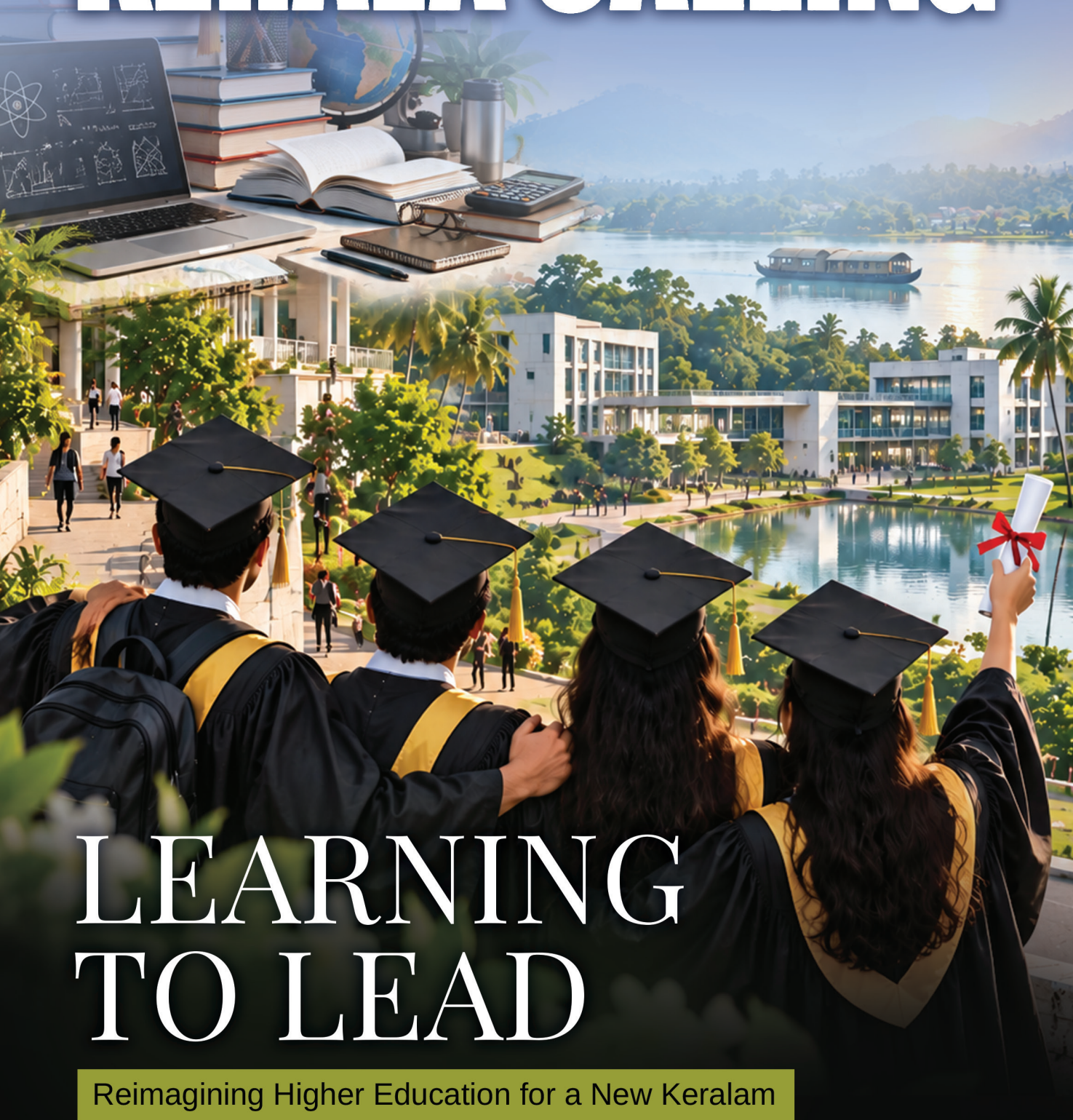




KERALA CALLING



LEARNING TO LEAD

Reimagining Higher Education for a New Kerala

It's
11:11
Manifesting this
for the weekend



SOARING HIGH, SHAPING TOMORROW



Keralam is witnessing a remarkable transformation in higher education, with students, their aspirations, and their well-being increasingly at the centre of academic progress. Student voices are playing a greater role in shaping educational initiatives, while campuses are becoming safer, more inclusive, and more vibrant spaces that nurture talent, creativity, confidence, and intellectual growth.

This transformation in education is part of Keralam's broader journey towards sustainable and future-ready development. The commencement of operations at the Vizhinjam International Seaport marks an important milestone, creating new opportunities for economic growth and strengthening the State's connections with global trade networks.

At the same time, Keralam is steadily embracing the opportunities offered by emerging technologies. The growing influence of Artificial

Intelligence, along with the initiative to make Ernakulam the first AI-literate district, reflects the State's commitment to equipping its people with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world.

Progress, however, is not defined by innovation and infrastructure alone. It is also reflected in the ability to face challenges effectively. Keralam's response to the recent floods once again demonstrated the State's resilience, preparedness, coordination, and strong spirit of collective action.

Together, these developments tell a larger story: that of a Keralam investing in its people, embracing innovation, strengthening its global connections, and facing challenges with determination. In this issue of Kerala Calling, we bring together diverse stories of transformation, innovation, progress, and resilience. They reflect a State that is soaring high while confidently shaping a better tomorrow.

Sabin Sameed IAS
Editor

Editor: **SABIN SAMEED IAS** Additional Editor: **SYAM KUMAR P.** Deputy Editor: **NAFIH M.** Editor in Charge: **VINOD G.S.**

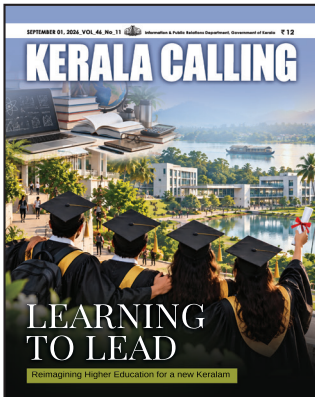
Assistant Editor: **DESNI ZULH** Assistant Information Officer: **RESHMI R.S.** Circulation Officer: **L. HEMANTH KUMAR**

Design & Layout: **ANIL De. PRAKASH** Printing: **ORANGE PRINTERS Pvt Ltd** Photo Credits: **I&PRD, FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, AI IMAGES**

Kerala Calling SEPTEMBER 01, 2026_VOL_46_No.11: Views expressed in the articles published in Kerala Calling are not, necessarily, those of the government.

Kerala Calling welcomes free expression of divergent views and exchange of ideas through its pages. **Enquiries** Editorial: 0471 251 8648. Subscription : 0471 251 7036

Responses May Be Sent To Mail keralacallingmagazine@gmail.com, facebook.com/KeralaCalling **Editorial Materials** Articles/features appearing in this magazine are either commissioned or assigned. Nevertheless, other articles are also welcome. A maximum of 750 word in word file is appreciated.



52 Pages including Cover

What's Inside

06. Learning to Lead

V. D. Satheesan

08. Listening. Leading. Changing.

Interview Roji M. John / U. Shaiju

12. Welcoming the Big Shift

Dr. B. Ashok IAS

14. Keralam's Path to Progress

Ajil Babu R.

16. Redefining Higher Education in Keralam

Adv. Thoufeek Rajan

19. KSHEC in Focus: New Initiatives Beyond the Classroom

Abida Farooqui



21. The SDG Benchmark
Kuriakose P.K.

24. Witnessing a Massive Surge in GST Collection
Dr. Mary George

25. A Gen Z Connect
Amala Saji

28. Preserving Heritage, Powering Futures
Dr. Azeez Tharuvana

32. ATS: Driving the Future of Public Safety
Ajithkumar K.

34. The Emerging Vizhinjam Potential
Sreekumar K. Nair

38. A State in Action
Staff Reporter

**40. AI-ERA: Preparing Ernakulam for
an Intelligent Government**
Chinchu Sunil

42. The Classroom Cabinet
Staff Reporter

**44. Pink Sparsham:
Reimagining the way Keralam Travels**
Keerthana Sara Kiran

46. The Next Leap Forward
M. Muhammed Haris

48. Kerala Nurses in the Global Arena
Joby Baby

50. World Tourism Day - September 27





LEARNING TO LEAD

Reimagining Higher Education for a New Keralam

V. D. Satheesan
Chief Minister

Keralam's greatest strength is not merely its natural resources or geography; it is its people. The importance given to education across generations has played a defining role in placing Keralam at the forefront of India's social development. But in a rapidly changing world, we cannot move forward by relying only on the achievements of the past. We must rethink the purpose and direction of higher education to meet the challenges of a new era.

Higher education can no longer be viewed simply as the final stage of acquiring a qualification. It must

become an environment where the abilities of young people are recognised, nurtured and transformed into opportunities for themselves, for society and for the wider economy.

One of the most important questions before Keralam today concerns the future of its young people. The success of our education system cannot be measured only by the number of educated young people who leave the state in search of opportunities. Our young people must have the freedom to explore the world, but they must also have compelling reasons to make Keralam a place where they can build their dreams.

For that to happen, we must change the way we perceive our campuses. Universities and colleges should not exist as isolated academic spaces. They must become

more deeply connected to the social and economic life of Keralam. We should ask what a university can contribute to the development of its region, and how a college can help shape the future of the community in which it is located.

Keralam's future cannot be built only around young people seeking employment. We must also nurture a generation capable of creating employment. An idea born in a classroom should have the opportunity to become an enterprise. A research discovery should have the potential to evolve into an industry. A university campus should be capable of becoming a centre of new economic activity.

This is not simply about strengthening the relationship between industry and education. It is about creating a deeper relationship between our higher education institutions and society itself. Research and academic work must engage more closely with the real challenges confronting Keralam.

From waste management to elder care, from urban development to climate change, many of Keralam's challenges require the intervention of knowledge, research and innovation. Our universities should become places where these challenges are studied seriously and where practical solutions are developed.

At the same time, the purpose of higher education cannot be reduced to economic growth alone. Education must create people who are capable of thinking. It must nurture individuals who can question, respect differences of opinion, make decisions based on evidence and remain conscious of their responsibilities towards society. Such citizens are essential to the future of democracy. Education, therefore, is not merely a process of transferring knowledge; it is also a process of shaping citizens.

Public education and public institutions have played a vital role in Keralam's social progress. Strengthening government higher education institutions, therefore, cannot be seen merely as an infrastructure development exercise. It is an investment in the continuity and strength of Keralam's social democracy.

Keralam must never become a society where access to the best educational opportunities depends primarily on economic privilege. A child from an ordinary family must have the opportunity to rise as far as their talent and determination can take them. Opening the doors of education is only the beginning; we must also ensure that every student who enters those doors has a genuine opportunity to progress.

The world is now undergoing a profound transformation. Technology is changing the very nature of human life and work. Entire sectors are evolving. New professions are emerging, while some traditional occupations are disappearing.

An education system that fears change can never lead the future. But while embracing technology, we must also preserve the human values that give education its deeper purpose. Empathy, creativity, ethical awareness, social responsibility, collaboration and independent thought are qualities that technology cannot replace.

The education of the future must therefore be technologically advanced, yet deeply human. Our universities must be more open to the world. But internationalisation should not mean simply copying models from elsewhere. Keralam must learn from global experience while developing solutions rooted in its own social realities and, in doing so, create models that the world can learn from.

Young people who leave Keralam to study or work abroad should not automatically be viewed as a sign of failure. Our global generation can be one of Keralam's greatest strengths. At the same time, our higher education institutions should become bridges that bring global knowledge, ideas, talent and investment back to Keralam.

The next phase of Keralam's development will not be defined only by more roads, buildings and physical infrastructure. It will be defined by greater knowledge, greater opportunity, greater creativity and the full potential of our people. That is why our vision for higher education cannot be limited to the needs of the next five or ten years. It must be shaped by a larger question: What kind of Keralam do we want the next generation to inherit?

We need a generation that can stand confidently anywhere in the world; entrepreneurs who can create world-class opportunities from Keralam; researchers who can find solutions to the challenges faced by society; and citizens who remain firmly committed to democratic values and social responsibility.

These are the real assets of the Keralam we must build. Knowledge is Keralam's strength. Turning knowledge into opportunity must be Keralam's next great mission.

The transformation of higher education must be one of the most important steps towards that future.

Learning to lead is not simply about preparing young people for the future. It is about preparing them to shape it.



LISTENING. LEADING. CHANGING.

In an exclusive interview with Kerala Calling, Minister for Higher Education Roji M. John shares his vision and hopes for the future of higher education in Keralam, and speaks about the opportunities and challenges in shaping a stronger, more future-ready education system.

Roji M. John / U. Shaiju

Q : How did your experience as the Member of Legislative Assembly for the last decade prepare you for the responsibility of leading the Higher Education Department?

Public life allows you to understand society from very close quarters. As an elected representative, you meet people from different walks of life and listen to their problems, expectations and concerns directly. You also get to understand how government policies are actually perceived

at the grassroots level. This difference in perspectives is often vital in higher education. A policy document may look promising from an administrative perspective, but its reality can feel entirely different to a student in a classroom, a teacher in a college, a parent financing his child's education, or a researcher searching for essential resources.

