



KERALA CALLING



THE REAL KERALA STORY NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Kerala Becomes **FIRST EXTREME POVERTY FREE STATE** in the Country
by November 2025

സ്മാർട്ടായി കെ.എസ്.ആർ.ടി.സി.



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The Real Kerala Story: A State Eradicating Extreme Poverty



Kerala is poised to become the first state in India to officially declare itself free of extreme poverty on November 1st, a significant and commendable achievement. The substantial investment of time, manpower and funds demonstrates the state's commitment to inclusive development, ensuring no one is left behind.

The task of identifying and assisting the extremely poor—a group comprising less than 0.55% of the population, already the lowest in the country according to NITI Aayog—was particularly challenging. These 'invisible poor' had previously fallen through social safety nets, making their identification far from a simple task.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the state adopted a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach. The Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP), declared in 2021, set a five-year goal to eliminate extreme poverty. This was one of the first major decisions of the second Ministry under the leadership of Pinarayi

Vijayan. Through extensive research and surveys, 64,006 extremely poor families were identified and micro-plans were created for each to ensure access to essential services like food, healthcare and social security.

The EPEP evolved into a grassroots social movement, led by the government and supported by voluntary agencies, social activists, people's representatives, and citizens. The success of this collaboration is evident in the state achieving its goal in just four years. This remarkable journey saw the Dharmadam Legislative Constituency become the first to be free of extreme poverty. In this special issue, Kerala Calling examines the multidimensional aspects of this exemplary achievement.

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52 Pages including Cover

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Kerala Calling SEPTEMBER 01, 2025_VOL_45_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.

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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.

Navigator

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Vision 2031

To shape Kerala into a progressive and developed state by 2031, the government is launching a seminar series called Vision 2031. The logo of the Vision 2031 seminars was unveiled by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The seminars will focus on 33 different themes. As Kerala approaches its 75th year in 2031, the initiative seeks to chart future development goals by reflecting on the state's past achievements.

The district-level seminars will be conducted from October 1 to 30, led by the respective ministers on selected topics. Each seminar will bring together nearly 1,000 participants, including national and international experts. Insights and recommendations from these sessions will later be consolidated and presented in a comprehensive seminar chaired by the Chief Minister in January.



Minister for Health Veena George inaugurates STHREE Clinic in Thiruvananthapuram.

STHREE Clinics Launched

For the first time in the country, special women's clinics—Strengthening Her to Empower Everyone (STHREE)—have been launched in all 5,415 public health centers across Kerala. The state-level inauguration was carried out by the Minister for Health, Veena George.

The STHREE clinics aim to provide dedicated healthcare services for women and children through public health centres, offering regular clinics, screening camps and specialist consultations.

These women's clinics will function every Tuesday focusing on the early detection of anemia, diabetes, hypertension, cancers and other health conditions. As part of this initiative, special health tests will also be conducted through Kudumbashree neighborhood groups, alongside expert examinations at family health centres and awareness programmes.

The Minister urged all women to make use of these wellness clinics and undergo regular health check-ups to ensure better well-being.

Kerala is to be declared as the first extreme poverty free state in the country by November 1st. The achievement is the result of a well-planned research and survey, meticulous implementation, community participation and coordinated efforts of various departments. Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan speaks about the journey so far to Kerala Calling Editor in Charge Sini K Thomas. Here are the Excerpts:



No One Left Behind

KC: The government is all set to declare Kerala as Extreme Poverty Free State in November this year. What we communicate to the world while doing this?

CM: Kerala will be declared as the first extreme poverty free state in the country on November 1st. It gives the world a strong message that, with collective efforts and cooperation of the Local Self Governments, society, and various government departments, poverty and even extreme poverty can be completely wiped out from a region. Kerala becomes the first state in the country to fully achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals of 'No Poverty' and 'Zero Hunger'. This achievement reminds us that the development leaving no one left out is possible.

KC: The extreme poverty eradication programme was one of the major decisions of the first Cabinet of the Second LDF government led by you. How has been the journey towards this since last four years?

CM: The Government has launched this project in 2021 with an aim to find out the families who live in extreme poverty and to help them to get out of this condition. A detailed survey was conducted by the Local Self Government. The survey identified 64,006 families as extremely poor based on the factors such as income, health, food, and housing. Subsequently, a comprehensive action plan was prepared for each family. These micro plans were implemented with the support of local self-government institutions, Kudumbashree, LIFE Mission, and Health and other government departments. In the first year of the project, 47.89% of the population from the surveyed list was lifted out of poverty. As of September 16, 2025, from the families covered by the programme, 53,699 families (84%) have been lifted out of extreme poverty. From the list

those who were included in the extreme poverty line at the time of extreme poverty identification and later died, those who were migrated to other states, whom appeared twice in the list, and those who did not need a micro-plan, were excluded. Thus, 55861 families (96.13%) have been freed from extreme poverty. Now, activities are underway to free 2148 families from extreme poverty by October 31, 2025.

