In Kerala the tables have been squarely turned against the NIPAH virus.
Marching Ahead!

It needs a visionary leadership to get a State and its people out of an unprecedented crisis. That is what Chief Minister Sri Pinarayi Vijayan and his team are doing at the moment: rebuilding Kerala with utmost care and planning.

The Chief Minister’s recent tour to a few European countries like the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, etc., has helped a long way in striking strategic partnership in sustainable development.

In Geneva, the Chief Minister addressed the Opening Session of the World Reconstruction Conference, explaining how Kerala tackled the 2018 floods. He also spoke of the ‘Rebuild Kerala Initiative’. The Kerala Pavilion at the conference drew the attention of key global policy and decision-makers, which will surely help in the State’s efforts to obtain international support.

The Chief Minister’s delegation held fruitful discussions with experts in various fields in the Netherlands, a country with which Kerala has historical ties. They explored the latest technological advancement in agricultural sector at the University of Wageningen’s Research Centre. The techniques of precision farming, shelf life optimisation, etc will be explored further to help revitalise Kerala’s traditional agricultural sector and increase agrarian exports. The ‘Room for the River Project’ for flood prevention was found to be a suitable model for adaptation in our low-lying areas such as Kuttanad.

One of our unique success stories, which has been acknowledged worldwide, is the way we tackled Nipah outbreak a year ago. Credit must go the whole team—from the Minister to the hospital staff, who fearlessly, and selflessly, worked together to make sure we defeated the fatal virus. It is a testimony to the efficiency of our health care system and commitment of our Government.

The Chief Minister reminded the public, while releasing the government’s progress report on its performance over the last three years, that the Government has been successful in implementing the changes promised in its election manifesto.

This issue of Kerala Calling mainly carries articles and stories on these themes. We hope these would provide useful information and insights to all our readers.

T.V. SUBHASH IAS
Editor-in-Chief
BUILDING A NEW KERALA RESILIENT TO DISASTERS

JOURNEY FOR A STRONG RESURGENT KERALA
TOM JOSE IAS

PROUD MOMENT FOR MALAYALEES ALL OVER THE WORLD
BALAGOPAL

TAPPING MUCH FROM THE NETHERLANDS
PROF. DR.A.G. MENON

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MASALA BOND & KERALA INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
M.MUHAMMED HARIS

A WORLD IN MOTION
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE “MANCHUKKAR”
S. HARIKRISHNAN

NOT VICTIMS BUT HEROES

WE SURVIVED IT TOGETHER
K. K. SHAILAJA TEACHER
KERALA’S HEALTH SECTOR SHOULD BE CONGRATULATED ON ROBERT C GALLO / RAJESH C BOSE

LINI -OUR HONOUR OUR PRIDE GEETHU VIJAYAN, RANJANA K. AZAD

IT’S ADVANTAGE KERALA DISADVANTAGE NIPAH! DR. GANESH MOHAN M

THE CHANGING FACE OF EDUCATION SCENARIO IN KERALA

PROGRESS REPORT RELEASED

GOLDEN MEMORIES OF MONSOON ANEES SALIM
The State of Kerala, which I represent here, is situated in the southern part of the Indian peninsula and is known for its rich and diverse natural heritage. However, we did not have to face natural calamities of significant magnitude for more than ninety years. But the recent unprecedented floods of August 2018, posed a new and a major challenge to our Government and civil society.

Kerala was very badly affected by this flood in which there was loss of 453 precious human lives. In addition, 280 thousand houses were lost or damaged, 140 thousand hectares of standing crops were destroyed and about 70 thousand kilometres of road network suffered major damage. The total recovery needs of the State has been estimated as around 4.4 billion US dollars, as per the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) conducted by the UN Agencies.

But our society met this with exemplary determination. The spirit of courage, especially among the youth and students has its roots in the uniqueness of Kerala society due to the inbibing of the values of famous renaissance movement, which took place in our society in the last two centuries. The secular fabric of our society ensured that no differences could stand in the way of meeting this natural calamity challenge.

The civil society and the Government in Kerala acted swiftly and in unison in the hour of crisis. The fisher-folk who brave the sea for a livelihood deserve our special gratitude for their timely intervention without which we would have lost many more lives.

The Government machinery worked hard to respond on a real time basis to meet the emergent crisis.

The Chief Minister and the concerned Ministers along with the officials met more than once in a day for closely monitoring and reviewing the situation. Along with State Government officials, representatives of the Armed forces also actively participated. Rescue of people trapped in houses and moving them to safer places was the top priority and this was done effectively with societal participation as mentioned earlier.

Our Government efficiently channelized the contributions of thousands of citizens, the Kerala diaspora and aid agencies to get the State back on its feet. Affected families were given immediate relief in cash and kind. Critical infrastructure like power supply was restored in record time. The State Government in cooperation with Local Government institutions, civil society and mass organisations organised a massive drive for cleaning flood affected houses, provision of drinking water, medicines and essential supplies.

A comprehensive programme to rebuild lost and dam-
aged houses has been launched. Loans for recovery of essential house-hold articles lost and damaged during the floods from our Co-operative Banks and commercial banks where channalized through the widely networked Women’s self help group Kudumbashree. The interest payment on these loans was borne by the Government of Kerala. Our Government also ensured wage employment to needy families by augmenting the ongoing employment programme. Our Government is also providing financial assistance with beneficiary involvement for rebuilding damaged houses and constructing completely lost houses.

We have presently taken up the challenging task of rebuilding Kerala better. In other words, our aim is not to restore what was in existence before the flood, but to build a new Kerala which will be resilient to any possible natural disasters in future.

The Rebuild Kerala Initiative is being carried out in a mission mode. Eco-friendly building strategies, giving more room for rivers, learning to live with floods etc. are the key ingredients of this initiative. Kerala which has a long history of implementing social security measures and several progressive interventions like land reforms, state action in education and health, expects to fulfil the present task also through peoples’ participation.

For this, the strong institutional framework of decentralisation of governance will be of great support.

Our rehabilitation packages give utmost importance to the basic needs of food and shelter to the least empowered sections of the society. We have also taken care to ensure that these sections get these as a matter of entitlement and rights and not as a gratis from the state or the society.

To conclude, I would like to note here that during the first week of May 2019 the cyclone Fani badly affected the Indian State Odisha. But damage to human life could be controlled due to sufficient early warning. This brings before us the fact that early warning systems should work effectively as the variations in climatic patterns due to global warming have increased the frequency of natural calamities like floods and cyclones.

I wholeheartedly support the theme of the conference which is “Opportunities to build back more inclusively include identifying vulnerable groups and their needs prior to a disaster, social protection programs that target the most vulnerable and ensuring that reconstruction does not overlook low-income and geographically-isolated areas.” The floods of 2018 brought the best of Kerala out – we supported each other in a spirit of brotherhood, without social or economic differences. This spirit will continue to inspire us through all our recovery efforts.

We are happy to share our experiences with others and learn better practices elsewhere. We see this forum as an important milestone that will help us get better ideas in building our State better.
KERALA IS AT CROSSROADS. WHILE THE UNPRECEDEDNT 2018 FLOODS WERE SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED, THE TASK OF REBUILDING AND TRANSFORMING THE STATE REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM CHALLENGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.

To build a strong resurgent Kerala that is future-ready, our knowledge and technical expertise must incorporate the best in the world, and be adapted to seamlessly meet the State’s needs. Revival of agriculture sector, housing for all, flood prevention, infrastructure development, research-based advancement and greater socio-economic empowerment are areas that will pave the way for Kerala’s transformation.

The Honourable Chief Minister of Kerala Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan led a delegation to the Netherlands, Switzerland and France in May 2019 to explore global best practices in governance, improve inter-governmental relations and attract investment.

NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands is of particular interest to Kerala considering that a densely populated country that is slightly larger than Kerala, through research driven sustainable agriculture, has become one of the world’s largest agricultural produce exporters with limited use of chemical fertilizers. They have successfully prevented floods even though one-third of the country is below sea level.

The delegation explored various advancements made in the agricultural sector at the University of Wageningen’s research centre, a leading centre for agriculture, life-sciences and plantation crop research. The techniques of precision farming, shelf life optimisation et al will be explored further to help revitalise Kerala’s traditional agricultural sector and increase agrarian exports. The ‘Room for the River Project’ for flood prevention was found to be a suitable model for adaptation in our low lying areas such as Kuttanad.

SWITZERLAND

The Chief Minister while addressing the Opening Session of the World Reconstruction Conference provided a comprehensive view of how Kerala
tackled the 2018 floods and spoke of the ‘Rebuild Kerala Initiative’ with fast and efficient relief, inclusive recovery and reconstruction. The session and the Kerala Pavilion at the conference succeeded in capturing the attention of key global policy and decision makers and will aid in our efforts for obtaining international support.

A resurgent Kerala must efficiently address the monumental task of waste processing in the interests of public health, animal welfare, environmental protection and responsible resource utilisation. The demonstrations at the Geneva Waste Management and Recycling Facility and the Waste Recycling Centre at Berne are successful illustrations of different strategies and technologies adopted for waste segregation, transportation and processing. The successful operation of these waste-to-energy units adhering to stringent environmental regulations will provide impetus to Kerala Government’s ongoing efforts to establish such units.

**FRANCE**

The discussion with the world renowned economist Professor Thomas Piketty at the Paris School of Economics focused on understanding the Professor’s views of the prevailing inequality in Indian society and how Kerala could further reduce it. He was particularly impressed by the initiatives of the State in introducing a law for bringing about land reforms in the State. Professor Piketty expressed keen interest in studying the Kerala Model of inclusive growth and has agreed to visit the State for holding detailed discussions.

**IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Our State must further strengthen ties with the Kerala diaspora, foreign Governments and other international entities for achieving sustainable development in our State. During the visit, the delegation highlighted the investment ecosystem post Kerala Investment Promotion Facilitation Act 2018 and the availability of highly skilled workforce.

The Non Resident Keralites opened up about their vision and pledged their support for the growth of our State. The World Health Organisation offered technical assistance in prevention and treatment of cancer, non-communicable diseases and expanding the reach of Ayurveda. The Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management of Netherlands, Ms. Cora van Nieuwenhuizen and members of the Switzerland Parliament have also expressed interest in visiting Kerala along with eminent business people to assess the infrastructure and other facilities available for setting up businesses.

