. Rajeev, the Minister of Industries, will attract more investments and generate more employment in the coming days.

Also, the ease of doing business by single window clearance was a step for attracting investments both from Non-Resident Indians and other foreign institutions. This was also a thrust for giving more opportunities for our young entrepreneurs who are interested to invest in our State.

The focus of the Government is to make Kerala investment-friendly and to ensure a safe environment for entrepreneurs to invest with confidence.

Kerala is today a state of many opportunities. We have a very investor-friendly Government under the leadership of the Chief Minister. I request entrepreneurs and investors to capitalize the opportunities Kerala offers and to invest either as a single investment or as a consortium. I encourage everyone to become strategic partners in the growth and development of our State. ■



Dr.T.P.Sethumadhavan
 Professor, Transdisciplinary University of
 Health Sciences & Technology, Bengaluru

Changing trends towards innovation and co-operative's resilience

Co-operatives need to consider future Innovations and world of work and need to position their institutions to the global level. There are umpteen numbers of successful co-operatives in the Asia Pacific region which are functioning in tune with the changes in technology, trends in services sector, innovation, entrepreneurship and skill development.

Sustainability of cooperatives assume more significance now a days. In order to sustain, co-operatives are in the process of diversification with the use of technology and business opportunities. Good practices from the region reveals that dairy, agriculture, banking, worker co-operatives, etc. are implementing innovative processes to excel in the market.

Need for innovation in the changing world of work

International labour organization forecasts reveal that by 2040, based on the future innovations, world of work will change. Many of the sectors will become obsolete and new employment opportunities will emerge in unknown technology-based sectors. Digital technologies, automation, health care and skill development, e commerce, e learning, data analytics, augmented reality, machine learning, cyber security, process

automation, food processing and self-service capabilities will exhibit spectacular growth during this period. There are lot of opportunities for co-operatives to offer stakeholder-based market centered programmes in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Co-operatives can make effective collaboration with industries, edutech companies, skill councils and National skill Development Corporation which in turn will pave way for offering short term to medium level courses.

World of work

World of work will exhibit three new normal realities which includes working from home with increased productivity, increasing automation and change in policy framework towards the new normal situation. Upskilling and reskilling will be the success mantras for career and productivity enhancement in the new year. Innovation and Entrepreneurship will create lot of new job opportunities. Involvement of women in entrepreneurship development programmes will be on the rise. Co-operatives can successfully associate with skilling, start-ups, knowledge and innovation system so as to develop centres of excellences or platform-based model.

Agriculture and food security

Agriculture including livestock and poultry are the backbone of rural economy in India. Basic challenges include whether we are able to link Indian farmers with markets around the world? How to convert COVID 19 impact to explore the opportunities? Agriculture co-operatives can effectively network agriculture, agribusiness and food processing sector in rural areas to increase production, productivity and value addition of agriculture

produce. Co-operatives can think of developing platform co-operatives to address different stakeholders including students, entrepreneurs, unemployed youth, farmers, women, workers, etc. which is the new emerging model in co-operative sector across the world.

ULCCS promotes innovation and entrepreneurship through technology and future skills

At a time when services sector supersedes the agriculture and industry sectors across the world, the 96-year-old Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS), a worker Co-operative based at Kerala, India had successfully diversified in to potential sectors based on co-operative innovation and entrepreneurship. ULCCS explored new economic paradigms through digital transformation and new business models. This ICA member co-operative diversified from construction and infrastructure to Information technology, IT enabled services, Tourism, Education, Skill development and agribusiness. Taking in to account the growth of services sector which creates 68 percent of employment opportunities in India, ULCCS established an IT company called UL Technology solutions and established UL Cyber Park. Increasing unemployment among the educated youth motivated the worker co-operative to launch UL education to give more thrust to education and skill development. The basic objective of the project is to create a skilled workforce in tune with future of work. ULCCS established skilling institutions to bridge the technical, domain and communication skills among the educated youth in the state of Kerala. This paved way for getting technical, supervisory and managerial positions for matriculates, diploma/technical certificate holders and graduates respectively. Sectors identified for skilling include construction, infrastructure, information technology, entrepreneurship, hospitality, management, urban planning, automation, IT enabled services, manufacturing, housekeeping, building information modelling, quality control, facility management and data analytics.

Taking in to account the advances in digitalization, ULCCS is giving more thrust to develop appropriate solutions for banking, finance, insurance, services and other IT industries through promoting digital technologies including automation, machine learning, deep learning, internet of things, block chain technology, cyber security, Geographic information system, data analytics and data management. Along with banking algorithms ULCCS is implementing cyber security projects to secure digital security system of financial institutions. Entire Kerala legislative assembly proceedings were converted in to online digital platform through ULCCS's projects.

COVID 19 created lot of disruptions in various sectors including education and skill development across the World. In order to comply with COVID protocols, skilling institutions are offering online courses through appropriate digital platforms. Technology institutions and Universities within the country and abroad are collaborating with this project. ULCCS is conducting series of webinars to create awareness among the members, workers and students on potential topics based on customized approach. ULCCS is implementing an academic project on learning and empowerment in schools. 40 interventions were identified to improve logical, analytical, numerical, linguistic, creative, communication, digital and future technology skills of the students. ULCCS's intervention in agriculture is to promote entrepreneurship in agriculture, dairying, poultry production and fisheries along with market intervention and livelihood support for the producers. ■



^ The mellifluous presence of Bamboo in the music industry

On a mission to create Bamboo revolution

Gone are the days of limiting bamboo to winnowing baskets, rolling blinds and posts for fencing. The present-day bamboo artisans will enthral you with a wide array of products from handcrafted hanging bamboo lanterns to furniture made using bamboo and glass.



Suraj S.
Chief Executive Officer,
Kerala State Bamboo Mission

The State Bamboo Mission is in an endeavour to explore the possibilities of making bamboo products an integral part of our day-to-day life and to break new paths by adding more value and aesthetics into its products to match the requirements of our times.



The state government has firmly taken up this cause of enhancing the traditional bamboo products and their marketing keeping in mind the changes it could affect to uplift the lives of tribals and other communities who have been into making a wide range of bamboo products.

A Bamboo Supply Chain is also set up by State Bamboo Mission in association with the Kerala State Bamboo Corporation to provide processed bamboo to artisans, distribution of necessary tools and related equipment to the self-help groups of artisans, schemes to promote bamboo breeding.

Treated and designed bamboo products could do wonders to the interior of your homes and offices. Magical could be the use of different bamboo varieties in landscaping.