In the first year, the Government focused more on the most essential and inevitable factors; that is, food and health care. In addition to this, under the Avakasham Athivegam campaign, 21263 poor people were provided with entitlements including Voter Id, Aadhar, ration card, Health insurance, identity cards for differently abled, Bank accounts, employment card and emergency services. Through the dedicated and collective works of the State Government, the social security institutions and Local Self Governments those families who were in need of continuous support for food and health services were taken care of. The needy families were supported by social security pension, and the homeless families by LIFE Mission, the housing scheme. Through the Ujjevanam Scheme implemented by Kudumbashree, a livelihood and regular income were ensured. Mostly, the beneficiaries were in need of land and house, only house or renovation of house.

Until now, 3855 families who were in need of only houses were given financial support to construct houses which have been completed. There were 1320 families who needed both a house and land have had their houses built. 5287 houses have been renovated and financial support have been provided to families who needed house renovation. 610 families who were eligible for house only/land and house have been relocated to rented houses as per their request. A



Ambassadors to India from European Union countries visit Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at his official residence Cliff House in Thiruvananthapuram

total of 948 families, 428 families belonging to single family and 520 non-single families have been safely relocated to shelter homes. Out of 5350 families who faced difficulties to earn, 4395 were capable of generate any kind of income. They were identified and 3822 families were provided with livelihood through Ujjeevanam and 572 families through LSGD, other departments or private organisations. The project activities are underway with the aim of making the state free from extreme poverty by November 1, 2025.

KC: The UN has set to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030 and the Goal 1 is to end poverty and deprivation in all forms while making development economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Why Kerala focused on the eradication of extreme poverty instead of poverty eradication?

CM: Kerala has made great strides in eradicating poverty. Poverty was 59.8% in 1973-74. It has come down to 0.55% in 2019-21. Therefore, in the next phase, the government has focused on uplifting the poorest sections of the society and helping them to escape from extreme poverty. This has led to the goal of 'Eradicating Extreme Poverty'.

KC: What are the preparations as a whole to achieve this?

CM: Preparations for the eradication of extreme poverty were carried out in various stages. First, a detailed survey was conducted by the Local Self Governments to identify the people living in extreme poverty.

In the first stage information gathering was conducted locally by evaluating the conditions of food, health, income, housing needs for each family. In the second stage short-term, interim and long-term micro plans were prepared based on the needs of each family. The third stage was project implementation. The project is being implemented by the Local Self-Government Department with the support

of the Local Self-Government Institutions, Kudumbashree, LIFE Mission, various government departments including Health department, NGOs, resident associations. Major component of the project was funding. The government has allocated Rs. 50-crore each for the years 2023-24 and 2024-25 for this project. These funds have been utilised for health, housing and livelihood. This year, Rs. 60-crore has been allocated.

KC: What are the strategies for the government for balancing governance between the infrastructure development and welfare measures?

CM: In the Extreme Poverty Eradication Project, you can see that infrastructure such as housing through the LIFE Mission and welfare schemes such as health care, food distribution, educational assistance, and employment opportunities through the 'Ujjivanam' scheme have been given equal importance. This indicates the government's priority to include infrastructure and welfare side by side. Along with this the government has prioritised development of road networks, water metro, renovation of KSRTC etc. We have a holistic approach towards development.

KC: Dharmadam has become the first extreme poverty free constituency in India. How do you foresee this achievement as the MLA of the constituency?

CM: Dharmadam is the first constituency in the country to be declared an extreme poverty free constituency. As the MLA of the constituency, I must say that it is not a personal achievement but the result of a collective effort from all walks of the society.

The most important aspect of this success is collective efforts by the LSGD Department with the support of LSGD Institutions, Health and other govt departments, voluntary organisations, Kudumbashree, LIFE Mission and more



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan addresses District Collectors at Collectors' Conference held at Govt Guest House, Thycaud



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan addressing "Vikasana Sadass"

importantly the people of the constituency. This is an exemplary model of Kerala's journey to achieve the status of the extreme poverty free state and an emulative model for other constituencies and states. This is the example of inclusive development in the state that included all families of the constituency and ensure health, food, livelihood, housing and education for all. This is a proof that how a government is committed to uplift the living standards of people and ensure equal opportunity to its resources.

KC: Kerala scored No 1 in the country in terms of Human Development and many development priorities. But we see many campaigns disregarding data, for eg- the movie Kerala Story and the support it received in terms of national recognition. Do you think Kerala is less understood in the country?

CM: It is a fact that Kerala ranks first in the country in the Human Development Index and other development priorities. Kerala has achieved heights in areas such as literacy, improved healthcare, low infant mortality, etc. However, some campaigns like movie The Kerala Story that are gaining national attention may be part of an attempt to spread certain perceptions unrelated to these development achievements of Kerala. There may be two reasons for this.

First one is different perspectives on the development model. While some section of people accepts Kerala's development model another section may try to see it from a different political or social perspective rather than its development angle.

Another reason is the impact of propaganda strategies. The influence of social media and art forms like cinema in the society is very much. The stories spread through these mediums often influence people's emotions rather than factual reality. Such attempts may create a different picture

of Kerala at the national level which is far from the reality.