As the Minister for Higher Education, I will strive to incorporate all these perspectives into policymaking.

Q: You place considerable importance on direct interaction with students. Why do you consider this important?

Students are among the most important stakeholders in



higher education. We can draft policies from behind closed doors, but if we fail to understand the aspirations of the students, the gap between policy and reality will only widen.

Whenever I interact with students, I try to create an environment where they feel comfortable.

They talk about academic pressure, examinations, admissions, infrastructure, transportation, hostels, scholarships, internships, employment opportunities, technology and even their dreams for the future beyond Keralam.

They often draw our attention to practical issues that may not always come to our attention through official reports or administrative channels. When a student opines that a particular procedure is complicated, our responsibility is not merely to explain why the procedure exists. We must also ask whether that procedure itself can be simplified.

That is how a student-centred administration should function.

Recently, when students raised concerns regarding certain aspects of engineering admissions, we examined the issue from their perspective and took steps towards making the admission process more student-friendly.

This kind of responsive governance is what we need to institutionalise.

Q: Keralam has achieved significant progress in expanding access to higher education. What should be the next target?

The next transition must be from access to excellence. For decades, the State of Keralam has been at the forefront in ensuring affordable quality education to our students. While sustaining these achievements, it is imperative that we now turn our focus to the next-generation challenges faced by the higher education sector.

Are our institutions equipped to compete at global standards? Are our students prepared for emerging employment sectors? Are our universities producing high-quality research? Can we build stronger connections between education and industry? Are our campuses encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship? Are our students getting sufficient international exposure? These are the questions that will define the next phase. We need to build a higher education system that is comprehensive, innovative, research-driven, technology-friendly and globally connected.

Q: Government colleges have a central role in Keralam's higher education system. What is your approach towards strengthening them?

Government institutions are at the heart of the social character of Keralam's education system. They play a crucial role in ensuring access to quality higher education for students from various social and economic backgrounds.

That is why infrastructure development in government colleges and universities becomes a high priority for the government. Our vision includes setting up modern classrooms, laboratories, libraries, digital facilities and student amenities suitable for a contemporary academic ecosystem. But infrastructure is only one part of the equation. To truly become centres of excellence, institutions also need excellent teachers, strong academic programmes, a vibrant research culture, an effective student-support system and an environment that encourages innovation.

Government institutions should not be chosen by students merely because they are affordable. Our goal is to make them institutions that students would choose for their quality, opportunities and excellence.

Q: Looking ahead, what sort of academic culture do you expect to see across colleges and universities in Keralam?

Our campuses should become spaces of curiosity, creativity and dialogue.

A university or college should not be merely a place where students attend classes and prepare for examinations. Students should be encouraged to ask questions, challenge ideas, conduct experiments, participate in research, engage with society and develop their own perspectives.

We also need to give greater importance to interdisciplinary learning.

Modern education cannot be confined to a single academic discipline. Climate change, artificial intelligence,



healthcare, urbanisation, sustainable development and emerging technologies require collaboration across multiple fields.

Our institutions must therefore become more open, integrated and collaborative.

Q: Employment has always been a major concern among the youth of Kerala. How should higher education respond to a rapidly changing job market?

I think there has never been another time in which the nature of work has changed so rapidly. Artificial intelligence, automation, robotics, biotechnology, data science and renewable energy are creating new opportunities while also transforming existing sectors.

Our education system must respond to this reality. We need stronger industry-academia collaboration, greater opportunities for internships and skill development, entrepreneurship programmes and projects connected to real-world work environments. At the same time, we should not reduce education merely to employability. Students also need critical thinking skills, communication skills, creativity, ethical awareness and the ability to learn throughout their lives. Perhaps the most important skill for the future will be the ability to upskill and learn continuously.

Q: With research and development increasingly driving

global economies, what is your vision for strengthening research-oriented learning in Kerala?

Keralam has enormous intellectual potential. We have talented students, researchers and teachers. What we need to create is a stronger research ecosystem in which that talent can flourish. Our universities should be encouraged to become stronger centres of research through the sharing of resources and collaboration between institutions and different academic disciplines. Research must also connect with society.

Keralam faces several unique challenges and opportunities relating to climate change, coastal issues, public health, an ageing population, agriculture, tourism, urban development and technology. Our universities should generate knowledge and technology capable of addressing these challenges. At the same time, we must encourage research and widen the scope of research, understanding its global relevance. Our goal should be to make Kerala a state where excellent research leads not only to publications, but also to innovation, entrepreneurship and social transformation.

Q: You have spoken about creating a 'Knowledge Valley' to navigate the transformation to a Knowledge society. How do you expect this vision to materialise?

A knowledge society is one in which knowledge

becomes a major driver of social and economic development. Kerala already has a strong foundation for this. What we need is an integrated ecosystem in which universities, research institutions, industries, start-ups, students and government work together. 'The Knowledge Valley' will offer a single umbrella to integrate and disseminate the fruits of technological innovation in a way that benefits all stakeholders. Research parks, innovation ecosystems, modern learning opportunities, emerging technology initiatives and new forms of cross-sector collaboration are all part of this vision.

Q: What should Kerala's position be in the global higher education landscape?

Kerala must become more global in its outlook. Internationalisation means bringing global academic standards, international collaborations, faculty exchanges, joint research, international programmes and global experiences into our institutions. Our students should be able to engage with the world while remaining rooted in Kerala.

At the same time, we should create an environment that attracts students and researchers from other states and from other countries. With its academic talent, social progress and high quality of life, Kerala has enormous potential to emerge as an important higher education destination.

Q: Technology is transforming education. How should Kerala respond to this change?

We must embrace technology, but we must do so intelligently.

Artificial intelligence will have a significant impact on teaching, learning, research and administration. It can support personalised learning, strengthen research and expand access to knowledge. But technology cannot replace teachers. Education is not merely about transferring information. It is also about guidance, empathy, dialogue, values and human relationships. Therefore, we need to create an education system that adopts technology, but is fundamentally human-centred.

Students must learn to use AI responsibly and creatively. At the same time, they must retain the ability to think independently and evaluate information critically.

Teachers should have opportunities to update their knowledge, engage in research, learn new teaching methodologies and understand emerging technologies. We need to create an academic culture in which teachers themselves continue to learn throughout their careers.

Q: How can Kerala ensure that equity and social inclusion remain central as its higher education sector undergoes modernisation?

Inclusion is a fundamental element of Kerala's educational model.

Students from different social and economic backgrounds must have meaningful access to higher education and to the opportunities available within it. But

inclusion cannot end with admission.

Students must also have access to infrastructure, technology, scholarships, academic support, counselling, research opportunities, internships and career-oriented programmes. The goal is not merely to bring students into institutions. It is to ensure that every student has a genuine opportunity to succeed.

Q: Looking back at your journey from student activist to public representative and now Higher Education Minister, what is the common thread connecting all these stages?

As a student activist, I worked among students. As a public representative, I worked with people in my constituency and beyond. Today, as a Minister, I have the opportunity to work on policies that can influence an entire generation.

The scale of responsibility has changed, but the fundamental responsibility has not.

It is still about listening, understanding problems and trying to find solutions.

My student years taught me that leadership begins with listening. Public life strengthened that lesson. My present responsibility has made it even more relevant.

Q: Finally, what is your larger vision for the future of higher education in Kerala?

I want to see a Kerala where every young person has the opportunity to access quality higher education, regardless of their social or economic background. Our government institutions should become centres of excellence.

Our universities should become stronger centres of research and innovation.

Our students should become globally competitive while remaining socially responsible. Industry and academia should work more closely together.

Technology and artificial intelligence should become instruments of empowerment.

Above all, our young people should have the confidence that they can build their future in Kerala itself. Kerala should not merely be a state that produces educated young people. We should become a state that produces creators of knowledge, innovators, researchers, entrepreneurs, professionals and responsible citizens.

Education should not be viewed merely as a means to employment. It should become the foundation of individual freedom, social progress and economic development, helping Kerala evolve into a global knowledge society. My own journey began on a college campus. That is why I have a deep understanding of the transformative power education can have in an individual's life.

A campus can change the direction of a person's life. A strong higher education system can change the direction of an entire society.



WELCOMING THE BIG SHIFT

CONSOLIDATING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND ATTRACTING QUALITY PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Keralam has to embrace transformation and build a higher education system worthy of the talent, aspirations and possibilities of its people.

Dr. B. Ashok IAS

Principal Secretary, Higher Education Department

Keralam's achievements in education are well known. Yet its higher education sector now stands at a crossroads. The challenge is no longer simply to expand access. It is to restore institutional strength, renew academic quality, build modern infrastructure and create an ecosystem in which universities, industry, technology enterprises and students can grow together. What Keralam needs now is not another incremental reform. It needs a decisive transition.

A New Direction

The way forward is neither to abandon public institutions nor to assume that government alone can finance the entire future of higher education. The emerging policy direction is therefore twofold: consolidate and strengthen

Keralam's existing public institutions while creating a credible framework to attract high-quality private investment into areas where public resources alone will not suffice.

The 2026–27 Budget provides an important beginning. It has announced new higher education initiatives involving approximately ₹218 crore, including the Kerala Knowledge Valley, Kerala Research Park, the proposed Wayanad Tribal University and Indigenous Knowledge Zone, a State institution of architecture and a State Culinary Institute. These initiatives can help address a fundamental gap in Keralam's higher education ecosystem: the absence of sufficiently large platforms where public investment in land and infrastructure can be combined with high-quality private and institutional participation, advanced technology, common facilities, data infrastructure, research and industry.

This is particularly important when other States are actively attracting national and international universities,

technology companies and research institutions. The proposed University Township initiative of the Union Government offers another opportunity. Keralam should compete vigorously for such investments and create integrated locations where universities, research institutions, startups and advanced industries can coexist.

A Knowledge Valley or Research Park located in or around one of Keralam's established urban centres—Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi or Kozhikode—could become such a platform. The objective should not be merely to construct another campus. It should be to create an ecosystem in which academic institutions and industry share infrastructure, intellectual resources and talent.

Students should be able to work with companies while they study. Industry professionals should teach in universities. Faculty should be encouraged to collaborate with enterprises and create technology ventures. Research should move more easily from the laboratory to the marketplace. That is how higher education can become an engine of economic transformation.

Specialised University

The proposed Wayanad Tribal University and Indigenous Knowledge Zone offer a different but equally important opportunity. Keralam's tribal communities possess rich knowledge of agriculture, biodiversity, ecology, medicine, crafts and natural-resource management. Much of this knowledge remains outside the formal academic system. A specialised university can provide a platform to preserve, document and develop this knowledge while offering contemporary education relevant to the social and economic advancement of tribal and Scheduled Caste communities. Its academic programmes could combine education and professional studies with environment, disaster management, agriculture, indigenous knowledge and other disciplines relevant to the region. The institution should be designed as an autonomous statutory university, drawing on State and Central resources while developing partnerships with other institutions. Its success, however, must ultimately be measured not by its buildings but by the opportunities it creates for young people.

Reforming the Rules of the Game

Institutional transformation also requires better legislation. Keralam's university laws need substantial updating and, where possible, harmonisation. A new State Universities Act, drawing upon contemporary legislative experience from other States and developed in consultation with the Kerala State Higher Education Council and other stakeholders, can provide a common modern framework.

The objective should be clear: greater academic freedom, transparent decision-making, professional governance and accountability of both teachers and students. Autonomy and accountability must go together.

Similarly, Keralam needs an effective and credible framework for private universities. The proposed Private Universities legislation should create a regulatory

environment that attracts serious educational institutions while protecting academic standards, student interests and public objectives. The message to prospective investors must be unambiguous: Keralam welcomes private participation, but it will demand quality.

Making Keralam a Destination for Higher Education

Keralam should aspire to become a destination for students and faculty from other States and from abroad, not merely a State that sends its young people elsewhere to study. Our cities have the climate, social infrastructure, educational diversity and quality of life to compete with established education destinations such as Delhi, Pune, Bengaluru and Chennai. What is required is a deliberate strategy to convert these advantages into an international higher education ecosystem. Faculty development will be central to this effort. A State-wide programme to familiarise teachers with artificial intelligence and emerging digital tools can help bring teaching and learning practices up to date. Initiatives such as "Study a Semester in Keralam" could introduce students from outside the State to Keralam's academic institutions and culture. Technology can also play a role in making campuses safer. Integrated digital systems can strengthen mechanisms for reporting and responding to ragging, bullying, harassment, substance abuse and other threats to student welfare.

A Quality Movement, Not another Expansion Drive

Keralam now has an opportunity to move beyond an education model primarily measured by enrolment and institutional numbers. The next phase must be about quality, innovation, employability, research and global relevance.

Public universities must be strengthened, not weakened. At the same time, the State can further expand opportunities by welcoming high-quality private and international institutions, fostering industry partnerships, and encouraging new models of academic collaboration. Regulation should facilitate excellence rather than obstruct it; autonomy should be matched by accountability; and investment in infrastructure must be accompanied by investment in people and academic content.

Keralam's natural advantages – its human capital, decentralised governance, social infrastructure, connectivity and quality of life – provide a strong foundation. With the right institutional, financial and regulatory architecture, there is no reason why new niche institutions in Keralam cannot become globally recognised centres of learning and research. The task before us is therefore larger than repairing a sector under financial stress. It is to reposition higher education as one of the principal drivers of Keralam's next phase of development. The choice is not between the public and the private. The real choice is between stagnation and transformation.

