



KERALA CALLING



Redefining the Future

Operation Toofan becomes India's largest coordinated anti-narcotics drive

Young Toofan Warriors, the pride of Kerala

— CELEBRATING —

One Month of Empowering Every Journey

1
Month
OF SUCCESS

PRIYADARSHINI – FREE TRAVEL — FOR WOMEN ACROSS KERALA —

A promise of safety, dignity and freedom.
A journey towards equality and a stronger Kerala.
Thank you, women of Kerala, for making
this mission a remarkable success.

Thank you
Kerala!
♡



SAFE.
COMFORTABLE.
FREE.
FOR EVERY
WOMAN.
♡



**Freedom
to Study**
Reaching colleges
with confidence



**Freedom
to Work**
Reaching workplaces
with independence



**Freedom
to Travel**
Connecting families,
communities and dreams



**Freedom
to Dream**
Building a brighter,
empowered tomorrow

A PEOPLE-CENTRIC INITIATIVE BY
GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

The Spirit of Progress



Kerala has shifted into a higher gear of development, driven by a clear vision and a commitment to inclusive progress. The State has launched a series of transformative initiatives that have reached the grassroots, ensuring that the benefits of development are felt by ordinary citizens.

With the implementation of Operation Toofan, it is seen that the whole state and its people stand together with the government to wipe out the menace. Operation Toofan has certainly created a stir, and the Government is committed to carrying forward this reformatory spirit. This Onam, let us all take a pledge to help create a Kerala free from the menace of drugs.

As we begin preparations for Onam, the festive spirit is spreading across the state. The government has already set in motion extensive preparations to ensure that the state welcomes its colourful festival in a well-organised manner. Market intervention measures have been strengthened to ensure the availability of essential commodities at affordable prices. The government is all set to welcome Onam, the biggest festival, with flying colours.

May the spirit of Onam inspire us to strengthen the bonds of unity and hope and guide us towards a brighter future for our state and its people.

Happy Onam!

Sabin Sameed IAS

Editor

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Happy
Independence
Day





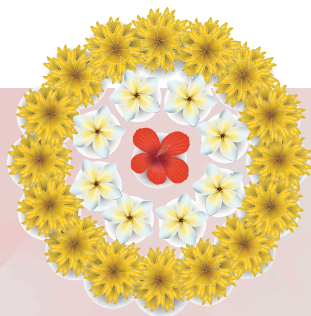
Cover picture – Ayyappan N

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Hearty Wishes for a Glorious Onam

Onam, Keralam's national festival, is a celebration of our rich cultural heritage and the enduring values of unity, equality, harmony and shared prosperity. It is an occasion that transcends barriers of caste, creed, religion and region, bringing together Malayalis across the world in a spirit of joy, compassion and togetherness.

The legend of Mahabali continues to inspire generations with the vision of a just, inclusive and compassionate society where every individual enjoys dignity, opportunity and well-being. The ideals associated with his reign remind us that genuine progress is measured not merely by economic growth but by our collective commitment to social justice, equality and the welfare of all. These timeless values continue to guide us as we strive to build a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable Keralam.

Onam also offers an opportunity to reaffirm our responsibility towards one another. As we celebrate with our families and loved ones, let us remember those facing adversity and extend to them the

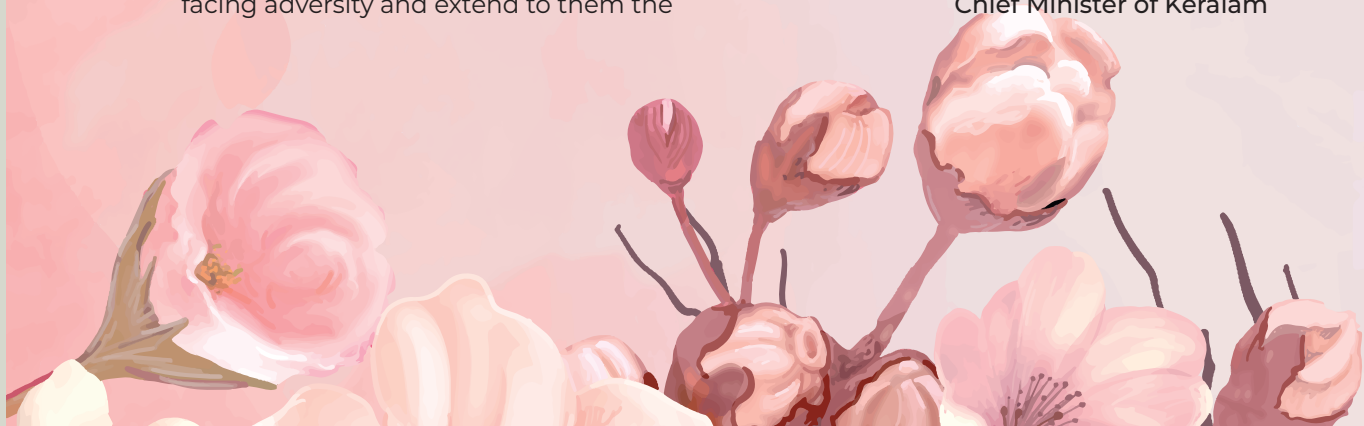
warmth of our care, compassion and solidarity. The true spirit of Onam lies not only in our traditions and festivities but also in our willingness to share, to support one another and to strengthen the bonds that unite us as a society.

Let this festival renew our commitment to preserving Keralam's vibrant cultural legacy while safeguarding our environment for future generations. May our celebrations reflect responsibility, inclusiveness and respect for nature, reinforcing the values that have always defined our State.

On this joyous occasion, I extend my heartfelt Onam greetings to Malayalis across the globe. May this festival fill every home with peace, happiness, good health and prosperity. May the spirit of Onam inspire us to move forward together with hope, compassion and an unwavering commitment to the common good.

Happy Onam!

V.D Satheesan
Chief Minister of Keralam





A STORM BUILDING BULWARK AGAINST DRUGS

A storm is making history in Kerala. Operation Toofan, the Narco Hunt launched by the Home Department against the sale, distribution, and use of narcotics, has captured the attention of the world.

Ramesh Chennithala

Minister for Home, Vigilance,
Fire and Rescue Services, Prisons, Coir

In Kerala, Operation Toofan has become a major fight against evil. If we examine the first fifty days of the operation, the social changes it has inspired

among us become clear. As the Home Minister of the state, it gives me pride and joy that our state has united for such a mission with caution and commitment. The

people of Kerala have already embraced the country's largest anti-drug campaign, Operation Toofan – The Narco Hunt.



After becoming Home Minister, I did not have to think long about which initiative to take up first. I was already firm in my decision. Under the auspices of *Proud Kerala*, we had been organising anti-drug rallies in all districts under the name *Walk Against Drugs*. I was deeply moved by the strong public response to this programme. During my visits to each district, I heard many stories about how drug addiction has taken root in our land. It was then

that the idea of a narco hunt took shape in my mind. That resolve was further strengthened by the heartbreaking words of a mother about her son at an event in Kochi.

I told my team that we must strike hard against this mafia that is destroying our children and turn the campaign into a true Toofan. In fact, it was my team that named the initiative Operation Toofan, and it later spread across Kerala.

Operation Toofan is now moving beyond Kerala's borders. It has set an example of South India uniting against addiction. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay and Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar have also extended support. As part of this effort, it was agreed to conduct joint searches with the police forces of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and to share intelligence. A special meeting of the DGPs of southern states was also held for police coordination. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay and Mohanlal will be present at the grand Toofan event in Kochi.

Kerala is eagerly awaiting that day.

Toofan has three phases: Toofan Strike, Toofan Warriors, and Toofan Care. We have now entered the third phase. Even now, inspections aimed at dismantling drug gangs have continued without pause for two months. From prominent public figures to schoolchildren, people are now coming forward to join as Toofan Warriors.

More than one lakh Toofan Warriors have joined the anti-drug struggle across the state. In the past 50 days, I have personally visited 10 districts and led the campaign as Home Minister. More programmes are scheduled in other districts as well. School and college students, health workers, mothers, autorickshaw drivers, artists, and many others have become warriors against drugs. In Thiruvananthapuram, auto drivers are now driving vehicles bearing Toofan stickers.

Earlier, people feared the drug





mafia; now, it is the mafia that fears the people. Today, citizens are moving forward with greater vigilance. The mafia is targeting our children, but in terms of scale and social impact, Toofan is becoming the most deeply rooted movement in Kerala after the literacy movement. We will not retreat from this fight. At the same time, Toofan Care, which creates a path to recovery for victims, is expanding widely. Our vision is clear: those affected by addiction must be treated as patients, not criminals.

Efforts have also been made to bring respected figures and community leaders from different backgrounds into this fight against addiction. Actor Mohanlal joined the movement as the first Toofan Warrior, followed by

Kanthapuram A.P. Aboobacker Musliyar, Sayyid Muhammad Jifri Muthukkoya Thangal, Panakkad Sayyid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal, Thamarassery Diocese Bishop Mar Remigiose Inchananiyil, Kashyapa Ashram Acharya M.R. Rajesh, and other leaders. In addition, film industry icons such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Madhu, and



More than one lakh Toofan Warriors have joined the anti-drug struggle across the state.

Sreekumaran Thampi also received the Toofan Warrior badge.

As part of Operation Toofan, about eight thousand cases have been registered so far, around eight thousand five hundred arrests have been made, and drugs worth more than thirty crores have been seized.

Under Toofan Care, 13,311 awareness classes were conducted across the state in recent days. Through counselling, 417 victims of drug abuse received proper treatment and support. In addition, 2,299 Toofan Warriors were directly deployed by the police to maintain law and order.

Several programmes were organised across the state to ensure public participation,

especially among students and women. The Jwala 2026 women's rally was held under the leadership of Kollam City Police. It was also notable that 3,200 students of Udayamperoor SNDP School lit lamps against drug abuse in their homes, while students raised red cards in protest. In addition, professional theatre and film workers, including the entire crew of the film Harivarasanam, have also joined the fight.

As Operation Toofan enters the next phase, several organisations in the health sector have also come forward to work with the Home Department. Important decisions were taken after discussions with organisations such as the Indian Medical Association, the Indian Psychiatric Society, and the Indian Academy of Paediatrics.

Training and treatment programmes have been planned in all 20 police districts to help drug addicts return to normal life. It was also decided to form committees comprising the District Medical Officer, District Education Officer, IMA office-bearers, psychiatrists, and paediatricians. Training programmes led by expert doctors, along with rehabilitation activities in collaboration with government and private hospitals, will also be organised. Special training will be provided to students through student groups formed in schools. Around seventy hospitals in the state have already expressed their willingness to take part in Toofan Care.

Operation Toofan will continue to surge until it reaches its goal. The vigilance of the society is its greatest strength. The fact that mothers across Kerala are



I told my team that we must strike hard against this mafia and turn the campaign into a true Toofan. In fact, it was my team that named the initiative Operation Toofan.



standing with this initiative, determined not to hand over their children to any drug mafia, is strengthening this struggle. This mission is moving forward because its goal is noble and its method is truthful.



Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala with auto-rickshaw drivers after inducting them as Toofan Warriors



Forging a United Front against Narcotics

Our vision is clear: a Kerala where every child grows up free from the threat of narcotics, where communities remain secure, where organised drug syndicates are relentlessly pursued, and where the rule of law prevails without exception.



Ravada A Chandra Sekhar IPS

Director General of Police, Kerala

The fight against narcotic drugs has emerged as one of the defining law enforcement challenges of our time. Drug trafficking today is no longer confined by geographical boundaries or conventional criminal networks. It has evolved into a sophisticated transnational enterprise that exploits technology, transport corridors, financial systems, and vulnerable communities. The consequences extend far beyond crime, threatening public health, social harmony, economic stability, and, most importantly, the future of our youth.

Recognising the gravity of this challenge, Kerala has adopted a comprehensive and uncompromising approach to combating the drug menace. Under the leadership of the Government of Kerala and the Home Department, the Kerala Police has launched Operation Toofan: The Narco Hunt, India's largest coordinated anti-narcotics initiative. More than an enforcement campaign, Operation Toofan represents a strategic framework that integrates intelligence, technology, inter-agency coordination, and interstate cooperation to dismantle

narcotics networks at every level.

South Zone Meet

A landmark milestone in this mission was the Inter-State Coordination Meeting of Police Chiefs from South Indian States, held at the Kerala Police Headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram. Convened by Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala, the meeting marked a new chapter in collaborative policing against narcotics and cross-border organised crime.

The conference brought together police leadership from

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Puducherry, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, along with senior officials representing key central enforcement agencies, including the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Customs, Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (SIB), and the Railway Protection Force (RPF). The participation of these agencies reflects a shared understanding that the drug menace cannot be defeated through isolated efforts. It demands coordinated intelligence, seamless communication, and synchronised operational responses.

Former Director General of Police and Advisor to Home Minister A. Hemachandran IPS delivered the keynote address, highlighting the changing dynamics of organised crime and the urgent need for integrated enforcement strategies. North Zone Inspector General and Operation Toofan Nodal Officer Putta Vimaladitya IPS presented

the operational framework of the project, outlining its objectives, enforcement methodologies, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and coordination protocols among participating agencies.

Towards Concrete Measures

The significance of this conference lies not merely in the exchange of ideas but in the institutional mechanisms it established for future cooperation. One of the most important decisions of the meeting was the creation of a permanent interstate coordination system involving the five South Indian states. Under this framework, each participating state will designate officers above the rank of Superintendent of Police as dedicated nodal officers for Operation Toofan.

Equally important, corresponding nodal officers will be appointed within central agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs, and the Railway Protection Force. This network of nodal officers will



Kerala's well-established District Anti-Narcotic Special Action Force (DANSAF) will be further strengthened as a permanent enforcement mechanism.



facilitate real-time intelligence sharing, coordinated investigations, joint operational planning, and rapid response mechanisms across state boundaries. Such institutional arrangements significantly reduce operational delays and strengthen collective enforcement capabilities.

Drug traffickers increasingly operate through complex interstate supply chains, using multiple transport modes to evade detection. Kerala, given its extensive coastline, international airports, railway network, and interstate road connectivity, requires constant vigilance against attempts to transport narcotic substances into the state. Recognising this challenge, the conference resolved that joint operations involving South Indian states and central agencies would soon commence to identify and block the principal trafficking routes leading into Kerala.

The operational scope of Operation Toofan extends across all major modes of transportation. Surveillance and enforcement activities will be intensified at interstate borders, highways, railway stations, airports, seaports, inland waterways, and other vulnerable transit points. The objective is not only to intercept consignments but also to dismantle the organised criminal syndicates responsible for financing, transporting, and distributing narcotic substances.





Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala addressing the meeting of Police Chiefs from South Indian states

Modern drug trafficking has also migrated into the digital domain. Criminal networks increasingly exploit online platforms, encrypted communication channels, social media applications, courier services, and e-commerce logistics to conceal their activities. Operation Toofan recognises this evolving threat landscape. Accordingly, special surveillance and targeted enforcement measures will focus on courier-based trafficking, digital transactions linked to narcotics, and emerging technology-enabled methods employed by organised criminal groups.

Strengthening Enforcement

The misuse of prescription medicines with addictive potential presents another growing concern. To address this challenge, the Government has announced stricter regulation of medicines that require valid medical prescriptions. Joint inspections by the Police Department and the Health Department will strengthen oversight of medical stores and pharmaceutical distribution channels, preventing the diversion

of controlled medicines into illegal markets while safeguarding legitimate healthcare access.

At the district level, Kerala's well-established District Anti-Narcotic Special Action Force (DANSAF) will be further strengthened as a permanent enforcement mechanism. DANSAF has already demonstrated the effectiveness of coordinated district-level action by integrating intelligence gathering, preventive

policing, and swift operational responses. Strengthening this institutional framework will enhance local enforcement while ensuring consistent implementation of anti-narcotics strategies throughout the State.

The criminal justice response to narcotics offences must be both effective and timely. Recognising the importance of speedy prosecution, the Government has announced the establishment

Significant Steps

- » A permanent interstate coordination system to be formed involving the five South Indian states.
- » Each state will designate officers above the rank of SP as dedicated nodal officers for Operation Toofan.
- » Corresponding nodal officers will be appointed within central agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs, and the Railway Protection Force.
- » The network of nodal officers will facilitate real-time intelligence sharing, coordinated investigations, joint operational planning, and rapid response mechanisms across state boundaries.
- » Surveillance and enforcement activities will be intensified at interstate borders, highways, railway stations, airports, seaports, and inland waterways.

Meeting Attended by

Tamil Nadu DGP ***Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal IPS***

Puducherry DGP ***Shalini Singh IPS***

Karnataka ADGP (Law and Order) & ANTF, ***R. Hitendra IPS***

Kerala-Lakshadweep Customs Preventive Commissioner ***Dr. T. Tiju IRS***

Narcotic Control Bureau Deputy Director General ***R. Sudhakar IPS***

SIB Joint Director ***Don K. Jose IPS***

Revenue Intelligence Additional Director General ***K. Padmavathy IRS***

Telangana Anti-Narcotic Bureau SP (admin) ***P.V. Padmaja IPS***

Andhra Pradesh Elite Anti-Narcotic Group of Law Enforcement SP (Operations) ***K.M. Maheswara Raju IPS***

Railway Protection Force Divisional Security Commissioner ***Muhammed Haneef.***

of two additional Special Courts under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam. Furthermore, the State will implement the Central Government's directive to establish ten additional NDPS Courts, significantly enhancing judicial capacity to ensure faster disposal of drug-related cases and stronger legal deterrence.

The conference also reaffirmed that anti-narcotics enforcement and maintenance of law and order remain complementary responsibilities. The Government has made it unequivocally clear that there will be no compromise in maintaining public order while simultaneously intensifying operations against narcotic crimes. Professional policing demands both proactive crime prevention and effective enforcement, and Operation Toofan embodies this balanced approach.

Invoking a Collective Spirit

While enforcement remains a critical pillar, experience has repeatedly shown that policing alone cannot eliminate the narcotics problem. Sustainable

success requires active participation from every segment of society. Families, educational institutions, local self-government bodies, healthcare professionals, community organisations, media, and responsible citizens all have indispensable roles in identifying risks, supporting prevention programmes, promoting awareness, and protecting vulnerable young people from substance abuse.

Operation Toofan therefore represents more than a policing initiative—it is a societal movement. It seeks to create an environment where intelligence flows seamlessly between agencies, institutions work collaboratively, communities remain vigilant, and criminal organisations find no safe space to operate. By integrating technology, professional investigation, legal enforcement, preventive education, and public cooperation, the initiative adopts a truly holistic approach to combating narcotics.

The successful conduct of the coordination meeting itself demonstrated the spirit of partnership that defines this



The Government will establish two additional Special Courts under the NDPS Act in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam.



mission. The presence of senior police leaders from neighbouring states and high-ranking officials from multiple central agencies underscored the collective commitment to protecting society from the devastating impact of narcotic drugs. Their participation reflected a shared recognition that organised crime does not respect administrative boundaries, and therefore our response must likewise transcend jurisdictional limitations.

Operation Toofan signals Kerala's determination to remain at the forefront of modern, intelligence-led policing. It exemplifies how strategic leadership, institutional coordination, and technological innovation can be combined to address one of the most complex security challenges confronting our nation today.

Through strong interstate cooperation, unwavering political commitment, professional policing, and active public participation, Operation Toofan will continue to strengthen our collective resolve to safeguard future generations.

The fight against narcotics is not the responsibility of the Police alone; it is the responsibility of society as a whole. Together, united in purpose and unwavering in commitment, we can build a safer, healthier, and drug-free Kerala—setting an example for the entire nation.



MIGHTY OPERATION THUNDER

Operation Thunder represents Kerala's intelligence-driven and zero-tolerance approach towards narcotics and substance abuse.



Seeram Sambasiva Rao IAS

Excise Commissioner

The menace of narcotic drugs has emerged as one of Kerala's most serious social and public health challenges, demanding a strong, coordinated, and sustained response. To challenge this, the Government of Kerala launched Operation Thunder, a comprehensive statewide anti-narcotics enforcement initiative imple-

mented by the Kerala Excise Department under the leadership of Chief Minister V.D. Satheeshan and the guidance of Minister for Excise and Cooperation M. Liju. As part of the Mayangilla Keralam campaign, Operation Thunder represents Kerala's intelligence-driven and zero-tolerance approach towards narcotics and substance abuse.

Excise Department's Focused Response to the Narcotics Challenge

The mission aims to dismantle drug supply chains, prevent illicit trafficking, and safeguard future generations through scientific enforcement, advanced technology, inter-agency coordination, and public participation. By targeting organised drug networks and ensuring effective legal action, the initiative reinforces the State's commitment to building a drug-free society.

Since its launch on 18 May 2026, Operation Thunder has achieved significant operational success across Kerala. The Kerala Excise Department has conducted more than 24,000 inspections and raids, leading to the detection of over 20,000 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985, Abkari Act 1 of 1077, and Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act 2003. Thousands of offenders have been apprehended, while substantial quantities of narcotic substances including ganja, hashish oil, MDMA, methamphetamine, and illicit liquor have been seized. These efforts have strengthened the State's ability to identify trafficking patterns and disrupt organised criminal networks.

The success of Operation Thunder is built upon the organisational strength of the Kerala Excise Department. Under the

Excise Commissionerate, the Department functions through an extensive state wide network comprising enforcement and administrative wings, joint excise commissioners, deputy commissioners, excise divisions, ranges, and circles. The Excise Intelligence Bureau acts as the key intelligence and surveillance wing, while the Excise crime branch handles complex investigations. Supported by thousands of civil excise officers working at the grassroots level, this integrated structure ensures coordinated, intelligence-based enforcement against narcotic offences.