I cannot give a definite answer to the question whether Kerala is not understood properly in the country. However, this situation gives an indication of how certain narratives influence society beyond development and reality.

KC: Kudumbashree is a national model. What is the role of Kudumbashree in achieving the goal of extreme poverty eradication?

CM: Kudumbashree played a crucial role in the efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. With the support of Kudumbashree, a campaign named 'Ujjevanam' was launched. Through this project, 4000 families experiencing extreme poverty were provided with job training, microfinance and entrepreneurship assistance. Kudumbashree distributed food through 'Janakiya Hotels'. As mentioned earlier out of 5350 extreme poor families who were unable to generate income 3822 families were able to provide a source of income through the Kudumbashree Ujjevanam project.

KC: Extreme poverty is invisible poverty, which is difficult to identify. How important for a government to uplift their invisible poor who are nowhere documented?

CM: Identifying those living in extreme poverty is a challenge. That is why the government adopted a unique method household-level data collection to identify the vulnerable people. This has been done based on the factors leading to extreme poverty such as health problems, malnutrition, lack of income, and homelessness. The campaign Avakasam Athivegam has been designed to speedy issue entitlements such as essential identity cards such as ration cards, Aadhar cards, health cards etc. This helped them to avail other welfare services easily. This is the way the government addressed the invisible poverty.

Dharmadam has become Kerala's first extreme poverty-free Assembly constituency showcasing how grassroots action, local governance, and community participation can transform lives and restore dignity to the most marginalised families.

DHARMADAM: Model for Human-Centric Development



P. Sudhakaran

Mahatma Gandhi often reminded us that India's freedom would remain unfinished until it reached the antyodaya – the last person at the margins. For him, poverty was not only the absence of money but the denial of dignity, social security, and opportunity. This vision, which also echoes Kerala's Left-oriented emphasis on equality, comes alive in the state's mission to eradicate extreme poverty. By ensuring that no family remains unseen or excluded, Kerala is carrying forward a Gandhian dream with a contemporary approach, underscoring the importance of sustainable development.

It was in this spirit that Dharmadam, the home constituency of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, was declared Kerala's first extreme poverty-free constituency on April 13, 2025. The announcement was more than ceremonial. It resulted from a sustained, grassroots effort that brought together state vision, local self-governments, Kudumbashree collectives, and community volunteers to address deprivation in its most stubborn forms. It also became a curtain-raiser for Kerala's ambitious goal: to declare the entire state free of extreme poverty by November 1, 2025 – Kerala Piravi Day.

Extreme poverty is not just about inadequate income. It is a condition of multiple deprivations, where families simultaneously struggle for food, healthcare, housing, and income. Kerala's Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP), launched in August 2021, recognised this reality and adopted four key indicators – food security, health, income, and housing. Families lacking in

one or more of these dimensions were classified as extremely poor. The World Bank now defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$3.00 per day in 2021 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms, a global benchmark updated in June 2025. The UN has placed poverty eradication at the heart of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Kerala, by localising this framework into measurable household indicators, has shown how global goals can be translated into grassroots action.

In Dharmadam constituency, a baseline survey identified 196 families living in extreme poverty. Micro-plans were drawn up for each household by local governments in collaboration with Kudumbashree neighbourhood groups. Every family's needs were assessed, and interventions tailored – some required immediate relief, others long-term rehabilitation. The results were transformative. Nineteen families were linked to nutrition programmes, ensuring regular food supply. One hundred and thirty-nine families gained medical support, from routine check-ups to palliative care, with health insurance coverage.





Twenty families were provided livelihood opportunities through Kudumbashree's Ujjeevanam campaign, skill training, or small enterprise support. Eighty-three families were given secure housing – some received new houses, others land-and-house packages under the LIFE Mission, and many received aid for home renovation. Toilets and drinking water connections were provided where needed. Families also received essential documents – ration cards, Aadhaar, voter IDs, disability cards, and bank accounts. Social security pensions were extended to eligible households, giving them stability and dignity.

A remarkable aspect of Dharmadam's achievement was how it reached the invisible poor – families who had slipped through the cracks of official records due to lack of documents, land titles, or secure housing. Door-to-door surveys by local volunteers and Kudumbashree groups identified such households, addressing their challenges – untreated illness, irregular income, unsafe dwellings, or social isolation. The effort restored dignity and belonging to people who had long remained unseen.

Extreme poverty is not just about inadequate income but a condition of multiple deprivations, where families simultaneously struggle for food, healthcare, housing, and income. Kerala's Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP), launched in August 2021, recognised this reality

The success of Dharmadam demonstrates the strength of Kerala's decentralised development model. Local self-governments led planning and monitoring, while Kudumbashree neighbourhood groups identified needs and mobilised support. Community volunteers bridged households and government departments, ensuring no family was excluded due to lack of awareness or bureaucratic hurdles.