Keralam must choose transformation—and build a higher education system worthy of the talent, aspirations and possibilities of its people.



KERALAM'S PATH TO PROGRESS

Keralam's development experience has been deeply shaped by investment in education and human capabilities. Education has contributed not only to literacy and social development, but also to occupational mobility, professional achievement and the emergence of a globally connected workforce. Higher education now stands at the centre of the State's next developmental transition.

Ajil Babu R.

Research Associate, SDG Cell (PIEMD)

Future-Ready Learning

Keralam's achievements in expanding access to education provide a strong foundation for the next phase—one centred increasingly on academic quality, learning outcomes and adaptability. Higher education must prepare students not merely for existing vacancies but for careers that will evolve repeatedly during their working lives.

Universities therefore need to combine disciplinary depth with critical thinking, communication, digital capability, quantitative reasoning, creativity and problem-solving.

The proposed Job Watch Tower can provide an institutional mechanism for continuously tracking changes in occupations, technologies and skill requirements in India and internationally. The proposed Kerala AI Research Institute, AI departments in colleges and a Future Readiness Think Tank focusing on technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and biotechnology can provide institutional anchors for this transformation.

Connecting Education, Skills and Employment

The relationship between higher education and employment is also changing. The traditional sequence—education first and employment afterwards—is increasingly giving way to models in which academic and professional learning occur simultaneously. Internships and industry projects can become integral components of degree programmes. A State-wide apprenticeship exchange can connect students with enterprises, while structured partnerships between universities and technology companies can expose students to professional environments before graduation. The proposal to facilitate part-time employment for college students with appropriate academic recognition is significant in this context. Properly designed work-integrated learning develops communication, teamwork, professional discipline and practical problem-solving while reducing the abrupt transition from classroom to workplace.

Internationalising Keralam's Higher Education

High-performing universities are increasingly international institutions—not necessarily because all their students travel abroad, but because their teaching, research and intellectual networks cross national boundaries. Keralam has historically been highly successful in sending human capital to the world. The next opportunity is to complement this by attracting international students, academics, research partnerships and knowledge networks into Keralam. Credit transfer can enhance mobility between institutions, while partnerships with leading foreign universities can support joint research, and collaborative programmes.

Internationalisation must also occur within Keralam's classrooms and laboratories. Access to leading international journals and digital libraries, quality MOOCs, interaction with distinguished international academics and participation in global research networks can internationalise education even for students who do not travel overseas.

Keralam possesses distinctive advantages as an academic destination. This creates scope for semester programmes, field research, international summer schools, academic conferences and academic tourism. The objective need not be to replicate foreign universities. Keralam can instead develop a distinctive proposition: globally connected education grounded in areas where Keralam itself offers intellectual and experiential advantage.

Globally Competitive Institutions

The pursuit of international excellence should remain firmly connected to Keralam's tradition of inclusive education. Financial assistance for college students, scholarships for study in India and abroad, enhanced research support and the proposed Educational Financial Corporation can expand educational opportunity. Support for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students, students with disabilities and other deserving groups can ensure that technological and academic advancement remains inclusive. Student well-being must similarly form part of academic quality. Mental health, campus safety and social belonging significantly influence learning and completion. Wellness centres, counselling, student-health initiatives, effective anti-ragging systems and accessible grievance mechanisms should therefore be viewed as components of a high-performing university rather than as peripheral welfare functions.

Institutional governance will ultimately determine whether these ambitions translate into outcomes. Stable academic leadership, timely decision-making, empowered academic bodies, performance evaluation and transparent governance are essential.

The proposed Kerala Higher Education Dashboard can become an important instrument if developed as a decision-support system rather than merely a reporting portal. It can progressively bring together information on student progression, faculty, research funding, publications and citations, doctoral and post-doctoral researchers, patents and technology transfer, startups, internships, placements, international students and academic collaborations. Such an approach would allow higher education to be evaluated increasingly by what the system produces rather than only by what it spends or administers.

The Way Forward

Keralam's next higher education transition should be anchored in a simple but ambitious proposition: to transform its exceptional human capital into a globally competitive knowledge capability. The way forward is to build an integrated ecosystem in which universities are simultaneously centres of learning, and students gain meaningful exposure to industry. The larger aspiration is to make Keralam not merely a place that educates and exports talent, but a destination that attracts talent, creates knowledge, translates ideas into value and contributes solutions of global relevance positioning higher education as a defining pillar of Keralam's knowledge economy by 2031.

The proposed Job Watch Tower can provide an institutional mechanism for continuously tracking changes in occupations, technologies and skill requirements in India and internationally



REDEFINING HIGHER EDUCATION IN KERALAM

The true transformation of higher education cannot be measured solely by physical infrastructure or course counts. Real progress is reflected in how deeply a student's voice is heard, how swiftly their problems are resolved, and the supportive space provided for their unique ideas and aspirations.

Adv. Thoufeek Rajan

Governance gains vitality when leadership listens to students directly. Engaging with students during campus visits to understand their concerns, beyond formal protocols is the key to this. Crucially, student-raised issues are seen

not as complaints, but as direct opportunities to refine the educational system. Visits are opportunities to listen and resolve issues.

'First Chapter' — Stepping into Campus Life

The 'First Chapter' programme was launched to help students enter higher education confidently. Held at Women's College in the capital city, this state-level programme welcomed newcomers to Keralam's Arts

and Science colleges. Empowering students to embrace a new campus, companions, and responsibilities with confidence, its core message is: "Enter your college not just to study, but to discover yourself and seek new possibilities."

'Zero2One' - From Learner to Engineer

While 'First Chapter' is the first step for Arts and Science students, 'Zero2One' is the induction concept for engineering students entering a changing landscape of AI, robotics, data science, semiconductor technology, startups, research, and industry collaboration. The initial days must show students the vast potential of their studies.

The program aims to develop professionals who use knowledge to solve problems and develop technologies benefiting society. It builds awareness about skills, research, entrepreneurship, industry relations, and careers. Shifting focus from "What should I study?" and "How do I get a job?" to "What can I create?" and "What change can I bring with my knowledge?", 'Zero2One' prepares students for the journey of evolving from mere learners into future engineers.

Addressing CBSE Students' Concerns in KEAM Rank List

The engineering rank list was published only after completely resolving the anxieties of CBSE Class 12 students. To address concerns of students and parents, the mark-uploading deadline was extended. The KEAM results were announced after rearranging the rank list to include CBSE revaluation marks, ensuring complete fairness.

NEET Issue: Standing Firmly by Students

The Keralam Legislative Assembly passed a resolution strongly protesting the NEET question paper leak and demanding strict action from the Central Government, showing the State Government's commitment to students. The resolution, presented by Higher Education Minister Roji M. John, demanded urgent measures to protect students' lives and dignity.

Four-Year Degree Grievance Redressal

To address concerns surrounding the new four-year undergraduate program, the Department formed a committee under the State Higher Education Council to recommend changes. The committee will examine

curriculum implementation, syllabus revision, question bank preparation, and evaluation systems. Reforms will be executed after discussions with teachers, students, and managements, with steps taken to adhere strictly to the academic calendar.

Appointing 35 Assistant Professors in Law Colleges

The government has officially handed over appointment orders to 35 newly recruited Assistant Professors in Government Law Colleges. This administrative step will significantly help in upgrading academic standards and fostering a rich research environment across government law colleges in the state.

Sree Narayana Guru Open University's Own Campus

The dream of Sree Narayana Guru Open University, Kollam (founded in 2020) to have its own campus is being realized with a ₹90 crore sanction for an academic-administrative complex. Currently operating in rented spaces, the university will transition to a four-storey, 16,864-sqm complex featuring advanced classrooms, hi-tech offices, and all possible safety measures.

KTU B.Tech 'Year-Back' System Suspended

The new APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University (KTU) Syndicate decided in its first meeting to temporarily suspend the fifth-semester B.Tech 'year-back' system. This decision suspends the strict regulation requiring specific credits from the first two semesters to enter the fifth semester, resolving concerns of thousands of 2024 scheme students.

ITI and Polytechnic Education Re-imagined

Based on the Higher Education Council's recommendation, guidelines were issued for ITI and Polytechnic graduates seeking degree admissions. ITI certificate holders can join the first year (after a language course), while three-year Polytechnic diploma holders get direct lateral entry to the second year. Polytechnic graduates already have B.Tech lateral entry. Under UGC's National Credit Framework, a Class 10 qualification is sufficient for ITI and

Polytechnic graduates to gain degree admission.

Student-Friendly Centralised Spot Admission

Spot admission for vacant B.Tech seats in 12 government and aided engineering colleges (9

The engineering rank list was published only after completely resolving the anxieties of CBSE Class 12 students. To address concerns of students and parents, the mark-uploading deadline was extended. The KEAM results were announced after rearranging the rank list to include CBSE revaluation marks, ensuring complete fairness.



government colleges, 3 aided) has been made student-friendly. Via centralised software, students can report to any of the 12 colleges to secure admission in any other college. This resolved the issue where students from across the state had to travel to Government Engineering College, Thrissur.

Repatriation of Michi Marpu's Mortal Remains

The government stood firmly by the family of Michi Marpu, an Arunachal Pradesh B.Tech student at Mar Athanasius College, Kothamangalam, who passed away. Representatives met his family at Kalamassery Medical College and arranged to fly his remains via Delhi to

Itanagar's Donyi Polo Airport. To facilitate transport to Ziro, in Lower Subansiri district, the government coordinated with Arunachal Pradesh and wrote to its Chief Secretary to arrange a freezer-equipped ambulance.

A New Political Culture in Higher Education

Keralam is witnessing a new political culture where governance shifts from files to students on campuses. Along with physical infrastructure development, swift administrative interventions addressing students' academic and mental concerns are transforming the higher education sector into a student-friendly space. Campuses have successfully evolved into safe academic spaces nurturing talents to lead tomorrow's world.

KSHEC IN FOCUS

NEW INITIATIVES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



The true measure of a higher education system is not merely the number of institutions it has, the range of programmes it offers, or the degrees it awards. The real measure lies in how meaningfully the system responds to the needs, aspirations and anxieties of students.

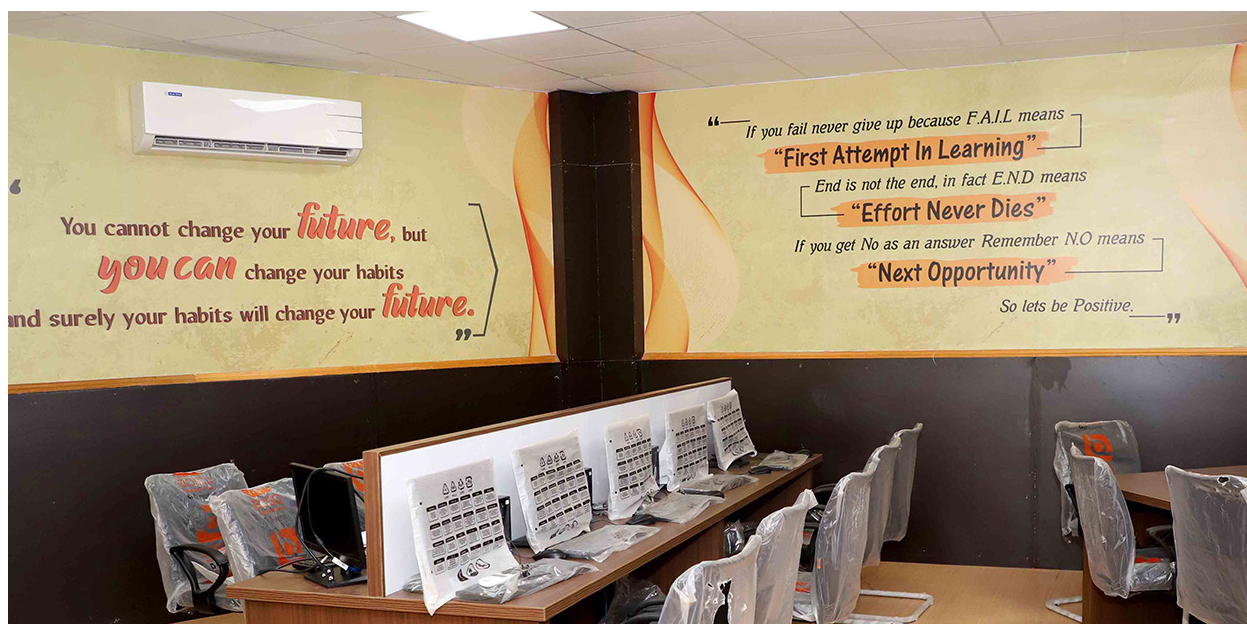
Abida Farooqui

Member Secretary,
Kerala State Higher Education Council

Higher education today is operating in a rapidly changing environment. The emergence of AI, changing attitudes and expectations of Gen Z, the transformation of the workplace and the increasing mobility of young people are compelling us to rethink education from the student's perspective. The question before the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) is to guide higher education institutions to cater to what students really need from them, to prepare themselves for a rapidly changing future.

