

KERALA CALLING

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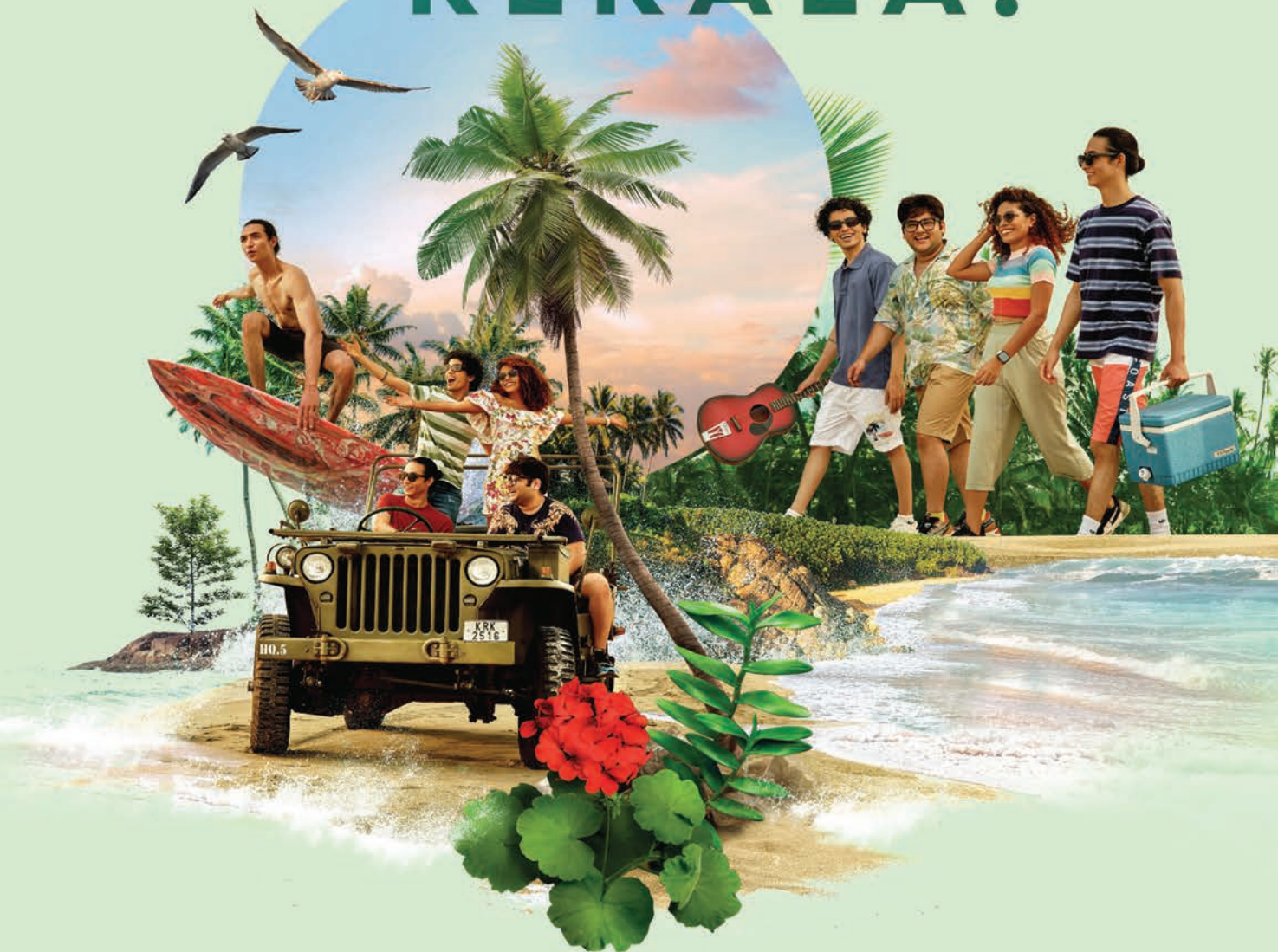


Heart-to-Heart

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's Face to Face programme marks a significant milestone in the sphere of public engagement and participatory governance in the State.

GEAR UP FOR
GOOD TIMES.

PACK UP FOR
KERALA.



WhatsApp 'Maya'
and explore Kerala

Gear up for the hearty laughs and heartfelt smiles, evergreen moments and everlasting memories... Pack up for the beaches, backwaters, hill stations and jungles of Kerala.


God's Own Country

Setting a New Benchmark for Public Engagement



The recently concluded face-to-face programme spearheaded by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan marks a significant milestone in the sphere of public engagement and participatory governance in Kerala. Initiated with an enlightening dialogue with students, the series culminated in a constructive session with the residents' associations at the Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Kadavanthra, Ernakulam. This initiative not only demonstrated the government's commitment to inclusive dialogue but also highlighted the vibrant democratic spirit that thrives within the state.

Spanning across various sectors, the programme commenced on February 18th and successfully engaged individuals from 10 distinct fields. This broad spectrum of interaction fostered a rich exchange of ideas, paving the way for an inclusive approach towards the vision of a Nava Kerala. The dialogues were instrumental in surfacing a plethora of suggestions and innovative ideas, thereby enriching the development discourse and reinforcing the government's philosophy of people-centric growth.

The success of these dialogues can be attributed to the enthusiastic participation of a diverse group of stakeholders, including students, youth, women, the differently-abled, senior citizens and pensioners, farmers, representatives from SC/ ST, people from culture sector, workers, and resident associations. They brought forth their perspectives, concerns, and aspirations. The engagement was not just a

platform for airing grievances but a constructive space for collaborative problem-solving and co-creating the blueprint for the state's future.

The Chief Minister's initiative serves as a commendable example of how leadership can bridge the gap between the government and its citizens, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective action. Such interactions are vital in ensuring that governance is not only transparent but also responsive to the needs and aspirations of its people.

The face-to-face programme has set a precedent for other states to emulate, highlighting the importance of direct dialogue and active public participation in governance. As Kerala strides towards the vision of a Nava Kerala, the insights garnered from these sessions will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping policies that are not only progressive but also reflective of the people's will. This initiative reaffirms the belief that the path to sustainable development is paved with the collective efforts of the government and its citizens, working hand in hand towards a common goal.

T.V. Subhash IAS
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**FACE
TO FACE
WITH CM**

Unveiling Visionary Blueprint for Education



Kerala embarks on an ambitious journey to redefine its educational landscape, setting new benchmarks for excellence and innovation.

In a significant step toward educational reform, the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has introduced a series of transformative initiatives aimed at reshaping the state's higher education sector. This announcement was made during a key engagement in Kozhikode, marking the beginning of the Face to Face series, which is central to the government's strategy to elevate the educational framework within the state. The initiatives, inspired by the success of the Navakerala Sadas, are designed to position Kerala as a leading hub for advanced learning and innovation on a global scale.