"This was truly a grassroots initiative shaped under the Chief Minister's guidance, with him leading from the front," said K. U. Balakrishnan, a resident of Dharmadam and former Deputy Director of the Public Relations Department of Kerala. "From the time he assumed office, his vision was that the extremely poor should have food and shelter, and that the economic divide in society must be eliminated. With the support of charitable and voluntary organisations across political lines, and with cooperative canteens and initiatives like Dinesh Adukkala playing a key role, this vision was realised. Exhaustive surveys were conducted at every stage to identify the poorest of the poor and provide them with sustainable solutions."

Housing emerged as the most difficult issue. Though few in numbers, many families were either landless or living in unsafe, dilapidated structures. Dharmadam addressed this systematically – some households received new houses, others land-and-house packages,

and still others received renovation aid. Toilets and water connections were added where needed. By ensuring a secure roof for every family, the project solved more than a material



problem; it gave people a sense of safety, stability, and future confidence.

“This is the fruit of the collective effort of society, and it stands as a model for the entire nation in alleviating poverty, addressing homelessness, and meeting healthcare challenges,” said Kakkoth Rajan, former president of Pinarayi Panchayat. “Every panchayat in Dharmadam played its role and ensured the project was effectively implemented, making the constituency free from extreme poverty, homelessness, and even beggary.” Beyond development, this has cultivated empathy and collective responsibility.

This achievement builds on Kerala’s long legacy of social development – universal literacy, strong healthcare, social security, and women’s empowerment.

Dharmadam’s milestone pushes the model further, from providing welfare to guaranteeing dignity and empowerment.

Being the Chief Minister’s constituency naturally

gave Dharmadam political visibility and administrative focus. Yet its significance lies beyond symbolism. Dharmadam proves that poverty can be tackled at the constituency level with clear benchmarks, local bodies can deliver targeted, sustainable interventions, and community-based planning is more effective

than one-size-fits-all welfare. In this sense, Dharmadam is a living model that can be replicated across Kerala and beyond.

Kerala’s journey is not over. Ensuring sustainable livelihoods, addressing indebtedness, supporting landless families, and providing long-term healthcare remain challenges. But Dharmadam has shown that with political will, grassroots empowerment, and systematic planning, even the toughest social issues can be overcome. As Kerala moves closer to becoming India’s first extreme poverty-free state, Dharmadam will be remembered as the constituency that showed the way – an inspiring example of inclusive development in action, and a step closer to Gandhi’s vision of a society where the dignity of the last person is preserved.

A remarkable aspect of Dharmadam’s achievement was how it reached the invisible poor – families who had slipped through the cracks of official records due to lack of documents, land titles, or secure housing. Door-to-door surveys by local volunteers and Kudumbashree groups identified them and addressed their challenges.

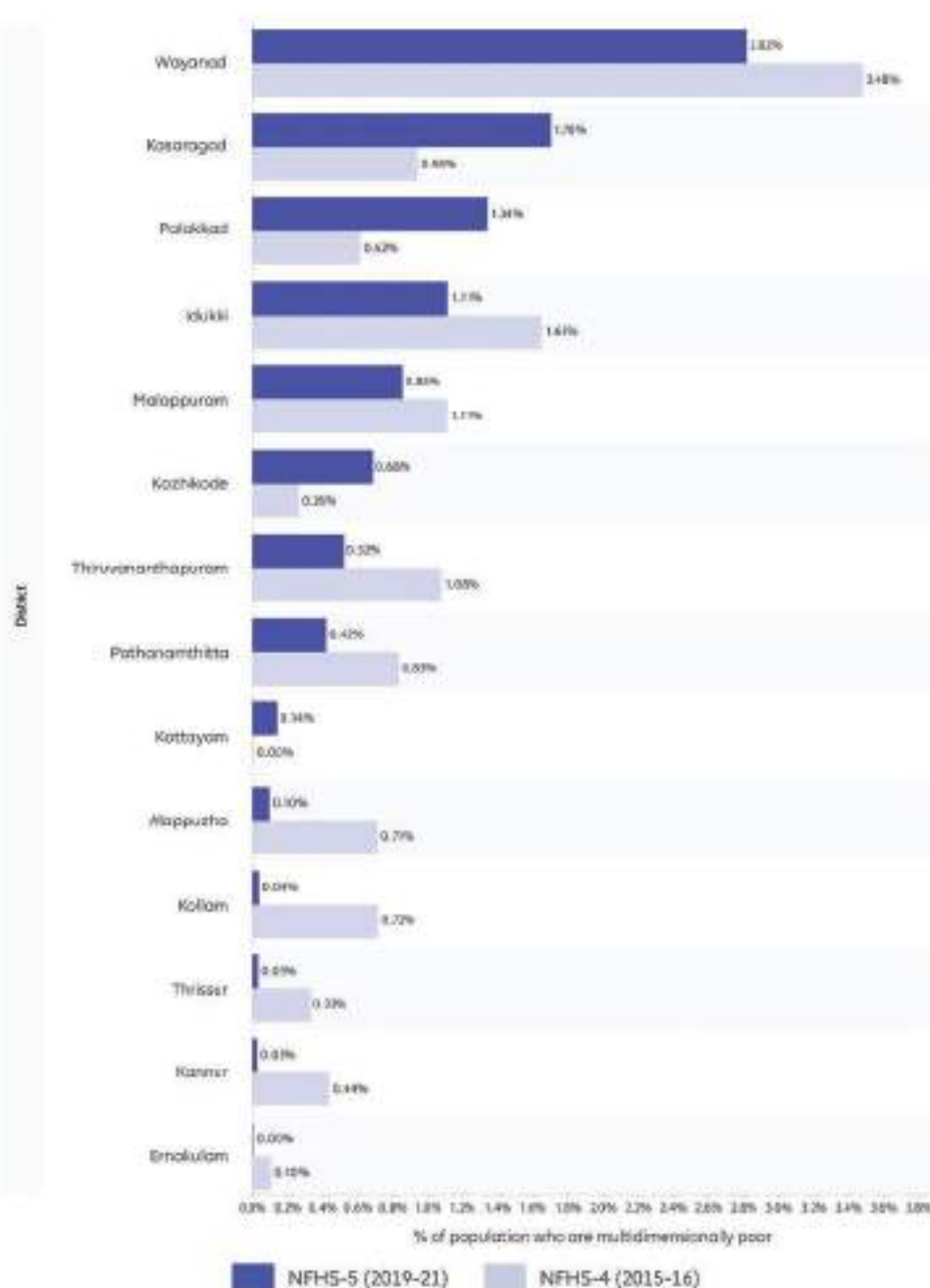
The author is a bilingual writer, poet, art critic and translator with more than fifteen books in English and Malayalam. He has worked with leading media houses in India including The Times of India and The New Indian Express.