Apart from these newly-found models of entrepreneurship in the arena, bamboo, which is one of the fastest-growing plants on our planet, has an important societal and environmental role to play in terms of development, livelihood and poverty eradication. The state government has firmly taken up this cause of enhancing the traditional bamboo products and their marketing keeping in mind the changes it could affect to uplift the lives of tribals and other communities who have been into making a wide range of bamboo products.

With its multiple uses and high value in a range of products aimed at national and international markets, there is great potential for value-adding operations and many different entry points for development initiatives.

Go green with bamboo!

'Green Gold', as bamboo is popularly known, it has a national and international role to play in addressing environmental issues. The Bamboo sector in India should be strengthened, to increase the resilience of livelihoods and ecosystems against the adverse effects of human activity and climate change.

To revive the bamboo sector, one of the traditional rural industries in Kerala, and to enhance the living standards of the craftsmen and entrepreneurs working in this field, the State Bamboo Mission in Kerala was established in 2003 under the Department of Industries, to accelerate the entrepreneurial process and innovation in the bamboo and allied sectors. The State Bamboo Mission functions at the Kerala Bureau of Industrial Promotion (KBIP) in Thiruvananthapuram.

The main activities of the Mission are to provide basic training and technical assistance for making bamboo handicrafts, adequate marketing support for participating in National & International Trade Fairs & Exhibitions and opportunities given to the bamboo artisan community to demonstrate their skills and product range, to encourage the craftsmen in need,



to promote the use of bamboo products, to promote entrepreneurship in the bamboo-related sector, to organise the promotional events specifically for bamboo, like 'Kerala Bamboo Fest' conducted annually by the Mission.

The Kerala State Bamboo Mission is also the Bamboo Development Agency for the implementation of various projects in Kerala funded by the National Bamboo Mission under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare of the Government of India.

The State Bamboo Mission is developing and implementing various projects in association with institutes like National Institute of Design, Bangalore, Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Thrissur, Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Scheme, Thiruvananthapuram, Social Forestry, Department of Forest & Wildlife, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Forest Development Corporation, Kottayam and Kerala State Bamboo Mission, Angamaly.

A Bamboo Innovation Centre is set up at Angamaly by State Bamboo Mission for providing training to bamboo artisans/craftsmen. Training and skill upgradation programmes are regularly organised for artisans/craftsmen to introduce innovative products in association with various institutes like the National Institute of Design (NID), Bangalore and Ahmedabad, Centre for Indian Bamboo Resources & Technology (CIBART), Gujarat, Bamboo & Cane



Development Institute (BCDI), Agartala, etc and the trainees who have received the said training as Master Trainers are providing training to other artisans/craftsmen in various training programmes organised by the Mission.

A Bamboo Supply Chain is also set up by State Bamboo Mission in association with the Kerala State Bamboo Corporation to provide processed bamboo to artisans, distribution of necessary tools and related equipment to the self-help groups of artisans, schemes to promote bamboo breeding. The State Bamboo Mission facilitates the participation of bamboo artisans from across the State at various National & International events to enhance the marketing of products of bamboo artisans/craftsmen, entrepreneurs, NGOs and SHGs in the State and also an exclusive website (www.keralabamboomission.org) that provides all the information required for bamboo artisans/craftsmen in Kerala.

By these, the Mission intends to secure the foundation of a sustainable bamboo-based economy providing livelihood and economic security to artisans/craftsmen, planters and entrepreneurs in the bamboo sector through a broad-based association linking Government, NGOs, SHGs, and Local Bodies. All its activities are being anchored by the three cardinal principles of 'People', 'Employment' and 'Income Generation'. ■





Industries Minister P. Rajeev with KKVIB Vice Chairman P. Jayarajan



Dr.K.A.Ratheesh
Secretary, Khadi & Village Industries

A new facelift for Khadi & Village Industries

In the post-pandemic scenario, the Kerala Khadi and Village Industries Board (KKVIB) is about to generate maximum employment opportunities with minimum investment

The KKVIB is a constitutional statutory body instituted as per Act 9 of 1957, with the commitment of organization, regulation, development, and promotion of khadi products and Village Industries in Kerala. KKVIB came into being on August 01, 1957. The Board reflects the Gandhian economic philosophy and helps in the progress of villages where 75% of the Indian population dwells. The KKVIB has embodied several Khadi spinning and weaving units functioning successfully across the state and providing

employment opportunities to hundreds of men and women. The activities initiated by KKVIB reflect the silent revolution in building up a strong and self-reliant rural community.

The Khadi and Village Industries operate with a mission to promote and establish eco-friendly manufacturing processes. KKVIB promotes Village Industries through self-employment programmes like 'Ente Gramam' and 'PMEGP' programme. The KKVIB indulges in training potential entrepreneurs, initiating various schemes to revive the wrecked firms and providing financial assistance to amateur firms. KKVIB takes up several programmes and activities. The Board implements these programmes through co-operative, registered institutions, individuals and departmental units by imparting/availing assistance from the Government of Kerala, Khadi Commission and Nationalised Banks. It mainly engages in two activities. The first is the production and marketing of Khadi Products through spinning, weaving and marketing units. Khadi handles the spinning and weaving of cotton across 232 spinning centres and 154 weaving centres and it is directly controlled by KKVIB. In total around 12,600 artisans are currently engaged in Khadi production activities in the State and out



It is proposed to start 75 new outlets one in each Taluk with adequate parking facilities and amenities to customers.

oil manufacturing units and many others which will be detailed in the upcoming section.

Kerala Khadi & Village Industries Board have sales outlets throughout Kerala. Different categories of showrooms are:

1. Khadi Grama Soubhagyas – 45 Nos.
These showrooms directly run by KKVIB
2. Mobile Sales Van – 3 nos
3. Khadi Soubhagyas - 15 Nos which are agency bhavans
4. Grama Soubhagyas - 88 Nos which are Sales outlets attached to production centres

Now KKVIB is planning to give continuous employment to its workers and to work as a model employer in the industry. For that Khadi Sales should be improved, Government of Kerala has directed Government employees PSUs and Co-operatives to wear Khadi dresses on Wednesday which have a very good impact. There is a thinking that Khadi dresses are old fashion. To attract a new generation to Khadi, KKVIB has entered into a tie-up with the Institute of Fashion Technology of Kerala for new designs. Designers are provided in the showrooms where customers can give input as they wish and a designer will design dress as per the inputs. Stitching, alteration facilities as per the requirement of the customers. New patterns are being developed by the Designers. Training is given to Sales staff to promote Customer satisfaction. A facelift is given to showrooms. It is proposed to start 75 new outlets one in each Taluk with adequate parking facilities and amenities to customers.