The delegation also held discussions with basic infrastructure development and wastewater treatment companies and explored collaborations with Dutch experts in traffic management to resolve traffic congestion issues in the State.

**REBUILDING THE STATE**

The State is simultaneously perusing numerous avenues for socio-economic and cultural advancement of our people. The State, as a facilitator, has placed significant emphasis on improving efficiencies of departmental operations through modern technologies, creating streamlined processing systems, focussing on knowledge enhancement and attempting to identify synergies, wherever possible. The Kerala diaspora has the capacity to play a significant role in fostering international ties. Keralites, both at home and abroad, are indispensable to our transformation and we must work together in moulding a new resurgent Kerala.
History was scripted when Pinarayi Vijayan became the first chief minister from India to ring the iconic bell at London Stock Exchange (LSE) to mark the listing of masala bonds sold by Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB).

It was indeed a proud moment for Malayalees all over the world when Pinarayi Vijayan opened the floor for trading on May 17, 2019 at the prestigious LSE.

“It was a privilege to open the trading in London today. Kerala also became the first sub-sovereign entity in India to achieve such a feat,” Vijayan wrote on Twitter.

KIIFB, a state government agency, had raised Rs 2,150 crore through its debut masala bond issue. KIIFB plans to raise Rs 5,000 crore through masala bonds to fund large and critical infrastructure projects in Kerala. Indian Rupee denominated overseas bonds are popularly known as masala bonds.

London Stock Exchange welcomed KIIFB’s debut Masala bond, the first sub-sovereign entity in India to tap the offshore rupee international bond
The INR 21.5 billion ($312 million equivalent) senior secured fixed-rate bond has a five-year tenor with a 9.723% coupon. The bond has been admitted to London Stock Exchange’s International Securities Market.

Dr. K.M. Abraham, Chief Executive Officer, Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board: “This is a milestone transaction for the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board and for the State of Kerala. KIIFB is the first sub-sovereign entity in India to access the international debt capital markets in this manner. This transaction has realised our objective of diversifying our sources of funding by accessing capital from international investors. KIIFB strives to be at the forefront of creating a sustainable development model for infrastructure financing in the emerging markets and an exemplar for best practices in corporate governance and fund management.”

Darko Hajdukovic, Head of Fixed Income, Funds & Analytics, UK Primary Markets, London Stock Exchange: “London Stock Exchange warmly congratulates KIIFB on its landmark debut Masala bond. Our markets have enabled issuers to raise over $7.5 billion equivalent, allowing Masala bonds to evolve from a specialist segment to a mainstream asset class. KIIFB’s bond highlights London’s status as a leading international financing centre, offering issuers access to the deepest pool of long-term international investor capital as well as best in class listing solutions.”

Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy Mayor of London for Business, said: “The opening of this new listing further enhances London’s role as a leading international finance centre, attracting global issuers to its markets and strengthening our relationship with Kerala and India. This is further proof that London is Open as the best city in the world in which to do business.”

KSFE CHITTY LAUNCH IN THE AFTERNOON

The chief minister and team’s trip to Europe was also to woo overseas investors and to seek assistance in rebuilding the infrastructure which received a setback during the floods that wiped off parts of the state in August 2018.

Following the opening of the stock exchange in the morning at the LSE, Pinarayi Vijayan attended another meeting with the Malayalees in the UK in the afternoon at The Montcalm Royal London House Hotel in Liverpool Street in London on May 17, 2019.

The meeting which was organised, by Loka Kerala Sabha (World Kerala Assembly), saw a packed hall with limited spaces.

Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) CEO Dr KM Abraham made an introductory speech where he detailed the purpose of the meeting and visit of the Kerala delegation to Europe and the United Kingdom.

Following this Kerala Finance Minister Thomas Isaac welcomed the audience and invited Kerala Chief Minister to address the audience. The chief minister spoke to the attendees by detailing the various successful schemes the Kerala government had launched during his tenure.

He spoke about his government’s aims in rebuilding Kerala after the floods that wiped off parts of Kerala in August 2018. He shared his experiences of his visit to Netherlands and other European countries where he is learning and experiencing ways on how we can carry out similar successful technological advancements in Kerala.

He invited NRIs to join the KSFE Pravasi Chit fund which are the latest in a series of measures taken by his government to attract funds, working the market for capital expenditure back home.

KSFE Pravasi Chitty is a chit scheme tailor-made for non-resident Keralites. The scheme is being propelled by the Kerala State Financial Enterprises Limited in conjunction with KIIFB and NORKA.

Through the scheme, Malayalees across the world can join chits, pay installments and take part in chitty auction from anywhere, all of which can be done online. The government claims it’s a transparent process through which non-resident Keralites can boost their savings and at the same time, take part in the state’s infrastructure development.

The government is looking to raise capital of Rs 10,000 crore through the scheme to fund its infrastructure projects and social-welfare programmes in the fields of health and education.

Everything from registration to submission of security documents and chit selection and prize money collection can be done online. An online call-center has been established to answer queries and grievances.
Chief Minister Sri Pinarayi Vijayan visited the Netherlands from the 8th to 11th May 2019, as guest of the Dutch Government, for exploring the possibilities of cooperation in the areas of water management, flood prevention and control, agriculture, port development and inland waterways. The stay gave the CM further opportunities to visit the National archives, the flower garden and Tulip centre Keukenhof, Anne Frank House and greenhouses. The four day visit covered a wide range of subjects relevant for cooperation with the Dutch Government and private entities for the development of the state. The personal contacts established and the meaningful discussions will contribute substantially for the future of the country and the state.

Immediately after the August 2018 floods, two teams of experts in water and flood management visited Kerala and submitted their reports. Two Dutch experts were part of the first team sent by the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Bank. The second team was a Dutch team sent by the Dutch Government, which submitted a detailed report on Kuttanad and flood control and prevention. These reports lead to the present visit and direct discussions with the Dutch Government and the other related organizations. During the Community Meet on the last day of his visit the Chief Minister made a special reference to these two teams and thanked the Dutch members and the Government.

THE NETHERLANDS MATTERS

The Netherlands is a relatively small country as far as the area is concerned. However, it is a giant in technological developments and innovations. The Dutch is known for their hard work and enterprising capacities. The following question may arise in the minds of many Malayalees as well as others: why the
Netherlands? I would like to point out three important reasons for visiting the Netherlands. CM’s visit was very carefully planned to understand within a span of 72 hours the achievements of the host country mainly in the areas mentioned above. The aim of these exercises was to study the Dutch models of developments. I shall explain the problems faced by the Dutch vis-à-vis the problems facing Kerala. This will illustrate the importance of the visit to the Netherlands.

**FLOOD CONTROL AND WATER MANAGEMENT**

The Netherlands is in many aspects comparable to Kerala. The North Sea forms its Western border just like the Arabian Sea for Kerala. One third of the country lies below sea level. The Netherlands is also known as the lowlands. Kerala has also areas like Kuttanad. How to stop the sea from swallowing the country? How to protect the long coastal areas? Further, how to manage the rivers from overflowing? Ambassador Venu Rajamony has described these alarming situations facing the Netherlands and the measures taken against them, in his recently published book “What we can learn from the Dutch: Rebuilding Kerala Post 2018 floods”. The Delta works connecting the islands and controlling the flow of salt sea water into the villages are wonders. The fight against water is a continuous process. Safety of the people is of predominant importance to the Dutch.

In the light of the post-war technological developments to counter the atrocities of floods, no head of state who cares for his people and country would ever miss an opportunity to visit the Netherlands. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan accompanied by Ambassador Venu Rajamony, Chief Secretary Tom Jose and Additional Chief Secretary Vishwas Mehta had discussions with the Dutch Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management Ms. Cora...
van Nieuwenhuizen and visited many of the sites related to water management and flood control and prevention. One such project is the “room for river”. The Dutch build two banks – one for the flow on each side of the river and the other for the overflow, which is also for protecting the cattle. We can learn many aspects of the flow, overflow and avoiding disasters from these projects.

**AGRICULTURE FOR DOMESTIC SUPPLY AND WORLD EXPORT**

The Netherlands is the second largest exporter of agricultural products in the world. The revolutionary greenhouse farming uses less water. It needs no soil. Pesticides are almost forbidden. Small farmers contribute their big share in the production. Visitors to the Netherlands are attracted by the long stretches of glass- or greenhouses lit at night and sometimes also during day by powerful led lamps. The whole process of growing in greenhouses is worth seeing. Plants grow on recyclable poly plastic. They are managed by computers which give them water and manure at the right time. The vegetable auction markets are technological wonders. The agro industry supplies one of the biggest shares of the national GDP. The production is not only for national consumption; but also for export. They grow even tropical vegetables. The greenhouse and precision farming made revolutions in the production of vegetables.

The growth of agricultural products, especially vegetables, in Kerala will certainly benefit by a close look at the innovative processes...
of production, preservation in cool houses and sale. Chief Minister had fruitful discussions with Mr. Jan-Kees Goet, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. One of the salient features of this meeting is the handing over of the letter on the implementation of a Centre of Excellence for Vegetables and Flowers in Kerala with the cooperation of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture. The discussion with the Wageningen Agricultural University is another milestone in improving research and development in Kerala.

RENOVATION AND REBUILDING – ROTTERDAM PORT AND INLAND WATERWAYS

The Netherlands which was heavily bombarded during the Second World War has risen remarkably from the ashes within a very short span of time. The Dutch built excellent harbours and many industries apart from developing new residential areas with modern facilities. The Rotterdam port - rebuilt after the Second World War - is the largest in Europe. The high-tech port is an example for efficient loading, unloading and transport facilities. The optimally maintained water ways in the Netherlands contribute to efficient transportation at a relatively low cost. The efficient use of the Dutch canals for transport may form a model for rejuvenating the canals in Kerala, for example in Alleppey, Cochin and Quilon. In Rotterdam CM was briefed on a number of topics such as inland waterways, logistics, flood control and water management. Further discussions will take place in Kerala during the visit of the Rotterdam port representatives. This visit has substantially contributed for establishing bilateral cooperation.

The devastated Dutch cities after the Second World War reminded us the atrocities of the August 2018 floods. It should be possible for Kerala to rebuild the old and to create the new ones. The Dutch created land out of sea and built a complete new city with all modern facilities and also agricultural land. There are many such examples of Dutch innovation.