Empowering Transformation

Central to these initiatives is a multi-dimensional strategy that includes digital transformation, student-centric reforms, and inclusive policies. A notable aspect of this strategy is the K-REAP system, aimed at enhancing university processes and administrative efficiency. This

approach leverages advanced technology to significantly improve the educational experience for both students and faculty.

A Call to Return

The government is also focusing on integrating international perspectives into the state's higher education system. A special program encourages students who studied abroad to bring their knowledge back home, facilitating a rich exchange of ideas and expertise that will benefit Kerala's educational ecosystem.

A Paradigm Shift

A shift towards a more student-centric education model underscores the importance of holistic development. The government's commitment extends beyond academics, recognizing and



rewarding students for achievements in various fields, thereby fostering a supportive environment for personal and intellectual growth.

A Thrust Towards Progress

In the medical field, Kerala is investing in biomedical research and the training of future professionals, aiming to lead in healthcare innovations and improvements. This focus on medical advancement is part of a broader effort to enhance the state's capacity for research and innovation.

Engagement and Collaboration

The Chief Minister emphasizes the importance of engagement and collaboration with various stakeholders in the educational sector. Through inclusive dialogue and partnerships, the aim is to implement reforms that align with the community's aspirations, setting the stage for sustained growth and development.





A Quest for Excellence

Kerala continues to strive for the highest standards of academic excellence, with ongoing efforts to enhance quality and achieve recognition for its educational achievements. This pursuit of excellence is reflective of the state's commitment to educational leadership.

Seeds of Progress

With a vision to transform into a knowledge economy, the state is fostering innovation and entrepreneurship through initiatives like startup incubation centres and industry collaborations. This is aimed at creating an ecosystem that supports creativity and enterprise among students.

A Leap into the Future

Kerala is also advancing its digital infrastructure, with initiatives in artificial intelligence and machine





learning, to prepare students for the challenges of a digitalized world. This approach ensures that the state remains at the forefront of technological education.

A Vision of Equity

The leadership's vision for an inclusive and democratic education system is evident in initiatives like the establishment of an open university. This reflects a commitment to accessible education for all, regardless of background or socioeconomic status.

Charting a Course Towards a Brighter Future

The comprehensive plan for Kerala's higher education aims to foster a vibrant learning environment that encourages innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. As the state embarks on this transformative journey, it is poised to become a global leader in education, empowering its youth and shaping a prosperous future.



The Face to Face event also saw participation from prominent figures in education and development, highlighting the collaborative effort towards achieving these educational goals.



Empowering Youth

Kerala's commitment to youth empowerment is evident in its initiatives that harness the potential of young individuals to drive the state's development, blending historical inspiration with modern opportunities for growth and global engagement.



The recently concluded NavaKerala Sadas stands as a significant milestone in the evolution of Kerala's parliamentary democracy, creating a platform that fosters inclusive discourse and gathers expert insights. The morning sessions of this groundbreaking initiative provided a space for diverse suggestions and observations, with a particular focus on the pivotal role of youth in shaping the state's future.

Recognising the necessity for additional platforms to capture unaddressed observations, the initiative divided the youth community into two sections, showcasing a commitment to considering every perspective in building a new Kerala.

Historical examples serve as compelling evidence of the potential impact youth can have on society. Figures like Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, and global personalities such as Charles Darwin and Vincent Van Gogh exemplify the transformative contributions young

individuals can make. Kerala's youth, inspired by these historical figures, are positioned as potential change-makers in the state's developmental trajectory.

Reflecting on Kerala's historical journey, the article underscores the pivotal role of the first government after the state's formation in 1957. Universalising education, strengthening public health systems, and initiating land reforms set the stage for the youth to become key contributors to the state's growth. The present government's commitment to facilitating youth growth and involvement serves as a continuation of these transformative initiatives.

The state's commitment to harnessing the potential of its youth is evident in various recent initiatives. Institutions such as the Institute of Advanced Virology and Digital University showcase a forward-thinking approach to technology and



education. The focus on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology in agriculture underlines the government's dedication to fostering a dynamic and self-sustaining ecosystem.

Strategic initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and innovation are noteworthy. Programmes such as Entrepreneurship Year, Mission 1000, and various startup initiatives have not only generated employment opportunities but have also contributed significantly to the state's industrial growth. The success stories of startups and the state's impressive industrial growth underscore the tangible outcomes of these youth-centric initiatives.

The narrative around youth migration should not be viewed merely as brain drain but as a strategic deployment of Kerala's social capital globally. Kerala's rich history of migration, spanning over a century, has positioned its youth across the globe in various innovative fields. The global presence of Malayalis stands as a testament to the





exceptional skills and capabilities acquired by the state's workforce.

This article sheds light on the proactive measures taken by the Kerala state government to facilitate and support youth seeking employment opportunities abroad. The state government has instituted the Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC) system to safeguard job seekers from fraudulent practices by private agencies, earning it the prestigious 2022 FIKI Award for Best Recruitment Agency.

ODEPC includes an International Air Transport Association (IATA)-accredited travel division. Over the past four years, ODEPC has successfully recruited 1,625 individuals for various countries, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, UK, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, and Uzbekistan. Notably, the agency facilitated free recruitment and training for nurses bound for Germany, with the first batch departing in August 2023.

Collaborating with the UK's Health Education England (HEE), ODEPC has contributed to the employment of over 600 nurses in the UK within the past three years. A strategic agreement with the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (WYICB) in the UK further solidifies the commitment to recruiting skilled





healthcare professionals.

Additionally, the state government has implemented the 'Study Abroad' scheme to empower students to pursue higher education in foreign countries, obtain advanced degrees, and secure better employment opportunities. International Employment Expos conducted in Riyadh, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi, in collaboration with the Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence, provide a platform for aspiring individuals to explore global job opportunities.

Training centers, located in Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Angamaly, Kozhikode, and New Delhi, offer preparatory courses for exams such as IELTS, Occupational English Test (OET), and German language proficiency.

The commitment to quality employment conditions in Kerala is underscored by the India Skills Report, designating the state as having the best employment conditions in India. The report highlights Kerala as a preferred destination for young professionals, irrespective of gender. Notably, Kochi ranks second, and Thiruvananthapuram fourth among cities in

the country where men and women alike prefer to work, emphasising the state's commitment to gender-neutral employment opportunities.

Kerala's proactive approach to facilitating overseas employment opportunities, ensuring ethical recruitment practices, and providing robust support systems reflects the state government's commitment to empowering its youth on the global stage. The achievements of ODEPC and the state's recognition in employment conditions underscore Kerala's position as a frontrunner in fostering a skilled and globally competitive workforce.

The government's support for young individuals seeking opportunities abroad, including recruitment programmes, overseas education, and skill development, demonstrates a proactive approach to address the challenges associated with migration.