This student-centred perspective also requires us to look critically at student mobility. A large number of students from Keralam pursue higher education in other states and countries. Mobility is certainly a sign of aspiration and openness, but it also raises two important questions. First, why is Keralam, with its strong public education system and social development indicators, not yet a sufficiently attractive academic destination for students from outside the state? Second, can migration itself be considered an indicator of educational progress if our young people eventually find themselves in low-paid or insecure employment? Our objective is not to prevent students from leaving Keralam, but to make it more convenient for them.

One of the major initiatives being envisaged by the KSHEC in this context is the Campus Diversity Mission. The proposal to provide fellowships of ₹15,000 to students from



other states and ₹50,000 to overseas students seeks to make Keralam's public universities more welcoming to all and to transform public universities into diverse and intellectually cosmopolitan spaces. The presence of students from different regions creates opportunities for dialogue and intellectual challenge. It enhances the quality of teaching and learning, over time, strengthening the global profile and ranking of our institutions.

Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), a major structural reform, offers students greater choice, flexibility and time. The implementation of FYUGP has also revealed gaps and difficulties. The Council's approach is to work towards a mature and fully developed FYUGP by listening to students and teachers, identifying gaps in curriculum and syllabus, correcting weaknesses and aligning programmes more effectively with emerging disciplines and changing employment requirements. The first batch of students entering the fourth year and the progression to PG require immediate attention. The FYUGP committee is therefore working on stopgap measures while simultaneously examining the larger reforms necessary for the future.

A particularly important component of this process is the proposed Student Aspiration Survey. The survey, being piloted in selected colleges and to be expanded to more colleges, seeks to understand student aspirations and experiences that will inform the framing of policies.

Another student-centric move is the implementation of 'Jawaharlal Nehru for Scientific Temper'. At a time when myths and unverified claims masquerade as science, it is

important to empower young people to question and think critically. The Council proposes a hub-and-spoke network for policy formulation, operational guidelines, coordination and monitoring. Around 300 Scientific Temper Centres function as spokes across educational institutions, public libraries, NGOs and other community spaces. They will function as platforms for scientific discussions and community festivals. The larger objective is to make rational enquiry a natural part of everyday life and to make them more socially responsible citizens.

A particularly important component is the proposed Student Aspiration Survey. The survey, being piloted now in selected colleges and to be expanded to more colleges, seeks to understand student aspirations and experiences that will inform the framing of policies.

The tragic death of Siddharth, a student of Veterinary University, after an episode of ragging has deeply shocked our conscience and warned us of the need for safer campuses. To this end, the proposed Siddharth Anti Ragging Act and Siddharth App are important interventions. An initiative of the Home Department in collaboration with KSHEC, with the Vice Chairman of KSHEC, Dr. Achuth Sankar as the chairperson of the committee, it will go a long way in ensuring that campuses must remain spaces where democracy is practised, not where violence, in the garb of student politics, is normalised. The app, with a distress-call mechanism, can provide students with a direct channel to seek help when they feel threatened or unsafe.

With a strong student focus, the reforms now being undertaken-from greater campus diversity to FYUGP, aspiration mapping, scientific temper, providing OBE re-training to faculty and safer campuses-share a common principle that the student must be at the centre of educational policy.



THE SDG BENCHMARK

The Kerala model - universally accepted and a recognized method of growth and development - acquired a unique position with its own reputation in higher education sector.

Kuriakose P.K.

Assistant Director,
Directorate of General Education
(Statistics Division)

Since the formation of the State, remarkable and incomparable achievements have been made in the field of education, health and social sector. Higher education is no longer merely a mechanism for obtaining degrees and professional qualifications. In the contemporary development process, universities, colleges,

research institutions and technical institutions are important instruments for promoting social inclusion, economic productivity, technological innovation, environmental sustainability and democratic citizenship. This makes higher education closely connected with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations titled as Agenda 2030.

SDGs and Keralam

- Keralam has topped NITI Aayog's SDG India index in all four editions (2018, 2019-20, 2020-21 & 2023-24), sharing first place with Uttarakhand in 2023-24 with a score of 79.

- The score of the state has been improving from 69 to 79 outpacing the country's National average at every stage.
- Cooking fuel & electricity access — Goal 7 score of 96, the highest in India
- Clean water and sanitation coverage at 89, backed by widespread household toilet access.
- Door-to-door waste collection underpins a strong Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities) with a score of 83.
- Keralam is the top scorer nationally on Zero Hunger, even though its own score of 52 remains modest.

Relationship between SDG & Higher Education

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Higher Education are closely interconnected as well as reciprocal. The 17 SDGs provide a global framework for achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental development by 2030 popularly known as AGENDA 2030. Higher education institutions—universities, colleges and research institutions—play a vital role in achieving these goals because they create knowledge, develop human resources, promote innovation and contribute to solving societal problems.

Goal	Name/Title	Role in Higher Education (HE)
SDG 1	No Poverty	Higher Education increases human capital, employability, income and social mobility
SDG 2	Zero Hunger	Universities contribute research on agriculture, nutrition, food technology and food security.
SDG 3	Good Health & Well-being	Medical, nursing, public-health and health-science education strengthens the health system.
SDG 4	Quality Education	Higher education is directly covered under SDG 4.3, aims to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. including university by 2030
SDG 5	Gender Equality	Women's participation in universities promotes economic independence, leadership and social empowerment.
SDG 8	Decent Work& Economic Growth	Universities and skill institutions develop employability, entrepreneurship and workforce capabilities.
SDG 9	Industry and Innovation& Infrastructure	Research, technology transfer, incubation and university-industry collaboration support innovation
SDG 10	Reduced Inequalities	Scholarships, reservations and affordable public education expand opportunities for disadvantaged groups
SDG 11	Sustainable Cities & Communities	Universities contribute urban planning, architecture, transport, housing and community development research
SDG 12	Responsible Consumption& Production	Campuses can promote resource efficiency, waste reduction and sustainable procurement.
SDG 13	Climate Action	Universities generate climate research and train professionals for adaptation and mitigation.
SDG 16	Peace, Justice & Strong Institution	Higher education develops democratic values, constitutional awareness and evidence-based public policy
SDG 17	Partnerships for Goals	Universities facilitate partnerships among government, industry, civil society and international institutions

Higher Education System in Keralam

The State has a well-developed higher education system consisting of universities, government and private colleges, professional institutions, and research centres. The system provides wide access to students and has a high level of female participation.

Indicator	Kerala	All India
Number of universities	25	1.168
Colleges registered (AISHE)	1300 +	48.246
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	41.2	30.0 %
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	>1.0 (Female favouring)	1.08
Literacy rate (Census 2011)	94.0 %	74.0 %

Sources: AISHE 2023-24, Ministry of Education, GoI; Census of India 2011.

AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) is an annual web-based survey conducted by India's Ministry of Education since 2010-11, covering all institutions in the country engaged in higher education, collecting data on teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, and infrastructure.

Refreshing Keralam into a Global Hub

- The state's ambitions here are increasingly digital and AI-focused,
- "Skill Kerala" initiative in Partnership Programmes aligning with other accredited universities in India and abroad
- Schemes to generate employment within Keralam so that young people no longer need to leave in search of opportunity.
- "Kerala Knowledge Valley – inviting top international universities to establish in the state
- "Global School" - to build capacity in advanced technologies and future-oriented vocational skills within the state.
- Inviting the World: The "Study in Keralam" Movement
- International academic partnerships - combined international academic partnerships with dedicated research funding and global branding success through transnational degree programmes and branch campuses

Innovations – Inference and Way Forward

- Supply Chain- HR to the Companies/ Institutions - Fixing the skill–employment gap
- Degree + Guaranteed Industry Rotation Model- Universities partner with Technopark/Infopark/ Cyberpark, etc
- Kudumbashree-linked Entrepreneurship Degrees -



Keralam's Self Help Groups SHGs/ cooperative sector network is globally recognised. A degree program built around applied cooperative entrepreneurship, with actual seed capital and mentorship from Kudumbashree, would be unique to Keralam and exportable as a model elsewhere.

- Global Nursing & Allied Health University: Keralam already supplies a huge share of the world's nurses. A dedicated, internationally accredited nursing/allied-health university (with direct licensing pathways for Gulf, UK, Ireland, Australia) would formalize an existing export industry instead of leaving it informal.
- Integrative medicine research hub: Combine Keralam's Ayurveda heritage with modern clinical research infrastructure — a proper research-grade institute (not just wellness tourism) that produces peer-reviewed evidence and attracts global scholars
- Climate Resilience & Coastal Engineering Institute: Keralam's coastline is a natural lab for applied climate-adaptation research to become a national/international reference center.
- Modernising Universities and Colleges: Outcome-based education with industry-aligned curricula

Keralam's future challenge is more demanding than its past achievements. The central question is no longer simply "How many students can Keralam educate?" but rather "What kind of knowledge, skills, research and innovation can Keralam generate for a sustainable and inclusive future?" If the State succeeds in making this transition, higher education can become one of the most powerful instruments for achieving not only SDG 4, but the broader 2030 Agenda.

WITNESSING A MASSIVE SURGE IN GST COLLECTION

Dr. Mary George

Economic Expert

Keralam's financial engine is running stronger than ever, outpacing much of the country after years of slow growth. The reason is twofold: smarter, more accountable tax collection on the one hand, and direct support for everyday citizens on the other. By paying off old bills owed to supply corporations, offering discounted goods during festival seasons, and releasing welfare payments, the state brought high prices back down to normal levels. This proves that when a government collects taxes fairly and invests directly in its people, the whole state thrives.

The Surge in GST Collection

In August 2025, Keralam collected ₹2,717 crore through the Goods and Services Tax (GST). Fast-forward to August 2026, and that figure jumped to ₹3,078 crore—a remarkable single-month increase of ₹361 crore. When Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) revenues are factored in, the state's total collection for the April–August 2026 period reached ₹16,132 crore, compared with ₹13,319 crore during the corresponding period in the previous year. This translates to an impressive growth rate of 21%, comfortably outstripping the national average of 16%.

Beyond Partial Explanations

Some analysts argue that the UAE–Iran war, which erupted on February 28, 2026, and the ensuing inflation—particularly across petroleum-linked sectors—were the main drivers behind this revenue surge. However, this conclusion is, at best, partial. If global fuel price inflation were the primary catalyst, how did Keralam achieve 21% growth while the national average remained at 16%?

Similarly, attributing the jump solely to the adoption of digital payments (UPI, debit cards, and credit cards), which makes tax evasion more difficult, is a weak premise. Digital transactions have been actively promoted since the 2016 demonetisation drive; their structural benefits do not suddenly surge overnight. Moreover, digital payment trails do little to prevent

large-scale tax evasion. Chapter 2 of the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) 2023 Compliance Audit Report offers valuable insights into these deeper structural issues.

Why GST Lacked Momentum in the Past

To understand this turnaround, one must ask why Keralam's GST revenue historically lagged behind national benchmarks. When GST was rolled out on July 1, 2017, a scientifically structured five-year compensation mechanism was established to offset state revenue losses. However, during this transition period, the necessary administrative measures were not taken to equip and modernise the Commercial Taxes Department for the post-compensation era. Once the compensation period expired, the department was left without sufficient specialised officers or robust internal auditing systems.

An Economic Shift

The new administration immediately prioritised an economic shift through the following measures:

Festive Relief & Welfare: Onam was celebrated with full vigour as bonuses and allowances were disbursed to all eligible recipients, and welfare pension arrears were released.

Market Intervention: Onam markets were established across all 14 districts and 140 legislative constituencies. By clearing past arrears owed to the Civil Supplies Corporation, the government restored the supply of 13 essential commodities at subsidised, controlled prices.

Inflation Control: Last October, India's consumer price inflation stood at 0.25%, while Keralam's stood at 8.56%. By the August–October period, Keralam successfully brought its inflation rate down to a level comparable with the national average.

Looking Ahead

With government employees re-energised and administrative efficiency restored, Keralam is demonstrating that when the public and the governance mechanism work hand in hand, both tax and non-tax revenues flow naturally into the state exchequer. Powered by prudent fiscal management and public trust, the state is poised to rise above average benchmarks and chart a steady path forward.



A GEN Z CONNECT

The Minister's recent interactions with students and young researchers offer a glimpse into a student-oriented approach. The efforts of the Government and the Higher Education Department to take students' views into account are commendable and offer renewed hope to the entire student community.

Amala Saji

Student, Mar Ivanios College

In an age when the relationship between students and education is changing rapidly, leadership in higher education requires more than administrative decision-making. It requires an understanding of the aspirations, anxieties, and ambitions of a generation that has grown up in a digital world. Students want impactful education, global exposure, and a government that actively listens. Within this evolving educational landscape, Roji M. John, Kerala's Minister for Higher Education, brings a distinctly student-centred perspective to government leadership. His approach combines a deep personal connection with students and a clear understanding of the rapidly evolving needs of today's youth.

Education for a Purpose

One of the Government's top priorities is to ensure that higher education connects directly with the world beyond the classroom. The Minister for Higher Education's emphasis on modern, job-oriented courses responds directly to student aspirations. Recently, the Minister stated that Kerala was open to foreign and private universities while prioritising contemporary, industry-relevant courses.

Technology for Social Impact

For Gen Z, artificial intelligence is deeply integrated into how they learn, conduct research, communicate, and build careers. Recognising this reality, the Department of Higher Education has placed a strong emphasis on AI literacy and training for educators.