Major Operations

One of the significant achievements of Operation Thunder has been the detection of major interstate drug trafficking networks. A Nigerian national allegedly involved in operating a large-scale drug distribution network spanning Bengaluru and Kerala was arrested by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by Wayanad Assistant Ex-

cise Commissioner Y. Prasad. In another major operation, the Excise Commissioner's Squad, Kozhikode Excise Intelligence Bureau, Kozhikode Deputy Excise Commissioner's Squad, and Kozhikode Anti-Narcotic Special Squad, with technical support from the Excise Cyber Cell, intercepted a vehicle near Pantheerankavu Toll Plaza, Kozhikode, and seized 3.312 kilograms of MDMA trafficked from Rajasthan.

The Angamaly Excise Range achieved one of Kerala's largest recent ganja seizures by confiscating 110 kilograms of ganja and arresting four individuals involved in an organised interstate syndicate. Similarly, the Palakkad Excise Special Squad seized 538 grams of methamphetamine during an operation at Pambampallam Toll Plaza, Palakkad. These operations demonstrate the Department's focus on dismantling both street-level distribution channels and larger supply networks.

Operation Thunder has also expanded beyond conventional enforcement through specialised the-matic operations. Operation Hideout, spearheaded by the Excise Intelligence Bureau, focused on lodges, hotels, homestays, and other establishments suspected of facilitating narcotics consumption and trafficking. Conducted simultaneously across districts, the operation highlighted the Department's capability for coordinated intelligence-based interventions and strengthened



The Kerala Excise Department has conducted more than 24,000 inspections and raids, leading to the detection of over 20,000 cases.



preventive enforcement mechanisms.

Calculated Precaution

Going forward, Operation Thunder will evolve into a long-term anti-narcotics mission supported by advanced intelligence systems, stronger interstate coordination, and targeted action against emerging drug threats. The proposed State Narcotics Control Bureau under the Kerala Excise Department aims to create a specialised institutional mechanism to enhance intelligence gathering, coordinated investigations, specialised training, inter-agency cooperation, and focused action against organised drug networks.

The Mayangilla Keralam campaign serves as a comprehensive public platform covering drug prevention, enforcement, de-addiction, rehabilitation, and awareness initiatives. Operation Thunder is therefore more than an enforcement drive; it represents Kerala's collective commitment to protecting society from the threat of narcotics. Through institutional strength, technological innovation, intelligence-based operations, and public participation, the Kerala Excise Department continues to redefine anti-narcotics enforcement. The message remains clear: Kerala will neither tolerate narcotics nor compromise in its pursuit of a safer and healthier society.



SAY NO TO DRUGS.
YOUR CALL CAN SAVE LIVES.



**REPORT
NARCOTIC TRAFFICKING**
WhatsApp Helpline
9447178000
Report narcotic trafficking directly to the **Excise Commissioner**



**YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
WE ARE HERE TO HELP.**
Vimukthi Counselling Helpline
14405
For professional guidance and support.



Your identity is safe.
Your call can create a drug-free tomorrow.





Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala holding up the hand of a migrant labourer at Perumbavoor

Transforming Perumbavoor

The rise of an industrial city, anchored in safety



Dilshad Mohammed
Journalist

Perumbavoor, a town with a distinctive place on Kerala's industrial map, has for the past two decades witnessed historic demographic shifts and economic growth. The surge in plywood industries, furniture manufacturing, steel fabrication, construction, hospitality, and other commercial enterprises has turned this town into a major hub for migrant workers from other

states. Thousands of labourers from various parts of the country depend on Perumbavoor for their livelihood, making the region aptly nicknamed the 'Gulf of migrant workers'.

Economic Growth and Emerging Social Challenges

However, alongside this economic progress, several challenges affecting the town's law-and-order situa-

tion and social stability have also emerged. An increase in people residing without identification documents or proper addresses, unregistered labour camps, the presence of unauthorised intermediaries, the use of forged documents, and hideouts for anti-social elements had become major concerns for the police and security agencies. More alarmingly, certain drug trafficking

networks attempted to exploit the large migrant worker population, creating extremely serious situations.

In this context, Operation Toofan was executed with great intensity in Perumbavoor. Launched with the aim of ensuring the town's security while stringently curbing unlawful activities, this initiative has brought about significant changes in Perumbavoor's social landscape, with far-reaching positive outcomes.

Comprehensive Security Review Needed

Perumbavoor is one of the areas in Kerala with the highest concentration of migrant workers from other states. Hundreds of thousands of workers are employed in various plywood units and factories across regions such as Vengola, Okkal, Vazhakulam, Kuruppampadi, and Odakkali. While the majority of these workers are ordinary people earning their livelihood through hard work, unlawful activities by a section of individuals brought disrepute to the entire community.

Numerous labour camps lacked basic infrastructure and safety standards; gangs actively produced and supplied fake Aadhaar cards and identification documents; individuals wanted in various cases from other states sought refuge in Perumbavoor's worker settlements; and wholesale and retail drug trafficking operated from these camps—creating a grave situation that made a comprehensive security review in Perumbavoor unavoidable.

Methodical Implementation of Operation Toofan

Some mistakenly perceived this initiative as merely a series of inspections. However, Operation Toofan was implemented in a highly planned



manner under the leadership of investigating officers. The core components included comprehensive data collection from labour camps, digital registration, ensuring accountability of building owners, and gathering accurate tenant information.

Inspections were conducted simultaneously during day and night across various centres within the Perumbavoor sub-division. Police personally visited plywood units, worker settlements, and rental buildings, verifying each individual's Aadhaar cards, voter IDs, employer details, and native addresses. Officers ensured that law-abiding establishments and workers faced no difficulties, focusing interventions precisely on lawbreakers.

Dismantling Drug Networks

One of Operation Toofan's most significant achievements has been the apprehension of major drug smuggling networks. Large-scale raids were conducted across Ernakulam Rural District as part of this

mission. In the Rural District alone, approximately 145 kilograms of cannabis were seized. Of this, about 17 kilograms of highly potent hybrid cannabis recovered in Perumbavoor was of extreme seriousness. Key accused, including a couple, were arrested in connection with this case. Police uncovered international links involved in smuggling hybrid cannabis through Thailand using tourist visas. Luxury vehicles worth lakhs of rupees were also seized in this case.

At Athani Junction, 35 grams of MDMA (including 24 grams in a car), 790 grams of hashish oil, and 200 grams of heroin were seized. The arrest of Shefeeul Islam, an Assam native and key figure in the heroin sales network, led to the collapse of a major trafficking chain.

As part of Operation Toofan, 330 cases were registered and 390 arrests were made in the Rural District. Within the Perumbavoor sub-division alone, 130 cases and 155 ar-

rests were recorded. In Aluva, 101 people were arrested in 75 cases.

Support from Traders and the Industrial Sector

Traders and plywood industrialists in Perumbavoor wholeheartedly welcomed this initiative. In the past, various frauds committed by anti-social elements under the guise of genuine workers had brought shame to the industrial sector.

A noteworthy development was the formation of an anti-drug volunteer force by local residents, which greatly assisted officers and public representatives. These volunteers kept watch day and night, providing accurate information about drug transactions in Perumbavoor to concerned officials. Many faced threats and assaults from drug mafia due to this, yet they continued their efforts undeterred. Several of these Toofan Warriors were honoured by the government for their contributions.

Visible Changes

With stricter security inspections, the following changes became evident:

- ▶ Employers began mandatorily maintaining identification documents, native addresses, and mobile numbers of workers entering employment.
- ▶ Interference by fake intermediaries reduced significantly.
- ▶ Unnecessary and suspicious night-time movements in the town were brought under control.
- ▶ Building owners became more vigilant in sharing tenant information with the police.

Community Participation



and Awareness Campaigns

More than just a police raid, Operation Toofan has been driven forward with participation from all sections of society. Extensive awareness programmes and camps have been organised involving Residents associations, traders, voluntary organisations, clubs, social and cultural activists, students, and youth. Continuous interventions by officers led by District Police Chief K.S. Sudarshan have played a major role in making this initiative people-centric.

Addressing Human Rights Concerns

A key question that arises whenever stringent security measures are implemented is whether human rights are being protected. Such discussions also surfaced during the inspections in Perumbavoor. Social organisations and human rights activists demanded that migrant workers, who play a crucial role in driving Kerala's industrial growth, should not all be placed under a shadow of suspicion. Keeping these concerns in mind, police authorities proceeded carefully. Actions were precisely targeted at criminals and drug mafias, ensuring that ordinary workers engaged in legal employment faced no difficulties.

Future Priorities for Sustained Impact

While Operation Toofan has brought about major cleansing and progress in Perumbavoor's security landscape, certain areas require continued attention for the future:

- ▶ - Completely stopping the operation of unregistered small labour camps.
- ▶ - Establishing systems to accurately update information on workers who frequently change jobs.
- ▶ - Ensuring cleanliness and fire safety arrangements in residential centres through joint interventions by the Labour Department and local self-government institutions.

In these matters, coordinated efforts among the police, local institutions, health department, fire force, and industry owners are essential.

A Model for Other Cities

The contributions of Operation Toofan in ensuring the security of Perumbavoor are historic. By taking strong action against rising drug trafficking and fake document mafias, the police have been able to restore Perumbavoor's atmosphere of peace. The true success of such initiatives is fully realised only when security goes hand-in-hand with the protection of the dignity and rights of migrant workers from other states. There is little doubt that this security model initiated in Perumbavoor will become an example for other industrial towns in Kerala. Residents collectively say that with continued monitoring and transparent actions, this mission can help build a new Perumbavoor—free from crime and secure for all.



Know the Law

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 provides the main framework for prosecuting drug offenses in India. Under the act, offenses are heavily structured based on quantity—categorised as Small, Intermediate, or Commercial—rather than just the type of drug.

1. NDPS Act —Section 20

Establishes penal provisions specifically handling cannabis (Ganja, Charas, and the cultivation of the plant).

- For 20(a) [Cultivation]: Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) extending up to 10 years, and a mandatory fine extending up to ₹1 Lakh. Non-Bailable.
- For 20(b)(ii)(A) [Small Quantity]: RI extending up to 1 year, or a fine extending up to ₹10,000, or both. Bailable.
- For 20(b)(ii)(B) [Intermediate Quantity]: RI extending up to 10 years, and a fine extending up to ₹1 Lakh. Non-Bailable.
- For 20(b)(ii)(C) [Commercial Quantity]: A strict mandatory minimum RI of 10 years extending up to 20 years, along with a mandatory fine of ₹1 Lakh to ₹2 Lakhs. Non-Bailable (Bail is tightly restricted by Section 37).

All subsections are Cognisable (Police can arrest without a warrant).

2. NDPS Act — Section 22

Penalises illicit operations involving synthetic or manufactured psychotropic substances (such as MDMA, LSD, or Alprazolam).

- Section 22(a): Where the contravention involves a Small Quantity. RI extending up to 1 year, or a fine extending up to ₹10,000, or both. Bailable.
- Section 22(b): Where the contravention involves an Intermediate Quantity (less than commercial but greater than small). RI extending up to 10 years, and a fine extending up to ₹1 Lakh. Non-Bailable.
- Section 22(c): Where the contravention involves a Commercial Quantity. Mandatory minimum RI of 10 years extending up to 20 years, along with a mandatory fine of ₹1 Lakh to ₹2 Lakhs. Non-Bailable.