By placing the youth at the forefront of the state's development agenda, the government ensures that Kerala continues to thrive as a progressive and dynamic region. As the state charts its course toward a brighter future, the active participation of the youth emerges as a driving force, ensuring that Kerala remains a beacon of growth and transformation.

Pursuing Gender Equality and Economic Self-Sufficiency

The implementation of women-friendly policies, coupled with a focused approach to education, has substantially improved the socio-economic conditions of women across the state. Women in Kerala are prominently represented in admissions to arts, science, and medical courses, showcasing a strong dedication to higher education and professional qualifications.



The inauguration of the New Kerala Women's Conference at the Nedumbassery CIAL Convention Centre marked a watershed moment in the pursuit of gender equality in all sectors. This event witnessed a significant turnout of women, underscoring the pivotal role their



perspectives play in shaping the trajectory of Kerala's future. Kerala, often hailed as a trailblazer among Indian states, has consistently demonstrated a commitment to providing equal rights and opportunities for women. The implementation of women-friendly policies, coupled with a focused approach to education, has substantially improved the socio-economic conditions of women across the state.

Education stands as a cornerstone of women's empowerment in Kerala, with the state consistently achieving high literacy rates for both genders. This commitment to education has resulted in gender equality in public education, where women in Kerala are prominently represented in admissions to arts, science, and medical courses, showcasing a strong dedication to higher education and professional qualifications.

The empowerment of women in Kerala has been a gradual and transformative process, catalyzed by historical movements like the Channar Riot and Kallumala Strike. These movements laid the foundation for women to transition from traditional roles to assuming leadership positions across various fields. The renaissance movements in Kerala played a pivotal role in sparking discussions about



women's education and rights, ushering in a new era of awareness.

Political participation of women in Kerala has been notable, with figures like Ammu Swaminathan, Annie Maskreen, and Daksayani Velayudhan making significant contributions. The reservation of half of the chairmanships of local self-government bodies for women serves as an exemplary standard for the rest of the country.

Government Initiatives, Challenges, and the Vision for a New Kerala

The government of Kerala has implemented initiatives aimed at comprehensively empowering women economically, socially, and politically. The Kudumbashree movement, with its focus on economic self-sufficiency, has gained global recognition as a model for women's empowerment. The government's commitment to gender budgeting, special recruitment in the police force, and women's safety programs underscores its dedication to women's holistic development.

Despite these significant strides, challenges persist, including gender disparities in certain job sectors and the



need for increased awareness of new-generation jobs. The government's proactive measures, such as training in artificial intelligence tools, demonstrate a commitment to ensuring women's participation in the evolving job market.

Kerala's journey towards empowering women serves as a testament to the state's dedication to equality and justice. From historical struggles to contemporary policies, women in Kerala have transcended societal norms to become leaders in various fields. The focus on education, political participation, and economic empowerment positions Kerala as a beacon of progress for women in India. As the state strives for a "New Kerala," continued commitment to women's empowerment will undoubtedly shape a more inclusive and equitable society. The government's seven and a half years of work towards making a NavaKeramam (New Kerala), woman-led reflects a long-term commitment to creating an egalitarian society. The various initiatives, including the implementation of gender budgeting, the creation of women-centric schemes, and the establishment of a special department for women and children, underscore the holistic approach towards addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by





women.

The emphasis on job creation and skill development through programs like the Knowledge Economy Mission and initiatives by NORKA and ODEPC further reinforces the government's commitment to ensuring economic independence for women. The recognition of the changing job market and the creation of opportunities like Work Near Home Centers align with the evolving needs of women in the workforce.

The success of Kudumbashree, evolving from an economic self-sufficiency initiative to the world's largest women empowerment movement, demonstrates the transformative impact of targeted programs. The state government's continuous efforts, such as the annual gender budget, have resulted in significant allocations for women-centric initiatives, far surpassing the national average.

The government's focus on safety through initiatives like the Nirbhaya Project, Aparajita Helpline, and Women Help Desks at Police Stations addresses critical issues surrounding women's security. The state's commitment to addressing crimes against women and children, coupled with the swift adjudication of cases, reflects a zero-tolerance approach to violence.

While challenges like gender disparity in labour force participation and the need for increased awareness of

new-generation jobs persist, the government's commitment to addressing these issues is evident. The formulation of a start-up policy, support for women entrepreneurs through grants and soft loans, and the organization of events like the Women's Startup Summit are indicative of a forward-thinking approach.

Kerala's efforts extend beyond economic empowerment to social initiatives, with women actively participating in the Suschitwa Mission and the Green Army. The state recognizes the importance of managing not only physical waste but also social waste, emphasizing the need for communal harmony and resistance against divisive forces.

Kerala's journey towards women's empowerment is a testament to the state's commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable society. From historical movements to contemporary policies, the evolution of women's roles in Kerala reflects a dynamic and transformative process. As the state progresses towards a "Nava Keralam," the continued commitment to women's empowerment will undoubtedly contribute to shaping a society that values and respects the contributions of all its members.

Empowering SC/ST Communities through Education, Legal Training and Sustainable Development

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan unveils comprehensive reforms across education, legal training, and social welfare sectors in Kerala, emphasizing inclusivity and sustainable development for SC/ST communities.



The Chief Minister stated that higher education institutions will be transformed into lifelong learning institutions in a way that benefits Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students. He was responding to discussions and suggestions as part of the face-to-face program. According to changes in the world, the nature and attitude of jobs will change. Courses relevant to these changes should be given importance in the field of higher education. Reforms in knowledge, skills, and competencies, according to the changes over time, are necessary. Discussions will be held with the higher education department regarding this. Reforms beneficial to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students will be implemented. Higher education institutions will be transformed into lifelong learning institutions to acquire new knowledge and skills. Basic infrastructure development in the higher education sector will be ensured, said the Chief Minister.

The Jwala project is an initiative by the Scheduled Caste department in the legal field. As part of the project, 69 individuals are being provided with practical training in the legal field, with 24 people receiving training in the High Court and 45 in the District Courts. Most of these individuals





are appointed in Government Pleader's offices. The Chief Minister announced that they would also have opportunities to work in other offices and under other competent lawyers. This was in response to a query raised by Advocate Bharadwaj.

The Chief Minister also mentioned that the possibility of starting new Tribal Extension Offices would be examined. Post-matric hostels have been initiated in Ernakulam and Thrissur for girls, and in Kothamangalam for boys. A new post-matric hostel for girls will be started in Kozhikode, and the existing hostels will be renovated. Financial assistance for students in post-matric hostels will be increased with the approval of the Finance Department.