Listen, Review and Rethink

A student-centred approach encourages continuous feedback and improvement, driving effective educational reform. The Minister for Higher Education has called for a restructuring of the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP), citing concerns about its implementation and the difficulties experienced by both students and teachers.

VOX POP



Blestin M. Kurian

B.Ed Student, Malabar Training College, Kannur

As students, we expect the government to execute new ideas through strategic initiatives such as building an education hub, boosting campus placements, and securing strong funding for education in the 2026 Budget.

Fidha Hashik

Student, Mar Ivanios College, Thiruvananthapuram

Minister Roji M. John's approachable nature highlights a key truth about public life: genuine leadership is defined by how accessible and humble a person remains to everyday people, not by the height of their office.



Jobin Saji

B.Com LLB (Hons.), Co-Operative School of Law, Thodupuzha

The launch of 'World to Kerala Campuses', by the Higher Education Department is a visionary step toward making Keralam a global higher education hub.



Ajitha Joshy

Student, Marian College, Kuttikkanam

The Minister understands the mind-set, aspirations, and choices of today's youth. His empathetic and modern vision could help make Keralam a confident first choice for students.

Mahitha Beena Vincent

Plus Two Student, Sarvodaya Central Vidyalaya, Thiruvananthapuram

I really value the way the Administrative Authorities envision a system that is modern, inclusive and prepared for the future. Students should possess skills and numerous opportunities to compete at an international level.



Dr. Lalu Thomas

Rtd. Higher Secondary School Principal, Idukki

The government's dedication to secular and inclusive education is highly commendable. By championing open and welcoming campuses, this vision ensures equal educational opportunities for everyone.



PRESERVING HERITAGE, POWERING FUTURES

Keralam's proposed Wayanad Tribal University can become a transformative global centre where Indigenous knowledge, modern science, culture, ecology, technology and community-led research converge.

Dr. Azeez Tharuvana

Assistant Professor,
Department of Malayalam, Farook college

The Government of Keralam envisions it as a centre for educational advancement, research, innovation, and socio-economic transformation, while also placing particular emphasis on indigenous studies, tribal entrepreneurship, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and future-

ready skills. An allocation of ₹50 crore has been made for the project.

Why Wayanad?

Wayanad constitutes one of the most significant geographical and cultural regions of Indigenous life in Keralam. Various Indigenous communities and their lived experiences embody diverse and sophisticated forms of knowledge relating to language, agriculture, forest ecology, traditional medicine, food cultures, and many more. The Indigenous communities should be among the principal

beneficiaries of the university, while the knowledge produced and nurtured within it should remain open to the wider world. Indigenous students should be provided with special opportunities for admission, academic advancement, and research. At the same time, students and researchers from across India should have opportunities to study and conduct research at the university. Such an orientation could enable the institution to evolve into a global centre for Indigenous knowledge.

Rethinking What Constitutes Knowledge

Modern universities generally organise knowledge around writing, books, laboratories, formal research methodologies and certification. Much Indigenous knowledge, however, exists through oral traditions, lived experience, relationships with nature, intergenerational transmission, rituals, songs, stories and artistic practices. It is also embedded in careful observation of land, forests, plants, animals and climatic patterns.

The university must therefore reconsider the very definition of knowledge. This would represent a significant epistemological shift. The knowledge of an Indigenous elder about a medicinal plant and scientific knowledge generated inside a university laboratory need not be treated as mutually contradictory. They may instead represent two distinct epistemologies—two different ways of knowing and producing knowledge. The proposed university should create meaningful dialogue between these systems. Such dialogue must neither romanticise Indigenous knowledge nor place it outside critical inquiry. Nor should Indigenous knowledge be reduced to an antiquarian subject.

Indigenous communities should not be treated merely as subjects of research; they should be recognised as partners in research. A considerable body of research has already been produced on Indigenous communities in India.

Language: The Heart of the University

The proposed university should accord special importance to Indigenous languages. The systematic collection, documentation, preservation, and digital archiving of the Indigenous languages of Kerala should constitute one of its central missions. For this purpose, a Centre for Tribal Languages may be established.

New Historiography and a Living Laboratory

The university should encourage Indigenous communities to write their own histories. The era in which the history of a community is written exclusively by outsiders must come to an end. Indigenous people should be recognised not merely as historical subjects but as authors, interpreters, and custodians of their own historical memory. One of the most distinctive features of a Tribal University in Wayanad could be its character as a living laboratory. Wayanad itself is an immense field of inquiry, where forests, mountains, agricultural landscapes, water systems, wildlife, human settlements, and Indigenous communities interact in complex ways.

Agriculture, Food Culture and Traditional Medicine

The Indigenous agricultural knowledge of Wayanad constitutes an immense and relatively underexplored field of research. Traditional rice varieties, tubers, forest foods, edible plants, seed conservation, rain-fed agriculture, and other



practices embody generations of accumulated ecological knowledge. A School of Indigenous Agriculture and Food Systems could therefore be established, with programmes focusing on Indigenous farming systems, Seed sovereignty,

Traditional rice varieties, and other related areas.

Indigenous medical knowledge represents another major area of research. A Centre for Indigenous Medicine and Ethnobotany could therefore be established to pursue multidisciplinary research in ethnobotany, medicinal plants, traditional healing, pharmacological research, public health, nutrition, mental well-being and biodiversity.

The University Without Walls

An Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights Centre should be established within the university. This is of critical importance because traditional knowledge is often not private property in the conventional sense; it constitutes a form of collective community knowledge transmitted across generations. The Tribal University should not remain confined within the boundaries of its campus. Every Indigenous village in Wayanad should, in a meaningful sense, become an extension campus of the university. For this purpose, Village Knowledge Centres could be established to provide: Digital literacy, Agricultural support, Entrepreneurship training, Legal awareness, Forest-rights information etc.

Indigenous Arts and Aesthetics

Indigenous artistic traditions should not be confined

to the narrow category of “folk art.” They possess their own sophisticated aesthetic systems, philosophies, symbolic structures, and modes of expression. Songs, dances, musical instruments, clothing, body art, painting, storytelling, ritual performance, and material culture should therefore be studied as interconnected forms of Indigenous intellectual and aesthetic production.

A world-class Indigenous Knowledge Digital Archive should be one of the university’s flagship initiatives. It could preserve: Oral histories, Songs, Myths, Legends, Photographs, Manuscripts, Maps, Plant knowledge, Agricultural practices, Genealogies, Ritual traditions, Material culture.

The Living Museum

The university should establish a Tribal Museum, but it should not simply reproduce the conventional museum model in which cultural objects are placed behind glass and separated from the communities that created them. Instead, it should become a Living Museum of Indigenous Knowledge. Indigenous communities themselves should participate as curators, storytellers, cultural interpreters, artists, and knowledge holders. The museum should therefore be a living space of dialogue, performance, memory, learning, and cultural transmission rather than merely a repository of objects from a supposedly disappearing past. Institutions such as Indira Gandhi National Tribal University demonstrate how tribal museums,





documentation, research, tribal art, and cultural studies can be integrated into academic activities. The proposed university in Wayanad could build upon such experiences while developing a distinctive model rooted in the Indigenous communities of Kerala.

AI, Technology and Indigenous Knowledge

A Tribal University should not become an institution devoted exclusively to studying the past. It must also participate in creating the future. An Indigenous Knowledge and AI Lab could focus on: Tribal language AI, Speech recognition and many more. Through such initiatives, Wayanad's Indigenous languages and knowledge systems could acquire a meaningful digital future. The objective should be not merely to digitise Indigenous knowledge, but to ensure that Indigenous communities retain agency over how their knowledge is represented, interpreted, circulated, and technologically transformed.

Giving Indigenous Women a Central Place

The knowledge of Indigenous women has frequently remained undocumented. Women possess critical knowledge relating to seed conservation, food, medicinal plants, childcare, agriculture, handicrafts, songs, rituals, and community life. A Centre for Indigenous Women's Studies should therefore be established. Its work should extend beyond research to include leadership programmes, Entrepreneurship, Higher education opportunities, Legal literacy, Community-based research, Documentation of women's knowledge, Political and institutional

participation. Recognising Indigenous women as knowledge producers and intellectual agents is essential to the larger project of knowledge democratisation.

Wayanad as a Global Capital of Indigenous Knowledge

If designed with vision and institutional imagination, the proposed university need not remain merely another university in Kerala. It could evolve into India's leading centre for Indigenous knowledge, South Asia's major hub for Indigenous studies, and a global centre for Indigenous knowledge, ecology and community-based innovation.

To realise this vision, the university could establish partnerships with UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO), international universities, Indigenous peoples' organisations etc. Such collaborations would place Wayanad within a global intellectual network while allowing Indigenous knowledge from Kerala to contribute to international conversations on ecology, climate change, cultural rights, sustainability, and alternative models of development.

The proposal to establish a Tribal University in Wayanad should be understood as far more than an educational project. It represents an opportunity to transform the way Kerala understands, engages with, and learns from its Indigenous communities. It should become a new intellectual space in which Indigenous knowledge, lived experience, and modern science enter into a sustained and mutually enriching dialogue.

ATS: DRIVING THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC SAFETY



Keralam is revamping road safety with 28 high-tech automated vehicle testing stations statewide, replacing manual guesswork with precise, 10-minute digital inspections. Marking a major milestone in smart governance, the state's first fully operational Automated Testing Station (ATS) commenced service at Pooyappally, Kollam.

Ajithkumar K.

Regional Transport Officer, Kollam

ATS is a government-authorised facility that uses computerised and calibrated equipment to assess vehicle fitness and roadworthiness with minimal human

intervention. In compliance with directives from India's Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), these automated lanes replace conventional manual inspections by motor vehicle inspectors with objective, technology-driven evaluations. The primary mandate of an ATS is to eliminate subjective bias, standardise the certification process, and ensure that only genuinely roadworthy vehicles ply public roads.



ATS play a transformative role in upgrading public safety and simplifying vehicle administration. Machine-driven testing removes human intervention, eliminating subjective assessments and the risk of improper fitness certification. Precise electronic checks detect hidden mechanical faults, directly preventing fatal accidents caused by structural or component failures. Highly accurate emission diagnostics keep heavily polluting vehicles off the road, reducing environmental degradation. By offloading the highly time-consuming fitness test processes to automated lanes, Assistant Motor Vehicle Inspectors (AMVIs) can focus more efficiently on on-road enforcement, accident investigations, and traffic management.

The Inspection Process at an ATS

A vehicle undergoes a structured, multi-phase inspection completed sequentially in about 10 minutes. The automated setup covers six to seven critical tests:

Pre-Check and Registration: High-resolution and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras identify the vehicle in the entrance lane and retrieve its data from the Vahan database.

Speedometer and Noise Level Test: Measures the accuracy of the vehicle's speed tracking equipment and registers its operational sound levels against permissible limits.

Suspension and Side-Slip Test: Inspects shock absorber response and side-slip characteristics to check wheel alignment divergence or convergence.

Brake Testing: Uses roller-equipped testing plates

to calculate individual braking force, distribution efficiency, and overall equilibrium across all wheels.

Headlamp Alignment Test: Employs electronic light sensors to judge the beam alignment, intensity, and high/low beam trajectory of the vehicle's headlights.

Emission and Exhaust Diagnostics: Automatically analyses smoke opacity, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbon contents via computerised exhaust probes.

Real-time Report & Certification: The local testing system consolidates sensor readings. If the vehicle clears all predefined thresholds, the system pushes data directly to the Vahan software and auto-generates the fitness certificate without any manual approval.

Keralam's First Automated Testing Station at Kollam

The Pooyappally station spearheads Keralam's transition toward automated transport management, setting the baseline for 27 upcoming sister facilities across the state (aiming for two ATS hubs per district). Because the hardware evaluates parameters strictly against MoRTH regulations, early estimates indicate that roughly 60% of vehicles initially fail unless they are meticulously maintained. If a vehicle fails any parameter during its 10-minute automated run, the owner receives an instant digital error report, granting them an opportunity to repair the specific defect and book a retest. The station's computer systems bypass all manual paperwork, uploading data directly to central government servers to prevent any illicit interference in fitness validation.

THE EMERGING VIZHINJAM POTENTIAL



The Vizhinjam International Seaport is on the cusp of creating history. As a strategically located Deep-water Multi-purpose Seaport, Vizhinjam will soon emerge as India's Maritime Gateway to the World.

Sreekumar K. Nair

Chief Executive Officer,
Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited

The flag-off of the first Export Container through Vizhinjam by V. D. Satheesan, the Chief Minister of Kerala on August 18, 2026 is a landmark event, which opens the flood gates for positioning the State as a leading Export-driven Economy of India. With the commencement of the Export – Import (Ex-Im) Operations, Vizhinjam would be the cornerstone

for rolling out the Hon'ble CM's Vision for repositioning the entire State as a Port City.

Strategic Advantage

The strategic location of Vizhinjam at the southern tip of Peninsular India positions it to serve as a Regional Maritime Hub, serving not only India, but practically all Indian Ocean Rim Countries. Added to this locational advantage, a mere 10 nautical miles (18 km) from the world's busiest sea-route, the Port also enjoys the geographical advantage of having a natural water depth of close to 20 metres right at the shoreline. These two advantages position Vizhinjam as an

ideal Deepwater Port for the berthing of the mega trans-continental Mother Ships of the leading Container Shipping Lines.