Cognisable across all quantity tiers.

3. NDPS Act — Section 27, Subsection (b)

- Punishment for consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance (Other substances).
- Imprisonment for a term extending up to 6 months, or a fine extending up to ₹10,000, or both. Bailable.
- Cognisable (though typically treated as a minor, bailable enforcement scenario on the ground)

Latest Statistics of Operation Toofan

- Total number of cases (Except under COTPA)-8157
- Total Number of Arrests - 8773
- Number of Persons Counselling - 453
- Number of Persons Rehabilitated - 18



Exploring the science of addiction, the health risks of substance abuse, legal consequences, and evidence-based treatment pathways to address Kerala's growing drug challenge effectively



Dr. Sagar T. Thevalappuram

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District Hospital, Kozhencherry

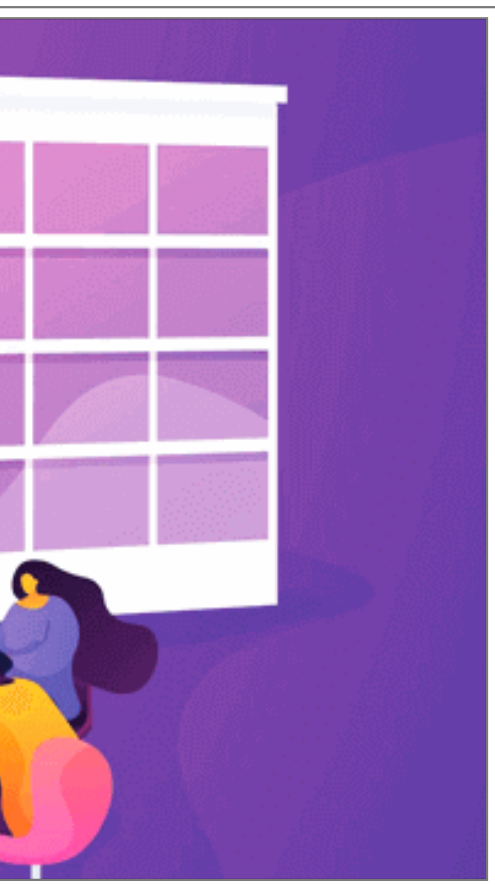
Drug abuse remains a serious public health concern in Kerala, affecting individuals, families, and communities through medical, psychological, and legal harms. The issue is not limited to a single type of drug or a single pattern of use; it includes synthetic stimulants, potent cannabinoids, opioids, hallucinogens, and chemical substances consumed through smoking, swallowing, snorting, injection, or sublingual ingestion.

Clinical profile of substances

Different drug classes produce different toxic effects depending on the substance and the route of administration. Synthetic stimulants such as MDMA and meth can cause an initial euphoric surge followed by acute serotonin depletion, leading to severe anxiety, depression, bruxism, and hyperthermia. Potent cannabinoids, including hashish oil and high-potency weed, may trigger acute drug-

induced psychosis, panic attacks, paranoid delusions, and memory fragmentation.

Opioids such as heroin and brown sugar create rapid physical tolerance and carry a high risk of fatal respiratory depression in overdose, along with severe withdrawal symptoms. Hallucinogens such as LSD blotters distort perception, cause visual hallucinations and existential panic, and are sometimes disguised



as colourful stamps or candies, especially to target young students.

Addiction as a brain disease

Addiction should be understood as a chronic neurobiological disorder rather than a moral failing or character defect. Psychoactive substances overstimulate the mesolimbic reward system, producing an artificial dopamine surge that can flood synapses with up to 10 times the normal level of dopamine.

Over time, the brain adapts through receptor downregulation, reducing dopamine D2 receptor density and lowering the person's baseline capacity for pleasure. This can lead to anhedonia and compulsion, where individuals may continue using drugs not for pleasure, but simply to function at a baseline level.

Methods of use and medical risks

The method of drug use significantly changes the medical risks. Smoking and vaping substances such as ganja, hashish oil, and chemical concentrates can cause chronic bronchitis, airway injury, and an earlier onset of panic or psychosis. Oral use of MDMA pills, sedatives, codeine, and prescription painkillers can lead to gastrointestinal damage, liver toxicity, and delayed but potentially fatal overdose.

Nasal snorting of cocaine, powdered MDMA, and ketamine may cause nasal septum perforation, chronic rhinitis, and immediate central nervous system intoxication. Intravenous use of heroin or liquid chemical cocktails exposes users to blood-borne infections such as HIV and hepatitis B and C, as well as vein collapse, endocarditis, and sudden fatal overdose. Sublingual or oral ingestion of LSD blotter stamps and spiked soft drinks can cause rapid psychotropic effects, metabolic instability, disorientation, and increased vulnerability to assault.

Legal consequences in Kerala

Kerala follows a zero-tolerance approach toward drug possession and trafficking. Under the NDPS Act, illicit drug possession, sale, and transport are non-bailable offenses and can lead to mandatory imprisonment. The KAAPA Act allows preventive detention for up to one year without bail for repeat offenders and mafia operatives.

The Abkari Act is used to prosecute illicit contraband alcohol and bootlegging networks. In addition to criminal penalties, an NDPS record can result in passport cancellation, loss of Police Clearance Certificate status, and a permanent bar from foreign jobs and government service.

Treatment and rehabilitation

Effective treatment requires



Addiction should be understood as a chronic neurobiological disorder rather than a moral failing or character defect.

Under the NDPS Act, illicit drug possession, sale, and transport are non-bailable offenses and can lead to mandatory imprisonment.

a structured clinical response. Medical detoxification begins with inpatient withdrawal management, and ICU support may be necessary in medical colleges for acute toxicity or high-risk cases. Pharmacotherapy may include Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) and anti-craving medications such as acamprosate and naltrexone under medical supervision.

Psychotherapeutic care includes structured Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET), and relapse prevention skill building. Rehabilitation typically involves 14- to 28-day hospital stays, family therapy, and 12-step mutual aid peer groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

Drug abuse in Kerala is both a clinical and a societal challenge. Addressing it requires early identification, medical treatment, psychosocial support, legal enforcement, and long-term rehabilitation, with addiction understood as a treatable brain disease rather than a personal failure.

Stronger Together Against Drugs

Ramesh Chennithala's social media post

"A historic internal security initiative has commenced in Kerala to make South India drug-free. As part of 'Operation Toofan: The Narco Hunt', a high-level meeting convened by Kerala brought together Police Chiefs from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Puducherry, along with top officials from central agencies like Kerala-Lakshadweep Customs, NCB, DRI, SIB, and RPF at the Police Headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram. The Southern states have today launched a massive internal security coordination that serves as a model for the entire country. All participants announced in the meeting that an SP-rank officer will be urgently appointed as a Nodal Officer in their respective states for 'Operation Toofan: The Narco Hunt'.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Puducherry Chief Minister N. Rangasamy, and the Home Ministers of these states for responding positively to Kerala's request for this joint initiative, extending their support, and appointing the necessary officers".



The Post That Sparked Attention

Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar

"Shri Ramesh Chennithala, Hon'ble Minister for Home and Vigilance, Government of Keralam, met me today to seek Karnataka's support for Operation Toofan, Kerala's anti-drug mission. Drug trafficking knows no borders, and neither should our resolve to combat it. I have directed the Karnataka Police to take necessary action and coordinate closely to dismantle interstate drug networks and safeguard our youth from the menace of drugs".



United for a Drug-Free Tomorrow

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay

Kerala's anti-drug campaign, Operation Toofan, has gained further momentum with Tamil Nadu extending its full support to the initiative. During a meeting held on July 15, 2026, Kerala Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay discussed measures to strengthen cooperation in combating drug trafficking.

The two states agreed to work in close coordination through joint border patrolling, seamless intelligence sharing, and collaborative action against drug peddlers. Chief Minister Vijay also expressed his support for Kerala's Narco Hunt initiative and assured full cooperation in the anti-drug campaign. He further welcomed closer collaboration between the two states and indicated his intention to visit Kerala soon.

The discussions also highlighted the need to establish a coordinated mechanism among the five southern States to tackle narcotics trafficking more effectively. The joint initiative marks a significant step toward a stronger regional response against the growing drug menace, reinforcing the commitment of both governments to ensuring safer communities.



A New Benchmark for Women's Safe Mobility



Sruthi Sreekumar

Writer

The state government of Kerala has taken another significant step towards building a more inclusive and women-friendly public transport system with the launch of the Pink Bus - Ladies Only service by the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation .

Introduced as part of the Government's 100-day action plan, the initiative is designed to provide women with safe, reliable and affordable travel, particularly during late evening and night hours when access to secure public transport has long been a concern.

The state-level inauguration of the project was conducted by the Minister for Transport, C.P. John, at the Thiruvananthapuram

Central Depot. Speaking at the function, the Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment to creating an environment where women can travel freely and confidently at any time of the day. He noted that the lack of dependable late-night public transport often compels women to depend on expensive private transport, adding financial burden while also raising safety concerns.

As first phase, the Pink bus service has been introduced in Thiruvananthapuram, with operations commencing along the city's Technopark corridor. The route connects major locations including East Fort, Thampanoor, Pattom, Pettah, Kumarapuram, Medical College, Regional Cancer Centre (RCC), Ulloor, Sreekaryam,

Kazhakootam, Technopark, Infosys, Lulu Mall and KIMS Hospital. This corridor serves thousands of daily commuters and has been identified as a priority due to the large number of women travelling to workplaces, hospitals and transportation hubs.

The service has been carefully planned to address the mobility needs of women who travel during unconventional hours. It is expected to benefit IT professionals working night shifts at Technopark and Infosys, hospital employees, women returning home after late-night cinema shows, railway passengers arriving at Thampanoor, patients and their bystanders, and many others who require dependable transport



after regular bus services have ended. In addition to the late-night operations, special services have also been arranged during the morning hours to assist women travelling to the Medical College area, including mothers with young children and passengers arriving by train.

The introduction of the Pink Bus reflects the Government's responsive approach to public policy. The concerns raised by various stakeholders, including the organisation Prathidhwani, regarding the need for stronger night transport facilities for women were taken into consideration while formulating the project. This collaborative approach highlights the importance of citizen participation in shaping public

services that directly address the needs of the community.

The service currently operates using the latest Link Fast Passenger buses deployed from the Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam depots. Designed as a city fast service, the buses provide an economical alternative to private transport while ensuring greater comfort and convenience for passengers. Women can now access reliable public transport without incurring the high costs often associated with taxis and other private vehicles during late-night hours.

Looking ahead, KSRTC has outlined plans to further strengthen the initiative. The government intends to introduce an online reservation system to improve passenger convenience and service efficiency. It is also exploring the inclusion of electric buses as part of the Pink Bus fleet, reinforcing Kerala's commitment to environmentally sustainable public transport while ensuring punctual and dependable services. Based on scientific assessment of commuter demand and travel patterns, the Government also plans to expand the Pink Bus service to other districts in the coming months.

The initiative also complements the Government's broader efforts to strengthen public transport and encourage greater use of KSRTC services. At the inauguration, the Transport Minister observed that KSRTC has earned the trust and confidence of the public through continuous improvements in service delivery. He expressed confidence that initiatives focused on passenger welfare would further strengthen the Corporation while enhancing the confidence and morale of its workforce.