To prevent student dropout, the Chief Minister stated that 326 mentor teachers have been appointed through the Gothrabandhu Scheme. Measures will be taken to rehabilitate the Malapandaram community, who traditionally do not stay in one place, by providing them with permanent residences. Land possession certificates have been





provided to 20 families in Perinad Panchayat, and procedures are underway to provide the same for 23 more families. Discussions are ongoing with KSEB to make land available for the Malapandaram community living in the quarters area of Moozhiyar in Seethathode Grama Panchayat. A package to improve the living conditions of the Malapandaram community will be implemented. The Land Bank scheme, which finds and provides land to landless Scheduled Caste communities, is progressing. The Chief Minister also mentioned that self-employment loans with 100% subsidy provided to the weaker sections of the Scheduled Castes will be considered for expansion to other categories. A project will be launched in collaboration with the Co-operative Department to rejuvenate the co-operative societies in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe sectors.

The government, in collaboration with KIRTADS, will implement a project to establish treatment centers for traditional healers within the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, ensuring that their medical practices are passed on to the next generation. There will also be support for talents in arts and sports. Selection trials will be conducted in sports model residential schools to provide





training from the fifth grade onwards. The Chief Minister congratulated Nandu, who is undergoing football training in Spain with government support.

Various programs will be implemented against the use of narcotics. The Chief Minister emphasized that there should be no compromise with drug dealers and that such individuals should be brought to the attention of the authorities.

Special consideration is given to transgender individuals, including their inclusion in vocational training programs and providing them with land by relaxing the criteria. The feasibility issue of crematorium roads will be addressed separately, ensuring the availability of feasibility certificates. The demand for a research center in the birthplace of Ayyankali will be seriously considered. The possibility of reallocating SC funds from local self-government institutions without SC populations to those with significant SC populations, instead of refunding, will be explored. The Chief Minister announced that the digital resurvey of three villages in Attappadi would be completed within six months, and Chuzhali village will be included in the second phase of the resurvey.



Kerala's Cultural Renaissance and Vision for an Inclusive Tomorrow

In a compelling address, the Chief Minister of Kerala delineated the pivotal role of cultural leaders in shaping the state's progressive trajectory and outlined an inclusive vision for its future.

Throughout history, luminaries in the realms of art, literature, and culture have significantly influenced the course of events, steering the nation and moulding public discourse. Their guidance, rooted not in self-interest but in societal welfare, has earned the trust of the people, who regard their pronouncements as reflections of objective truths. This perspective is shared by the state government, which places great importance on the insights of cultural figures when formulating the strategic vision for Kerala's future.

The Chief Minister elaborated on the successful convening of the New Kerala Assembly, an initiative that reached every corner of the state. Its primary goal is to reshape Kerala to align with the demands of the new millennium, to foster a knowledge-driven economy, and to establish a society that is at the forefront of innovation. By creating centres of excellence across various disciplines and bridging the gap between research institutions and the industrial sector, Kerala aims to catalyse economic development, enhance productivity, and achieve social justice

through the fair distribution of newfound wealth.

To lay the groundwork for these ambitious goals, comprehensive development in essential sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, industry, transportation, and technology is deemed crucial. Moreover, these endeavours are to be pursued with a commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The government envisions an integrated approach to development and welfare activities, ensuring that the benefits of progress are accessible to all societal segments, thereby making the vision of New Kerala both sustainable and inclusive.

The Chief Minister pointed out that Kerala's economic advancement and social welfare measures, grounded in the growth of the agricultural and industrial sectors, are not the sole defining features of this new vision. The exceptional talents of Kerala's youth, capable of making significant contributions even in the most avant-garde



domains, along with the state's contributions to arts, sports, and culture on the global stage, are also considered key to the New Kerala identity. This multifaceted approach is seen as essential for safeguarding both current and future generations from the challenges that lie ahead.

Achieving these lofty objectives is not the sole purview of the government; it necessitates the mobilization of the entire society. Herein lies the critical role of the cultural sector and the formation of public opinion, where the intellectual community is poised to play a pivotal role. Cultural leaders have historically been at the forefront of societal progress, whether during the national freedom struggle, the renaissance movement, the lower caste emancipation, the labour movement, or the agricultural revolution. Their engagement in cultural discourse has always been marked by vigour and commitment.

Furthermore, cultural leaders have consistently engaged with the pressing issues of social life, embodying a tradition of relentless humanism and social orientation, with only rare exceptions. This





tradition, dating back to Ezhuthachan, has fundamentally shaped Kerala into its present form. The current era, too, demands similar contributions from the cultural sphere. Culture, being the superstructure of social life, cannot thrive in isolation; it requires a solid foundation, which is currently under threat.

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for unity beyond caste and religious divides to sustain the arts and literature. He warned against the dangers of fascism, which threatens freedom of expression and the rich, diverse cultural blend of Kerala. The imposition of a uniform culture, language, religion, lifestyle, and dietary habits heralds the onset of fascism, against which a firm stand must be taken.

The discourse also touched upon the importance of maintaining federalism, not only in economic terms but also in the cultural sphere, to ensure the preservation of linguistic, faith-based, and lifestyle diversities. The Chief Minister voiced concerns over attempts to dilute Kerala's



unique Malayali essence and the unity that has been the bedrock of the state's formation. He called for a collective effort to safeguard Kerala's identity and to uphold the values of religious harmony, coexistence, and brotherhood.

In closing, the Chief Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to nurturing native art forms, protecting artists, and fostering a vibrant cultural ecosystem. This commitment is evidenced by the numerous initiatives undertaken over the past seven and a half years to promote cultural activities, safeguard endangered art forms, and support the livelihoods of artists. These efforts, he asserted, are integral to the broader mission of preserving Kerala's rich cultural heritage and



ensuring its continued relevance and vitality in the modern era.

Diamond Jubilee Fellowship

Aiming to foster artistic interest among all sections of people, the Diamond Jubilee Fellowship is moving forward successfully. This initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the Department of Culture and local self-governance institutions. It provides free training in Kerala's art forms including classical arts, acting, painting, sculpture, and folklore arts. Artists serving as trainers are provided with a fellowship of ₹17,500. Since this government came into power, ₹15.98 crore has been spent on this initiative, benefiting 925 artists.

Artist Pension-Welfare Pension

The Artist Pension Scheme is implemented to provide relief to artists facing financial difficulties in their old age. During this government's tenure, ₹9.20 crore has been spent to provide monthly pensions to 5,004 artists. Additionally, members of the Cultural Worker Welfare Fund Board who are artists receive a pension of ₹4,000. A total of ₹31.97 crore has been spent for 7,268 artists during this government's term. Along with this, 8 individuals have been provided with dependent pensions and 539 with family

pensions.

Medical Financial Assistance

Under the medical financial assistance scheme of the Department of Culture, ₹2.76 crore has been spent for 30 artists.

SC-ST Women Cinema Project

The Department of Culture's SC-ST Women Cinema Project aims to encourage women and directors from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the film industry. Under this project, up to ₹1.5 crore is provided as financial assistance for making films from two scripts each in the women's category and the SC-ST category. So far, ₹6 crore has been spent to make 4 films under this project.