The Dutch employer’s federation VNO-NCW advises the Government on all aspects of labour and employment. It is an important entity in policy making. This federation organized a meeting with the Chief Minister and his team.

“MEET AND GREET” FOR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN KERALA

On the last day of his visit, the Chief Minister and his team along with Ambassador Venu Rajamony and the First Secretary Mrs. Mrinalini Kaur Sapra of the Indian Embassy attended a “Meet and Greet” event where a seminar on “Business opportunities in Kerala” was organized by the Indian and Dutch business chambers ASSOCHAM, NICCT and IBC. The Chief Secretary and the Additional Chief Secretary made an illustrated presentation and answered all the questions. Many of those present expressed their intentions to come up with investment proposals. The Chief Minister and the Secretaries assured them all facilities and assistance. A business delegation to Kerala in this year is one of the proposals.

THE CULTURAL BOND

From the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch East India Company was very active for about two centuries in Kerala. Though their main activity was centred on trade and commerce, some of
the Dutch Governors immensely contributed to our language and culture. Many historical places, documents and cultural artefacts remind us of this golden relationship. The Chief Minister along with Ambassador Venu Rajamony and the Chief Secretary visited the Dutch National Archive in the Hague, where many of the documents pertaining to this period are preserved in good conditions. Three important decisions were taken: one to organize an exhibition in Cochin about the Indo-Dutch relationship; the second a plan to digitize the documents in the archives in Kerala, and the third, a reprint of the English translation of the Hortus Malabaricus. This will also explain how meaningful and useful were the visits of the Chief Minister and his team to the Netherlands.

**WHEN THE HILL RANGES BECOME A GARDEN OF TULIPS**

CM received a detailed briefing about the cooperative model of business, the plan of the garden and also about the tulips. CM discussed on the feasibility of growing Tulips in the hill ranges in Kerala. This is a model for creating such gardens in Kerala in the valleys on the sides of our Western Ghats or in any other place in Kerala. The director of Keukenhof informed the CM about all the facets of this wonderful tourist attraction. Keukenhof is one more Dutch model for the whole world to follow.

Development of tourism is an important project of the Government. Every year millions of tourists visit
Amsterdam. Many of them take a canal ride. Why a canal ride? Within about sixty to ninety minutes one can learn the history of the country, the ancient town planning and architecture, the East India Company buildings, the shutters preventing floods, bridges connecting the streets and the rich museums. In one ride the tourist will see many historic buildings. CM made a canal cruise in Amsterdam and was overwhelmed by the organisations helping the flow of tourists. The impressions CM received will help a long way in developing Kerala tourism further.

A visit to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Anne Frank was a brave Jewish girl who, in the beginning, escaped from the Nazis who occupied the Netherlands during the second world war, by hiding in a rear little room in a 17th century canal house in Amsterdam. She could hide here only for two years from 1942. The Nazis found her and deported her to a concentration camp. During the two years of hidden life, she maintained a diary. This diary was saved and became a very important historical document. The house where she stayed is now known as the Anne Frank House and is a museum. Her father Frank, the only one to survive, wished that this house and the diary would constantly remind the dangers of discrimination, racism and hatred of Jews.
What is KIIFB?
KIIFB is a financial company owned by the government of Kerala. It aims at taking in borrowings and spending them for the basic infrastructural development of the state. A sum of rupees 50,000 crores is intended to be collected in the initial phase.

What is the working model of KIIFB?
To develop the roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and other infrastructural facilities through loans and borrowings foreseeing the future revenue of the government and to collect the fund required for the same through bonds and other instruments. It also thereby ensures infrastructural facilities of international standards to our children.

What is the need for a specialised company? Why can’t the government accept loans directly?
There are legal limitations for the amount of loans that a government can take in directly, which have been fixed by the central government. This leap in infrastructural development which we aim at won’t be possible with the portion allocated from such loans whereas no such limitations are applicable to the government owned companies. This is the reason why a new company has been set up.

Is it desirable to surmount such restrictions that are placed for attaining economic stability? Won’t it lead us into a debt trap?
No. Precautions have been taken to avoid such debt traps. It is not only us who are taking such loans, almost all public sector undertakings take in such borrowings. The big projects of our state such as Vizhinjam port, Kochi Metro, Kannur air port and so on are all being done by accepting such large scale borrowings. This won’t lead them into debt traps and the loans will be repaid by the revenue from the projects in the future.

But, all the above said projects are revenue earning ones, aren’t they? Can the same be said about those undertaken through KIIFB? How will the money be repaid?
About 50% of the Motor Vehicle taxes of the state and the petroleum cess have been legally allocated for the repayment of the loan. He total of 50,000 crore and its interest can be repaid within the tenure of the loan with this amount.

What is a Masala Bond?
Masala Bonds are instruments wherein foreign investments are collected by releasing bonds in terms of Indian Rupees itself instead of foreign currencies. This was released at first by the financial institution
decided each year by the Central government above which we cannot take loans independently. KIFBI has been set up to attract large scale investments other than budget for infrastructural developments crossing all the limitations. The state government was borrowing loans from the National Savings scheme (NSC) till the past two years at an interest rate of 9-11% which is now reduced to 8.4%. But the central government has fixed limits for this also. An average of 5% interest is levied on the loan taken by the state government for the RDF project from NABARD, but the loan is limited to 350 crores of rupees. The loan taken from NIDA, a specialised agency of NABARD amounted to 9.3% interest and the same taken from various banks amounted to 9.15% interest.

The Indian states such as Andhra Pradesh have collected funds for domestic market by means of bonds. The debentures collected for the basic infrastructural development of Amaravathi, the capital of Andhra amounted to 10.34% of interest.

**Who or What is CDPQ, who purchased the Masala Bonds?**

CDPQ is a Pension Fund Management Company that was constituted in 1966. It is a public sector undertaking that was established following a legislation passed by the Canadian provincial Cubic National Assembly. CDPQ has about 130 million of Indian government securities. It has an investment of about $220 billion across 75 countries i.e., 15.4 lakh crores of rupees. The company has an investment of 31500 crores of rupees ($4.5 billion). The National Infrastructural Investment Fund Board (NIIFB) of central government is cooperating in many projects with the company. The NIIFB is the central government initiative that is equivalent to KIFBI.

**Even though it is KIFIB that releases the bond, aren’t the people and the state the ultimate bearers of the debt burden. So isn’t there a need of a common deliberation and accreditation for the same. And is it something to be decided by only two or three people?**

The money collection methods of KIIFB have been clearly mentioned in the budget speech and discussions thereafter in the legislative Assembly. No objections or arguments were raised either during the discussions or when the KIIFB law was passed. And, it is only now when KIIFB proves to be a success that untimely objections and criticisms are being put forward. It is to be kept in mind that a sum of rupees 1300 crores was taken as loan from the Canara Bank at an interest rate of 10.8% which is 0.6% more than the basic interest rate of the bank during the tenure of the last UDF government. The opposition parties were not consulted when that loan was taken. All these are the part of the day to day activities of the government. This is similar to that. Many Public sector undertakings and government agencies in India accept loans by means of instruments like bonds and debentures from the domestic as well as foreign markets. None of this is done after notifying or advertising in newspapers asking anyone whether there is a disagreement in the interest rate or so.

**Kochi Metro received loans at 1.3% interests during the UDF government. Could KIIFB have got the foreign loan at the same rate?**

It is not only during the UDF tenure, the loan taken by this government for the Kochi water Metro is also at the rate of 1.3%. One thing that the critics try to hide is that all these loans are in terms of dollars and Euros that is, if one takes a loan of 100 dollars today, the same 100 dollars and interest should be repaid at the end of 25 years which is the tenure of the loan at the exchange rate that prevails then. For example, suppose we took 100 dollars as loan before 25 years, the exchange rate of dollar was 31 rupees in 1994. At the end of 25 years which is the tenure of the loan at the exchange rate that prevails then. Today the value of dollar in rupees is 68. The loan which valued rs3100 at the time of borrowing will amount to 6800 rupees at the time of repaying. This is the actual burden of dollar loans. It is not the interest but the decline
in the exchange which is the actual threat with foreign loans. The burden increases not based on the interest rates but on the exchange rates. But Masala bonds don’t have such an issue. We borrow loans in terms of rupees. The fluctuations in exchange rates will not affect the same. People try to add flavours to the allegations hiding these facts. It is the people who are clear about the facts there is no possible comparison between loans in dollars and those in rupees who are coming forth with such allegations.

**Can the huge loans that are taken for KIIFB be repaid? Will not this lead the state to debt trap?**

These are the questions that were raised and replayed in almost all budget discussions right from that relating to KIIFB. The loan amount indeed should be repaid with it’s interest. In order to do that only the tax amount allocated for the same as per the provisions of the law that was unanimously passed by the assembly should be KIFBI. Not a single more penny should be given in this regard.

**What is the amount allocated annually according to the KIIFB law passed by Kerala Legislative Assembly?**

Mainly a part of the Motor Vehicle tax is given to KIIFB. 20% of the tax is to be given in 2017-18 and 30% of the same in 2018-19, 40% in 19-20 and from 2020-2021 onwards 50% of the tax is to be allocated according to the provisions. The 1 rupee per litre petroleum cess that was decided to be collected during the UDF government is also allocated for KIIFB. No one accused this to be un bearable in the discussions in the assembly. The revenue that KIIFB would receive if the rate of growth of vehicle tax and petrol consumption was to continue as in the past decade was represented by a bar chart. KIIFB will receive revenue of about 1 lakh crore rupees from the government by 2030-31. The construction activities worth about 50 crore rupees are intended to be initiated under KIIFB. The planning and implementation of these will take time as all these are large scale projects. The system of online payment for the contractor once the construction is completed. The bills are expected to be paid within six years. Thus there is no question of borrowing the entire amount as loan in advance. Bonds will be released and loans will be taken only according to the needs that arise each year. It is because of this notion that no loans were taken thus far. No one will say that the construction works that we are doing now re unnecessary. They have been shaped according to the suggestions put forward by the members of the assembly. It will take about 15 years if these works are to be done with the budget allocations as usual. That is why we complete these constructions using the borrowings at a stretch. An extra expense of interest may arise while taking loans. But the construction expense for a project for 15 years is much higher than this interest rate and thus the importance of constructions even through loans will be acknowledged by everyone. The present generation will enjoy the benefits of the same. These infrastructure facilities will attract the industrial giants to Kerala. There will be a great leap in investments and developments. Time will relinquish us if we hesitate.