The berthing of over 1,100 Ships and transshipment operations of over 2.34 Million (Mn) Twenty Feet Equivalent Units (TEUs) of Containers in a short span of 25 months since commencement of trial operations in July, 2024, is testimony to the phenomenal potential of Vizhinjam. The Port has already become a part of the Global Supply-Chain Network with regular and adhoc services connecting the Port with over one hundred Ports across the World distributed over fifty countries in six continents. With this global reach, shipment of Indian Cargo, both Export and Import, through the Vizhinjam International Seaport provides a 40% saving in transit time and transit cost for the Indian Ex-Im Community. Such savings will make Indian products more competitive in the global market and will lead to the development of a robust Ex-Im led industrial eco-system in our State.

Port capacity and future development

The development of the Vizhinjam International Seaport is a classic model of Port development in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode, wherein the Authority, Government of Keralam, selected a Private Partner through a transparent bid process in 2014. Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd (APSEZ), the largest Port Operator in India was selected and the Concession Agreement was signed with the wholly owned subsidiary of APSEZ, M/s Adani Vizhinjam Port Pvt Ltd (AVPPL).

Upon expansion of the Container Terminal capacity,

the Vizhinjam Port will see its Container Berth length increasing from the current 800 metres to 2,000 metres by December, 2028. Additionally, two multi-purpose cargo berths, 620 metres long and 600 metres long respectively, and a Liquid Jetty of 250 metres length are slated to be commissioned. With this scale-up in capacity, Vizhinjam would emerge as the third largest container port in the country behind JNPA and Mundra. However, with its strategic advantages, Vizhinjam will emerge as India's Gateway to the World upon completion of the capacity augmentation. With the commissioning of the additional capacity, Vizhinjam will have a total investment of Rs. 24,000 Crores by the Private Partner, AVPPL, which is by far the largest private sector Investment in the State.

With the planned extension of the length of the Container Berth and Container Yard and adoption of higher capacity Cranes, the Port is expected to witness growth in container transshipment, Ex-Im movement of Containers to the hinterland and opportunities for movement of bulk cargo.

The roadmap for total economic transformation of Keralam

Aligned with the capacity augmentation of the Port, ambitious plans are being rolled out under the Mission Samudra Vision of the Chief Minister, Shri V. D. Satheesan. This Vision envisions the holistic development of the entire State into a Port City on the lines of the City State of Singapore, integrating the Vizhinjam International Seaport with the other Major and Non-major Ports of Keralam, the Inland Waterways, Maritime Services, a robust rail and road

Container Yard



network, all connecting to a mega land-side Logistics and Industrial Eco-system. In other words, Vizhinjam Seaport infrastructure is only the starting point for a wider logistics and industrial led-development strategy for the entire State.

The vision lays down four connected roles for Vizhinjam, namely

- A Transshipment Hub serving Indian and regional cargo flows
- A Gateway Port for Peninsular Indian States
- A potential fuel-bunkering Hub between Singapore and Fujairah
- A catalyst for Kerala's economic transformation

Development of Maritime, Logistics and Industrial Ecosystem

The entire thrust of the Mission Samudra Vision of the State Government would be to leverage the Vizhinjam Advantage for creating a Maritime, Logistics & Industrial Ecosystem distributed across the length and breadth of Kerala. Vizhinjam is envisioned as the anchor around which multiple port-linked activities can be clustered.

These would broadly include the development of the following Sectors and sub-sectors:

A. Marine side Eco-system

- A mega Bunkering Hub strategically placed between Singapore & Fujairah
- Ship Repair and Ship Recycling Facilities distributed across Kerala's coastline
- Maritime Support Services

Given the port's location close to the busiest East – West Sea Route, approximately at the mid-point between the World's biggest Bunkering Hub, Singapore and the second biggest Bunkering Hub, Fujairah, large scale fuel bunkering is identified as a specific and immediate opportunity. The realisation of the bunkering opportunity will require massive Tank Farms for fuel storage, safety systems, regulatory approvals, commercial fuel supply sourcing arrangements and green-fuel readiness over time. Progressively, the bunkering would migrate from traditional fossil fuels to greener fuels like LNG, Methanol, Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia over the next twenty-five years.

It is assessed that along with fuel supplies, Vizhinjam would trigger the development of Ship Repair Clusters, which will gradually grow across the State creating a strong eco-system of engineering industries.

B. Logistics Eco-system

- Empty Container Yards (ECYs) and Container Repair Facilities
- Container Freight Stations (CFSs) & Multi-modal

Logistics Parks (MMLPs).

- Third Party Logistics (3-PL) Facilities for aggregation, consolidation and distribution of Cargo – these 3-PL Players will link our Seaports & Airports for seamless Cargo Movement
- Free Trade Warehousing Zones (FTWZs) leveraging on the Vizhinjam Seaport

For driving the Port led Industrial development, the primary task is to focus on the development of the Logistics Eco-system, starting with the neighbourhood of Vizhinjam, gradually spilling over to the entire State. Presently, there is a huge gap, in terms of supporting container-logistics infrastructure around Vizhinjam, compared to the other major Indian Container Terminals, highlighting a clear investment opportunity as well as a strategic deficiency that must be addressed. South Kerala requires massive investments to be channelised into the Empty Container Yards, CFSs, MMLPs and Reefer Plugs, for end-to-end container movement, including empties repositioning, repairs, storage, customs-linked processing, stuffing and de-stuffing, cargo consolidation, and distribution. Without these facilities, substantial Ex-Im Container and cargo movements cannot scale up to the full potential of Vizhinjam Port. The proposed ecosystem is therefore necessary both to support cargo growth and to avoid unmanaged logistics sprawl.

C. Industrial Clusters

In addition to strengthening the competitive advantage of the traditional Industries of Kerala like Cashew, Coir, Processed Fish, Spices, Oleoresins etc, the Vizhinjam International Seaport would also contribute in developing the modern manufacturing eco-system creating large scale employment for educated Youth.

The logical follow up activity to the development of the Logistics Eco-system would be the development of Industrial Clusters across the State that would be automatically linked to the nearest Non-Major Port through excellent road, rail and Waterway connectivity. The priority would be the industrial cluster development starting with the southern Districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam, leveraging on Vizhinjam.

The proposed Outer Area Growth Corridor (OAGC) in Thiruvananthapuram District and the Southern Kerala Economic Corridor linking Kollam District would be Economic Corridors that would house both Logistics and Industrial Clusters. The influence zone of the OAGC is expected to be 414 sq. km, with a planning influence depth of 2.5 km on each side of the Outer Ring Road (ORR) or NH-866. The land-use planning along



this corridor can channelise growth into designated logistics, industrial, and urban-development nodes rather than allowing uncoordinated development around the Vizhinjam Seaport or within congested parts of Thiruvananthapuram City.

The Road and Rail Connectivity

The last-mile road and rail access are the critical enablers for the Port-led economic development.

The upcoming 63 km Outer Ring Road (ORR) – NH-866 is proposed along the eastern periphery of Thiruvananthapuram and would start at the Thalakode Intersection on NH-66 near the Vizhinjam Seaport, again linking with the NH-66 at Navaikulam. It will be the “spine” of the OAGC rather than a bypass for Thiruvananthapuram City. It will be an infrastructure corridor for planned urban expansion, development of logistics and industrial zones and will provide relief from congestion in the core capital-city area.

This is a significant planning proposition. A port

generates heavy vehicle traffic, land demand, and service activity. If these are not managed through a purpose-built road network and planned logistics zones, the result can be local congestion, conflicts with residential development, unsafe trailer movement, and inefficient terminal access. The ORR is thus positioned as the infrastructure backbone that links three principal growth drivers:

- Thiruvananthapuram capital city and its services economy.
- Vizhinjam Port and associated maritime activity.
- Logistics and Industrial Clusters developed along the Corridor

Rail Connectivity

Along with the expansion of the Vizhinjam Port capacity, the 10 km long tunnel rail connectivity linking the Indian Railway Network with the Port is also expected to be commissioned, providing seamless connectivity from the hinterland to the Port.



A STATE IN ACTION

The monsoon rainfall episode once again demonstrated that disaster management is not confined to what happens after a disaster strikes. It begins with monitoring the hazard, interpreting warnings, preparing institutions, and ensuring that multiple agencies work together.

Staff Reporter

During the intense spell of monsoon rainfall in early August 2026, several parts of Keralam experienced flooding, landslides, waterlogging, river-level rises and coastal hazards. Pathanamthitta, Kottayam and Idukki were among the worst-affected areas, while other districts also reported flooding and rain-related incidents. Vadasserikkara recorded about 302 mm of rainfall in 24 hours, while exceptionally high rainfall was also reported from the high-range areas.

One of the most important components of the

response was the conversion of weather information into administrative action. The India Meteorological Department issued a red alert for seven districts on August 1. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), Kerala State Emergency Operations Centre (KSEOC) and district administrations disseminated warnings and translated them into precautionary measures. The KaWaCHaM warning system was also activated, with warning sirens scheduled in the 12 orange-alert districts on August 2.

The response extended beyond formal warnings. Educational institutions in several affected districts were closed and examinations were postponed. In Kozhikode, the second day's kayaking events of the International Malabar

River Festival were cancelled after water levels in the river system rose to dangerous levels. These actions illustrate an important principle of disaster risk reduction: early warning becomes effective only when it leads to early action.

Preparedness Before the Situation Escalated

As rainfall intensified, the State Government activated its administrative and emergency-response mechanisms. District Collectors and departmental authorities were placed on alert, while response agencies were prepared for possible evacuation and rescue operations. The Chief Minister's Office maintained coordination with the Revenue Minister, ministers assigned to affected districts and district administrations as the situation developed.

Preparedness was also reflected in the management of reservoirs and water-discharge infrastructure. When the Kallarkutty reservoir reached full storage capacity amid continued heavy rainfall, KSEB opened all five shutters to release excess water. In Alappuzha, the Thottappally spillway assumed particular importance because it provides a route for excess water from the Pamba, Achankovil and Manimala river systems towards the sea. The Irrigation Department itself identifies the spillway as an important mechanism for protecting the low-lying Kuttanad region from flooding by facilitating the discharge of excess floodwater. As water levels and drainage conditions continued to evolve, authorities undertook further measures at Thottappally to accelerate the discharge of floodwater.

Evacuation and Relief Camps

Evacuation was another important component of the response. In areas threatened by flooding, landslides and rising river levels, people were moved to safer locations and relief camps were opened. The scale of displacement became evident by August 2. According to the Chief Minister's Office, 5,792 people had been shifted to 209 relief camps across the State. Twenty-seven houses had been completely destroyed and 196 partially damaged at that stage. District-level responses reflected the importance of local preparedness. In Pathanamthitta, rising water levels in the Pamba and surrounding areas resulted in evacuation and rescue efforts. In Kannur, families whose houses were flooded were moved to relief camps, while Fire and Rescue Services assisted people stranded in flooded homes. In Wayanad, vulnerable residents were also relocated following landslide incidents. The experience demonstrates that evacuation is most effective when it is treated as a preventive measure rather than a last-minute emergency response. Relief camps, therefore, are not merely temporary shelters; they are part of a larger system of risk reduction, protection and humanitarian assistance.

Rescue Operations: A Multi-Agency Effort

When flooding and landslides affected settlements, roads and houses, rescue operations required the combined efforts of several agencies. The Fire and Rescue Services and Police played a frontline role in evacuation and rescue. NDRF teams were deployed in support of State and district response mechanisms, while local authorities coordinated operations according to the nature of the emergency.

Coastal incidents brought together the Police, Fisheries



Authorities, Coast Guard and Indian Navy for search-and-rescue activities. This multi-agency approach is one of Kerala's significant strengths.

Coordination Across the Government

The August 2026 response highlighted the importance of coordination across departments and levels of government. The Revenue Department remained central to overall disaster coordination. KSDMA and KSEOC supported hazard monitoring, warning dissemination and emergency coordination. IMD provided weather forecasts and warnings, while district administrations converted these into local-level decisions.

KSEB was responsible for reservoir and dam operations. The Irrigation Department managed spillways and drainage infrastructure. Police and Fire and Rescue Services undertook evacuation and rescue. Health authorities prepared medical teams and essential medicines. Fisheries authorities and maritime agencies became important where coastal hazards and fishing-related emergencies emerged.

At the district level, District Disaster Management Authorities and local administrations played a critical role in translating State-level directions into action on the ground. This decentralised dimension is particularly important in Kerala.

Kerala's response to the August 2026 floods demonstrates the value of a State that acts before, during and after a disaster. The task ahead is to continually learn from each event, strengthen what worked, address the gaps that emerged and ensure that preparedness becomes an everyday component of governance.



AI-ERA

PREPARING ERNAKULAM FOR AN INTELLIGENT GOVERNMENT

AI-ERA (Ernakulam Revolutionising Administration) emerged as a pioneering district-wide initiative of the Ernakulam District Administration, in collaboration with the Kerala State IT Mission, to equip the government workforce with the skills and capabilities needed to navigate an AI-driven future.