KKVIB have Silk weaving facilities. Pure Silk saris are the highlight of KKVIB. Now using the service of Designers Custom-made Bridal Saris are produced. Wedding wears, special kid wears, etc are being introduced. Khadi Fabric is known as breathing clothes because it is hand spun and handwoven. So it is comfortable during Summer and Winter. Even though Khadi is promoted as a symbol of the Indian National Movement, now it is accepted as organic and eco-friendly globally.

It is the mandate of KKVIB is to promote Village Industries. KKVIB have units producing Honey, Gingelly oil, Bed units, Readymade garments etc.

It is proposed to create 20,000 new employment in Self-employment schemes 'PMEGP' and 'SEGP' in 2022. Thus the vision of KKVIB is to generate maximum employment opportunities with minimum investment observing the principles of self-reliant village articulated by Mahatma Gandhi will be achieved. ■

KKVIB promotes Village Industries through self-employment programmes like 'Ente Gramam' and 'PMEGP' programme.

of this, 11500 artisans are women in the rural sector. Second, Village industries handle the Ready-made garment making units, Honey processing units,



△ Khadi Board Vice Chairman P. Jayarajan with staff



Hema Sreekumar
Freelance Journalist

Coir Industry on the roll

Think Kerala and the first image that comes to anyone's mind is the coconut trees. Along the coastal area and everywhere, tall swaying coconut trees are a delightful sight to anyone. Not just the trees, but no tourist would miss the beauty of the coir industry that was flourishing along the backwater shores.

In 1861, a British Editor, Charles Allen Lawson compared the coir industry in Kerala to cloth manufacturing units set up in the villages of England. Kerala being the land of coconut produces more than five million nuts in the state, but that alone does not make Kerala the largest coir producing State in the country.

The coir industry has seemed to lose the charm it had in the past. In the 1970s, there were around 4 lakh people employed in the coir industry. But, after that there has been a decline in the growth of the coir industry. Five to six years ago, the indigenous coconut fibre production in Kerala was as less as 5% of the total fibre available in the State. Most of the fibres are imported from Tamil Nadu. Considering these factors, Kerala, with the initiatives by the Coir Development Corporation is all geared up to revive the lost glory of the golden fibre.

Second Coir Reorganisation Scheme

A Second Coir Reorganisation Scheme was introduced in 2017, the first being in 1960. This scheme was a part of the 13th five Year Plan (2017 – 2022) and this scheme gave importance to modernising and innovating the coir industries. With regards to its workers, increased wages to the workers in the coir industry and better working conditions were implemented.

The development strategies for Coir Reorganisation are self-sufficiency in coir fibre production, complete mechanisation,



Kerala has become a technical hub for coir geotextile projects

expansion of the usage of coir geo-textiles, product diversification, and implementing modern marketing techniques.

In order to increase the production, around 500 defibrating units (DFU) mills will be installed across the state by the end of 2022, from 50 DFUs in 2015-2016. 1000 Automatic Spinning Machines (ASM), with 50 kg capacity have also been installed in 10 societies – 100 each in one society. Yarn production has increased from 7,800 tonnes in 2015-16 to 22,500 in 2020-21.

The revenue of Coir Corporation has increased to Rs. 162 Crores from Rs. 154 crores.

The government decided to distribute 30,000 E-ratto Coir employees where they can

There is also development in the non-woven innovative coir products. These are the binderless board and composite boards.

work from their homes. This has helped greatly during the COVID times when they could work from home, using these rattans.

During the pandemic time, there was an increase in coir production by 8-9% where 25,000 quintal coir was produced.

Automatic looms are also being set up in the State, where seven looms are already operational. Three more looms are expected to be operational this year. The weaving of coconut is mainly practiced in the Alleppy district, especially in Ambalapuzha and Cherthala.

Kerala has become a technical hub for coir geotextile projects.

“Coir Development Corporation has signed an agreement with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for the use of geotextiles in local self-governments worth Rs. 121 crores in this financial year. Due to COVID and some restrictions on MGNREGS, we could not materialise the target. So, we conducted district level seminars and we sent our staff to every panchayat during February and March – staff from Coir Development Department and Coir Public sector and in their effort, we could achieve a target of Rs. 23 crores,” said V R Vinod IAS, Director, Coir Development.

“The staff has done a commendable job and we are planning to expand this initiative to municipalities and other areas,” he added.

“Geotextiles are applied in railway embankments and landslide-prone areas. We are going to market geotextiles in North and North East India and to invite their ministers and senior officials to Kerala”.

“Even though the coir yarn production has increased, we need more marketing for this. So, we will be focusing on that from April through geotextiles,” he said.



Non-Woven Innovative Coir Products

There is also development in the non-woven innovative coir products. These are the binderless board and composite boards.

Wageningen University and National Coir Research and Management Institute signed an MoU for the development of binderless boards where the university provided technology to produce the boards. Pilot plants will be set up for developing these binderless boards. Desk and benches made using coir composite boards are being supplied to schools.

There is also an increase in coir pith value from 0.50 paise per kg to Rs. 6 per kg. ■



Kerala Handicrafts to thrive as tourism gears up

Handicrafts are always a reflection of the State's culture and tradition. A good artisan is also a silent marketer of the destination through his crafts and he also entices more people to come and visit the place.

Enter a household in Kerala and you are most likely to see one of the things adorning the home – either a Kathakali face, straw picture scenery, sculpture of any Gods or Goddesses, wheel clock, Nettoor Box, or a model of the Kerala Snake Boat. The Kerala women mostly would own or want to own a traditional saree from any of the places- Kuthumpally, Chendamangalam or Kasargood sarees. These are the native and traditional products of the State of Kerala and it invokes a personal connection with the State, the very reason why many people, both domestic and international tourists buy these handicrafts to take home.

Handicrafts are always a reflection of the State's culture and tradition. A good artisan is also a silent marketer of the destination through his crafts and he also entices more people to come and visit the place. Handicrafts will always have a story to tell – about their place of origin, how it is made and how talented and well equipped are the artisans. Many communities and localities thrive on the income they get from these handicrafts, which are linked to tourism, both domestic and international. People are either trained in the art or the art has come down to generations as a hereditary occupation. As there is an inflow of more tourists, the products get more reach. Nature has blessed Kerala with ample natural resources like coconut trees, palm trees, seashells for making eco-friendly products.

In the last two years, Kerala has seen a dip in the inflow of tourists due to the



As tourism gears up, Kerala handicrafts are also expected to pick up its business in the next six months.

COVID pandemic. This has had an adverse impact on the handicrafts industries too. People were left unemployed. But this year, in 2022, the market seems to be slowly reviving.