Women can now access reliable public transport without incurring the high costs often associated with taxis and other private vehicles during late-night hours.



The Pink Bus service marks another milestone in Kerala's journey towards gender-sensitive governance. Public transport is more than a means of travel. It is a vital enabler of education, employment, healthcare and social participation. Ensuring that women can travel safely, comfortably and affordably at all hours directly contributes to their economic independence and overall well-being.

Following the successful implementation of the Priyadarshini bus scheme, which expanded mobility support for women, the launch of the Pink Bus service represents another landmark initiative by the Government. Together, these programmes demonstrate a strong commitment to creating a transport ecosystem that prioritises safety, accessibility and dignity for women. The Pink Bus is not merely the introduction of another public transport service. It is a progressive social intervention that promotes equal opportunity and greater freedom of movement. As the initiative expands across the State, it has the potential to become a model for women-centred public transport in India, reflecting Kerala's continuing leadership in inclusive governance and people-oriented development.



Onam: Cultivating Prosperity Across Generations

T. Siddique

Minister for Agriculture

As Kerala celebrates abundance, we must honour farmers through fair markets, women-led enterprise, responsible technology and school-based agricultural learning that connects a new generation with soil, food and shared prosperity.

Onam invites us to imagine a society in which prosperity is shared, food is plentiful and every family can celebrate with dignity. That is why the story of Mahabali continues to live so powerfully in our collective memory. It speaks not simply of abundance, but of equality, gratitude and hope. At the heart of that promise are the farmers whose labour sustains our homes, strengthens our communities and keeps alive Kerala's enduring relationship with the soil.

Our agrarian landscape has shaped our culture, cuisine and way of life for generations. The

rice served at the Onasadya, the Nendran banana, the vegetables gathered from farms and homesteads, and the flowers arranged in the pookalam all carry the imprint of human effort and natural abundance.

This year, our Government is working to ensure that Onam honours farmers not only in sentiment, but through meaningful support. The Agriculture Department's special programme seeks to expand the cultivation of vegetables, Nendran banana and marigold while strengthening the connection between production and markets. Nearly 2,000 Onam markets are planned across Kerala in partnership with the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (VFPCCK) and HORTICORP, with a proposed outlay of ₹10.20 crore. These markets will make fresh produce and value-added agricultural products available at affordable

prices while helping farmers secure remunerative returns.

Women will be central to this transformation. Launched in the context of the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026, the five-year Krishi Sakhi—Women Farmer Development Programme has an outlay of ₹3.5 crore. A State-level Women Consortium will bring together women's collectives, improve access to technology and finance, and support women-led agricultural enterprises.

Special attention will be given to conserving the traditional farming practices and agricultural heritage of tribal communities while improving their access to markets. We will intensify efforts to identify fallow land suitable for cultivation and create stronger pathways for farmers' produce to reach national and international markets.

Technology must serve this human purpose. An allocation of ₹1.5 crore has been made for Technology-Driven Agriculture, supporting artificial intelligence, drones, sensors, smart irrigation, precision-farming tools and digital decision-support systems wherever they are practical and beneficial. The Department has begun steps to introduce AI-based technologies across Kerala and aims to substantially expand their adoption over the coming year.

Our agricultural renewal must also begin with the young. Kathiru Agricultural Clubs—short for Kerala Agriculture Technology Heritage and Innovation for Rural Understanding—will connect students with farming, scientific practice, food systems and environmental stewardship. Acclaimed actor Mohanlal brings exceptional strength and visibility to this mission as the Goodwill Ambassador of the Kathiru programme. His inspiring presence will help carry the message of Kathiru into homes across Kerala, encouraging children and families to embrace agriculture with renewed interest, pride and confidence. In the

first phase, financial support will be provided to 2,500 schools, with the programme intended to extend across government and aided schools. Each club will include interested students and function with student and teacher nodal leadership, supported through training, monitoring and continued departmental guidance.

The Kanippanthal in Schools complements this effort by linking agriculture with children's nutritional security. The programme is being implemented under the Fruit Nutrition Garden Scheme of the State Horticulture Mission. In the first phase, fruit nutrition gardens are proposed in 2,921 selected schools. The Agriculture Department will provide saplings free of cost, including mango, jackfruit, guava, Indian gooseberry, sapota, rambutan, mangosteen and passion fruit.

The promotion of farm tourism, supported by an outlay of ₹50 lakh, provides another path for diversified rural incomes. Our farms are repositories of biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, food traditions and



Nearly 2,000 Onam markets are planned across Kerala in partnership with the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (VFPC) and HORTICORP, with a proposed outlay of 10.20 crore.



cultural memory. Responsible farm-tourism enterprises can create employment and supplementary income while allowing visitors to experience rural life.

Together, these measures advance a larger commitment to food security. We want every family to have access to safe, nutritious and locally produced food. This requires stronger farmer producer organisations, reliable market linkages, responsible value addition, household cultivation and farming practices that protect soil, water and biodiversity.

As we welcome Mahabali, let us honour the people who make abundance possible. Let us respect farmers not only in words, but through fair markets, responsible consumption and sustained public support. Let us protect the soil and water that future generations will inherit and give women and young people the confidence to build livelihoods in agriculture.

May this Onam bring happiness to every home, hope to every farmer and strength to every family. May it renew our resolve to build a more equal, compassionate, food-secure and self-reliant Kerala.

Onashamsakal to all!



Spotlight on the Onam Bazaar

Staff Reporter

This Onam, state government is launching an expanded, market-driven campaign focused on maximizing reach and consumer convenience through free kits, special rice distribution, market intervention measures, and trade fairs to ensure essential commodities remain available at affordable prices.

This Onam, Supplyco gears up to celebrate the season with an expanded, market-driven campaign aimed at maximising reach and consumer convenience. Departing from tradition, Supplyco is staging three mega trade fairs across the state — at Kozhikode Beach, the helipad ground of Kaloor Stadium in Ernakulam, and Nayanar Park in Putharikandam, Thiruvananthapuram — bringing together prominent public and private sector brands under one roof. The events will feature German-style hanger structures with air-conditioned facilities. In addition to a dedicated 4,000 sq. ft. Supplyco pavilion, visitors can expect stalls showcasing electronics, automobiles, textiles

and a wide array of other product categories. The Agriculture Department and MILMA will also participate as partners in Supplyco's trade fair.

The Ernakulam mega trade fair opens on August 8 and runs for 18 days, concluding on August 25. Fairs in Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram will each run for 15 days. The Kozhikode Beach fair will also host a family-friendly food court run by Kudumbashree.

Beyond these three mega venues, Supplyco will hold district-level fairs at key locations across the remaining 11 districts, with MILMA and HortiCorp participating in every district fair. District events begin on August 14 and continue through August 25. Additionally, Supplyco fairs will be organised in all assembly constituencies from August 21 to 25.

Subsidised Product Availability

Supplyco has completed the first-stage tendering and placed

orders for a range of staple items in time for Onam, including rice, pulses, chillies and cooking oil, ensuring stock for the festival season.

New Sabari range

Ahead of Onam, Supplyco will introduce new Sabari-brand products such as rava, maida and payasam mix.

Onam Kits and Gift Cards

Following government directives, Supplyco will distribute free Onam kits to over six lakh AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) cardholders. Each kit for AAY beneficiaries will include 16 items — including sugar, cooking oil, pulses and a bundle of cloth worth ₹837.25.

Supplyco is also offering special Onam gift kits including all the necessary ingredients and branded products for the Onam feast. The Atham Onam gift kit, featuring essentials like rice, cooking oil, sugar and a selection of Sabari



spices (21 items in total), will be available at Supplyco outlets for ₹1,000 (a saving of up to ₹280 from the maximum retail price of ₹1,280). The Uthradam kit, containing 25 items, is priced at ₹1,500 (₹380 below the maximum retail price). The premium Thiruvonam kit — a 30-item hamper — will be sold for ₹2,000, representing a saving of ₹540.

In addition, Supplyco will launch a Sabari Signature kit that bundles

nine premium Sabari products — including Puttu powder, vermicelli, payasam mix, chilli powder and turmeric powder — at a special price of ₹299, offering over ₹75 in savings.

These kits make ready gifts for colleagues, friends and family. Supplyco will also offer Onam gift cards in denominations of ₹500 and ₹1,000, which can be redeemed at Supplyco outlets for products of the recipient's choice.

Onam Customer Bonus Coupon

Customers who spend ₹1,500 or more during the Onam season will receive a bonus coupon worth ₹100. This coupon can be redeemed on purchases of ₹1,000 or more at Supplyco between September 1 and October 31.

Offers on Branded Products

Around 70 FMCG companies will roll out special offers and discounts on a variety of branded products at Supplyco outlets during the Onam period. Sabari branded goods will also feature dedicated combo deals and price reductions.

Gears up for Onam

To control price hikes during the Onam season and ensure essential commodities are available to the public at reasonable rates, the Civil Supplies Department has initiated extensive preparations. Supplyco's Onam Trade Fairs are set to commence on August 8. The government aims to distribute 1,29,078.302 metric tons of rice and 24,506.291 metric tons of wheat through various schemes during the Onam season.

The distribution of free Onam kits encompassing 16 items for AAY (yellow) ration card holders will commence in the first week of August. The distribution will be completed by August last week. The government has allocated ₹53 crore for the distribution of free Onam kits to AAY cardholders and inmates of welfare institutions.





PROSPERITY Woven by Women



Asha S Panicker

Editorial Assistant
Kudumbashree

Kudumbashree's Onam fairs are a development model that values the labour and dreams of rural women. The message 'Onam with Kudumbashree' is not just a promotional slogan; it is a living declaration of women's economic empowerment, job creation, local production, and sustainable development.

Onam is not only the biggest celebration for Malayalis; it is

also an economic festival that revitalizes Kerala's rural economy. When vegetables and flowers ripen in the fields, value-added products are prepared in rural kitchens, and the labour of small enterprises reaches a wider market during Onam, the benefits flow directly into the lives of thousands of women. Kudumbashree's Onam marketing fairs have emerged as a people-driven model that transforms this

potential into a force for women's economic empowerment and local production.

For years, Kudumbashree fairs have become an integral part of Kerala's Onam market, and today they are more than just a trading platform. They are a grassroots movement that ensures women's labour receives its true value, promotes rural enterprises and production, strengthens



the local economy, and turns the vision of a self-reliant Kerala into reality. Connecting farmers, entrepreneurs, and consumers on a single platform is Kudumbashree's greatest strength.

This year too, Kudumbashree is organizing extensive Onam market fairs across the state in anticipation of the festival. The state-level inauguration of the fairs, scheduled from August 20 to 25, will take place in Alappuzha district. District-level marketing fairs will be held in all 13 districts, and more than 2,000 local market fairs two in each Community Development Society (CDS) across the state will be organized. The fairs are jointly led by district missions, CDSs, and local self-government institutions.