Masala Bonds are instruments wherein foreign investments are collected by releasing bonds in terms of Indian Rupees itself instead of foreign currencies. This was released at first by the financial institution named International Financial Cooperation.
GFDRR MISSION WITH A VISION

GFDRR is a global partnership established in 2006 to support developing countries to understand, manage, and ultimately reduce their risk from natural hazards and climate change. Hosted at the World Bank, GFDRR is supported by 37 countries and 11 international organizations, and works with over 400 sub-national, national, regional, and international partners. GFDRR’s governance, mission, and operating framework are defined in its Partnership Charter. The long-term strategic objectives of GFDRR are set and monitored by the Consultative Group (CG), which is GFDRR’s primary advisory and decisionmaking body. The CG includes donor members and observers, invited developing country members, intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, and civil society organizations. The CG is chaired by the World Bank and co-chaired by a contributing CG Member that rotate annually. The GFDRR Secretariat carries out GFDRR’s mission, and is responsible for the preparation of the annual work program, awarding and monitoring of grant resources, as well as reporting to the CG. The large majority of GFDRR grant resources are dedicated to its in-country engagements that support on-the-ground implementation of the Sendai Framework. The GFDRR Secretariat also maintains thematic initiatives that provide technical expertise to help advance strategic areas of engagement and facilitate global cooperation. Promoting resilience to climate change and enabling gender equality are both central to achieving GFDRR’s mission, and these two themes are embedded into all GFDRR activities.

THE BOOK THAT TOOK THE WORLD BY STORM

It is the economics book that took the world by storm. Capital in the Twenty-First Century, written by the French economist Thomas Piketty, was published in French in 2013 and in English in March 2014. The English version quickly became an unlikely bestseller, and it prompted a broad and energetic debate on the book’s subject: the outlook for global inequality. The book argues that the rate of capital return in developed countries is persistently greater than the rate of economic growth, and that this will cause wealth inequality to increase in the future. To address this problem, Piketty proposes redistribution through a progressive global tax on wealth.
KERALA INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT FUND BOARD

MANSOON ECONOMY

M. Muhammed Haris
Additional Secretary, Finance Department

Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), a State Government Agency has raised ₹2150 crore in March 29, 2019 for the Infrastructure development through Masala Bond. Kerala is the first State in India stepped into well planned strategic endeavour has created path breaking milestone by successful completion its debut international issue of bond in India Rupees from London Stock Exchange by the Chief Minister of Kerala Sri. Pinarai Vijayan in the presence of Chief Secretary Tom Jose and CEO Dr. K.M. Abraham etc. Moreover it a largest dual currency issue by an Indian State from entire emerging bond markets. The first offshore capital market advertise of a State level entity from India witnessed strong participation of a wide spectrum of investors include asset managers, insurance companies, pension funds bank and private wealth managers. The acceptability of KIIFB among international investors shows the strength of State economy. The transaction has realise the objective of diversifying the sources of funding by accessing capital from the international investors for the sustainable and infrastructure development and create new path for corporate governance and fund management.

Its secured ₹2150 crore investment in the first issue at fixed rate of interests 9.723% for 5 year tenure “Masala Bonds”. These issuance of Masala Bond is a sole property of large Indian corporate such as HDFC and National level investors like National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and National Thermal Power Corporation (NDPC) which are all rated AAA in the domestic market. KIIFB founded in 1999 act as a special purpose vehicle to mobilise funds for infrastructure development of the state of Kerala. After the enactment of FRBM (Kerala Fiscal Responsibility & Budget Management) Act 2003, KIIFB has shelved all the projects, now it is in the infrastructure development of the State. As the bond is issued in terms of rupees it is free form of exchange rate fluctuation and save the rupees from devaluations. In view of tension between United State of America and Iran and trade war between U.S.A and China the Masala Bond will save the possible down fall of Indian Rupee.

“Masala Bond” is a term used to refer
to a financial instrument through which Indian entities can raise money from overseas markets in the Indian Rupee. They are rupee-denominated bonds issued to overseas buyers and are free from the risk of fluctuations in the value of foreign exchange. The term “Masala Bonds” was used by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) with reference to the culture and cuisine of India.

Kerala has previously created history in the domestic bond market by becoming the first state in the country to float a Municipal Bond. It is a little known fact, even within Kerala, that Calicut (now Kozhikode) Corporation was the first Local Government in India to float Municipal Bonds way back in 1969. In the absence of any precedents laid down procedures, the then Mayor and Commissioner of Calicut Corporation directly met Shri. Marariji Desai, who was the Finance Minister and placed their proposal before him. Though the request was unconventional, recognizing its objective and potential, the Finance Minister gave his consent. The Corporation harnessed Rs.30,00,000 from the local public, spent it well and repaid it promptly.

It has also helped to showcase the unique strengths of Kerala before a wider global audience and will certainly serve to attract international investments to the state.

This is a milestone transaction for KIIFB in realising its objective of diversifying funding sources by accessing capital from international investors. KIIFB is striving to be at the forefront of creating a sustainable development model for infrastructure financing in emerging markets and an exemplar for best practices in corporate governance and fund management. The successful closing of this deal is also recognition of fundamental robustness of the Kerala economy and the development model adopted by the state. It could act as a spring board for future international issuances by KIIFB and also help the State in strengthening its connect with the global investment community and the NRIs living in different parts of the world.
THE WELCOME NOTE BY LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE

London Stock Exchange today welcomes Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board’s (KIIFB) debut Masala bond, the first sub-sovereign entity in India to tap the offshore rupee international bond market. The INR 21.5 billion ($312 million equivalent) senior secured fixed-rate bond has a five-year tenor with a 9.723% coupon. The bond has been admitted to London Stock Exchange’s International Securities Market. (lsge.com)

LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE

London Stock Exchange is one of the world’s oldest stock exchanges and can trace its history back more than 300 years. London Stock Exchange Group was created in October 2007 when London Stock Exchange merged with Milan Stock Exchange, Borsa Italiana. London Stock Exchange is the largest Masala bond centre globally

THOMAS PIKETTY

Thomas Piketty is Professor at EHESS and at the Paris School of Economics. He is the author of numerous articles published in journals such as the Quarterly Journal of Economics, the Journal of Political Economy, the American Economic Review, the Review of Economic Studies, Explorations in Economic History, Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales, and of a dozen books. He has done major historical and theoretical work on the interplay between economic development, the distribution of income and wealth, and political conflict. In particular, he is the initiator of the recent literature on the long run evolution of top income shares in national income (now available in the World Inequality Database). These works have led to radically question the optimistic relationship between development and inequality posited by Kuznets, and to emphasize the role of political, social and fiscal institutions in the historical evolution of income and wealth distribution. He is also the author of the international best-seller Capital in the 21st century.
Much has been written about how the Malabar Coast connected Kerala with the rest of the world. The commercial activity in this region brought in not just material exchanges from across the globe, but also forms of belief, culture, tradition, and religion. K.R. Sunil’s photo series, Manchukkar: The Seafarers of Malabar, tells the stories of arguably the last links in this chain. Self-narratives are special. They often throw light on what historians don’t. It is through the fabric of the everyday that such narratives are woven, revealing astonishing tales about people, their lives and their times. K.R. Sunil’s recently concluded photography exhibition on the seafarers of 20th century Malabar—Manchukkar—retold some such narratives. A manchu or dhow (also called pathemari or vanchi) is a wooden boat that the seafarers of Malabar used for travel and trade. Before motors became common in the second half of the 20th century, dhows sailed on winds, their masts often standing as tall as fifty feet. In a collection of black-and-white portraits, Sunil absorbed the lives of the sailors—their hopes, dreams, and memories of a time at sea. All of Sunil’s subjects are men, now over sixty years of age, who joined the boats in their teens as cooks. Those who stayed on became deckhands and captains. Some went on to serve for as long as half a century. About those long years at sea, some recollect heartwarming tales of friendship and camaraderie. Sixty-four-year-old Hussain has fond memories of making friends and exchanging gifts with Arabs on his travels to Ajman and Muscat. The boats often carried clothes and other accessories that labourers in Arab countries sent back home to Kerala.

For many in the villages of Malabar, these manchus were their ticket to big cities like Kozhikode and Bombay or to the Arab lands. Abdullahkutty, sixty-six, recollects a fascinating “ceremony” for new sailors before they saw the skyline of Bombay for the first time: “You must wash your eyes with turmeric water before you look at the big city!”

But for the most part, life at sea was far from easy. “Death was a constant companion,” recollects seventy-year-old Kunjava about a boat-wreck that almost killed him. Kunjamu (67?) remembers being crammed on a small life-boat with his crew after a storm swallowed their dhow. Everyone tied themselves to each other so that at least their bodies would be found when they all died. Some, like Manchukkoran of Kasaragode, hung their boots early because of near-death experiences at sea. The cyclone from 1967 seems etched in the memories of many of these sailors. Two boats from Ponnani—Duldul and Vijayamala—were destroyed by this cyclone, and many lives were lost. Ummar Srank, now in his seventies, was among the lucky ones who survived. His wife remembers being terrified because news of the deaths of her neighbours at sea reached home before Ummar could return. During the Indo-Pakistan War (in 1965), some of the sailors at sea spent their days in constant fear of being bombed. P. Ummar and his crew had to live on the boat at sea in total darkness for a week because they were given strict instructions to have their lights turned off after dark. Some also recount disturbing tales of sexual abuse by the captains.