“Earlier, after the impact of COVID, we had a sale worth Rs. 20,000 to 30,000 per day, but now it has increased to Rs. 2 Lakhs per day,” says K S Anilkumar, Managing Director, Handicrafts Development Corporation of Kerala Ltd.

“The annual turnover per year was Rs. 12 -Rs. 13 Crore in the pre-COVID period which has now reduced to Rs. 4 Crores,” he adds.



The maximum sale of handicrafts happens in Thiruvananthapuram, in Sree Moolam Shashtyabdapurthi Memorial (SMSM) Institute.

Lack of tourism and large-scale events like marriage has greatly impacted the handicrafts sector. Handicrafts are given as a token of love for weddings and other functions. Since organizing events were limited to a small circle, it indirectly affected the industry too.

Revival of Handicrafts Sector

Preliminary works are underway for reviving this business. Virtual exhibitions are being conducted and softwares also being developed for conducting online business. Both the State Government and Central Government are assisting to develop E-Commerce business for handicrafts. The offices are also turning digital with the inventories being available online. More transparency is expected to facilitate more sales.

“Since handicrafts are not a fast-moving commodity and not a necessary item for daily livelihood, many products became unused during the last two years. The Handicrafts Corporation has bought those items from the artisans for Rs. 50 Lakhs. These artisans were left unemployed during the pandemic and this amount will help them buy raw materials,” adds the MD.

He says how the artisans are confident in reviving the lost business and coming to the forefront. “The best artisans have enrolled with us. The unique products they make are not available in the open market. It will be either of low quality or duplicate ones. So, we have confidence in them.” notes Anilkumar.

Nettur Box or Netturpetti? (the jewel box of women in the high-class traditional Kerala family), Aranmula Kannadi (Aranmula Metal mirror), Kathakali head, and traditional sculptors including that of Gods and Goddesses are the most sought after handicrafts. Aranmula Kannadi has also got Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

The maximum sale of handicrafts happens in Thiruvananthapuram, in Sree Moolam Shashtyabdapurthi Memorial (SMSM) Institute. It gets revenue of Rs. 1 lakh per day, which was Rs. 5 lakh before the covid pandemic. As domestic tourism picks up, people will buy more handicrafts to be gifted as souvenirs for their dear and near ones, both on the personal and professional front. Recently, a group of Russian tourists had arrived in the Arts and Crafts Village in Kovalam. Similarly, more international tourists are expected to visit Kerala in the coming months.

There is a total of 19 Kairali showrooms – the Government Emporia for authentic Kerala Crafts, across India. In Kerala, there are nine showrooms in districts where there are a maximum number of tourists inflow. These districts are Kannur, Kozhikode, Ernakulam, Alleppy and Thiruvananthapuram.

As tourism gears up, Kerala handicrafts are also expected to pick up its business in the next six months. ■





Santhosh Koshy Thomas
Managing Director, KINFRA

KINFRA Making giant strides

Kerala State Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (KINFRA) has posted significant milestones in the infrastructure sector in Kerala in 2021-22.

The 2021-22 financial year witnessed a leap in KINFRA's achievements in various segments of its operations. Land allotments made by KINFRA during the year 2021-22, till January, witnessed the creation of around 20,900 jobs and attracted private investment to the tune of Rs 1522 crore.

A comparison of land allotments made during the last five years, and also the investments and employment generation statistics with that achieved during 2021-22 (till January) alone would make it clear that the growth during the single year was proportionate with the achievements made in the last five years.

During the past five-year period, land allotments stood at 527.21 acres, while 128.82 acres were allotted in the year 2021-22 (till January 2022) alone. While the allotment of multi-storey factory buildings stood at 680,619.06 sq ft over the past five years, 3,45,800.42 sq ft were allotted in 2021-22 until January. During the past 5-year period, there were 540.00 units, 17,228.00 jobs, an investment of Rs. 1731.53 crore, while the 2021-22 year alone recorded 62 units, 20888 jobs, and investment of Rs. 1522.1 crore.

In the current financial year, KINFRA was able to perform better financially



exchequer every year by way of this industrial corridor.

Continuing projects

Into its 30th year, KINFRA is also going ahead with the progress achieved concerning various continuing projects. An amount of Rs 300 crore is expected to be spent on basic infrastructure development for the Petrochemical Park to be set up by KINFRA on 481 acres at Kochi Ambalamugal on a total investment of Rs 1200 crore. The project, which has received environmental clearance from the Union Ministry of Environment, has prompted KINFRA to already allot 230 acres of land to 35 investors. Of these, 170 acres have been provided by leading petrochemicals company BPCL. The projects are expected to generate close to 11,000 jobs and an investment of Rs 10,000 crore. The park, for which construction has been taken up for Rs 150

than during the previous years. The year 2021-22 was also a year of significant progress in land acquisition for the Kochi-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor. KINFRA has been handed the responsibility of implementing this special scheme of the Union Government in the State, towards ensuring industrialization and industrial development. Work on the acquisition of 2240 acres of land has been charted in two nodes. Of this, 87% will be acquired by May 2022. An investment of Rs 10,000 crore is expected in the Palakkad node. The project is expected to create 22,000 direct and 80,000 indirect jobs. An investment of Rs 3000 crore is expected through the Gift City-Ernakulam node. About 10,000 direct and 20,000 indirect jobs are expected to be generated here. It would possible to add Rs 600 crore to the state

crore, will be fully operational by October 2024.

Further, the Idukki Spices Park, which is currently in progress, is a project under the MSME-CDP scheme of the Union MSME Ministry. The first phase of the Spices Park at an investment of Rs 12.5 crore is in progress at Muttam in Idukki district. The Union Government will provide a grant of Rs 5 crore for the development of the park in various stages. The project is expected to create about 300 jobs and an investment of Rs 45 crore.

PROJECTS ONGOING

Electronic Manufacturing-Cluster, Kakkanad: Included in the EMC Scheme under the Union Ministry of Electronics and





Information Technology (MeitY), this 66-acre park is being constructed by KINFRA at Kakkanad, Kochi for electronics-related industries. The allotment process has begun, and the land for the park has already been allotted to 7 units. The project is expected to create 11230 jobs and an investment to the tune of Rs 820 crore. The project will be completed by December 2023.

International Exhibition and Convention Centre, Kakknad: KINFRA has lined up the construction of a

permanent exhibition centre in Kochi, especially for the MSME sector. The master plan and other related activities for the project are in progress. It is expected to be completed by October 2023.