The foundation of women's economic security

The greatest relevance of the Onam market fairs lies in the fact that they are an economic intervention that ensures additional income for women, beyond merely being an opportunity to sell products. Onam is the time when micro-enterprise products and agricultural crops produced through a year's labour reach the largest number of buyers, and Kudumbashree has built its marketing network to fully utilize this opportunity.

The additional income earned in the market not only increases women's personal financial independence but also brings significant improvements to the living standards of their families. This income helps meet families' financial needs, including children's education, healthcare, home renovations, investment in new enterprises, and loan repayments. Kudumbashree's experience shows that every rupee earned by women is invested in the development of their families and the progress of society.

The strength of the micro-enterprise sector

Kudumbashree's micro-enterprise sector is today the largest network of women entrepreneurs in Kerala. Thousands of units operating in numerous fields—food products, food processing, spices, cleaning products, handicrafts, clothing, and value-added products—are the main driving force of the Onam market.

Last year alone, the micro-enterprise sector achieved sales worth ₹40.44 crore, and this year an even greater achievement is targeted. More than 50,000



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women entrepreneurs will participate in over 2,000 marketing fairs organized across the state. The fact that no other trade fair in Kerala sees such a large collective participation of women entrepreneurs is a unique feature of Kudumbashree.

A model that creates markets for rural production

Through the Onam market fairs, hundreds of quality products made by Kudumbashree micro-entrepreneurs across the state reach consumers. A wide variety of products will be available at the fairs, including various types of chips, sharkara varatti (jaggery fritters), pickles, payasam mixes, grain powders, curry powders, spice blends, organic rice, jam, squash, cashew nuts, tamarind, soap, and cleaning products.

Special emphasis is also being given this year to indigenous products from different parts of Kerala. Products made by tribal entrepreneurs in Idukki such as

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As part of the “Onakkani” scheme, vegetable cultivation is progressing on 12,000 acres, and under the “Nirappolima” scheme, flower cultivation is underway on 2,000 acres.



kooavapodi, honey and kudampuli along with Attappadi’s “Hill Value” brand honey, ragi, maize, little millet, foxtail millet, cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, cloves, coconut oil will be available. Along with this coffee powder, honey, millet, and nellikka–kanthari mulaku pickle from Athirappilly region, will also be available to consumers. This model, which connects local delicacies and traditional products to the market, gives new strength to rural production.

Pocketmart e-commerce app for products

As in previous years, Kudumbashree will also make products available through its Pocketmart e-commerce application. The ability to purchase authentic, pure, and trustworthy Kudumbashree products online is attracting consumers. Alongside this,

Onam kits will also be distributed through Kudumbashree CDSs.

From farms to the Onam feast

Behind the success of the Onam market lie months of preparation. In anticipation of the Onam season, Kudumbashree agricultural groups are carrying out extensive farming activities across the state. As part of the “Onakkani” scheme, vegetable cultivation is progressing on 12,000 acres, and under the “Nirappolima” scheme, flower cultivation is underway on 2,000 acres. Additionally, nutrient-rich sweet potatoes and other crops produced by farmers in Attappadi will reach the Onam market.

These schemes not only increase production but also help women grow into agricultural entrepreneurs. By ensuring women’s active participation from sowing seeds to harvesting and

marketing, Kudumbashree has been able to make the agricultural sector women-friendly. Last year alone, women farmers earned ₹10.3 crore in sales through the Onakkani and Nirappolima schemes, and hence farmers are hopeful of achieving excellent income this year as well.

A development model that creates employment

Another major feature of the Onam market fairs is job creation. Thousands of women gain additional employment during this period in various sectors such as agriculture, food processing, packing, transport, storage, marketing, catering, and accounting. This is not limited to seasonal income. The income and consumer confidence gained during Onam help sustain enterprises throughout the year and create new job opportunities. In this way, women in rural areas



are able to secure employment and income in their own villages.

Kudumbashree's hand in the Onam feast too

The Onam feast market is also one of Kudumbashree's key interventions. Women entrepreneurs operating in the canteen and catering sector will prepare delicious Onam sadya by accepting orders from various institutions and families. Coordination of the sadya is done at the CDS level, and payasam fairs will also be organized. The Onam sadya, prepared with assured quality and hygiene, is another example of Kudumbashree women's culinary expertise and entrepreneurial excellence.

Kudumbashree's green market, following the green charter

Kudumbashree also gives importance to environmental protection. Instructions have been given to strictly follow the green charter in all Onam market fairs. The aim is to convey the message of a "green Onam" to the people by ensuring eco-friendly packaging, reducing plastic use, and proper waste management.

Women's journey towards a self-reliant Kerala

The benefits of the Onam market fairs are not limited to sales figures. Women who become economically self-reliant turn into partners in the decisions of their families and society. They become employers, start new enterprises, and provide employment to other women, thereby making women's empowerment a social reality.

This marketing model, which integrates Kudumbashree's activities in agriculture, animal husbandry, and micro-enterprises, not only promotes local production but also strengthens Kerala's domestic economy. By minimizing middlemen and directly connecting producers with consumers, this system ensures higher income for farmers and entrepreneurs. Along with providing quality products for Onam celebrations, Kudumbashree's Onam fairs will also help control price hikes in the general market.

Every product tells the story of a woman's labour, self-confidence, and success. It is these stories that make Kudumbashree the most people-centric economic empowerment movement in today's Kerala development narrative. ■

BOAT RACES

Where Art and Muscle Power Synergise



Dr. Nedumudi Harikumar, Writer

The boat race is a great sports event that Kuttanad has gifted to the world. It can also be described as a leisure-time activity and form of self-expression designed by a people who combat adverse life circumstances. Not so long in the past, small boats were the only means of transportation in this region full of rivers, canals and water-logged paddy fields. There

were plenty of canoes in Kuttanad that could be rowed by one, two or four persons. And then there were various, larger, canopied barges, called kettuvallams, company vallams and valavarayan vallams, for transporting people and goods. Maybe the boat race originated when rowers playfully started competing with one another in order to gain relief from the tedium of their daily chores.

Water sports in Keralam begins on the Moolam asterism of the Malayalam month of Midhunam [June-July] on the Champakulam water channel that runs through Kuttanad in Alappuzha district. This boat race is connected to a legend about the deity of the Sri Krishna Swamy temple in Ambalapuzha. The months of Idavam, Midhunam and Karkadakam [mid-May to





mid-August] constitute a period of deprivation, characterised by poverty and attendant troubles but, strangely, it is also a time when boat races, with all their fun and festivities, begin. The enthusiasm of this indigenous water sport reaches its zenith during Onam festival in the month of Chingam [Aug.-Sept.].

Every year, the world-famous Nehru Trophy Boat Race – described as the Olympics on the Ripples – takes place on the Punnamada lake in Alappuzha town. It commemorates the visit of India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Alappuzha on the Second Saturday of August 1952. Snake boats had arrived at Punnamada

as part of a formal welcome accorded to Nehru. Excited on seeing the Nadubhagam snake boat gliding by, Nehru jumped into it, sending its rowers into a tizzy of joy. Nehru himself instituted the trophy to commemorate his visit to Alappuzha, and since then the boat race has been conducted every year, on the Punnamada lake on the Second Saturday of August.





Marking History: Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru handing over the trophy to the captain of Nadubhagam Chundan Vallam - (I&PRD File Photo)

In the initial years, it was known as the Prime Minister's Trophy.

The snake boat is the emperor of all racing boats. The sight of these boats zipping over the ripples of the lake, like black snakes, is one of unparalleled beauty and gives inexplicable joy. A single snake boat can accommodate more than 100 individuals, including the rowers, the steersmen, the rhythm-keeper and the choristers. Each boat in Kuttanad and Aranmula is owned, designed and maintained by a region. There are numerous regions, a few of which are Kavalam, Nadubhagam, Champakulam, Aanakkari, Paayippad, Cheruthana, Thaayankari, Koduppunna, Pulinkunnu and Kaarichal. In the course of time, the snake boats of some of these regions that disintegrated have been renewed, and even given new shape.

As the season of the boat race begins, the people of Kuttanad talk about nothing other than boats and races. When the rehearsals start, the level of enthusiasm soars. Betting and raucous calls reach a feverish pitch, making the atmosphere vibrant and frenzied. The strongest among the youth of the area, cutting across all differences of caste, religion, class and race, are selected as rowers. Winning a creditable victory is a matter of prestige as far as each region is concerned. And to achieve it, the people are prepared to sacrifice their all, be it their own health or their savings.

Vanchippattu or boat songs form the literary component of the boat race. Among them, "Kuchelavrittam" vanchippattu of Ramapurathu Warriar is the most prominent. Set in Nathonnatha metre, it is famous not only in

Kuttanad but in the entire state of Kerala. The winners return home, singing this song:

*Kuttanadan punjayile, kochu penne, kuyilalaale,
Kottuvenam, kuzhal venam,
kuravavenam.
Varavelkaanaalu venam,
kodithoranangal venam,
Vijayashree laalitharaayi varunnu njangal . . .*

[O young girl on the punja fields of Kuttanad, O cuckoo!
Let's have drumbeats, pipe music and ululation.
Let's have welcoming crowds and gay festoons,
To receive us, as we come in victory . . .]

Boat songs are primarily meant to relieve the strain of the rowers, and they are set to different kinds of metres. Vocables are also used for the same purpose:

*Thithithaarathithitheyi
Thitheithakatheiytheiythom
Thaathaamthatheiyam
Thitheiyamtheiythom...*

While these are sung in slow tempo, there are other vocables like “Ayyadapoyedaa...” which are fast-paced. A thick wooden plank called vedithadi is placed right in the middle of a snake boat, and the rhythm-keeper uses a long pole, the height of an adult male, to pound on it in order to keep the time. The rest of the choristers stand around him. The rowers in a snake boat have their special places. Those seated at the highest point of the boat play a major role in steering the direction of the vessel. As they plow the waters of the lake and the river, they send high arcs of water drops in opposite directions, and the beauty of the spectacle is simply indescribable. Their discipline, athletic power and stamina have to be at the highest level.

By the time they appear for the competition, especially for major events like the Nehru Trophy Boat Race, they would have put one month of intense training and practice behind them. And when a team completes its participation in an event, from the first rehearsal to the final race, it would have spent lakhs of rupees. In races like the Nehru Trophy, government grants are a great source of support to the participants. Although certain other boat races also have government sponsorship, most are conducted with the help of generous funds from individuals and residents of each region. Despite all the effort and expense, nothing whips up as much enthusiasm and cheer in the world as this particular sports event. Small wonder that Nehru Trophy Boat Race has won the sobriquet “Olympics on the Ripples”. It is also a form of sports that symbolises the gallop of human life. ■

*photos by Dalu Parameswaran,
(I&PRD)*



Kerála: A Land Painted in Rain and Green



Dr. Aparna Ajith, Writer

Kerala is a land where nature, culture, tradition, and progress intertwine in perfect harmony. With its rare geographical shape, rich greenery, backwaters, majestic mountains, monsoon rains, delicious cuisine, and warm-hearted people, Kerala is not merely a place on the map but a cherished emotive experience

Kerala, the beloved 'Kairali', is a land that remains serene and sanguine with all its uniqueness. In the inner worlds of every Malayali, the recurring rhythm of the well-

known lyrics, Sahyasanusruthi, secretly buzzes a lot. Kerala rises like a jewelled veena, its soul tuned to the ancient beats of the Sahya mountains, the Western Ghats. From the unfathomable blue strings of the Arabian Sea, it rouses melodies that soothe and stir at once, a music both eternal and intimate. Across its winning green landscapes, where paddy fields breathe, and coconut palms whisper. The reverberation of art flows like an unseen river, echoing through every breeze, every ripple, and every shade of green. These touching and mind-

blowing lyrics make one fall for the endearing charm of the real God's Own Country.