Chinchu Sunil

District Project Manager, Kerala State IT Mission

From AI Literacy to AI-Enabled Governance

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly becoming a tool that can transform the way governments work, analyse information and deliver services to citizens. For Ernakulam, one of Kerala's most economically active districts, the question is no longer whether Artificial Intelligence will enter government offices. The more important question is whether the government workforce is prepared to use it effectively, responsibly and purposefully.

It is in this context that AI-ERA-Ernakulam Revolutionising Administration was conceptualised as a district-wide initiative under the leadership of the Ernakulam

District Administration, with the Kerala State IT Mission, to build an AI-ready government workforce.

The initiative is an effort to move beyond conventional technology training and create a sustained ecosystem for AI learning, experimentation and responsible adoption in government.

A District-Wide Beginning

The inauguration of AI-ERA on 6 August 2026 by Roji M. John, Minister for Higher Education, marked the beginning of an ambitious district-wide effort to make AI literacy part of the administrative ecosystem.

The vision behind AI-ERA is to create a system through which government employees can continuously learn, experiment with emerging technologies and identify practical applications within their own departments.

Listening to Government Before Teaching AI

One of the fundamental ideas behind AI-ERA is that AI training cannot be designed in isolation from the actual functioning of government. Every department has a different mandate, workflow, database, documentation requirement and citizen interface. Therefore, the initiative seeks to collect inputs from Department Heads, departmental nodal officers and participating government employees.

The information gathered will help identify:

- The major functions performed by each department;
- Repetitive and time-consuming activities;
- Types and volumes of documents handled;
- Information and data frequently required by officials;
- Existing digital workflows;
- Challenges faced in service delivery; and
- Areas where AI could potentially improve efficiency or citizen experience.

This department-level information will become an important input for developing the learning modules and identifying practical AI use cases.

The philosophy is simple: First understand the problem. Then identify the technology.

Building the AI-ERA LMS

A major component of the initiative is the development of a dedicated Learning Management System (LMS) for AI-ERA. The LMS is envisaged as more than an online repository of training videos. It will provide a structured learning pathway through which government employees can progressively move from AI awareness to practical application. The content architecture is being planned around different levels of learning.

Level 1 – AI Awareness

Understanding Artificial Intelligence, Generative AI, Large Language Models, opportunities, limitations and responsible use.

Level 2 – Practical AI Skills

Prompt engineering, drafting, summarisation, translation, information retrieval, presentations and everyday productivity applications.

Level 3 – AI for Government

Document processing, data analysis, workflow improvement, automation and department-specific use cases.

Level 4 – Responsible AI

Cyber security, privacy, confidentiality, verification of AI outputs, bias, ethics and human oversight.

Level 5 – Innovation and Advanced Applications

Department-specific experiments, automation, emerging technologies and development of practical government use cases.

The intention is to make the learning journey progressive: Learn → Practice → Apply → Experiment → Innovate

How the Modules Will Be Created

The development of the modules itself is being approached as a collaborative exercise. Inputs collected

from departments will first be analysed to identify common administrative challenges and department-specific requirements. These requirements will then be mapped against possible AI capabilities. These real administrative use cases can then be converted into practical learning exercises.

The Effort behind the Initiative

The initiative requires continuous coordination with departments, identification of participants, collection of departmental requirements, preparation of training content, development of the LMS structure, coordination with trainers and technology partners, creation of practical exercises, planning assessments and establishing mechanisms for continuous learning.

The effort is therefore being built around a participatory model. Government employees are not treated merely as trainees. Their experience, problems and suggestions become inputs into the programme itself.

The 365-Day AI Studio

The next important step is the establishment of a dedicated AI Studio at the Ernakulam Collectorate. The Studio is envisaged as a year-round learning and innovation centre where officials can receive training, experiment with AI tools, work on use cases and explore emerging technologies. The concept includes learning across basic, intermediate and advanced AI, prompt engineering, automation, data analysis, cyber security, ethical AI and emerging technologies.

The larger vision is to create a space where an official can bring a real administrative challenge and ask: “Can technology help us solve this better?”

Responsible Intelligence

The use of AI in government comes with a responsibility that cannot be overlooked. Government handles personal information, confidential records and decisions that directly affect citizens. An inaccurate AI output, privacy breach, biased system or unverified information can undermine public trust. Therefore, AI-ERA places cyber security, data privacy, ethical AI and human oversight alongside technological capability.

The principle is clear: Use AI boldly where it creates public value, but cautiously where public trust is at stake. AI should empower the government employee, not replace responsibility.

From Digital Government to Intelligent Government

Keralam has already travelled a considerable distance in digital governance. Services have moved from counters to portals and physical records have increasingly become digital. The next transformation is about making that digital ecosystem more intelligent, responsive and citizen-centric. AI-ERA seeks to take Ernakulam towards that next stage. The journey has only begun. The objective is to create a government where people are empowered by machines—where technology reduces repetitive work, improves access to information and supports better decisions, while human judgments, empathy, constitutional values and accountability remain at the centre.



The Chief Minister and State Cabinet ministers during the two-day 'Reimagining Keralam' workshop at IIM Kozhikode

THE CLASSROOM CABINET

Staff Reporter

Education is a lifelong journey, not a process confined to classroom walls. As time passes and we reach our career goals—even representing the public in governance—learning and growth remain continuous. When the State ministers and the Chief Minister convened at IIM Kozhikode for the 'Reimagining Keralam' State Cabinet Leadership Retreat, leadership met learning in its purest form. From taking notes and engaging in discussions to collective problem-solving and shared laughter, these leaders embraced the familiar, inspiring experience of being students once again.

The two-day residential strategic leadership retreat, 'Reimagining Keralam', organised by the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIM Kozhikode) for the Keralam Council of Ministers, concluded on a high note, with the entire 21-member State Cabinet, led by the Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan participating enthusiastically in the discussions and interactive learning sessions.

The conversations of Day 1 explored transformational leadership, healthcare and wellness, climate resilience, disaster preparedness and the science of making governance work, while Day 2 broadened the dialogue to higher education, the silver economy, entrepreneurship and employment, sustainable growth, and the global positioning of



Keralam.

The Ministers actively engaged in team-building exercises and experiential learning, recognising the importance of community participation in making public policy and governance more effective. The discussions also included international examples of good governance and explored how global best practices could be adapted to Keralam's context. Prof. Debashis Chatterjee, Director, IIM Kozhikode, said that the Cabinet's enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, and ability to connect ideas with policy and performance had made the engagement particularly meaningful.

Prof. Satish Krishnan, Prof. Sreejesh S, Prof. Devaprasad M, Prof. Ankur Jain, Prof. Silpa Satheesh, Prof. Priya Nair, Prof. Deepa Sethi, Prof. Venkataraman S, Prof. Mridul Sagar, Prof. Vipin Veetil,

Prof. Arqum Mateen, Prof. Ashutosh Sarkar, Prof. Nycil George, Prof. Rajesh Upadhyayula, Prof. Gladys S, and Prof. Aishwarya Ramasundaram conducted various sessions. The sessions explored how Keralam could capture the imagination of its stakeholders while retaining the essence of God's Own Country.

The Cabinet's engagement in the two-day programme was marked by strong participation, curiosity, and appreciation for the academic and

experiential approach. Ministers particularly appreciated sessions on disaster management, public health and wellness, citizen behaviour and policy design, eldercare, entrepreneurship, higher education reform, and international examples of good governance.

The interactive nature of the retreat, including team-building exercises and case-based discussions, was appreciated for providing opportunities to step outside the immediate demands of administration and reflect collectively on longer-term questions of policy, society, and development. Prof. Chatterjee expressed optimism that Keralam would make a civilisational leap into the global space—not merely as a destination to visit, but as a place to live, learn, innovate, and contribute.

The two-day retreat brought together the State's political leadership with IIM Kozhikode faculty and international experts in a structured dialogue designed to move beyond immediate administrative priorities towards the larger forces shaping Keralam's future. As envisaged at the outset, the programme combined contemporary management thought, academic research, experiential learning, and international perspectives to encourage strategic reflection and translate ideas into meaningful outcomes.

PINKSPARSHAM

REIMAGINING THE WAY

KERALAM TRAVELS



At a time when technology is reshaping everyday life, young innovators are emerging with fresh ideas and remarkable talent. Among them is Keerthana, an aspiring student whose out-of-the-box thinking led to the creation of PinkSparsham, a digital platform designed to reimagine the public transport experience by enhancing safety and accessibility. Encouraging young talents like Keerthana reflects the Government's commitment to nurture youth innovation and empower young minds to create meaningful solutions for society.

Keerthana Sara Kiran

B.Tech Student,
LBS Institute of Technology for Women,
Thiruvananthapuram.

Public transport is the heartbeat of Kerala, with KSRTC buses carrying millions of passengers across our picturesque State every day. Yet, the actual travel experience comes with some frustrating gaps. We have all felt the anxiety of missing a stop in an unfamiliar neighbourhood, the panic of losing something valuable on a bus, or noticed how challenging commuting can be for passengers with visual or hearing impairments.

Seeing this gap between a basic bus service and a truly comfortable commuting experience is what pushed me, as a Computer Science student, to look beyond my textbooks and focus on real-world problems. After extensive coding, testing, and incorporating feedback, that idea took shape

as PinkSparsham—a digital platform built to completely reimagine how we experience public transport.

What is PinkSparsham?

More than just a travel tool, PinkSparsham is a mobile application designed to set a new standard for safety, accessibility, and efficiency in public transport. It aims to ensure that every passenger—regardless of age, gender, or ability—feels secure and informed throughout their commute.

Its key features include destination alerts for unfamiliar routes, real-time crowd tracking for smarter trip planning, dedicated emergency alerts for women, a driver notification dashboard for seamless drop-offs, and an integrated lost-and-found system. Together, these capabilities make PinkSparsham a complete, end-to-end companion for modern transit.

A Dream-Come-True Moment

A defining moment in this journey came when I had the privilege of presenting the concept to the Chief Minister of Kerala, V. D. Satheesan. He received the proposal

with remarkable attention and enthusiasm, recognising its potential to significantly enhance public transport in the State.

The Chief Minister referred the proposal to KSRTC, and PinkSparsham was formally submitted to the IT Division of KSRTC. After a thorough review, the team issued a Certificate of Appreciation, describing the proposal as one reflecting 'initiative, clarity of thought and public-spirited approach,' with special commendation for its emphasis on accessibility, safety, and inclusion.

Key Features

The following features are already operational in the current version of the PinkSparsham mobile app prototype:

Destination Alerts

Passengers can set their intended stop and receive a real-time notification when the bus is approximately 500 metres away from the destination. This feature has been successfully tested on select routes in Thiruvananthapuram.

One-Touch Emergency Alert for Women

A dedicated emergency button has been integrated into the mobile application. Upon activation, an alert is instantly transmitted to the conductor's dashboard and to selected passengers on the same bus who have opted into the safety network. The prototype also includes a geo-tagging feature that shares the bus's real-time location with emergency contacts.

Digital Lost-and-Found System

The app also includes a fully functional lost-and-found module where commuters can report missing belongings by entering the bus number and item details. Conductors receive an instant alert on their interface, and passengers are notified via SMS if the item is recovered.

Automated Audio Announcements

PinkSparsham incorporates a text-to-speech engine that automatically announces upcoming stops at regular intervals. This feature has been developed with multilingual support, including Malayalam and English.

Real-Time Crowd Information

Using a combination of GPS data and manual inputs from conductors, the prototype provides real-time occupancy information to passengers before boarding. This feature allows commuters to make informed decisions about which bus to board, helping reduce overcrowding and improve overall comfort.

AI-Enabled Passenger Counting

The prototype employs a computer vision model that uses the bus's existing CCTV camera at the entrance to automatically count boarding passengers. This count is



Keerthana presenting the concept of PinkSparsham to the Chief Minister V D Satheesan

cross-referenced with the number of tickets issued, and any discrepancy triggers an alert to the conductor.

Driver Dashboard

A dedicated dashboard has been developed for drivers, displaying the next stop, the number of passengers expected to alight, and any active emergency alerts. The interface has been designed with a simple, non-distracting layout to ensure driver safety and focus.

Vision

The interest shown by the Chief Minister and the thorough evaluation by KSRTC's technical team stand as a testament to the Government's proactive approach to nurturing youth innovation.

The recognition received is both an honour and a source of motivation to continue working towards a future where every passenger—regardless of age, gender, or ability—feels safe, informed, and valued throughout their journey.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Kerala, KSRTC, and LBS Institute of Technology for Women for their unwavering support and encouragement. It is my sincere hope that PinkSparsham will soon become a reality, helping make Kerala's public transport system a shining example for the rest of the country.

My ultimate goal is to see PinkSparsham implemented on the ground, establishing Kerala's public transport system as a national benchmark for safety, accessibility, dignity, and passenger-friendly innovation.

A defining moment in this journey came when I had the privilege of presenting the concept to the Chief Minister of Kerala, V.D. Satheesan. He received the proposal with remarkable attention and enthusiasm, recognising its potential to significantly enhance public transport in the State.

THE NEXT LEAP FORWARD



The emergence of Artificial Intelligence is a significant milestone, opening new opportunities for development in every sphere of human life. The state government's decision to create a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Department is a welcome step, and the process is already underway.