KINFRA Small Industries Park, Mattannur: The project is under construction on 127 acres at Mattannur, in Kannur. There are also plans to develop the park as KINFRA's North Zone Office. The allotment process is in progress. The project is expected to create around 200 jobs and an investment of Rs 30 crore.

The project will be completed by September 2023.

Integrated Rice Technology Parks: KINFRA has initiated the process for building two rice parks – one in Palakkad and the other at Alappuzha. The rice parks will come up on 5 acres in Palakkad and on 5.5 acres in Alappuzha. Construction activities are expected to be completed in 24 months, once the acquisition of land is over by March 2023.

Land Bank, Kannur: About 5,000 acres of land has been





acquired for industrial purposes in Kannur. The land will be acquired in 11 land parcels. The project is in various stages of acquisition.

Since its inception in 1993, KINFRA has been instrumental in pushing Kerala's industrial growth on the path to excellence. All set to make its entry into its thirtieth year of operations, KINFRA has been, all along the way, implementing infrastructure development with a policy towards staying in harmony with nature.

With a focus on the Kerala Government's Ease of Doing Business policy, KINFRA has ensured that it simplifies procedures and makes it easier for investors to start their businesses in the state. In addition, all KINFRA parks work as per a single-window clearance system and have made sure that all aspects related to promoting investment and businesses ride on simplified time-bound procedures, better infrastructure such as transportation, electricity, water and communication facilities. ■

INDUSTRIAL PARKS: PRIDE OF THE STATE

KINFRA has also made giant strides in the manner in which the Industrial Parks are being implemented. The Union Government's Industrial Park Rating System, aimed at the enhancement of infrastructure of industrial parks in the country, has rated as many as five KINFRA parks the best in the South. These include the KINFRA High Tech Park, Kochi; KINFRA Mega Food Park, Palakkad; KINFRA Film & Video Park, Kazhakoottam; KINFRA Small Industries Park, Mazhuvannur; and the KINFRA Integrated Industrial Park, Kanjikode. Leading companies like TCS, Tata Elxsi, V-Guard, Agappe Diagnostics, Hykon, Winwish Technologies, Trans Asian Shipping Co and Jolly Coates have been made allotments in 2021-22.





T.S. Chandran

*Former Deputy Director,
Industries & Commerce Department*

Nano for all

Nano Industries will pave way for more people to enter the enterprise sector and for initiating new ventures. The common man will benefit from this as he can enter the industrial sector without major financial risks. As Nano Industries grow, more investment can be made to expand production.

As part-time and as a hobby

One feature of the Nano venture is that this business can be considered as a part-time business as well as a hobby. Most of our hobbies are ideas that have great business potential and are less competitive. Start-ups based on agricultural-based products, artworks, interior decoration, paintings, garments, food processing enterprises, animal husbandry, nursery culture, farms, costume jewellery, dresses, cosmetics can be started on the basis of being only a hobby. If determined, individuals who have taken up such hobbies can create huge business opportunities through it. Nano initiatives will lead the way for it.

You can start Nano Ventures with a very small investment

- It is easy to find a market based on production
- There won't be many technical problems during the manufacturing process.
- Credit sales are less likely to occur.



Panchayat Licence not required till 5HP

The State government has popularised interest subsidies for various industries. The State government has made interest subsidies for Nano Industries more generous. This benefit is for in-house Nano ventures and those that have been started near the house. The interest on the loan they availed is allowed as a subsidy. This is a scheme that has been implemented since November 2016. The objective of this is to uplift family entrepreneurs who have not received any subsidy benefit from either the Central or State governments. Revising the existing scheme, the government has issued an order on December 3, 2021.

Eligibility Criteria as per the revised order

- Institutions that have a fixed deposit of fewer than 10 lakhs are considered. Investments in real estate and buildings are not taken into account
- Only engines with less than five horsepower are allowed to operate. The benefit is available even if electricity is not required
- Eligibility for manufacturing firms, service firms, and job working firms
- Those who have availed low-interest loans from backward/women/minority/SC and ST Welfare Corporations will not get this benefit
- Nano enterprises that operate without the permission of local self-bodies are eligible
- Those who have borrowed from public sector banks, scheduled banks, and Co-operative banks approved by the RRB Taskforce will be eligible
- For a unit that has started operating availing loans, the interest subsidy is available for the first year, without considering the arrears. Debtors will not receive this benefit for two to three years. In short, this is only available for those, who repay the loans on time

You can apply through a simple procedure

A half-page certificate from a financial institution is the main document to be produced for receiving this benefit. The application can be submitted through the General Manager, District Industrial Centre, or through the offices under him. Online applications cannot be submitted

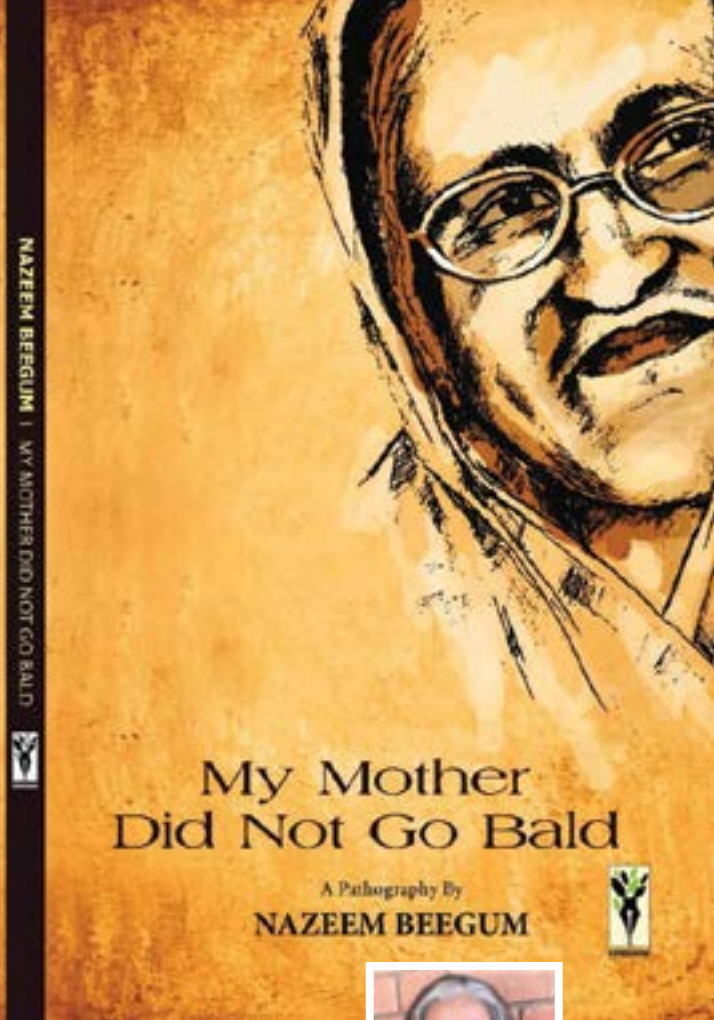
The special feature of this scheme is that a Kudumbashree venture, with a fixed deposit of fewer than ten lakhs and that, has not availed any other subsidy, will benefit from this scheme