This exhibition on the sailors adds to Sunil’s excellent documentation of everyday life in Malabar and its “histories from below”—histories of the less powerful that often remain undocumented. When asked why he chooses to do portraits, he quips: “It is people’s stories that brought me to it...it’s not just about taking pictures. These people have a history that needs to be told”. He plans to extend this work into a book, complete with more pictures, artefacts and stories. Through Sunil’s evocative photographs, we get a glimpse of a powerful and moving world of hardship, pain, sacrifices, friendships and love. On land, it was often poverty and hunger that forced these young boys to take up these dangerous voyages. At sea, cyclones and storms were constant companions, often wreaking havoc and loss of life. Between these, on boats to far-off lands, the seafarers sailed towards hope.
we have the sea tied to our blood...
MANCHUKKAR
The Seafarers of Malabar

Credit: ala.com
The survival story of Ubeesh and Ajanya seems to be unbelievable even to modern medicine. It is more than a reality and no less than a fairy tale. When the aggressive Nipah virus attacked the state last year, nobody had a clue about the idea of ‘great escape’ from this outbreak. The relentless and unabated effort made by the doctors and expert teams saved the state from this dangerous epidemic. But the Nipah claimed lives of many but two people survived from the deadly attack, remains as inspiring figures. Ubeesh from Malappuram and Ajanya from Kozhikode are not victims but heroes who defeated the Nipah attack. The survival of two heroes are true inspiration for the entire humanity.

“There is nothing to worry about the virus but all we need is to be cautious and alert. I was too prudent and careful that nobody would get infection from me. So that I took precautions very seriously. I used N-95 mask and communicated only to my father by keeping a safe distance of 1 km. The excellent treatment facilities and clean surroundings helped me for a quick survival” says Ubeesh who hails from Malappuram.

Ajanya native of Kozhikode also has similar saga of survival. She got Nipah attack while doing internship at Medical College causality. “Nothing will happen if we face it with intense courage and vigilant care. My life is the result of team work of health people who worked arduously for the wellness of whole community. One thing I have to make clear is that, if we fear the virus attack entire things will get worse. All we have to do is be confident and trust ourselves. Follow the instructions and suggestions put forward by the health experts”.

Both of them are thankful to everyone who accompanied them during those hard times. Family and friends motivated and helped them to return to normal life. What we have to learn from this is that confidence and willpower along with the idea of togetherness’ will help to overcome any menace. We shall overcome!!
As you are all aware, a case of Nipah infection has been reported at Ernakulam District. I assure you that The State Health Department is all equipped to address any challenge in this regard. However we have to be vigilant and take appropriate precaution to contain the spreading of the disease.

Nipah is a zoonotic virus and can also be transmitted through contaminated food or directly between people. Infected people initially develop symptoms of fever, headache, muscle pain, nausea and sore throat. Stringent personal hygiene measures along with avoiding exposure to droppings of bats should be followed. I also want to tell you not to be panicked, but to be vigilant only and also don’t fall into false propaganda and confusing social media messages. From our part with the dedicated team of health professionals we are vigilantly following all those suspicious cases. The student who was identified as Nipah positive is under treatment and the disease is under control. With the great team effort by everyone in the health sector and corporation from the public we will definitely overcome this threat and fight the Nipah in the same manner as we have done in the past.
It has been a year since we successfully combated the Nipah virus infection that affected Kerala under unforeseen circumstances. A reminder of the state’s furious battle with and victory over this unexpected attack will undoubtedly be a morale-booster. The story of how the Government, though shaken at first, confidently took the initiative to save our land from this scourge and drove away the Nipah virus is part of the annals of history now. The most alarming nature of the infection was that the patient went into a critical condition within a few hours of the manifestation of the first signs of the disease, and died shortly afterwards.

As soon as the cause of the epidemic in Kozhikode was confirmed as Nipah virus, it was decided that the situation had to be tackled on a war-footing. Immediately, a team comprising the Additional Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Health and other officials made enquiries all around the world about cases and experiences similar to Nipah viral infection. What such efforts generated were very worrisome bits of information about Nipah outbreak in places like Bangladesh, Malaysia, Siliguri and so on. Now there was no doubt that combat measures had to be taken at the earliest.

Immediately after the National Institute of Virology confirmed the Nipah virus infection, the news was released to the public through the media. Under such circumstances, maintaining transparency and giving warning to the masses were of utmost importance. However since there were chances of this leading to panic and hysteria, it was necessary to make people understand that the need of the hour was defence against the infection, not fear. The Health and the Public Relations departments were able to instil this awareness among the public. The task of dispelling people’s fears regarding Nipah infection was taken on bravely.

Under the collective leadership of the Director of the Health department, the District Collector and the D. M. O., a special cell to control the spread of the disease and a 24-hour call centre were made operational at the Kozhikode Guest House. In the meanwhile a few
people who had been in contact with the family of Mr Sabith, the first victim of Nipah infection, started succumbing to death. This was a frightening scenario. Deadly contagions like the Nipah infection put caregivers to extreme risk of infection. The need to protect the lives of the hospital staff presented a huge challenge. For this, an expert committee was set up to formulate a set of guidelines based on those laid down by the World Health Organisation. It was then sent to all hospitals in the district. Facilities for emergency treatment, and sufficient number of ventilators as well as other amenities were made available in all major private hospitals as well as the taluk, district and general hospitals. With the participation of representatives from Animal Welfare Organization, Disaster Management Authority, Forest Department, Revenue Department, Department of Home Affairs and Department of Local Self Government, the State was able to put up a strong circle of defence against the disease.

Amidst this, it was extremely painful to learn that Ms Lini, the nurse who had taken care of Sabith at Perambra taluk hospital, had fallen prey to the disease. Lini was extraordinarily brave. Even as she became aware of her impending death, she was determined that the infection should not pass from her to anyone else. The courage that she showed to insist that her husband and children not visit her in hospital cannot be overlooked. The services rendered by the nurses and doctors who valiantly carried on their responsibilities in the isolation ward, despite the death of one of their colleagues, can never be forgotten. The memory of the nurse who sacrificed her life while selflessly tending to patients under her care will never fade from Malayali minds.

What followed was an effort to find Ribavirin, a tablet against Nipah virus. Emergency measures were taken to bring in this medicine from Hyderabad. Even though there was no authenticated evidence of its curative power, it was known to provide some relief. In the meanwhile news reached about a medicine named Human Monoclonal Antibody (M 1.04) with the Government of Queensland, Australia. This drug had been tested on 14 people affected by a virus called Henipa and all of them escaped death. So with the permission of the Chief Minister, the Government of Queensland was contacted, and a request submitted through the Central Government. Subsequently they agreed to supply...
the medicine. The speed with which an N.O.C. was obtained from the Central Drugs Controller was unbelievable. The N. O. C., that usually takes three to four months to come through, was made available within a day. This was an invigorating achievement.

By then, all processes had been expedited to provide safety equipment to the nursing staff so that they could take care of incoming patients. N 95 masks, P. P. E. and other such devices were made available. The staff taking care of the patients had to change their safety dress at least three times a day. Safe disposal of these items had to be ensured. There was a fear of acute shortage of masks and other equipment. At this critical juncture, Dr Shamsheer Vayalil, owner of V. P. S. Healthcare Group, arranged the supply of safety equipment worth Rs 30 lakhs via a special flight from the U. A. E. With that, all apprehensions were laid to rest.

While all such efforts were progressing, the confirmation of the disease in three people who had died after being brought from Malappuram to Kozhikode Medical College caused a great deal of discomfort. Consequently a camp was set up in Malappuram similar to that in Kozhikode, and defence lines were mounted. It was decided that patients detected with the infection should be shifted to Manjeri Medical College or Kozhikode Medical College. Though the hospital staff was apprehensive about the decision in the beginning, very soon they braced themselves for the task. More members were inducted into the teams to give adequate rest to the staff operating in the isolation ward. Special arrangements were made in the O. P. counters to admit patients exhibiting symptoms of Nipah infection and shift them to the I. C. U. immediately.

The responsibility of cremating the Nipah victims with extreme caution was also discharged dutifully. It was not possible to permit the bereaved families or members of the community to dispose of the dead. Therefore members of expert committees and the District Collector intervened to convince the families about the seriousness of the matter and the inevitability of cremation in electric cemeteries. Hearts were heavy as the bodies of the departed, including Lini’s, were consigned to the furnace. Such a precaution was necessary in order to ensure no one else fell victim to Nipah. The most significant achievement was that team effort and mutual trust among the members helped find timely solutions at every step along the way.

At the same time, there were a few who tried to spread untruths and nonsense about Nipah through the new-age media. But the Government acted with equanimity, took steps against those involved in misinformation campaigns and reined in such attempts in time.

In the initial days of the outbreak, the media accused the Government of failure, but on understanding the facts, most of them put an end to negative propaganda and cooperated with the ongoing efforts.

Various agencies, including the W. H. O., have acknowledged that it was due to the time-bound and scientific measures adopted by the Health Department of Kerala in dealing with this extremely critical issue that the infection could be contained and the death rates lowered. Even the international community recognized that it set an exemplary standard for the world to follow. The part played by the media in informing the public about the State’s endeavours to resist the disease and raise awareness among the masses deserves special mention. The successful detection of the Nipah virus as early as when it claimed its second victim and the containment
We have to continue to be alert in the future as well. If we work together we can resist not only Nipah, but all other contagious diseases such as dengue fever, H1N1, rat fever and jaundice as well. If we stand united, we can maintain cleanliness and develop immunity against infections. Paying respects to Lini’s demise let us hold hands and take a solemn pledge to fight all contagions.

of the infection at the second stage itself were achievements that attracted global attention.

However, scientists fear there is no guarantee that Nipah virus won’t strike again. There are chances of recurrence of the infection during the reproductive season of bats, from December to January. So this time the Health Department has taken all preventive measures. The strategy adopted is to prepare isolation wards in all Medical College Hospitals and subject patients to a thorough medical examination even when they exhibit only the slightest symptoms. Well-organized awareness programmes have also been conducted for the public.

We have to continue to be alert in the future as well. If we work together we can resist not only Nipah, but all other contagious diseases such as dengue fever, H1N1, rat fever and jaundice as well. If we stand united, we can maintain cleanliness and develop immunity against infections. Paying respects to Lini’s demise let us hold hands and take a solemn pledge to fight all contagions.
KERALA’S HEALTH SECTOR SHOULD BE CONGRATULATED ON

ROBERT CHARLES GALLO  Co-founder & Director, Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine
The Homer & Martha Gudelsky Distinguished Professor in Medicine Co-founder & Scientific Director, Global Virus Network

The Institute of Human Virology (IHV) was co-founded and is directed by Robert C. Gallo, MD, the eminent scientist who became world famous in 1984 when he co-discovered HIV as the cause of AIDS. Little was known then of the mysterious disease that was fast becoming the deadliest in medical history. Since, Dr. Gallo has spent much of his career trying to put an end to this raging epidemic and other viral, chronic illnesses.