KERALA

MPI PROGRESS REVIEW 2023

Kerala: Headcount Ratio

Percentage of population who are multidimensionally poor in each district



GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX 2024



Major Highlights



- 1.1 billion people live in poverty.
- Nearly half (48.2 percent) of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa (553 million).
- Over a third (35.0 percent) live in South Asia (402 million).
- 9.1 percent live in East Asia and the Pacific (104 million)
- 4.6 percent in the Arab States (53 million)
- 3.0 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean (34 million)
- 0.2 percent in Europe and Central Asia (2 million).

The five countries with the largest number of people living in poverty together account for nearly half (48.1 percent) of the 1.1 billion poor people.

India (234 million)- medium HDI

Pakistan (93 million)- low HDI

Ethiopia (86 million) - low HDI

Nigeria (74 million) - low HDI

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (66 million) - low HDI

Most poor people live in rural areas of the 1.1 billion poor people, 962 million (83.7 percent) live in rural areas. This rural-urban poverty disparity is stark worldwide, with 28.0 percent of the rural population living in poverty compared with just 6.6 percent in urban areas. Some 70.7 percent of all poor people live in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (463 million) and South Asia (350 million).





GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX 2024



Who are the poorest?

- Over half of the 1.1 billion poor people are children under the age of 18 (584 million). Globally, 27.9 percent of children live in poverty, compared with 13.5 percent of adults.
- 83.7 percent of poor people live in rural areas. Across all world regions people in rural areas are poorer than people in urban areas. Overall, 28.0 percent of the global rural population are poor, compared with 6.6 percent of the urban population.
- 83.2 percent of the world's 1.1 billion multidimensionally poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa has 553 million people living in poverty, and South Asia, 402 million.
- Nearly two-thirds of poor people live in middle income countries (749 million, 65.2 percent).



What deprivations do poor people experience?

- Large proportions of the 1.1 billion poor people lack adequate sanitation (828 million), housing (886 million) and cooking fuel (998 million)
- Well over half of the 1.1 billion poor people live with a person who is undernourished in their household (637 million). In South Asia 272 million poor people live in households with at least one undernourished person, and in Sub-Saharan Africa 256 million do.
- Around half of all poor people lack electricity (579 million), and over half live in a household where no one has completed six years of schooling (590 million).
- Nearly half of all poor people do not have an improved source of drinking water (513 million).
- 482 million poor people live in households where one or more children are out of school.



Kerala has marked a milestone in its long journey of social progress and inclusive development through Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme. The achievement reflects decades of progressive policies, people-centric governance, and the unwavering commitment of local self-government institutions. In this exclusive interview, Kerala Calling Assistant Editor Arathy K.R. speaks with the Minister for Local Self Governments, M B Rajesh about this remarkable endeavour.



A Historic Accomplishment A Gratifying Experience

KC: Kerala is becoming the first state in the country to be free from extreme poverty. How do you view this achievement as Minister of the Department?

Minister: This is the first time in India and only the second in the world after China that a region has become free from extreme poverty. It is a matter of great pride that we were able to accomplish this. This moment is exceptionally gratifying as this is an inevitable outcome of the multifaceted progress achieved through the famed Kerala model of development. We have reached this achievement through the collective and coordinated work of various departments and agencies under the leadership of the Local Self-Government Department, with the proficient guidance of the Honourable Chief Minister.