Loans up to Rs. 10 Lakhs at 40% subsidy

Since last year, the government has been implementing another scheme with a 40 percent subsidy. The project is called 'Margin Money Grant to Nano Units'. As per this scheme, an entrepreneur can choose any project costing up to Rs. 10 lakhs. The scheme provides an advanced subsidy of up to 40 percent of total scheme cost to women, SC-STs, and youths below 40 years of age. For other applicants, the maximum subsidy is 30 percent of the total scheme cost. It also has the advantage of being received in advance. ■



- Since direct selling is involved, there are more chances of generating better dividends.
- Businesses can be done on a part-time basis or as a hobby.
- It will be environment friendly and will fall under the cottage industries category
- Production costs can be reduced through family groups
- House-wives can easily start as self-employment
- You can enter the employment sector without much tension
- It will be possible to increase production and start new plants depending on the marketing potential
- Since smaller amounts are involved, it will be easier for loans to be sanctioned
- Entrepreneurs, who also work as employees, can deliver great success from Nano industries



A Bystander's Memoir of a Cancer Journey



Suneetha Balakrishnan
Editor, Writer, Translator, Trainer

Review of My Mother Did Not Go Bald by Nazeem Beegum, a veteran journalist.

My Mother Did Not Go Bald" by Nazeem Beegum is a worthy addition to the cancer canon. This is a memoir of pain, by a daughter who was a conscientious caretaker, for half a year, and to her mother terminally affected by cancer.

The book can be labelled variously. At first look, it's a cancer memoir. It's also a pathography. On every page, it's a poignant grief-memoir; a long, sad, perhaps cathartic goodbye offered to a mother by a fond daughter. You could read it as a journey of pain, experiences, and the realisation of a bystander. It's also, most relevantly, a survivor's story.

Personal experiences with cancer have been documented aplenty in recent times. The books that come to mind immediately are some posthumous memoirs. 'When Breath Becomes Air' by Paul Kalanithi, 'The Unwinding of a Miracle' by Julie Yip-Williams,



^ Nazeem Beegum

and 'The Bright Hour' by Nina Riggs; all three books spelling out beautifully what makes a meaningful life when one has limited time. 'The Undying', is by poet Anne Boyer, who survived cancer to write a genre-bending harrowing memoir. The book also spoke on more, like the hypocrisies of the 'pink ribbon culture, and the gendered politics of the illness.

Nearer home the renowned writer Chandramathi's 'Njandukalude Nattil Oruldavela', and the popular actor Innocent's 'Cancer Wardile Chiri' document their own experiences with cancer, and after recovering from the illness. Eminent Oncologist Dr V P Gangadharan's vast medical experiences with

his cancer patients have been collected into the memoir 'Jeevithamenna Albhutham'.

What comes to mind most but is the survivor narrative, 'The Iceberg' by Marion Coutts, recounting more than a cancer patient's last days. It talks about her partner's 18-month journey to death by cancer. It's also the life of the bystander from the perspective of the loved ones of cancer patients, those survivors with innumerable, invisible, multiple and day-to-day needs which they struggle to manage. Nazeem Beegum's book is closest to the latter.

She voyages at first from the pre-cancer days of uncertain health to the first shock in a cancer journey - the moment of diagnosis. Then there is the vacillation between hope and grief, the onset of the stark and hard realities of caretaking and its nitty-gritty, the vacuums in support systems and then the surprising provisions for care.

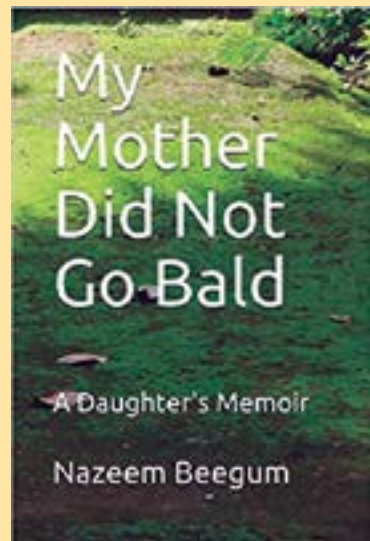
The voice used by the narrator is quaint. It's in the first person but adapts into 21 personas, each of which is a 'bystander'. There is immense and raw pain that comes across to the reader. Especially when the narrator's voice combines the helplessness of a child watching her mother in pain with the bewilderment of an adult struggling to comprehend her fabric of life crumbling around her. One is reminded of Sarah McColl's cancer memoir too. McColl opens 'Joy Enough' quite simply with: "I loved my mother, and she died. Is that a story?"

Nazeem Beegum's memoir is much more than this personal declaration. The journalist in her does not forget to look beyond the obvious even when she reels in pain. She is coping with the angst of the cancer journey of a loved one and juggling several tasks, but she ventures to point to several issues that drag and decelerates the care cycle of the cancer patient. The alienation of the geriatric population in the nuclear family norm, the poor infrastructure and the lack of trained caretakers for terminally-ill patients, the callous and insensitive privatised health care systems, all are etched sharply into the narrative. Nazeem has also reiterated the importance of palliative care for the terminally ill, taking care to bring out the actual meaning of the word palliative. The choice of saying no to invasive treatment in terminal illnesses is something every bystander needs to be aware of.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's 'On Death and Dying' suggests that grief is the method by which we learn to live with the loved one who's dying or dead. 'My Mother Did Not Go Bald' speaks to us in the same lingo.

Nazeem Beegum's 'bystander memoir' sums up this odyssey in an almost spiritual recognition of the human experience in suffering:

"I realise that I was a mere bystander to a whole lot of events throughout her life". ■





^ Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurates the 26th IFFK



A Chandrasekhar
Film Critic

Framing the conflict

The conflict between society and individuals is one of the dearest themes of all creative art forms. Movies also nurture this to a great extent, across the globe. The 26th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) kicked off from March 18 to March 25, 2022, in Thiruvananthapuram showcased the resurgence of the common man in crises like the COVID 19 pandemic and war.