In 2011, Dr. Gallo co-founded the Global Virus Network (GVN) to position the world to rapidly respond to new or re-emerging viruses that threaten mankind, to bring together and achieve collaboration amongst the world’s leading virologists, and to support training of the next generation of medical virologists.

In an exclusive interview with Kerala Calling, the world renowned Dr. Gallo lauds the Kerala Government on its realisation of a dream— an advanced Virology Institute for the State. He also showers praises on the State administration for the way it tamed the deadly Nipah outbreak last year.

How vulnerable are humans to an outbreak of viruses? Are we really facing a microbial/viral threat in the 21st century?
We are completely vulnerable to viral outbreaks, as they are completely unpredictable and can have a significant impact globally more than ever. Climate change, urban expansion, increased risk of infectious pathogens spilling over from animals to humans, deforestation, increased international travel and other constantly changing global variables means that at any given time humans are susceptible to viral outbreaks. With our unprecedented increased mobility, viruses like West Nile Virus, Ebola, Lassa and Zika can readily cross what become arbitrary geographic boundaries. Looking at the history of HIV, polio outbreaks and past influenza pandemics – there is always a chance for viral outbreaks that humans are vulnerable to. Influenza, Ebola and Nipah are other common examples of old and new emerging viruses that can cause pandemics.

**How does the GVN work? How does information and knowledge exchange happen within the GVN?**

The Global Virus Network (GVN) is a coalition comprised of eminent human and zoonotic virologists from 45 Centers of Excellence and seven Affiliates in 29 countries worldwide, working collaboratively to train the next generation, advance knowledge about how to identify and diagnose pandemic viruses, mitigate and control how such viruses spread and make us sick, as well as develop drugs, vaccines and treatments to combat them. No single institution in the world has expertise in all viral areas other than the GVN, which brings together the finest medical virologists to leverage their individual expertise and coalesce global teams of specialists on the scientific challenges, issues and problems posed by pandemic viruses.

**What are the viruses that may cause an outbreak in the near future, and are we prepared to face it?**

The most likely virus to cause an outbreak in the near future is unknown; not necessarily a virus unknown throughout history like HIV, but rather something you aren’t expecting, such as a new variant or mutation of an existing virus. However, the next most likely to cause an outbreak is influenza. With increased tourism and travel, it would be impossible to predict the next virus that will contribute to an outbreak. It’s probable that there will be more than one, and viruses like HTLV-1 and HIV speak to outbreaks that will continue. Eradication of measles and polio might be possible given that current reservoirs for these viruses don’t exist and proper inoculation program have previously been implemented. So far, we have not been successful. Yellow Fever and Zika virus also pose threats as re-emerging disease and West Nile transmission has increased with increasing travel.

**South Asia is one of the highly populated terrains on earth - does it**
make it any important for virology?

Absolutely. South Asia is highly populated and like any terrain, is susceptible to viral outbreaks. For example, in India there have been outbreaks of Dengue, Chikungunya and Hepatitis C, as well as HIV. There are additional viral outbreaks in southern China and Indonesia.

An important factor of rapid spread of infection is due to air travel and population. This makes places like South Asia particularly vulnerable to pandemics. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates most outbreaks will likely begin in the world’s most vulnerable areas – countries with few resources to enforce preventive measures before it spreads. The CDC estimates that a virus can travel from a remote village to major cities on all continents in 36 hours. The threat to our world is at its highest ever.

With reference to the last NIPAH outbreak in Kerala, how effective was the state’s health sector, which are the areas we need improvement in defending an onslaught by viruses?

The state’s health sector should be congratulated on their efforts. The need for improvement in defending an onslaught of viruses is a global concern and not just limited to India. Some parts of Africa, Central America, Asia and the Caribbean are striving to respond accordingly. Improvement efforts are needed worldwide.

Apart from epidemics, the number of cancer cases are increasing in Kerala. What are the types of cancers caused by viruses and bacteria, and can we prevent them if diagnosed?

We estimate that more than 20 percent of cancers have been shown to involve an infection – seven viruses and one bacterium. These viruses are Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV), Human Herpesvirus-8 (HHV-8), Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), Human T-cell Leukemia Virus Type 1 (HTLV-1), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), and Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) bacterium. Various co-factors play a significant role in the association of cancers with infection.

For example, HIV is a co-factor to Kaposi’s Sarcoma (KS), a type of cancer that can form masses in the skin, lymph nodes or other organs. Some can be prevented or reduced by vaccines (HPV and HBV), blood tests and other public health measures. Some can be greatly reduced but not totally prevented such as HTLV-1 and HIV, and H. pylori by therapy.

There also viruses that cause liver cancer – HBV, HCV, and HPV - that through a yet to be identified environmental phenomenon have been shown to favor cancer progression.

Another co-factor is geography. HTLV-1 is causing much devastation in communities with high prevalence. There are hyper-endemic numbers in the Aboriginal population of Australia and HTLV-1 is endemic in other regions, including several islands of the Caribbean and in countries such as Brazil, Iran, Japan, Romania, Nigeria and Peru. The majority of HTLV positive people transmit the virus unknowingly and are unaware that they are at risk of developing HTLV-1 associated diseases. In non-endemic areas, due to the migration of people, sexual transmission of HTLV-1 has also been detected.

Like all viral threats, surveillance and diagnostics can interrupt transmission.

What are the areas GVN current and future foci?

The mission of the Global Virus Network (GVN) is to strengthen medical research and response to current viral causes of human disease and to prepare for new viral pandemic threats. The GVN meets its mission through these main pillars:

1. Establishing a global network of expert virology laboratories
2. Promoting research for the development of new tools, including diagnostic test, antiviral medicines and vaccines
3. Training the next generation of experts in virology
4. Advocating for a more comprehensive and inclusive response to viral threats worldwide

The GVN is working on the development of Regional GVN Chapters. Although the GVN is headquartered in Baltimore, we believe our presence needs to be global (by definition) and therefore each regional GVN needs to meet specific geographic challenges found particularly in Southeast Asia, South America, Europe, the Caribbean and Africa. The idea is to evolve into a more flexible, global organization.

At the core of the GVN’s mission is research. To that end, this includes an international scientific meeting to present and discuss current findings in medical and veterinary virology, and their application to existing and emerging viruses of global importance. Virology leaders explore new approaches to the prevention, treatment and cure of infectious disease as well as engage and inspire early career scientists to advance virology research while developing critical
collaborations. Past GVN international meetings have taken place in Washington D.C., United States, Dublin, Ireland, Naples, Italy, Baltimore, MD, USA, Munich, Germany, Moscow, Russia, Beijing, China, Sapporo, Japan, Melbourne, Australia and the latest in Annecy, France.

**The GVN’s objectives include:**

To present and discuss current findings in medical and veterinary virology, and their application to existing and emerging viruses of global importance

To explore new approaches to the prevention, treatment and cure of infectious disease

To engage and inspire early career scientists to advance virology research

To promote collaborations among world expert virologists

The 11th GVN International Meeting will be hosted in Barcelona, Spain. This year’s meeting will be held alongside the annual meeting of the Spanish Society of Virology (SEV). We are grateful to Drs. Segalés, Domingo and Rodríguez, from two GVN Centers at IRTA-CReSA and Centro de Biología Molecular, Severo Ochoa, and to Albert Bosch, President of the SEV for hosting the GVN. The combined meeting will take place from June 9-12, 2019. The final day, June 12, is exclusively SEV-led presentations, however, GVN members are welcome to attend.

**What is your vision for India?**

We believe that India could be a beacon for virology in that part of the world. It can take its place in a leadership role in South Asia, and from there, globally. This requires consistent patience and support for virology, even when there have not been recent scares. We would like to see India continue to be a regional and world leader in medical virology through partnerships and collaborations, which include Centers of Excellence and Affiliates within the GVN, and participation in the Annual Short Course in Basic and Translational Virology and the International Meeting.

**The GVN Institute in Kerala has completed its first phase, what will be its immediate benefits to the state’s healthcare and what we can expect in the future from medical virology?**

We hope that Kerala can help foster more GVN Centers in the area as well as strengthen virology locally. The first stage is to establish strong diagnostics and surveillance and share that information with both the GVN and the local government. We hope that the Kerala center will connect with the GVN central offices and other centers around the world, keeping them informed of their progress and needs. As they grow, they can focus on advanced research, such as developing vaccines.

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**ROBERT. C GALLO**

Dr. Robert C. Gallo is a world-famous virology expert whose contributions in medical virology are numerous and include:

- The co-discovery of HIV as the cause of AIDS
- Development of the HIV blood test
- First to identify a human retrovirus and the only known human leukemia virus – HTLV1 and later HTLV2
- Discovery of Interleukin-2, a growth regulating substance now used as therapy in some cancers and sometimes AIDS and was essential to the discoveries of all human retroviruses
- Discovery of the first new human herpes virus in more than 25 years (HHV-6), which was later shown to cause an infantile disease known as Roseola and now suspected as playing a role in some Alzheimer’s disease patients

Dr. Gallo was the most referenced scientist in the world in the 1980s and 1990s according to the Institute for Scientific Information, during which he had the unique distinction of twice winning America’s most prestigious scientific award - the Albert Lasker Award in Medicine - in 1982 and again in 1986

Dr. Gallo holds 36 honorary doctorates and was elected to both the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine

Dr. Gallo was ranked third in the world for scientific impact for the period 1983–2002 and has more than 1,300 publications
 Very quickly Lini realised she had contracted the same fever as Sabith had. Yet she approached the issue with the sense of responsibility of a nurse. She asked the other nurses to take precautions and maintain distance from her, and also barred me from taking our children to the hospital to see her. After she vomitted at the Kozhikode IQRAA Hospital, she stood on the weighing machine only after spreading her shawl over it. Every word about her brims with a feeling of amazement… and more than that, respect.

This is what Sajeesh has to say when he remembers his loved one. His wife Lini, a professional nurse, had fallen prey to the deadly disease while attending to patients infected with Nipah, the virus that battered Kozhikode district last year.