Cultural Complexes

The District Cultural Complexes project, initiated during the last Pinarayi Vijayan government, aims to preserve Kerala's cultural heritage and educate future generations about it. These complexes will be helpful in safeguarding



the state's renaissance values, maintaining freedom of opinion and expression, and spreading them in public spaces. For the project of constructing cultural complexes in the name of renaissance leaders, ₹50 crore per district is allocated. This project is being implemented with the assistance of KIIIFB.

The complex named after Sree Narayana Guru has already been inaugurated in Kollam at Asramam Maidan at a cost of ₹58 crore. The construction of complexes in honour of freedom fighter T.S. Subramanian in Madikkai, Kasaragod, and cultural center in the name of V.T. Bhattathiripad in Yakkara, Palakkad, is in the final stages.

Kilimanoor Artist Residency Studio

The Raja Ravi Varma Artists' Residency Studio, equipped with modern facilities, has been established in Kilimanoor, the birthplace of the famous painter Raja Ravi Varma, under the leadership of the Lalithakala Academy. This facility provides accommodation for renowned artists from national and international levels to engage in artistic activities.

Samam

The Samam project, aimed at raising awareness against gender

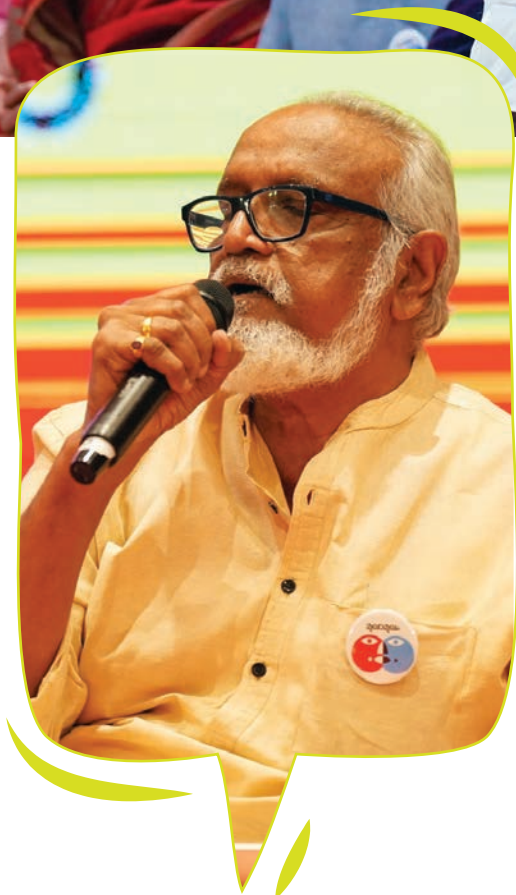
discrimination, has created significant positive outcomes. Singer K.S. Chithra is the brand ambassador of this campaign. Various programs including She Radio, short films, workshops, documentaries, and competitions are being conducted as part of this initiative. Additionally, 1,001 women who have achieved commendable success in various fields are being honoured. So far, ₹1.05 crore has been spent on the implementation of this project.

Theatre Renovation

The last Pinarayi Vijayan government initiated the renovation of Kairali, Nila, and Sree theatres at a cost of ₹13.5 crore to keep up with modern cinema experiences. This government has completed the project, renovating the theatres in a women, child, and differently-abled friendly manner.

Kerala Culture Dissemination

The Kerala Culture Dissemination project is successfully moving forward to share Kerala's unique culture and traditions with other countries and states, and to make the cultures of other regions known to Malayalis.



Heritage Village Project

The Heritage Village project was conceived with the goal of introducing the next generation to traditional arts, crafts, and art forms that are fading away. The project aims to integrate all cultural heritage centers and art centers in an area.

Abhayakendram for Artists

Abhayakendram is a project initiated to shelter artists who are left without care in their final days. A location in Nooranad, Alappuzha district, has been identified for this purpose, and construction will begin soon.

Freedom Memory Park

Steps have been initiated to start the Freedom Memory Park to commemorate significant chapters of our national freedom struggle. The project is designed to impart knowledge related to the freedom struggle to the new generation.

Art Performance Program

The Art Performance Program was introduced to familiarize Kerala's artists with internationally renowned artists and their work. As part of this program, 10 artists from Kerala visited Bangladesh, and 10 from there visited Kerala.

Landmark Dialogue with Differently-abled Community Highlights Inclusivity Initiatives

In a significant dialogue with the differently-abled community, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan articulated the government's unwavering commitment to inclusivity and empowerment during the "Face to Face" programme held in Thiruvananthapuram on 26th February 2024. This dialogue underscored the imperative of integrating diversity as a cornerstone of societal values, positing that true societal engagement is actualised only when we fully embrace differences, including those pertaining to disabilities.

Drawing attention to global statistics from the World Health Organisation, the Chief Minister pointed out that around one billion people worldwide live with some form of disability.

This figure translates to about one in every eight individuals, underlining the critical need to address the challenges and barriers faced by the differently-abled in society. The Chief Minister emphasised that overcoming these challenges is not just a matter of social justice but a hallmark of a progressive democratic society.



The Chief Minister criticised the prevalent societal norms that set unfair expectations for differently-abled individuals to compete on an equal footing with those without disabilities. Such expectations, he noted, serve only to perpetuate the marginalisation of differently-abled individuals across various spheres of life, including social, political, and economic realms. He advocated for a paradigm shift towards recognising the unique abilities and potential of differently-abled individuals and ensuring that they have equitable opportunities to participate and thrive in society.

A cornerstone of the government's approach is the implementation of comprehensive and targeted initiatives aimed at the holistic development of the differently-abled community. The Chief Minister elaborated on several key initiatives, including the development of accessible infrastructure, enhancing the participation of differently-abled individuals in education and employment, and the



creation of disability-friendly public spaces. Notably, the “Barrier-Free Kerala” project was highlighted as a significant step towards making over 2,000 public buildings accessible, alongside efforts to enhance the accessibility of tourist centres and digital spaces, thereby fostering a truly inclusive society.

At the district level, the government has established robust support mechanisms, including special courts dedicated to addressing the needs of the differently-abled community and expert committees tasked with identifying reserved positions in government appointments. The Chief Minister announced a noteworthy increase in reservation for appointments and promotions, aiming to improve representation and open up more opportunities for differently-abled individuals in the workforce.

A dedicated committee of experts has identified government positions suitable for reservation for individuals with



disabilities. Following these recommendations, 1,263 positions have been earmarked, and the reservation for such appointments, as well as promotions, has been increased from 3% to 4%, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing their representation in the public sector.

The “State Initiative on Disability,” in collaboration with the Health and Education Departments, addresses gaps in disability prevention, early detection, education, employment, and rehabilitation. The “Anuyatra” programme and “Samagra” scheme are integral to this initiative, offering services ranging from disability prevention to comprehensive development through various training programmes.