The most outstanding act that makes this festival historic is its decision to institute a Spirit of Cinema Award in addition to the Life Time Achievement Award for which this time to Kurdish Filmmaker Lisa Çalan, who lost both her legs in bombing while she was participating in a political rally. The jury consisting of ace Director Girish Kasaravalli, Roya Sadat, Mania Akbari and Jacques Comet decided the best film in the International Competition section. The NETPAC jury comprised of Rashmi Doraiswamy, Boodie Keerthisena and Bobby Sarma Barua. The FIPRESCI jury consist-ed of Viera Langerova, Ashok Rane and Jihane Bougrine whereas Amrit Ganger, Sunny Joseph and Rekha Deshpande formed the jury to select the winner for FFSI K R Mohan Endowment Award.

Set against so much unrest across the world, the IFFK 2022 highlighted the lives of the conflict-torn countries, in its Framing Conflict Package, it included films from Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Kurdistan, the countries facing severe disruption in peaceful life due to internal conflicts. This section included the Afghan film Drowning in Holy Water, Siddique Burmak's Opium War, the Kurdish film Kilometer Zero, Marooned in Iraq and Maung Sun's debut film Money Has Legs, from Myanmar. Mordan Dar Abe Motahhar or Drowning in Holy Water (2020) directed by Navid Mahmoudi, who migrated to Iraq from Afghanistan, features the emotional crises of two lovers,



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Turkey, Argentina, Azerbaijan, India and Spain. Turkish Film Anatolian Leopard, directed by Emer Cayce, Camila Comes Out to Net, You Resemble Me, directed by Dina Emir, Habitat Strategy, Nathalie Alvarez Mesen's Clara Sola which has won Guldbagges award for best screenplay, Antoneta Kusijanovic's Murina, Dina Amer's You Resemble Me, and Mounia Akl's Costa Brava Lebanon, Tamil movie Pebbles and Malayalam movies like Krishand R K's Aavasa Vyuham and Tara Ramanujan's Nishiddho were featured in the International Competition. Iranian-Australian director Granaz Moussavi's When Pomegranates Howl (2021) charts the life of Hewad, a nine-year-old boy who ekes out a living on the streets of Kabul to support his family. A photojournalist documents the life of this boy, holding a mirror to the lives of children of this war-torn society.

Rona and Hamed, who are planning to immigrate to Europe in search of a better life. Hamed finds it difficult to deal with the offer to convert to Christianity in exchange for quick immigration. The dilemma faced by three pregnant women under different social circumstances portrayed in Sahraa Karimi's Hava, Maryam, Ayesha was one among the three movies under the category of Afghan films. In the Jury Category, we had A Letter to the President (2017), directed by Roya Sadat, the first woman director from Afghanistan cinema in the post-Taliban era. The Golden Globe winner Siddiq Barmak's movie, Opium war was another splendid movie under this category. A special package on Horror movies Shiver Shiver and Sublime Fantasia featuring 7 movies including Tabu and The Face You Deserve too was one of the highlights of IFFK this year. Fourteen films screened under the International Competition from 9 countries including

The films under the World Cinema category reflected a global perspective of social concern among filmmakers. Blerta Basholli's Albanian movie Hive is about a widow's fight against a patriarchal system. Manolo Nieto's Spanish movie The Employer and the Employee discusses the convoluted relationship of people with happiness, freedom and work; Bolat Kalymbetov's Mukagali is a biopic of the Kazakh poet who became the embodiment of the Independence movement whereas and Pé-ter Kerekes' 107 Mothers, depicts real-life stories of motherhood in Ukraine across society. The section also showcased Oscar-nominated, Asghar Farhadi's A Hero, which depicts the protagonist's battle between his needs and his conscience. The story follows the desperate events in the life of Rahim on his two-day break from an ongoing jail term.

Oscar-nominated Drive My Car, The Cannes Film Festival Winners Ripples of Life, Prayers for The Stolen and Nadav Lapid's Ahed's Knee; the Venice Film Festival winner, Sun Children; and Brighton 4th, were screened in this category. The French movie A Tale of Love and Desire revolves around a young man who falls for his classmate and his struggles to reconcile his physical urges with his cultural values. Written and directed by Leyla Bouzid, it is a coming-of-age tale of love and eroticism.

Vignesh P. Sasidharan's Uddarani, Vishnu Narayan's Bannerghatta, Sanu Vargese's Aarkkariyam, Krishnendhu Kalesh's Hawk's Muffin, Atal Krishnan's Women with a Movie Camera were there in the Malayalam Movie Today section. Six films were showcased in the Homage section to honour eight artistes, including Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Dilip Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar; Madampu Kun-jukuttan, P Balachandran and Dennis Joseph. Baagh, a Bengali movie of Sourish Dey, The Deep6 of Madhuja Mukherjee, Amitabha Chatterjee's Kuyasar Majhe, Faraz Ali's Shoebox, Amit-abha Chaterji's Kuyasar Majhe and Bhojpuri director Aravind Pratap's Life is Suffering, Death is Salvation were premiered under the Indian Cinema Now category. ■



△ A scene from the film *Kummatty*



Adarsh Onatt
Film Buff & Critic

Kummatty: Gem of a film

Adarsh Onatt, an ardent film buff and critic, reminisces his IFFK experience with the restored version of the magnum opus of the late film maker G. Aravindan.

Forty-three years ago, was the first time *Kummatty*; a film directed by G Aravindan was released. The film had then a welcoming not an overwhelming response. Then, the slow-moving films hadn't had many fans and viewers.

Soon after the release and few weeks of running in theatres, the film went into oblivion. It's director and his other filmstoo was little known or talked among the corresponding young generation after his untimely demise in 1991. During a time when forgetfulness had taken creep over our memories, The Film Foundation (TFF)'s World Cinema Project, created by director Martin Scorsese, the Cineteca di Bologna, and the Film Heritage Foundation has come out a restored version of *Kummatty*. The film was screened at the 26th International Film Festival of Kerala. Originally planned for two shows, the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy made a screening of the film for a third time. Such was the response from the crowd. The three screenings, to the much surprise of all, were packed and many were seen sitting on the floors to watch the movie on a big screen.

One, who loves Aravindan so much, would wonder and becomes probably emotional to see such a crowd of youngsters filling the theatres. The film, though, was not received in this way when it was screened during the 1980s in Kerala.