Even in life Lini was a full-time nurse. During the early days of our marriage, she was a nurse-cum-counsellor at the AIDS Control Society. Giving treatment to sex workers and spreading awareness was part of her work and in the process she became friends with them. When they saw her on the road, they came enthusiastically to chat with her and get introduced to me. Lini used to talk to them with affection. A few people in our locality used to tell me that the sex workers sought her out personally as well. Hearing such things disturbed me. As I feared tongues would wag, I expressed my displeasure.

“Nursing is my profession. It is a nurse’s duty to provide treatment to patients. When I discharge my duties I am not bothered about what others think of me.” Her reply was firm.

I was working in the Middle East and whenever she rang me, most of what she spoke about was her job. The work, doctors, patients, nurses and even security personnel filled our conversations. Her jokes too were from the hospital. Through her words, the Perambra Hospital that I hadn’t seen even once became a very familiar place. Amidst all this, she also told me about Nipah-infected Sabith and his poor parents who were unaware of the disease.

This was a week-and-a-half before the disease was confirmed in Lini. More than pain over the untimely loss of his wife, it is admiration of her personality that spills out of Sajeesh’s words now.

Following her demise, I have reflected over her elevation to the status of an angel in the minds of people. It is not because she fell prey to the same disease that had infected the patients she was nursing. On the contrary, it is the respect people have towards her spirit of dedication. I understand now that as a good nurse she was devoting her life towards fulfilling her duties.

The first time I saw Lini was at Koyili Hospital in Kannur. She was my friend’s cousin. I happened to go there with my friend. As we talked I felt that she was a bold girl. Very soon I would propose marriage to Lini in the same hospital. Subsequently we intimated the family, and our wedding took place six months later, on 2 April 2012.

Sajeesh was talking to us from his home in Chembanoda near Perambra.
We listened to him without asking many questions. He had a lot to say not only about Lini but also about the terror and loneliness that gripped him in the post-Nipah days, the people who came to comfort and help, and those who distanced themselves out of fear. Their children, five-year-old Rithul and three-year-old Siddharth, stood around or sat on their father’s lap listening to everything. The experiences this man and his children faced following Lini’s death have been very different.

An hour after Lini’s death the doctor talked to me about shifting her body from the hospital. In order to prevent the risk of further spreading viral infection, the corpse had to be moved and cremated with extreme caution. But when we called for an ambulance, the drivers were neither ready to come, nor willing to let us use the vehicle. They were scared. Along with the pain of Lini’s sudden departure, such experiences hurt a lot as well. After a long period of separation from my loved one, I was able to only catch a glimpse of her from outside the I. C. U. Her mother and the children could not even see Lini’s body. She was cremated far from home... in Kozhikode city. Maybe it was better that way. What remains in all our minds are memories of Lini, brimming with life and happiness.

There were a lot of troubles even after Lini’s death. Only very few visitors came to our house and when they returned, people of our locality were afraid to interact with them. My sister’s neighbours even relocated just because she visited us. For a month and a half we were unable to go outdoors or receive news of what was happening outside. Lini’s colleagues used to ring us up. They told us about how people prevented them from even hiring auto rickshaws.

Sajeesh’s reminiscences are awash with the terror of Nipah times, and the fear it spread. During those times markets and shopping centres stayed shut, not just in Perambra, but in Kozhikode city as well. Buses ran empty. It was a Nipah spell, during which fruit vendors unable to sell anything incurred huge losses.

Among those who stood by us, the Health Department as well as the Health Minister, Shailaja teacher, and the support they gave us, can never be forgotten.

After everything was over we were in dire straits. I could not bear to go to my workplace, abandoning my children aged only four and two. Nor could I retain my job if I did not return to the Middle East. Under these circumstances, Shailaja teacher’s promise to arrange a job for me came as a solace. Later, whenever she came here, she showered affection on my children like a mother would, offered me words of comfort and enquired after things as a sister would, rang me up unfailingly... It was an unforgettable experience.

On the third day after Lini’s demise, film star Parvathy phoned me. After consoling the family she expressed interest in sponsoring the education of my children. But I refused her offer of help that day. My ego told me that my children’s education was my sole responsibility. Later, a doctor from Amicus Hospital rang up with the same proposal. He requested that I should not reject their offer because they wanted to do it as a mark of respect for Lini. I told him about a similar message I had received from Parvathy. But when he replied that a doctor among their team was
Parvathy’s cousin and that they had reached this decision after discussing it with her, I could not but agree. Later on I came to know that a movie was being made on Nipah virus.

Ashiq Abu phoned me when he was planning the film. He said that he was interested in making a movie on Nipah and that the story was only being written. But since it was about Nipah, Lini would be a protagonist in the film. He wanted to know whether I had any objections. He also informed me that Rima Kallingal would don the role of Lini. I replied that if a film could convey a message against Nipah to the people, I would only be too happy for it. With every commemorative meeting and award function I attend, I get to understand Lini better and better. Wherever I go, people show me love and consideration because I am Lini’s husband. It is not merely the sincerity that Lini showed to her profession, but also the care she took even after getting infected with Nipah that deserves respect. The fact that no other patient contracted the disease from interactions with her is solely due to the precautions that she took.

It is not that I am not aggrieved. Lini has two sisters. Her mother often gets seizures. If I break down, all of them too will collapse. So I don’t cry in front of anyone.

In place of tears, it is pride that fills Sajeesh’s and the children’s hearts.

With apprehension we asked the question that had been in our minds right from the start.

“Don’t the kids ask after their mother?”

“No, they know now that their mother won’t come back anymore. They have gathered that their mother sacrificed her life for some great cause. Even though they are conscious of the fact that she won’t return, they frequently plant kisses on her photograph. After every commemorative ceremony, there is a growing awareness about Lini’s goodness and greatness.

As bereavement turns a year old, Sajeesh believes that Lini hasn’t gone anywhere but is still present around her loved ones.

Translated by Radhika P. Menon
Key elements were a focus on infection prevention and control measures based on isolating patients, using personal protective equipment and decontaminating surfaces.

Surveillance was critical: more than 2,500 contacts of Nipah patients were monitored by the state surveillance system. Even though cases were reported from only 2 districts of Kozhikode and Malappuram in Kerala, the surveillance net was rapidly scaled up to neighboring districts as well. Advisories were issued by the Government, and updated on the Ministry website, and shared with all states. A total of 18 laboratory confirmed cases were identified, of whom 16 had died. One additional case, the person thought to have first contracted the disease, also died but could not be tested.

Information sharing also played a key role. A 24-hour helpline took queries from the concerned community, while the state government used all available channels of communication, including traditional, online and new media, and social mobilisers, to counter rumours and inform people what the risks were and how to protect themselves.

Health workers and officials all worked almost without a break, successfully preventing a further wave of human to human transmission. By mid-June, the Kerala government and the Union Health Ministry announced that the outbreak had been contained.

The outbreak response illustrates how effective, strong, and connected health systems – in close cooperation with animal health and wildlife sectors – are vital to preparedness and fast reaction.
This year the monsoons were late.

Being a lifelong Romeo of the blue clouds that surge inwards into Kerala from the Arabian sea....

I was missing my beloved rains.

Though the state government had put out Nipah alert from last December to the end of May this year, I took it as a precautionary measure to forewarn the citizens and medical workers across the state to exercise a heightened level of sensitivity in the early detection of cases and to ensure maximum preparedness to deal with an outbreak.

I did not imagine in my wildest dreams that my institution would become the ground zero of Nipah isolation and treatment activities.

And oh boy! We built a mighty big wall to resist the tiniest yet deadliest of the enemies the Nipah virus "in no time.

The alert of having a possible case was sounded on June 2nd just a day after the watch out period was over, and the confirmation came the next day....

It was as if death’s favourite Hannibal was at our gates.

The clarion call against ‘Nipah’ was received loud and clear, the state government responded with all its might.

An armada of ambulance’s, Protective gear, Men and Machinery, Antiviral medicines, all reached our campus in a matter of hours.

We received the first suspect case on the third of June.

Soon the biggest challenge began to manifest it was not about personnel or equipments. It was the testing of the samples drawn from patients for Nipah virus.

“Earlier the diagnosis, better the management” so goes the dictum.

But sadly, the samples had to crisscross peninsular India to be reported with authenticity.

That’s when Govt Of Kerala came up with the master stroke.

“Set up a ‘Nipah’ specific point of care lab at our college”.

Within 24 hours of that decision being made, the point of care lab for viral PCR testing started functioning at our facility with machines supplied by NIV Pune.

Along with the machines came three brave ladies brave enough to separate the RNA out of samples to pick up deadly “Nipah virus “ if any.

Armed with the latest cutting-edge techno gadget to pick up the virus, our clinical, diagnostic, infra and waste disposal teams got cracking...

From then on it was a symphony of dedication...
Suspect Patients being bought in to causality in ambulances with drivers in full protective gear,
Patients getting transported into the facility,
Examination, test sampling, the actual testing and the treatment were done with clinical precision under the watchful eyes of our Medical Board.
No cases were confirmed as Nipah.
So by seventh of June there was a sigh of relief that this episode would likely die out.
With that optimism our team leader honourable minister for health, Shri K. K Shailaja affectionately called as ‘teacher’ by all went to New Delhi on an official visit.

That night the monsoon clouds finally reached our skies and announced their arrival with a fury characteristic of my beloved monsoon rains.

We at the control room, leaning towards the windows to get the feel of the rain shower, enjoying a sip of black coffee got alerted about simultaneous arrival of three sick patients suspected of having severe symptoms resembling Nipah from three different locations near the location of the index case.

I was shaken our systems were going to be tested to its limits.
The best professional work ethos, of our staff were put to the toughest test imaginable.

On us depended the fate of this war and it was hanging by its thread.
Around us the lights began to go out in the city of Kochi for the day, lakhs of unsuspecting men, women and children were retiring to their beds.

It was around 10pm at night, I called teacher in Delhi and informed her about the situation.

“Don’t worry Ganesh, everything is going to be fine, get the viral test done at our lab and inform me the results”

The pune team had closed their test facility by then and had went back to the hotel room. They were requested to come back which they politely agreed while having just one request; “Kindly get us some snacks as these tests are a lengthy affair”.

For me, growing up in Alappuzha, where central teams were always seen as the ones who used to visit yearly in September to study the floods that accompanied the rains in June, this team was a novelty.