Financial support schemes like “Vidyakiranam” and “Vidyajyothi” provide assistance to children

of parents with disabilities and aid in the purchase of educational materials for students with disabilities, respectively. Scholarships are available for students at various educational levels, with special provisions for distance learning. Academic excellence is incentivised with cash awards, and projects like the cochlear implant support project and “Kathoram” focus on addressing specific disabilities.

Rehabilitation services for destitute and orphaned individuals with disabilities are facilitated through government institutions, with specialised care provided in facilities like “Pratheeksha Bhavan” and “Punyabhavan”. Inclusive recreational spaces, such as a disability-friendly park in the Thiruvananthapuram Museum Compound, and “Sahajeevanam” help desks, which offer support by collaborating with special schools and parent organisations, reflect efforts to create an inclusive environment.



Progress in issuing UID cards to individuals with disabilities is notable, with over 311,287 cards distributed. The “Snehayanam” project, providing e-autos to mothers of children with disabilities, supports their livelihood. The National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH) and the National Institute for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are highlighted for their comprehensive services and innovative programmes, contributing significantly to the rehabilitation and education of individuals with disabilities. The “Shreshtam” scheme, along with other initiatives like Shubhayatra, Ashwasam, and Hasthaanam, underscores the state’s commitment to enhancing the lives and opportunities of individuals with disabilities. The state budget reflects this commitment,



with significant allocations for various initiatives, including the “Barrier Free Kerala” project and ongoing activities at NISH.

Local self-governing institutions play a role in empowering individuals with disabilities through extensive programmes and events, with a mandate to allocate a portion of their annual state plan development fund to initiatives for individuals with disabilities, children, and transgender individuals. The state also provides pensions to a significant number of individuals with disabilities, demonstrating a wide-ranging support network.

Addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals with disabilities the CM said that the state is implementing comprehensive interventions in health, education, employment, and transportation. Expansion of specialised services





and the formulation of detailed guidelines for inclusive education are among the measures under consideration. Innovative initiatives like the “Prachodanam” scheme focus on employment training and skill development, aiming to equip individuals with intellectual challenges with employment skills and promote self-help groups and marketing outlets for their products.

The concept of Integrated Rehabilitation Villages offers comprehensive rehabilitation services, with land acquisition in various districts marking the project’s initiation.

“Sahajeevanam” support centers aim to alleviate mental stress for individuals with disabilities and their care givers, providing counseling and support services. A planned sports academy for individuals with disabilities aims to discover and nurture athletic talents, contributing to the state’s vision of creating a disability-friendly “New Kerala”.

The supportive environment for startups, including



successful ventures by individuals with disabilities, highlights the encouragement for entrepreneurship within this community. The narrative reinforces the notion that disabilities should not be seen as constraints, citing the achievements of renowned personalities who overcame barriers to succeed in various fields.

State's Pledge to Elderly Well-being and Participatory Progress

The Chief Minister underscored a commitment to improving the quality of life for the elderly and ensuring their active involvement in shaping the state's future.



The Chief Minister emphasised the state's commitment to the welfare of its elderly population and pensioners, underscoring the significant contributions they have made towards the development and betterment of the state. Recognising the demographic trend of an increasing elderly population within the state, which is higher than the national average, the Chief Minister highlighted the imperative need for targeted interventions and policies to ensure their well-being.

The government acknowledges that the elderly have dedicated a substantial part of their lives in service to the state and believes that their insights and suggestions are invaluable for shaping the future of Kerala. As such, there is a concerted effort to incorporate their perspectives in the planning and execution of development initiatives, ensuring their active participation in the state's progress.

The Chief Minister pointed out the inevitability of aging and the global trend of a rising elderly population, projected to exceed one billion by 2025 according to World Health Organisation estimates. This demographic shift underscores the necessity for comprehensive

care and attention to the elderly's needs, a responsibility the state government is keen to fulfil.

In response to the challenges faced by the elderly, especially in cases of neglect or abuse, the government has taken a firm stance, implementing strict measures to safeguard their rights and dignity. The approach is not merely one of compassion but of ensuring justice and support for the elderly, reinforcing the notion that such behaviours are not in line with the values of a progressive society.

The Chief Minister also recognised the proactive role played by the elderly during various crises, including the COVID pandemic and flood relief efforts. Their contributions, whether through community kitchens, educational support for children, or financial donations to relief funds, underscore their ongoing commitment to societal welfare.

The government's social security measures extend beyond government employees, encompassing farmers, destitute



women, the differently-abled, and senior citizens. Despite the challenges of neoliberal reforms and financial constraints, the state has made significant strides in distributing welfare pensions, ensuring broad-based social security.

Over the past seven and a half years, the state has distributed approximately 57,500 crore rupees in welfare pensions, with more than 23,000 crore rupees allocated during the current government's tenure. The schemes have benefited around 55 lakh individuals across various categories, although the central assistance through the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) has often been delayed and insufficient.

The government's perspective on pensions, both service and welfare, is one of responsibility towards ensuring social security and health protection for its citizens. This view is reflected in the inclusion of pensioners in the Medisep scheme and the Karunya health insurance program, which have provided significant healthcare benefits to millions of families.

The government, under the current leadership, is committed

to addressing the needs and challenges of the elderly population, ensuring their dignity, security, and active participation in the state's developmental journey. The administration's efforts are aimed at not only recognising the contributions of the elderly but also at integrating their wisdom and experience into the fabric of Kerala's progressive society.

Comprehensive Reforms and Advocacy for Labour Rights

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in his address during the Face to Face programme with the workers, promised measures to protect the rights of domestic workers and regulate working hours. Additional steps will be taken to prevent exploitation by agencies in the field and ensure they receive adequate rest.



According to the CM, the registration of workers related to the online marketing industry will pave the way for job security, placing special emphasis on the safety of women workers. Studio apartments are being



constructed for the accommodation of night shift workers.

A mobile app is in development for guest workers to file complaints in their own language. They are also advised to complete guest portal registration. Rest centres will be provided for taxi drivers. Gratuity, maternity leave, etc., have been introduced for those in unaided schools. Actions have been taken for wage revision for peeling workers in the cashew sector. Minimum wages are also being ensured in the elephant husbandry sector, with health insurance coverage available. Steps will be taken to ensure better wages for nurses, and more skill development centres will be established. It has also been decided to release government-owned land for film shooting at reasonable rates.

The wage situation in the media sector will be examined. It is said that information collection of artisans will be



done, ensuring the protection of those in the field of makeup art.

Following the event, the participants put forward valuable suggestions regarding ensuring better working and life conditions for the workers employed in different sectors.

Padmashri Gopinathan, who represented the handloom sector, demanded that each group be given 10 looms, and the sector promoted as permanent employment. He also stated that more employment opportunities can be created by providing new looms.

Media activist KK Shahina said that internal grievance redressal cells should be ensured in all media houses, and the new building of the Media Academy should be named after the old-generation woman journalist Haneema Bivi.