KC: The number of extremely poor people in Kerala is negligible. Why did this government decide to formulate a scheme for them?

Minister: This scheme exemplifies the priority of the

government. Kerala is a state that has almost eradicated poverty. The NITI Aayog has found Kerala to be the state with the lowest poverty in the Multidimensional Poverty Index. In the Multidimensional Poverty Index published by the NITI Aayog in 2023, the poor in Kerala are only 0.55 percent of the state's population. The extremely poor were a very small group. But this government gave first priority to liberating such a small group from poverty. That is why the government decided in its first cabinet meeting to create a special scheme for them and free Kerala from extreme poverty.

KC: Such models are uncommon in the world. How did the government conceive such a goal?

Minister: If a modern society like ours cannot uplift people suffering from extreme poverty, it must be regarded as a grave failure. The reality is that poverty, hunger, unemployment and other hardships continue to persist even in many highly developed nations. Some of these countries have not even considered formulating

special plans to address such problems. In contrast, China, which achieved rapid economic growth, took a decisive step at a crucial stage by announcing its resolve to eradicate poverty. It then implemented a well-structured plan and succeeded in fulfilling that goal. This achievement inspired us.

Within the framework of our Constitution and federal system, we too, have strived hard for this historic accomplishment, through timely and determined efforts. Kerala stands as living proof that with strong willpower, any crisis can be overcome and a better life can be ensured for the people.

KC: The very first decision of this government's very first cabinet meeting was to formulate a plan for eradicating extreme poverty. The true distinctiveness of this project begins right there, doesn't it?

Minister: Certainly. The initiative stemmed from a political vision to ensure a better life for the most vulnerable sections of society. If we look at the measures and legislations introduced by our governments in Kerala, we can clearly see the unwavering commitment to the poor and the working class. From redistributing agricultural land to farmers, providing free education to children of ordinary families, implementing multiple welfare schemes and ensuring free access to quality healthcare, every effort reflects a consistent focus on public welfare and national development. While these measures have significantly improved living standards over time, a small minority has continued to remain marginalised and in extreme poverty. Addressing their plight was given top priority. This is precisely why the government launched Extreme Poverty Eradication

Programme as its flagship project.

KC: How were the beneficiaries identified ensuring that not a single deserving person is left out?

In what manner was the scheme formulated to address their needs?

Minister: A total of 64,006 extremely poor families were identified through a survey conducted by the local self-government institutions in collaboration with Kudumbashree. A preliminary list was first drawn up through focus group discussions that included social organisations and subject experts at both the local body and ward levels. Comprehensive information was then collected, thoroughly verified and refined to ensure accuracy. The final list was approved by the ward and grama sabhas, as well as the respective local bodies.

The identification of extremely poor families was based on key hardship factors—food, health, housing and income. Families facing one or more of these hardships were included. For each identified family, a separate micro plan was prepared to address their specific challenges. Local self-government bodies, with the support of various government departments and agencies, worked to implement these micro plans in practice. Importantly, this was not a single uniform state-wide plan; instead, 64,006 unique micro plans were designed and implemented—one for each family.

KC: The nature of extreme poverty differs from family to family. Did this pose a challenge in implementing the project? How was this addressed?

Minister: Uplifting families from extreme poverty requires both comprehensiveness and coordination. No single department or local self-government institution



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan along with Ministers M B Rajesh, G R Anil, Veena George, Deputy Speaker Chittayam Gopakumar, Anto Antony MP, Pramod Narayan MLA and K U Jenish Kumar MLA during the declaration ceremony of 'Avakaasham Athivegam' project and the formation of micro plans

can achieve this on its own. Poverty in each family may arise from different causes, and these causes must be carefully identified and resolved. This reality was anticipated from the very beginning. Accordingly, efforts were made to study the specific factors contributing to each family's poverty and address them through tailored micro plans.

We began the project with the clear understanding that its implementation would involve numerous challenges. Step by step, we worked through them, directly confronting obstacles and steadily moving toward our goal. At every stage, the Chief Minister personally monitored progress and made timely interventions wherever necessary.

KC: Was the project implemented in phases as envisioned by the government? What challenges did you encounter?

Minister: The Extreme Poverty Eradication Project was launched in 2021 with the target of making Kerala free from extreme poverty by November 1, 2025. On November 1, 2023, during the Keraleeyam programme, the Honourable Chief Minister announced that 47.89 percent of the extreme poor had already been lifted out of poverty. In the first phase, 30,658 families—out of a total of 64,006—were liberated from poverty.

To achieve our goals, a wide range of assistance was provided: resolving hardship factors, supplying entitlement documents such as ration cards, Aadhaar cards, and employment guarantee cards and ensuring access to food and healthcare. A comprehensive programme was also implemented to provide land and housing for those without them.

Over time, the number of families has slightly decreased due to the passing away of beneficiaries in some single-member households and the migration of others to different states. We are moving forward with confidence, working systematically and on time to meet the target. The project is both comprehensive and meticulous. Difficulties were anticipated, but they are being steadily overcome, and the goal will be achieved within the stipulated timeframe.