My colleague Dr Manoj dashed in the downpour to get the cakes and my affable little brother Dr Nikilesh who was entrusted with the safe collection and cautious transport of samples to the lab accomplished his task in the most professional way.

It was around 12:00 AM by then and our long wait for the results started....
Exhaustion was a sneaking into me and I slipped into a sleep only to be woken up by the buzzer of my phone.

“Hello, this is Dr Reema here and all your samples have tested negative”

The relief was so much that I laughed out aloud in the darkness.

Now I had to inform the minister, but it was too late to call her... the clock was striking half past 3 am.
Yet I felt that I had to call and so dialed her number...
Within a single ring, it was attended, the minister madam was online.

“Yes Ganesh, all the results came as negative right?”

“Yes teacher ” I relied
“Ok doctor, you now take some rest and please take care of your health ”
“Ok teacher, goodnight “ I cut the call.

Walking back to my quarters a question came back to my repeatedly.

“Why should the health minister of the state be awake at 3:40 am to know the test results of patients whom she barely knows? ”

“Why should three ladies from Pune spend a whole night in Kerala in search of an elusive virus? ”

“Why should the likes of Dr Chandni from Calicut leave her family behind and camp in Ernakulam medical college to treat the patients? ”

Dr. Ganesh Mohan with his Three Musketeers: Anitha, Reema & Triparna who came to Kerala from Pune for fighting against Nipah

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“Why should the likes of Dr Chandni from Calicut leave her family behind and camp in Ernakulam medical college to treat the patients?”

Last but not the least...

“Why should the poor daily wage workers dare the rain, put on his/her protective coat and dispose the waste from the Nipah ward?”

I knew the answer too “ These men and women are the sentinels who guard us against the silent whisper of Great death-NIPAH”.

The rain was now in its full fury....
And I was drenched like a duck.

But the answer to my questions were too obvious to be ignored.

In Kerala the tables have been squarely turned against the NIPAH virus
The great wall of men & machines which we put against it is to be seen to be believed
For now, “Its Advantage Kerala and Disadvantage NIPAH”
The Public Education scenario in Kerala is going through a transitional phase. Within last three years, the sector has seen a sustainable upsurge in transformations that have made every Malayali proud of the public education system prevailing in their State.

The whole state welcomed the newly enrolled students to respective schools with vigour and enthusiasm in the reopening day after summer vacation through jubilant functions in all schools known as ‘Pravesanotsavam’. ‘Pravesanolsavam’ marked a quick start for a colourful and bright academic future for the little scholars in the state. Chief Minister inaugurated the state level pravesanotsavam at Govt. Higher secondary school, Chembuchira, Thrissur District. A positive change happened in terms of enrolment of students in Government and Government Aided Schools because of the impact of ‘Pothu Vidyabhyasa Samrakshana Yajnam’. Students’ flow from unaided schools to public schools is clearly visible.

Proper planning and careful implementation was done in the preparatory period for this academic year. The facilities were arranged even before the commencement of the fresh academic year. Rather than opening the schools in an inappropriate manner, the government paved way for a true and meaningful ‘new academic opening’. The textbooks had already been distributed to students before the reopening of schools. The uniforms were distributed even before the commencement of classes. Various steps had been taken to ensure quality education in the state. As a part of this, academic calendar for this academic year had been prepared well in advance. Along with that, examination calendar, sports-science-cultural calendars are some of the other marked features of this academic year. The teachers training have completed. The checking of the security setups for ensuring the safety of schools have completed.
When the schools in the state reopened on June 6, it was also the first time in the history of the Kerala that all classes from 1 to 12 started functioning on the same day. Therefore along with the 1st standard scholars, the students up to 12th standard also enjoyed the colours of ‘Pravesanolsavam’.

The schools are being transformed into Technology friendly. By the end of this year Kerala will have been a state with complete hi-tech facilities in the education sector.

New buildings are being constructed for the purpose of educational advancement. Transforming the school campus as eco-friendly and green and clean is a major area of intervention. With the help of Local Self Governments and community support the department is engaging with this challenge.

Transforming all public schools as centres of excellence is the ultimate aim of Education Mission. The Govt. considers’ excellence as academic excellence. As a part the government envisages revisiting the existing syllabus for the quality challenge. Actions have already taken for this. The government is aiming to advance the syllabus into world class by giving prime importance to scientific and logical thinking as well as modern aspects.

The distribution of plus two certificate and the declaration of plus one result in the month of May itself is considered as golden achievement to the department. Education minister Prof. C.Raveendranath wishes to foresee and mark this year as ‘Year of Excellence’ as everything has placed in advance for a wonderful and outstanding academic year.

Compiled by Anchitha. A and Velayudhan P. K after consultation with Minister for General Education Prof. C.Raveendranath

Arrangements had done to meet fruitful academic days so much so that, the students will get 203 working academic days in a year. During the previous years it was about 160 days only. So that we can proudly say that this is the first academic year in the history which offers 203 working days for the students. Along with that, education department is planning to execute quarterly to final exams in a diligent manner.

The textbooks had already distributed among the students before the reopening of schools. The uniforms were distributed even before the commencement of classes.
Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan released the progress report on the three year performance of the Government. The first copy was handed over to Speaker P. Sreearmkrishnan at Nisagandhi auditorium in Thiruvananthapuram. The release also marked the Government’s fourth year in office.

While releasing the progress report, the Chief Minister said that the Government had been successful in implementing the promised change. The progress report scrutinises how far the Government has marched towards in keeping its 600 promises made in the manifesto. The Chief Minister also said that the Government could replace the moral decay which had existed before with a new culture and high values befitting the State.
The green wooden gate of my ancestral home opened to a dirt path that ran along the railway tracks in twists and turns from one level crossing to another. Lined with houses on one side and trees on the other, the dirt path was preferred by many to the busier and noisier street across the railway lines. But when the rains came, the mere existence of this pumpkin-coloured path was frowned upon. Monsoon changed it beyond recognition, turned it into a chain of puddles, leaving little islands of slush between the tiny waterbodies formed overnight.

The puddles were of all sizes and shapes, reflecting electric poles and the branches of banyan trees that lined the path. Some of them also reflected the distorted faces of a few strange men who appeared from nowhere. Unmindful of the rains, they would squat by the puddles and bring out sieves and pans from their sacks. Standing under dripping umbrellas, we watched them curiously while they filled the sieves with silt from the puddles and sifted them with fierce concentration, never looking up. Sometimes we would find them still at work on our way back from school, small blobs of silt collected in their pans, the fruit of their daylong labour.

One such monsoon, we managed to strike a conversation with one of the men who took shelter in our porch as the rain thickened and made it impossible for them to work. A tall, dark with curly hair and kind eyes. His friends had retired for the day, but he had decided to get back to work as soon as the rain stopped. When he asked for some water, we served him tea. When the lunchtime came and there was no sign of rain letting up, we offered him lunch, which he first declined, then accepted. He squatted in the porch the same way he squatted by puddles and ate shyly, looking up...
occasionally with a grateful smile. It was over the lunch that he, tirelessly probed by a set of curious children, told us what he and his friends were looking for. They were fishing for gold in these puddles. We roared with laughter. He smiled and patiently explained how some of his friends had come upon little nuggets of gold from the very puddles we hopped across every day. Gold in the puddles, we asked. Yes, gold, he reassured us. Tiny as individual lumps, but of considerable value when collected during the course of a monsoon. The lure of slush-coated gold was such that every monsoon he and his friends travelled from interior Tamil Nadu to be here on the dirt road, and every monsoon their biggest fear was about someone taking possession of the puddles by the time they reached our town. That conversation changed the way we looked at the dirt path and its puddles. We started to eye them reverentially.

Halfway through the rainy season, the men would disappear as abruptly as they appeared, and on our way to school and back we looked at the liquid gold mines with respect, half expecting to see their rims dotted with a tiny glittering globules.

Every year, the rains turned the dirt path into a string of puddles and the men came all the way from interior Tamil Nadu with their sieves and sacks to hunt for gold. Our friend was always a part of the team, always smiling at us thankfully for the lunch we served him on a rainy day. Then one monsoon they failed to turn up, and we wondered what made them stop coming. Did they finally make a fortune? Or did they find a better mining ground? Slowly they faded away from our memories, and the dirt path became a tarred road and the rains did not create puddles on them anymore.

Many years after the tall man with curly hair and kind eyes squatted in our porch and ate lunch from a banana leaf, I saw his picture in the newspaper. He stood with a hint of a smile on his face, handcuffed and stripped down to his waist, flanked by the policemen who caught him while trying to break into a jewellery shop. He obviously had not struck gold.
HRIDYAM
FOR THE LITTLE HEARTS

What is Hridyam Scheme?
Hridyam scheme is a program envisaged for treatment of children with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD). The program utilises the support of technology for service delivery. Web based registry for CHD cases across Kerala, monitoring the progress of program envisaged for management of children with CHD.

When was Hridyam launched?
The programme was launched in 2017 August, with the objective of reducing the IMR rate in Kerala.

Why was Hridyam Scheme introduced?
To monitor the progress of the management of children with CHD, to identify the bottlenecks for implementing the protocols established at any point, and to understand the case status and response time for systems in place. The online systems enables fast response as well as efficient data management.

Where is the treatment done?
1. Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Trivandrum
2. Govt. Medical College, Kottayam
3. Amritha Institute of Medical Sciences, Cochin
4. Aster Medcity, Cochin
5. Lisie Hospital, Cochin
6. Believers Church Medical College Hospital, Thiruvalla
7. Aster Mims, Kozhikode
are the hospitals empanelled.

Who have received treatment under the scheme?
The scheme targets children with CHD, which happens to be the largest treatable cause of death amongst infants. Over 1414 cases have been registered in 2019. 382 cases have been operated, of which 233 are infant cases.

How does the online system work?
As per the present system, cases shall be registered from any location through web page hridyam.in by any target beneficiary using internet. The case will be notified to concerned DEIC of the district where the child lives. During case registration immediately on filling the basic information the child will get an automatically generated unique register number which will be used as Case Number for the particular case. On getting alert on case registration DEIC will check whether all forms are filled. On completion of registration (completing all five steps of registration and verification by DEIC) the case will be categorised primarily into category 1, 2, or 3 and will be reflected on the table put in the dashboard.
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