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Ranju Ranjimar, a makeup artist, demanded that makeup artists should be given a fixed basic salary and ensured to receive it. Film actor Aristo Suresh demanded that measures should be taken to reduce the rent paid by government institutions for making movies/serials available for filming.

Sheeja, a female carpenter, said that all the activities carried out by the government for the improvement of the carpenter sector are useful, and more provision should be given to the sector. Rekha Karthikeyan, the woman who obtained the first deep-sea fishing license in the country, demanded that the post-mortem compensation of fishermen should be increased to 5 lakhs.

Susheela Joseph, the winner of the 2020 Labour Shrestha Award, said that legislation



for domestic workers should be completed and brought into effect on a war footing. Measures should be taken to prevent the exploitation faced by domestic workers in the workplace.

Mohammad Nasser, a motor worker, suggested that the government should provide identity cards to drivers in the tourism sector and establish rest centers after long journeys. O. Valsalakumari, a cashew worker, said that the working days in the cashew sector should be increased. Shabna Sulaiman, an elephant keeper, demanded that the appointment of vacant doctor posts in the forest department should be expedited, and the salary of mahouts should be increased. The suggestions of 57 workers from different sectors were also included in the programme.

Cooperatives to Play a Bigger Role in Agricultural Growth

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan unveils a transformative 25-year plan to elevate Kerala to a middle-income developed status, focusing on agricultural innovation and cooperative partnerships to reshape the state's farming future.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has laid out the Kerala government's ambitious plan to bring the state up to the level of middle-income developed countries within the next 25 years. This goal is centred around boosting the agricultural sector's output and efficiency. To achieve this, the plan is to increase farmers' incomes by introducing modern technologies and working with cooperatives to build the needed infrastructure for farming. The Chief Minister has launched a hands-on program in Alappuzha, aiming to collaborate directly with farmers to shape a new future for Kerala. The government is focusing on adding more value to agricultural products and improving how they are stored and distributed. It's actively working to shield Kerala's farmers and their livelihoods from the overwhelming influence of big agricultural corporations. This marks





a significant shift from the usual scenario where the interests of these large corporations tend to dominate, often leading to reduced support for essential services like irrigation and power, cutting back on farming subsidies, and hiking up the prices of fertilizers. However, the Kerala government is choosing a different route, one that aligns with the welfare of the farmers.

There's a strong push to transform agriculture into an attractive and honourable profession for everyone in society. The state is dedicated to creating an environment where agriculture is considered a reliable main occupation. In the face of the many challenges that agriculture and farmers encounter, the government is stepping up its support and market intervention as a proactive solution.

Kerala's agriculture is under threat from several fronts, including climate change, wildlife disturbances, and a





shrinking amount of farmable land due to high population density. The government is putting in place strategic plans to tackle these challenges head-on.

Aiming to significantly raise farmer incomes, the government has set a target to increase them by at least 50% above current levels. As part of this effort, the support price for rubber has been raised to 180 rupees, reflecting the government's commitment to fiscal responsibility.

This year's budget highlights the government's emphasis on agriculture, with substantial funds allocated for crop maintenance, crop health programs, the promotion of organic vegetable farming, and developmental initiatives in the Kuttanad region.

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Additional investments include a considerable amount for paddy cultivation housing units, expanding coconut farming, and fostering fruit cultivation development. Notably, women make up 25% of the participants in these projects. The budget also covers agricultural marketing, soil and water conservation measures, animal welfare, and dairy development, showcasing a comprehensive approach to enhancing the agricultural sector.

The 'We also to Agriculture' initiative is making strides in getting all state households involved in farming activities. So far, 23,245 farming groups have registered, with about 20% of them focusing on adding value to various agricultural products. This initiative has generated over

three lakh job opportunities in the agricultural sector.

The younger generation is showing a keen interest in innovative agricultural techniques like polyhouses, rain shelters, aquaponics, and hydroponics. The government is keen on nurturing this interest with programs designed to keep them engaged and motivated in the agricultural field.

At a recent event, the government unveiled an agricultural mission to expand the variety of value-added agricultural products. It was announced that CAPCO, following the proven successful model of CIAL, has initiated several new projects, including a significant coconut cultivation project valued at 2375 crore rupees, demonstrating the government's dedication to revitalizing and expanding Kerala's agricultural landscape.

The Vital Role of Residents' Associations in Kerala's Progress

In societal advancement, Residents' Associations emerge as the crucial thread that binds communities together, fostering a collective ethos that significantly contributes to the overall progress of a nation.



The symbiotic relationship between effective government policies and their successful implementation at the grassroots cannot be overstated. It is the active involvement of the public in diverse projects, exemplified by initiatives like



Haritha Keralam, LIFE, Ardram, and Public Education Protection Mission, that stand as a testament to the success of the Nava Kerala Action Plan. These projects, rooted in massive public participation, showcase the transformative potential that community engagement holds.

During times of unforeseen crises, whether in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic or devastating floods, the resilience and strength of Kerala's community spirit shone through. The active participation of residents in rescue operations and relief measures underscored the power of collective action. This shared experience during challenging times has deepened the understanding of the critical role Residents' Associations play in building a resilient and united New Kerala.

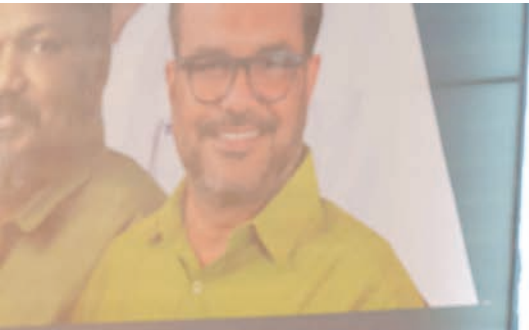
In the evolving legal landscape, Residents' Associations find themselves regulated entities, a fact underscored by the Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act. This legal framework



not only mandates the establishment of Residents' Welfare Associations but also presents a unique opportunity to address prevailing societal issues and act as stewards of positive change.

Residents' Associations, armed with legal recognition, have the potential to intervene effectively in preventing and addressing various social challenges. From guiding children away from potential pitfalls to curbing drug-related issues and ensuring the safety of vulnerable individuals, these associations can serve as proactive agents of positive change. Collaborating with existing structures, such as the Janamaitri police and Civil Defense Force, further amplifies their impact on community safety.

A notable example is the Coastal Vigilance Committee, functioning akin to a Residents' Association, which played a pivotal role during the Great Flood by swiftly mobilizing fishermen for rescue operations. This highlights the unique



role that Residents' Associations can play in leading emergency responses and fostering community resilience.

In the realm of safety and awareness, Residents' Associations can act as intermediaries between the community and law enforcement agencies. Maintaining accurate registers of residents, organizing awareness campaigns on emergency numbers, and collaborating with police and fire services can significantly enhance the safety fabric of neighbourhoods.