Kerala, also known as Keralam, is one of the most attractive and exceptional regions in India.. Kerala, the land of coconuts, brimming with the marvel of greenery and scenery, is not merely a land but a living symphony, where rain paints, nature sings, culture thrives, and life itself becomes a gentle, eternal melody. One of the most noteworthy features of Kerala is its distinctive shape. It lies like a long



The cuisine of Kerala also talks about the timeless allure of hospitality and abundance. The famous Onam Sadya, with the traditional dishes comprising thoran, avial, olan, kaalan, and pachadi served on banana leaves, is not just a meal but a cultural fragrance of togetherness.

green ribbon between the Arabian Sea on the west and the mighty Western Ghats on the east. This narrow stretch of land gives Kerala a rare blend of sea, rivers, hills, forests, and fertile plains within short distances. One can easily wander through this wonderful gathering of natural resources. This distinct geographical position makes Kerala rich in biodiversity, scenic beauty, and a pleasant climate. The Western Ghats act as the green crown of Kerala. These majestic mountains shield the land and attract monsoon clouds, bringing abundant rain every year. Because of this blessing, Kerala

remains lush and fertile. The Ghats are home to tea plantations, forests, waterfalls, wildlife sanctuaries, and hill stations such as Munnar, Wayanad, Ponmudi, and Vagamon. Their mist-covered peaks and cool air attract people across the globe. Indeed, the long, narrow strip of land blessed with a plethora of attractive landscapes is one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in India.

Tourism flourishes in Kerala because it offers something for every traveller. The breathtaking natural beauty of Kerala has a lot to convey to the locals and

tourists alike. Beach lovers visit Alappuzha, Kovalam and Varkala. Nature lovers explore waterfalls like Athirappilly Falls and forests like Periyar National Park. History enthusiasts walk through the colonial streets of Fort Kochi. Those seeking peace and healing come for Ayurveda and wellness retreats. Bekal Fort, Paithalmala, Edakkal Caves and the land of Zamorins allure travellers with an innate charisma. Every part of Kerala offers beauty in a diverse form. The ascribed beauty of Kerala needs no filter, and one has to just come, feel and enjoy to the lees.



The backwaters with the mesmerising aura to steal one's heart and soul, green nature that meets the grand culture, bestow a charm to Kerala, unlike any other place.



The charm of the coconut is central to life in Kerala. Coconut oil is used in cooking, coconut milk enriches curries, grated coconut adds flavour to dishes, and coir from the husk supports local industries. From food to festivals to hair care to body care, the coconut is deeply embedded in the everyday life of a Malayali. The cuisine of Kerala also talks about the timeless allure of hospitality and abundance. The famous Onam Sadya, with the traditional dishes comprising thoran, avial, olan, kaalan, and pachadi served on banana leaves, is not just a meal but a cultural fragrance of togetherness. Kerala cuisine is rich in coconut, spices, and freshness, making it both inimitable and outstanding. The aroma of coconut and spices bestows a striking warmth and feel to everyone's taste buds and appetite.

Kerala is equally rich in culture and harmony. Festivals like Onam unite people beyond religion and class. Traditional arts such as Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, and Theyyam preserve ancient creativity. Temples, churches, and mosques stand side by side, reflecting a spirit of coexistence. The people of Kerala are known for literacy, social awareness, and hospitality. What makes Kerala truly special is that it touches both

the eyes and the heart. It is a land where rain sings, rivers flow gently, mountains guard the horizon, and coconut palms dance with the wind. The boundless shades of green, rolling hills, grand elephant processions during Poorams, hundreds and thousands of devotees offering Pongala ritual to the goddesses, swaying coconut trees, the elegance of off-white mundu and kasavu sari, the exquisite floral patterns of Athapookalam, Malayali beauties clad in the traditional sari making dances moves matching the glory of thiruvathira, dropping in by relative's homes and rejoicing festive occasions, youngsters swinging in the ethos of Onam mood, chilling in the sightseeing spots, contemplating in the abyss

of sea waves, fishermen mending their nets by the shore, and boats gliding through tranquil waters together create a picture of rare beauty.

Kerala is also home to a large number of migrant labourers, often respectfully referred to as guest workers. They play an essential role in sectors such as construction, agriculture, hospitality, trade, and domestic services, becoming an integral part of Kerala's social and economic spheres. Their presence highlights the state's true spirit of inclusiveness, opportunity, and coexistence, adding yet another facet to Kerala's identity as a progressive and welcoming land. They feel that the culturally





affluent Kerala offers an emotional homeliness with unity and affection. They are no longer foreigners, but they become familiar with the Malayalam land, language, classical arts, lifestyle, food habits, community spirit and so on. The ancient Indian ideal, Athidhi Devo Bhava (the guest is equivalent to God), emphasises hospitality, respect, and kindness toward visitors. In the context of Kerala, it beautifully reflects the state's warm and welcoming gesture toward tourists, travellers, and migrant workers alike.

The absolute benedictions of monsoon enter the silhouettes of Kerala like a season of poems, washing the land in brightness and rejuvenating every leaf, lagoon,

river and lake with the sensation of life. The rains cheer the beauty of the countryside and make the state glow in myriad shades of green. Everywhere one looks, there are paddy fields, coconut groves, banana plants, forests, gardens, and flowering trees. The monsoon season transforms the land into an emerald paradise. Rain in Kerala is not simply weather; it is a carnival of life. The smell of wet earth, the sound of raindrops on rooftops, the feel of getting drenched, sipping a hot cup of tea brewed in the rainy background, and the sight of misty hills create a fairy-tale atmosphere. The backwaters with the mesmerising aura to steal one's heart and soul, green nature that meets the grand culture, bestow a charm to Kerala,

unlike any other place.

Long after one leaves Kerala, its beauty continues to bloom within one's heart. Its rain lingers like a nostalgic song, its greenery rests in the eyes, and its rivers flow quietly through memory. The flavours of meals served on banana leaves, the kindness of smiling faces, the whisper of coconut palms, and the distant elegance of the Western Ghats remain unforgettable. In the fresh air of excitement and freedom, one cannot help but whisper in the deepest recesses of the heart, Ente Keralam, Ethra Sundaram. Truly, Kerala is not merely seen, but deeply felt. It slowly shapes itself into an emotion of warmth, longing, peace, and belonging. ■

Beyond Scenic Beauty



Dr. Venugopal C.K.

Dean, Conspi Academy of Management Studies (CAMS)

With significant investments and sustained promotional efforts, Kerala Tourism is poised to achieve the growth level originally envisaged. Kerala has a plethora of natural attractions similar to many South Asian countries, and this alone cannot sustain tourism growth in the state. Culture and tourism go hand in hand. So are tourism and cinema. An intelligent master plan with this in mind can go a long way in upping the tourism graph in the years to come.

Tourism, Culture, and Cinema

The cultural symbols of Kerala have played a major role in tourism promotions. Road shows and advertisements showcasing these in tourism promotions could be given more emphasis. A deeper understanding of the knowledge of showcasing culture is the need of the hour. The culture of Kerala is deep-rooted and cannot be experienced in capsule form. Tourism promotions should be reframed, keeping this in mind. Without doubt, Malayalam cinema is a cut above the rest in terms of quality and real-life issues. In a state like Kerala, where the education level is on the upper scale, life situations and conflicts are different from those in other states. Cinema has gone a long way in addressing these issues and sometimes in even offering solutions.

Apart from this, attitudinal change may bring drastic transformation in this scenario. A tourist-friendly community can do wonders in helping Kerala realize

its potential as a world-class tourism destination. Almost all of Kerala's major tourist destinations enjoy excellent road connectivity. Further improvements in traffic management and transport infrastructure, particularly in popular destinations such as Munnar, can make travel even more seamless and enjoyable for visitors. Kerala has immense potential to introduce cable car connectivity, a sustainable transit solution for its hill stations across the Western Ghats, enhancing both accessibility and the overall visitor experience.

Culture has been portrayed in our movies many a time in an effective manner. Tourist destinations have also gained popularity through Malayalam films. Hitherto unknown destinations have made it into the minds of the viewers, paving the way to exploring them. Ramakkalmedu, Gavi, Vagamon, Alappuzha, Athirappalli, and Bekal Fort are just a few of them. Other language films have also helped in promoting destinations in Kerala.

Apart from this, keeping a destination clean is of prime importance. Keeping the place clean is actually part of our culture. Cultural tourism doesn't necessarily mean showcasing our inherent art forms and customs. It is essentially how we behave and present ourselves before the guest. Tourists are our guests. Treat them with the respect and courtesy they deserve. Many Southeast Asian countries that have climate and natural attractions similar to ours earn more revenue from tourism by mixing the culture and courtesy

factor in the tourism marketing mix.

The Way Forward

A lot needs to be done in terms of using state-of-the-art technology in understanding the demands of the tourist. Once an official data repository is created, data analysis can be done. The outputs from this will yield answers to various questions related to tourism planning. The advantage of this is that a self-correcting system can be put in place. This will provide the visionaries and policymakers the necessary data in tourism planning and policymaking. The goal of developing waterways will go a long way in developing tourism in Kerala in the most natural way. With a coastline of about 590 km dotted with beaches, it is quite natural to believe that we are a flourishing beach tourism destination. Nevertheless, we have to place special emphasis on reviving beach tourism by keeping our beaches clean and safe. Addressing encroachment has become a key priority in restoring the area's vitality. Tourists visit destinations to relax and enjoy their time. Respecting their privacy is therefore of utmost importance. Kerala's enduring appeal as a global tourism destination lies in its natural attractions, performing arts, culture and heritage, cuisine, and wildlife. Building on these unique strengths, we can reimagine the tourism policy with a forward-looking vision that promotes sustainable, inclusive, and balanced growth in the years ahead. ■



Kerala's Biggest Vibe Gets a Gen Z Upgrade



Malavika J Krishnakumar

Writer

The biggest festival of Kerala has become a beautiful blend of heritage and hype; where the traditions coexist with trends to make the season an ultimate vibe across the state.

As Kerala awaits to celebrate Onam in August, the social media will be flooded with various hashtags and trends like Instagram

reels, AI generated greetings, Pinterest inspired floral designs and group selfies. However, beside these trends, Onam continues to remain what it has always been before.

Onam carries an emotion that no digital media trend can replace. It is still a celebration of togetherness, equality and

gratitude that portrays the cultural richness of the state. This year the festival is all about a celebration where tradition is not replaced by modernity but reimaged for a new generation.