The younger people jeered, clapped, and sing along to the folksongs. Many could not hide their excitement of watching the film in theatres. "A rather impossible thing was if the Foundations did not restore this film. Well, this was an exciting experience", said a youngster after



^ G. Aravindan

The Film Foundation (TFF)'s World Cinema Project, created by director Martin Scorsese, the Cineteca di Bologna, and the Film Heritage Foundation has come out a restored version of Kummatty.

the third show of the movie at Kairali theatre. That moment, I thought, ultimately reclaimed the long-forgotten poet-auteur of Malayalam cinema; G Aravindan. For many of them, it was a

The younger people jeered, clapped, and sing along to the folksongs. Many could not hide their excitement of watching the film in theatres. "A rather impossible thing was if the Foundations did not restore this film. Well, this was an exciting experience", said a youngster after the third show of the movie at Kairali theatre.

revelation how tall he is standing in the Indian cinema.

Kummatty; it is titled in English as the Boogeyman, is a fairy tale character who lives a nomadic life. Aravindan has taken the character from the folklore and given a real-life make-over. Kummatty comes every year during the spring season to the village so vast in its landscape and seeped in its greenery. The serene and calm of the village is punctuated by the laughter of the kids playing around. They invoke Kummatty in their daily games and sings often about Kummatty. They antic others pretending to be Kummatty. The adults had in them instilled a sense of fear for Kummatty. They say that Kummatty will harm the kids. But the kids were rather intrigued than scared. They await Kummatty to arrive.

Life as usual goes around and then comes a day in the spring. There appears the Kummatti. Chindan the protagonist of the film tells his friend about the magical skills of Kummatty to disappear in thin air or gift him dates taken from the atmosphere. Chindan was fascinated by Kummatty's affectionate behaviour and all the kids slowly nurtures a friendship with Kummatty.

At the end of the spring, Kummatty leaves the village. But by the time the kids were so close to the Kummatty and they don't want him to leave them. No choice for him but to part ways and to appease the kids he does a magical act turning the kids into different animals. Chindan becomes a dog and his friends turn into various animals. Chindan is chased away by a dog during the act and misses the opportunity to regain his usual form as others, when Kummatty redoes the magical act. Chindan, now a dog, ends up in a family in the city where he gets chained. His life seemed limited and lack of freedom makes him deprived. He was later thrown out by the family because he is a country dog. He returns home. Life becomes sad for him as he misses his friends and the normal life. He awaits Kummatty to come and relieve him.

Kummatty's restoration has become kind enough for the Malayalam cinema and its younger audience. This gem of a film was a distant thing and never would have anyone thought to see it again on the big screen. Shivendra Singh Dungarpur of the Film Heritage Foundation picked Kummatty for the restoration activities. He had done the painstaking effort to restore the film by not compromising the originality of the film. He had even kept the grains and scratches of the film as it is. Kummatty's restoration was indeed a true resurrection to the filmmaker, G Aravindan. I hope, people will talk about him more often than in the yesteryears. ■



Sanil P Thomas
Sports Journalist

Will the Blasters' Show Rejuvenate Kerala Football ?

Be it in Kerala or Hyderabad, the football scene is like that of an ancient Greek city.

The football history talks much more about Hyderabad than Kerala, especially in Indian football's Olympic era. And, when a banner with the legendary Indian coach S. A Rahim's picture was raised in the Fatorda Stadium gallery, Goa it was obvious that football lovers from Hyderabad or even the F C management itself wanted to rekindle the state's football tradition. Rahim coached India in three Olympics and it was under him India



won gold in Asian Games football twice.

Back in Goa, the final result, Hyderabad 4, Kerala 2 after one-all draw in regular time. The extra time didn't make any difference other than a goal-line save or so.

No doubt, it was a spectacular performance by Kerala Blasters who arguably fielded the best team in its history with a no-nonsense coach, Ivan Vukomanovic. Blasters were 9th, 7th and 10th in the previous three editions and had a poor start as ATK Mohun Bagan scored four goals in the opening game. But things improved in due course. Blasters entered the playoff round after five years. Ivan was the 10th head coach in eight years and with the sporting director Karolis Skinkys the combo did wonder. Skinkys in a short span of two years made the team younger with an average age of 22. Football lovers of Kerala gave credit to coach Ivan for the Blasters show.

From Kerala, Sahal Abdul Samad and K P Rahul excelled. Other than this Kerala football fraternity has nothing to be proud of. But Keralites took Blasters as a Kerala team and enjoyed every

moment of the season. The gain is the enthusiasm it generated among football lovers of Kerala. With Malappuram, all set to host the Santosh Trophy National football tournament soon, what is to be seen is whether this spirit will inspire team Kerala state to perform well in the nationals? Further, will the enthusiasm sustain to attract huge crowds?

Kerala Blasters lost the previous two finals they played in 2014 and 16. This time history repeated.

When Blasters beat Jamshedpur FC in the double legged semi-final 2-1(1-0; 1-1) expectations exceeded all limits. JFC bagged league winners shield with 43 points in 20 games. Hyderabad was second scoring 38 points followed by ATK with 37. Blasters had 34 to their credit. In the other semi-final, HFC beat ATK 3-2(3-1;0-1).

The fabulous four of Adrian Luna , Alvaro Vazquez, Jorge Pereyra and Sahal Abdul Samad put Blasters in good stead. But Luna and Sahal got injured. Though the Uruguayan star Luna recuperated, he was not in his usual self in the finals. Blasters' backline also showed good improvement.

But on the other side, HFC scored more goals in season 8 and star striker Bartholomew Ogbeche was the highest goal scorer in the league round with 17. They got more depth in defence and attack.

Hyderabad coach Manuel Marquez showed superb management skills in a crisis. When Rahul took lead for Blasters well against the flow of the game Manuel substituted Sahil Tavera for Souvir Chakraborty which paid off. Sahil equalised with a stunning volley which was rated as one of the best goals scored in this season.

In the shootout, HFC custodian Laksmikant Kattimoni was the hero with three spectacular saves. Blasters goalkeeper Prabhukhan Singh Gill though slipped a bit in the shoot-off, was adjudged the best in the series to win the golden glove.

The final match result was in fact, inconsequential for Andhra and Kerala football teams as the state's representation was meagre. But the spirit it created among football lovers must inspire the state team, especially Kerala to perform well in the coming Santosh Trophy. Let's wait for a better turnaround. ■



Swadeshabhimani Kesari Awards & Media Awards Distributed

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan presented the Swadeshabhimani Kesari Awards of 2018 and 2019. The award for 2019 went to the late M.S Mani, former editor of Kerala Kaumudi and award of 2019 to the late cartoonist Yesudasan respectively, in honour of their contributions to journalism. For the late Mani,

his wife Dr. Kasthoori Bai and son Sukumaran Mani received the Award. For Yesudasan, his son, Suku Das accepted the Award.

Along with these, Chief Minister also presented the Media Awards and the State Photography Awards of the years 2018 and 2019 in this ceremony.



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