The intergenerational dynamic takes centre stage in the narrative, with a suggestion to leverage the wisdom of elderly residents in imparting values to younger generations. Going beyond the realm of annual events, Residents' Associations are encouraged to diversify their activities, including art programs, to foster a sense of community and deter undesirable activities.

Furthermore, Residents' Associations are urged to play a leadership role in local government-led projects, ranging from poverty alleviation to housing facilities, waste management, and entrepreneurship development. Contributing to the settlement of land disputes and the resolution of land-related issues aligns with the broader vision of a New Kerala.

In response to the escalating urbanization, a campaign titled



“Garbage-Free New Kerala” has made commendable strides, and Residents’ Associations are called upon to actively engage in waste management initiatives. Additionally, supporting entrepreneurship development and promoting indigenous products can contribute significantly to regional development and economic growth.

The Chief Minister also emphasizes the importance of Residents’ Associations in the tourism sector, urging them to uphold the cultural identity of the region and actively participate in activities related to local tourism centres.

Security, traditionally viewed as the exclusive domain of the police, is redefined as a shared responsibility. Residents’ Associations are encouraged to cooperate seamlessly with law enforcement agencies and throw their support behind schemes aimed at the welfare of women, children, and senior citizens.

Residents’ associations in Kerala transcend their role as mere community organizations; they emerge as dynamic catalysts for positive change and progress. By actively engaging in diverse facets of community life, these associations can contribute significantly to the transformation of Kerala into a model state, showcasing the profound impact of collective action and community-driven initiatives.

Women Empowerment in Kerala and India: A Comparative Analysis



Dr. M. Kuttappan
Former Director,
State Economics Statistics Department

Women empowerment is a process of making them aware of their rights and creating an environment where they can freely enjoy and play an important role in the social, economic and political decision-making process.

Women constitute about half of the world's population, but they have been denied equality of status and opportunities in social economic and political spheres in most of the countries of the world. Women empowerment is a process of making them aware of their rights and creating an environment where they can freely enjoy



and play an important role in the social, economic and political decision-making process. The concept of women's empowerment is the outcome of several important critiques and debates generated by the women's movement throughout the world. A favourable environment was created by the United Nations by organizing a series of World Conferences on Women. In the first World Conference held in Mexico in 1975, it was decided to celebrate 8th March of every year as International Women's Day. The importance of March 8 is that it was on that day in 1907, that the trade union movement and women's activism in America held a 'Hunger March' in New York to protest against the miserable working conditions of women and demand for a ten-hour working day. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 highlighted the need to incorporate gender equality in all institutions, policies and actions in member countries. India is a signatory to most of the international treaties and covenants which promote gender justice. It is in this context an attempt is made in this article to compare briefly the status of

women in Kerala and India.

The Constitution of India in Article 15 has provided equal opportunities and rights to women along with men in all walks of life. It has also recognized that women being a disadvantaged group require special measures for their advancement. Despite this problem, women did not receive adequate attention during the first quarter century after independence. The UN mandate given to member countries to critically assess the status of women led to the appointment of a Committee on the Status of Women in India. The report of the committee entitled Towards Equality brought the issue of women's concerns to the attention of Central and State governments to take up many policy measures to enhance the status of women in India. In this context, it is appropriate to assess the comparative position of Kerala and India using various indicators of women empowerment.

The status of women in a country depends heavily on its human development. Human development involves several aspects of life and can be expressed by a composite index. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) developed a human development index (HDI) to measure and evaluate the position of member countries. Realizing the importance of the index, the Government of India estimated the HDI of all States and Union Territories and found that Kerala occupied the top position. Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG-5). For measuring gender disparity, UNDP developed two gender-related indices named the Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). The government of India using a slightly reformed GDI and GEM examined the gender disparities in States and Union Territories and found that gender disparity is very low in Kerala as the condition of women in the state is much better than the rest of India. For a better understanding, an attempt is made below to compare the various indicators showing the position of women in Kerala and India. (see Table 1)

In Kerala, females outnumber males with a sex- ratio of 1084

females per 1000 males. The higher sex ratio is attributed mainly to the male-dominated migration to foreign countries for employment and also due to the longer longevity of females over males by 5.5 years. The most important factor determining the quality of human capital is the literacy rate and level of education. Kerala ranks first in the total literacy rate and also in the female literacy rate. The male-female literacy gap which was 22 percent point in 1951 has narrowed down to 4.04 percent point in 2011. There is a wide gap in the female literacy rate of Kerala (92.1%) and India (64.6%). The drop-out rate of school students in Indian states is the lowest at 0.11 per cent in Kerala compared to 4 per cent in the primary and upper primary stage and 17 per cent in the secondary school level in India. At higher secondary and college levels, girls are more than boys and female teachers are more than male teachers. The higher level of female education in Kerala is responsible for many favourable vital indicators such as infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. In Kerala, 99.8 per cent of births take place at institutions as against only 88.6 Percent in India. The expectation of life at birth for females in Kerala is seven years more than the all-India average. An important aspect of gender equality is female participation in the labour market. According to the 2011 Census female work participation rate was only 18.2 per cent compared to 25.5 per cent in India. However, as per the Periodic Labour Force Participation (PLFP) survey of the Government of India in 2022 it was 33.5 per cent in Kerala compared to 35.9 % in India. The Unemployment rate for females in Kerala according to this survey is 7% as against only 3.2 % in India. Even though women's participation in State Assembly and Parliament from Kerala lags behind the all-India average women representatives in Local Governments is 53% as against 45 % in India.





Delisha Davis, the first Indian woman to drive a fuel tanker

Women drivers strive to steer KSRTC's SWIFT service

Selected Indicators of Women Status in Kerala and India

SL No	Indicator	Reference Year	Kerala	National Scenario
1	Sex Ratio	2011	1084	943
2	Literacy Rate	2011	92.10	64.60
3	Mean age at Marriage	2022	23.20	22.30
4	Institutional Birth	2022	99.80	88.60
5	Infant Mortality Rate	2022	6.00	30.00
6	Maternal Mortality rate (per one lakh Live birth)	2022	43.00	113.00
7	Total Fertility Rate	2022	1.80	2.00
8	Expectation of Life at birth	2022	77.90	70.70
9	Work Participation Rate as per Census	2011	18.20	25.50
10	Work Participation Rate as per PLFP Survey	2022	33.50	35.90
11	Unemployment Rate as per PLFP Survey		7.00	3.20
12	Women Representation in Local Governments	2022	53.00	45.00

Table 1


kerala
God's Own Country



CATCH UP WITH NATURE. PACK UP FOR KERALA.



WhatsApp 'Maya'
and explore Kerala

Catch up with the fresh greens,
the earth browns, the bright blues...
Pack up for the beaches, backwaters,
hill stations and jungles of Kerala.



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