KC: The local bodies have led this massive project. How do you evaluate their performance?

Minister: This project has been implemented through the coordination of local self-government bodies, in collaboration with various state government departments, different agencies, and the people at large. A project of this scale can only be effectively carried out by local bodies that maintain direct contact with the people. Kerala's local bodies have a long tradition of being active, responsive and closely connected to the community. By efficiently coordinating modern facilities and systems, they were able to execute the project without major difficulties. I take this opportunity to commend and congratulate the local self-government bodies for their remarkable efforts.

KC: Can extreme poverty be eliminated through short-term measures alone? What steps are being taken to ensure that beneficiaries do not slip back into extreme poverty?

Minister: Both short-term and long-term plans were designed for the eradication of extreme poverty, depending on the specific hardship factors involved. For example, issues like housing and income require more



Chief Minister announced the completion of the first phase of EPEP during the inaugural event of Keraleeyam. He is flanked by Ministers V Sivankutty, M B Rajesh, K Rajan, K N Balagopal and Speaker A N Shamseer along with dignitaries including Kamal Haasan and Mammootty.



time to resolve, whereas health services and food support can be provided more immediately. If the assistance and services aimed at eradicating poverty are delivered in a sustainable manner, families will not fall back into extreme poverty.

Kerala's development journey itself proves this point. The state has never reversed any of its social achievements; instead, the history of poverty here shows a steady and continuous decline. It is evident that low levels of poverty have not resurged in Kerala. Still, recognising the possibility that some families may fall back into hardship, ongoing efforts will continue to safeguard this achievement and ensure that the progress made is permanent.

KC: Can we ensure that there will be no more extreme poverty in Kerala?

Minister: As long as Kerala's social, economic, and cultural achievements are preserved, extreme poverty will not return. The history of Kerala is one of consistently designing and implementing projects to uplift people from poverty and lead them toward a better life. This has been the foundation of modern democratic Kerala. I firmly believe that no one can undo the high standard of living and social awareness that the state has attained through the renaissance, social reforms, progressive legislations and forward-looking government measures. Our unwavering vigilance in safeguarding these

achievements gives us the confidence to state that extreme poverty will not reappear in Kerala. The services and assistance currently extended to families will continue for as long as required. Moreover, even after Kerala is declared a state free from extreme poverty, both the government and local self-government institutions will remain fully alert and committed to ensuring that this achievement is sustained.

KC: Kerala has implemented many poverty alleviation schemes over time. How is this scheme different?

Minister: Over the years, Kerala has introduced several schemes aimed at achieving steady social and economic progress and improving people's lives step by step. These initiatives gradually freed people from hunger and hardship, raising Kerala's standard of living to be comparable with developed nations. Through progressive policies and measures, poverty has been significantly reduced.

However, despite these achievements, a small section of the population continued to remain in poverty, often unnoticed. The Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme was specifically launched to identify this marginalised group through a focused survey, bring them into the social mainstream, and ensure them a better quality of life. The uniqueness of this scheme lies in its exclusive aim—to completely eradicate extreme poverty.



Kerala has passed through a democratic revolution and redistribution of assets resulted in economic and social developments.

BEYOND THE HYPE: Kerala's Quiet Victory Over Poverty



Ullekh N.P.

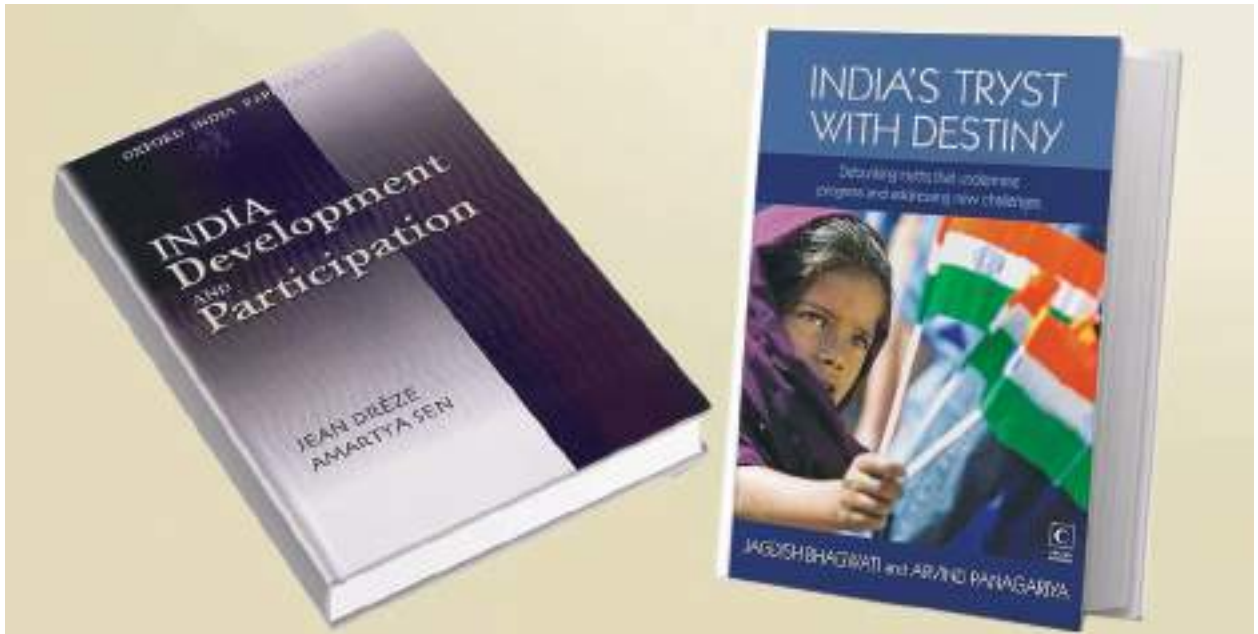
Back in late 2012 and early 2013, I remember doing a series of interviews for The Economic Times with Professor Jagdish Bhagwati, the rockstar advocate of growth-focused economic policies, and Professor Arvind Panagariya, who is now chancellor of Nalanda University. Both were associated with Columbia University back then and had just published a book titled *India's Tryst With Destiny: Debunking Myths That Undermine Progress and Addressing New Challenges*.