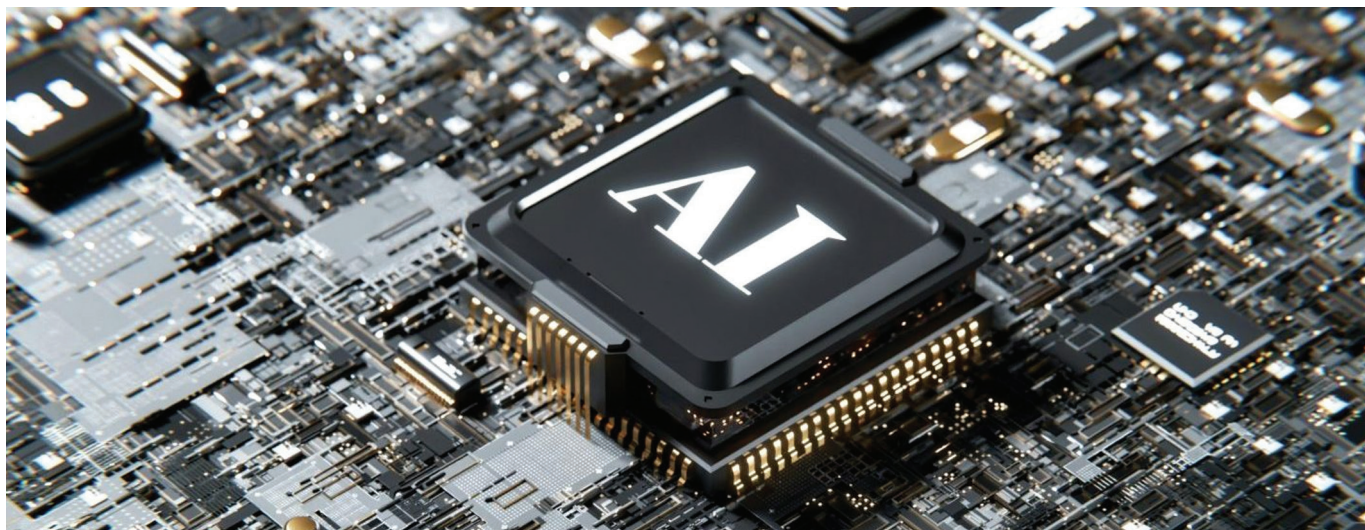
M. Muhammed Haris
Additional Secretary (Rtd.),
Finance Department

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has boosted the information technology sector to new heights, and its contributions span a wide range of dimensions. AI is used in medical diagnosis, surgery, commerce, stock trading, robotics, law, administration, scientific discovery, defence, security, entertainment, and many other fields. Its use helps ensure the speedy and effective delivery of services.

The application of Artificial Intelligence is essential for economic development, and the government is

therefore promoting its adoption and deployment across all walks of life. The adoption, development, and responsible use of AI have become the need of the hour. As a powerful technology driven by machine learning, AI can help address many of the challenges faced by modern society and improve the way we live, work, and govern, particularly by strengthening public administration, governance, and service delivery.

The application and deployment of Artificial Intelligence in agricultural production, forestry, environmental science, law enforcement, and security are gaining widespread recognition for their transformative potential. In modern logistics management, AI has become increasingly indispensable, enabling greater



efficiency, accuracy, and effective decision-making. Its growing application in defence has also emerged as an essential requirement in an era of rapid technological advancement and development.

The Government of Kerala, motivated by the goal of better governance, has initiated steps to promote collaboration between industry and government for research and development in state-of-the-art algorithms and architectures. It also aims to impart skills among personnel through education, training, and appropriate policies.

In these circumstances, the government has decided to create an Artificial Intelligence Department for Kerala, making it the first Indian state to have a separate department for Artificial Intelligence. It plans to remodel the Information Technology Department in tune with modern-day requirements and needs.

Artificial Intelligence has now penetrated almost every field of life. Machine-generated intelligence can handle large amounts of data and has attracted huge investments in developed countries. Even oil-rich Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, plan to set up huge data centres by investing billions of dollars to promote innovation in the field of Artificial Intelligence. Kerala, known for its distinctive model of development, continues to embrace innovation and introduce new ideas and approaches to address emerging challenges and shape a better future.

At present, the state's IT sector hosts around 2.5 lakh technology professionals, with about 1.5 lakh employed directly across major IT hubs such as Technopark, Thiruvananthapuram; Infopark, Ernakulam; and

Cyberpark, Kozhikode. The contribution of the IT sector to the state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is around 7 per cent, amounting to approximately ₹1 trillion, and there are plans to enhance this contribution to 10 per cent of GSDP.

The IT sector in India creates around six million jobs and contributes approximately 7.5 per cent of the country's GDP, with a value of about USD 250 billion. At present, information technology contributes significantly to the global economy. AI is expected to make a substantial contribution to the world economy in the coming years, while India's share is also projected to increase considerably.

Kerala is the first state in India to create a separate department for Artificial Intelligence. With its highly educated and skilled youth, Kerala has great potential to benefit from this new field

India has significant potential in the AI sector due to its talented workforce, vibrant startup ecosystem, Digital India initiatives, and huge and diverse population. Kerala's industrial policy recognises AI and robotics as important emerging technologies. The policy aims to integrate industry with academia for the overall development of the state. It is expected that AI-driven technologies will improve both the quality and quantity of products and services in the agriculture, manufacturing, and service sectors.

The decision of the State Government to create an Artificial Intelligence Department is laudable, and the necessary measures are in the pipeline. Kerala is set to become the first state in India to create a separate department for Artificial Intelligence. With its highly educated and skilled youth, Kerala has great potential to benefit from this emerging field. The creation of the AI Department is a welcome step and a significant initiative that can open up new opportunities for the state's young people and contribute to its future development.

KERALAM'S NURSES IN THE GLOBAL ARENA



According to emigration clearance statistics collected by India's Ministry of External Affairs, Malayali nurses continue to dominate India's overseas nursing workforce, contributing an overwhelming share of migration over the years.

Joby Baby

Nurse, Ministry of Health, Kuwait

Between 2016 and 2019, it is estimated that nearly 85–95% of all Indian nurses who emigrated were from Kerala. This trend remains evident in recent emigration clearance data. In 2023, out of 16,594 nurses who received clearance nationwide, 9,980 were Malayalis; in 2024, the figure was 8,572 out of 14,584; and in 2025, it was 6,393 out of 11,581. Despite a gradual decline in absolute

numbers, the proportion of Malayali nurses remains significantly high. Currently, it is estimated that around 60,000 Indian nurses—predominantly Malayalis—are working across Gulf countries, underlining Kerala's continued prominence as the backbone of India's global nursing migration.

Extensive Nursing Education Ecosystem

Kerala has one of India's largest concentrations of nursing colleges relative to its population, commonly cited as having more than 260 institutions offering GNM

(General Nursing and Midwifery), B.Sc. Nursing, Post-Basic B.Sc. Nursing, and M.Sc. Nursing programmes. These include government and private colleges regulated by the Kerala Nurses and Midwives Council (KNMC) and the Indian Nursing Council (INC). This provides Kerala with a large and steady annual output of qualified nursing graduates.

Multi-Generational Diaspora Networks

Malayali nurse migration to the Gulf dates back to the oil-boom era of the 1970s, meaning that there are now multiple generations of established Malayali nursing communities across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain. These networks matter in practical ways: job referrals, informal mentorship in navigating a new country's hospital system, shared housing arrangements, and community support all help lower the real-world barriers to migration, especially for early-career nurses.

In many Kerala families, nursing followed by overseas employment has become a well-established and socially normalized career path in a way that is less common in most other Indian states. This cultural familiarity reinforces the pattern generation after generation, independent of any single policy or economic push factor.

The Shift: From Gulf-Dominant to a More Mixed Picture

Historically, the Gulf has been the primary destination for Kerala nurses. A 2016 report estimated that around 57% of Malayali nurses working abroad were based in Gulf countries, attracted by geographic proximity, the absence of separate licensing examinations in many hospital recruitment pathways, and well-established migration channels.

However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, this pattern has begun to diversify. Gulf countries are increasingly prioritizing their own citizens for healthcare roles, while pathways to the UK and the US have gained relative importance. Significantly, overall migration numbers have declined across the board, meaning that this "shift" reflects a change in the mix of destinations within a shrinking total rather than a simple replacement of one dominant pathway by another.

The Trained Nurses' Association of India (TNAI) has provided continuous nursing education and skill-training programmes since 1980 to help nurses upgrade their skills and improve their efficiency. Workshops conducted in



collaboration with national and international organizations also form part of its e-learning programme.

Government Support for Overseas Nursing Recruitment

NORKA and the Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC) are two government-approved agencies in the state engaged in recruitment for safe overseas migration, with the aim of minimizing illegal practices and visa fraud. They primarily sign agreements with private agencies abroad and occasionally with governments, based on specific assignments and requirements.

NORKA has signed agreements with 54 agencies across 16 countries. ODEPC has facilitated overseas employment in eight countries for over four decades. NORKA and ODEPC have visited nursing institutions to raise awareness among final-year students while also disseminating information

through various media, including websites, social media groups, newspaper advertisements, and nursing colleges. These initiatives aim to protect aspiring nurses from deception, fraudulent practices, and malpractice by private recruitment agencies, helping them make informed and secure career choices.

NORKA and the Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC) are the two government approved agencies in the state which are engaged in the recruitment process for safe overseas migration to minimize illegalities and visa fraud.

Celebrating the World Through Travel

As the rare Neelakurinji paints the hills along the Munnar–Mattupetty road in enchanting shades of blue, World Tourism Day reminds us that travel is more than visiting places — it is about discovering nature, embracing cultures, connecting people and preserving the wonders of our planet for generations to come.

Photo Credit : Nikhil Jose, Idukki





Information Public Relations Department
Government of Kerala

KERALA CALLING

STORIES THAT CONNECT.
VALUES THAT INSPIRE.

A magazine that brings you closer
to the people, progress and
possibilities of Kerala.



In-depth Stories

On people, development
and culture



Exclusive Features

Interviews, insights
and analysis



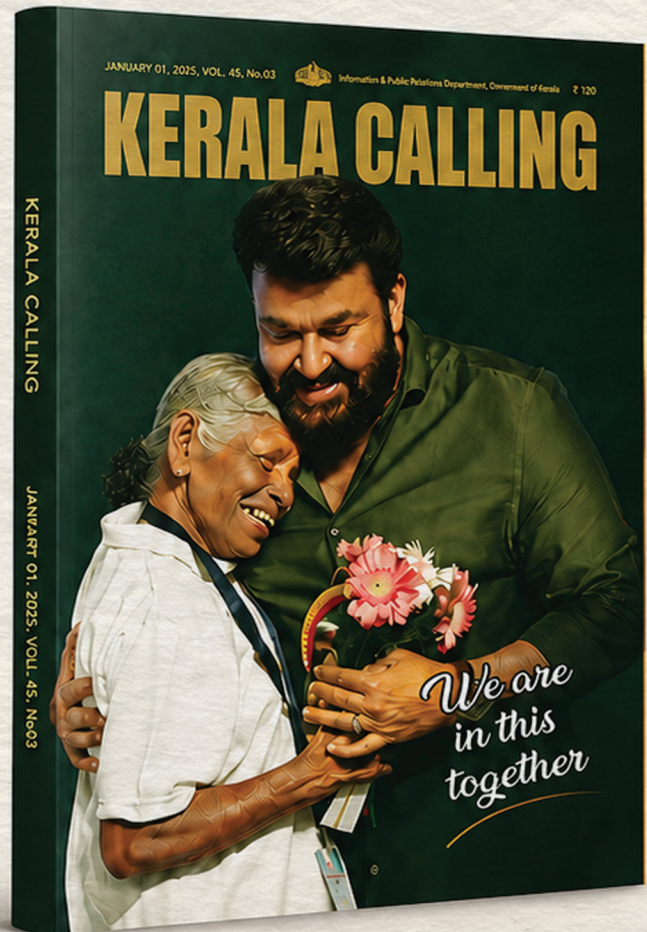
Celebrating Kerala

Heritage, innovation
and achievements



For Every Keralite

Informative, inspiring
and relevant



SUBSCRIPTION PLAN



1 YEAR
(12 ISSUES)

₹120



Send Rs. 120 money order to
The Director Information- Public Relations Department ,
First Floor Secretariat Annexe 1 ,Thiruvananthapuram ,695001



Subscription amount will be received at
all district information offices



Phone Number - 0471 2518471

REACH US AT



EMAIL

keralacallingmagazine@gmail.com



PHONE

0471 2518648



WEBSITE

www.keralacalling.kerala.gov.in



Also available in

official website of I-PRD



GIFT A SUBSCRIPTION

Share stories that matter.
Inspire someone you care about.

STAY CONNECTED. STAY INSPIRED.

SUBSCRIBE TO KERALA CALLING TODAY!



Information & Public Relations
Department, Government of Kerala

Printed and Published by Sabin Sameed IAS, Director, Information Public Relations Department on behalf of Government of Kerala and Printed at Orange Printers Pvt Ltd, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Published from Information Public Relations Department, Govt.of Kerala, Government Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram-695001. Editor: Sabin Sameed IAS. Enquiries: Phone - 0471- 2517036 Email: iocirculation@gmail.com