From Pookalam to Pinterest

The first sign that tells the arrival of Onam is the colourful pookalams. The entrance of

homes, schools, colleges and offices will be decorated with a wide array of flowers. While the older generations followed traditional floral patterns, the current generation take inspiration from Pinterest, Instagram and AI apps.

Schools and colleges across the state have made pookalam competitions more creative; where students experiment it with geometric patterns, sustainable themes, social messages and pop culture references while still respecting the cultural significance of it.

For Gen Z, the purpose of a pookalam is not only just creating the best design but also making it worth for the social media content. In fact, from the making process itself, it becomes a content in the form of time lapse videos, behind the scene reels and aesthetic photographs. Even though technology has entered the celebration, the aura of Onam remains pure to the people in Kerala.

Sadya: The Ultimate Food Flex

The grand Onam Sadya continues to be the festival's biggest attraction. It is not just about eating, but experiencing

food as a celebration. Each dish is served in a particular order for balancing sweet, sour, bitter, salty and spicy flavors. It is served on a banana leaf which symbolize the act of sustainability.

Despite the changes in lifestyle, people of every generation enjoys sadya which depicts that some traditions never lose their value. Also, food is an emotion to the people of Kerala; where Sadya holds a special place in it.

Fashion Meets Heritage

Fashion has become one of the biggest expression of Gen Z Onam. While the classic cream and gold kasavu saree and mundu remain timeless, the young people are experimenting with contemporary styles. In fact, it has gained immense popularity. The fusion of traditional attire with casuals has become a popular trend; where the social media influencers and content creators play a major role in shaping it.

Gen Z Talks

For many young people, Onam is much more than a holiday. It has also become a cultural learning for non Keralite students who study in the state.

Atheena, who is a post graduate student from Kollam

says: "Onam is the time where everyone slows down to spend time with family and friends. My most favorite moment is the Sadya part; where all sit together to enjoy a yummy meal."

Riya, who is an engineering student in Kochi said: "Gen Z love trends. But that doesn't mean we ignore culture. We simply celebrate it differently. We wear set saree, dance, record memories and share them online. It is our way of keeping traditions alive."

Alana, who is a non Keralite student in Kerala University recalls her first Onam: "Before coming to Kerala, I only knew Onam from online pictures. But celebrating it here completely changed my understanding. Everyone invited me to join the pookalam, taught me how to eat sadya properly and made me feel like a family. I realized Onam isn't just a regional festival – it's about inclusion. It was honestly one of the warmest experiences I have had."

The Festival That Never Goes Out Of Style

As Kerala celebrates Onam every year, it is evident that traditions survive when each generation find its own way to embrace them. With the involvement of Gen Z, the festive season got transformed; but by retaining the culture and adding the virtual presence.

The fragrance of fresh flowers, the taste of home made payasam, the excitement of celebrations and the warmth of family gatherings continues to define the festival even in the 21st century. Every year, it is evolving without losing its essence. Perhaps, that is why Onam remains timeless.

In a world where trends disappear overnight, Onam continues to prove that some celebrations never go out of style. In fact, it is an ultimate wholesome vibe. ■





A Man Who Lived Like a Blazing Flame

When we say someone has become a memory, it usually means they have faded into oblivion. But when we say someone like Thottam Rajasekharan who has caused a stir in words, thoughts, actions, and writing has become a memory — this means his personality still ignites the active memory of Malayalis. That distinction has been indelibly inscribed in the cultural history of Kerala. Serving as an officer in the Public Relations Department from 1958 to 1985, Thottam Sir spent the last ten years as its Director. That remarkable phase of his official career remains a blazing chapter in Kerala's history.

Before leaving to attend a journalists' union conference in 1976, Chief Minister K. Karunakaran asked his close confidant Thottam Rajasekharan what new ideas he should present at the gathering.



Salin Mankuzhi

Former Additional Director, (I&PRD)

Thottam Rajasekharan was an outstanding orator, a man of unwavering integrity who never bent his spine before authority, and a writer who waged an armed revolution through the sharpness of his language.

The reply Thottam gave that day remains as fresh today as it was historic:

- ▶ Establish a Press Academy in Kochi for the study of journalism.
- ▶ Introduce a Government pension scheme for journalists.

When the Chief Minister announced these two initiatives, the thunderous applause that followed has, in many ways, never ceased. Even today, several states visit Kerala to study the model conceived through those ideas. It is this enduring legacy that keeps Thottam Rajasekharan alive in the future as well. Thottam firmly believed that modernisation meant renewing the system itself.

Even forty-one years after his retirement, the distinction and prestige associated with

the title 'Director of PRD' continue to remain untarnished because of Thottam Rajasekharan's brilliance and strength. During his days as an ordinary officer in the Public Relations Department, the half-door of his office opened one day to welcome an unexpected visitor—the Leader of the Opposition, K. Karunakaran, whose party then had only nine members in the Legislative Assembly. He sought a few facts and figures on the agricultural sector for a speech he was to deliver in the Assembly. The detailed note Thottam prepared and handed over the very next day marked the beginning of a long, enduring, and mutually enriching association between an administrator and a civil servant. For anyone researching Kerala's political history, that partnership and those two personalities remain impossible to overlook.

Seven or eight months after Thottam Sir retired from service, he happened to meet Monu Nalapat, then Editor of Mathrubhumi. During the course of their friendly conversation, the editor asked him:

"Why don't you write your service story?"

Thottam Sir's response to that suggestion eventually became Udyogaparvam, the service memoir that set the pages of Mathrubhumi Weekly ablaze for more than a year beginning in August 1986. Even today, Udyogaparvam stands tall as the pioneering and definitive work among service memoirs. Thottam Rajasekharan was renowned for his fearless candour. He was an outstanding orator, a man of unwavering integrity who never bent his spine before authority, and a writer who waged an armed revolution through the sharpness of his language.

His profound scholarship in the literature and philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru constituted the core of his intellectual strength. His final book, Vakko Thokko (Word or Gun), a collection of essays, was released in April 2026. I had the privilege of receiving the first copy on that occasion. Even in the brief address he delivered that day, his extraordinary memory and remarkable clarity of thought shone with the vitality of a man in his thirties. Anyone who knew Thottam Sir would readily agree that a young man continued to reside within the heart of that ninety-five-year-old.

Thottam Rajasekharan was a flame that appears only on the rarest of occasions. He devoted thirty-three years to public service, followed by more than four decades of an equally purposeful and productive life after retirement. He continued to write and speak until his very last days. It would be fitting to describe Thottam Rajasekharan's life as an open book. But not in the ordinary sense of that expression. Rather, every page of that book forms an integral part of Kerala's political, social, and literary history—pages that deserve to be opened, read, and studied ■

Thottam Rajasekharan

Thottam Rajasekharan was born in Thiruvananthapuram in September 1930 to Advocate R. Kumaran and M. Gomathi of Veluthery House. After completing his Master's degree from University College, he served as a lecturer at Mar Ivanios College for two years, worked as a journalist for one year, and served for three years as a Social Education Officer in the Development Department. From 1958 to 1985, he was associated with the Public Relations Department. He also served as Secretary of the Kumaran Asan Memorial Society, Member of the Board of Directors of the Film Development Corporation, Member of the Film Censor Board, and Public Relations Officer to the Governor, among several other positions.

Works

- Mukhammoodikal (a play, 1954)
- Thrishna (novel, 1967)
- Bodhi (novel, 1966)
- Somatheeram (novel, 2008)
- Nandu (short story collection, 1972)
- Cinema: Midhyayum Satyavum (study, 1982; received the Sahitya Akademi Award)
- Cinema: Kalayum Jeevithavum (study, 2010)
- Udyogapravvam (Service Story, 1991)
- Sivagiri Samaram — Oru Sesha Pathram (2007)
- Sree Narayana Dharma (2004)
- Vakko Thokko (essays, 2026)



Minister Ramesh Chennithala conferring the Vigilance Commando badge on Nivin Pauly

YOUTH AGAINST CORRUPTION

Home and Vigilance Minister Ramesh Chennithala launched 'Project Zero – Vigilance Whistle', a state-wide anti-corruption campaign built on the motto Youth against Corruption. At the state-level inauguration held at Thiruvananthapuram, Home Minister emphasised that “delayed justice is denied justice” and called on young people to become the state’s first line of defence against corruption, asserting that a new generation in government would leave no room for corrupt practices.

The campaign introduced the 'Blow the Whistle' initiative, encouraging citizens to report corruption, and established a network of Vigilance Commandos to mobilise youth participation. Actor Nivin Pauly was named the first Vigilance Commando. The minister, Nivin Pauly, and hundreds of students then blew vigilance whistles together to launch the campaign. Students were also presented with Vigilance Commando badges.



Nivin Pauly administering the anti-corruption pledge to students and young participants



16 Athachamayam
Thripunithura,
Ernakulam



22 Nehru Trophy
Boat Race
Punnamada,
Alappuzha



24-30

Onam Tourism
Week Celebrations
Across Kerala

AUGUST MONTH OF ONAM

16 - 30 AUG



26 THIRUVONAM
Across Kerala



26-28

Payippad Boat Race
Payippad Lake,
Alappuzha



30 Aranmula
Boat Race
Aranmula,
Pathanamthitta



29 Pulikali
Swaraj Round,
Thrissur

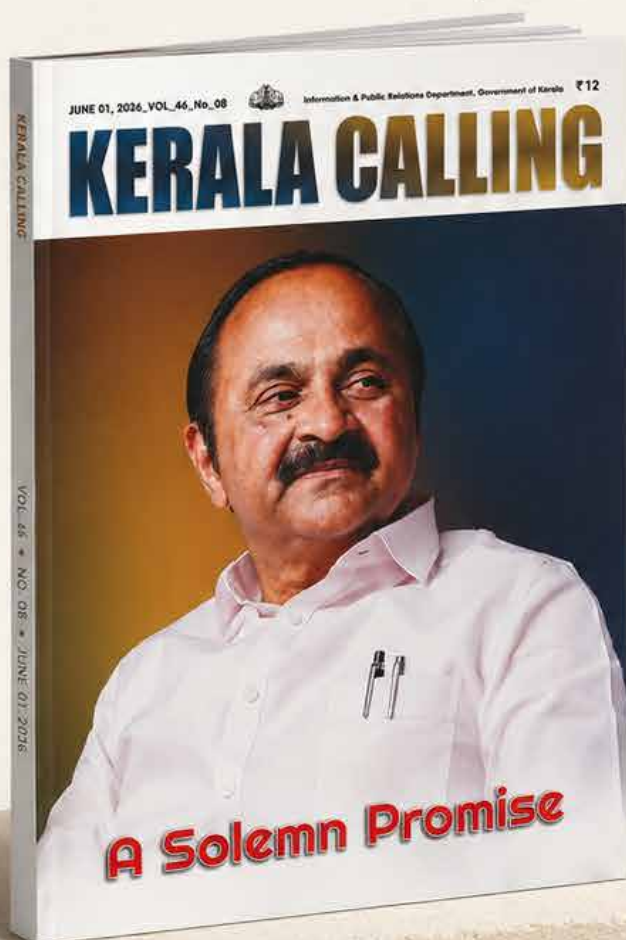


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