After reading the book, it became clear to me that it was an attempt to dismiss the Kerala model of

development—or Kerala 'experience,' as Professor Amartya Sen had called it—and to glorify the Gujarat model of development led by then Chief Minister Narendra Modi, who was being pitched as a contender for power at the Centre. For all practical purposes, Modi had already become the campaign spearhead of his party, the BJP.

I wanted to quiz Bhagwati and Panagariya on why they thought Gujarat offered a better economic model for inclusive growth than Kerala. That was the purpose of these interviews. Their argument was that growth-focused economic policies had also propelled Gujarat forward in terms of social development, making it a model far more worthy of emulation than Kerala's. They also made a nuanced observation—after all, they were globally acclaimed economists, especially Bhagwati. In response to my question on how they differentiated the Kerala and Gujarat models, they said:

"Kerala Model' in our book is a metaphor for a primarily redistribution- and state-driven development, while 'Gujarat Model' is the metaphor for a primarily growth- and private-entrepreneurship-driven development. As such, the Kerala Model vs. Gujarat Model debate is a longstanding one. We show in our



book *India's Tryst with Destiny* that it is ultimately the Gujarat Model that has delivered in Kerala."

Well, I leave it to economists better placed than me to analyse the prophecies of these renowned scholars, one of whom went on to become the first Vice Chairman of the newly created NITI Aayog.

According to NITI Aayog's National Multidimensional Poverty Index (2023), only 0.55 percent of Kerala's population was multidimensionally poor in 2019–21, down from 0.70 percent in 2015–16. In other words, fewer than one person out of every hundred (roughly half a person) is classified as poor by this measure. The state is also on track to become the first in the country free of extreme poverty by November.

Let's now examine where Gujarat stands on social development despite being hyped as a model state. The World Bank notes that "progress across social groups has been uneven in Gujarat. Scheduled Tribes in particular have a very high incidence of poverty and slower poverty reduction than other social groups in the state." According to the NITI Aayog report quoted earlier, released two years ago, an estimated 11.66 percent of people in Gujarat are multidimensionally poor—suffering deprivations in health, education, and living standards.

That said, I must add that Kerala's competition is not with Gujarat, whatever the political hype pushed by a

section of economists.

I asked my economist friend Rajesh Raj SN, an IIT Madras alumnus who has authored several books on the informal sector and currently teaches at Sikkim University, for his perspective. He told me: "Kerala has done remarkably well in reducing poverty, but the real challenge is to sustain this success in the event of rising unemployment, especially among the youth, and shrinking welfare budgets."

His worry, like that of many others, is that even with very low poverty rates, Kerala still has high consumption inequality, which points to sharp disparities in living standards. As he put it: "While the overall poverty figures are impressive, pockets of deprivation remain, especially among marginalised communities, which shows that targeted policies are still required."

Which is to say that although Kerala remains an outlier, it must aim much higher. The state has passed through a democratic revolution and redistribution of assets, including land, which had resulted in a decline in economic as well social inequalities. However, resting on past laurels shouldn't be the next step but to rise to expectations and judiciously frame policies that can help the state scale greater heights. Such quiet victories make us India's finest, but we must use this as an inspiration to outpace our own high expectations with greater urgency.



Amartya Sen

The author is a writer, journalist, and political commentator based in New Delhi. He is the executive editor of the newsweekly Open and author of three nonfiction books: War Room: The People, Tactics and Technology Behind Narendra Modi's 2014 Win, The Untold Vajpayee: Politician and Paradox and Kannur: Inside India's Bloodiest Revenge Politics. His book on Cuba, Mad About Cuba: A Malayali Revisits the Revolution, part travelogue and part political commentary, was released in November 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

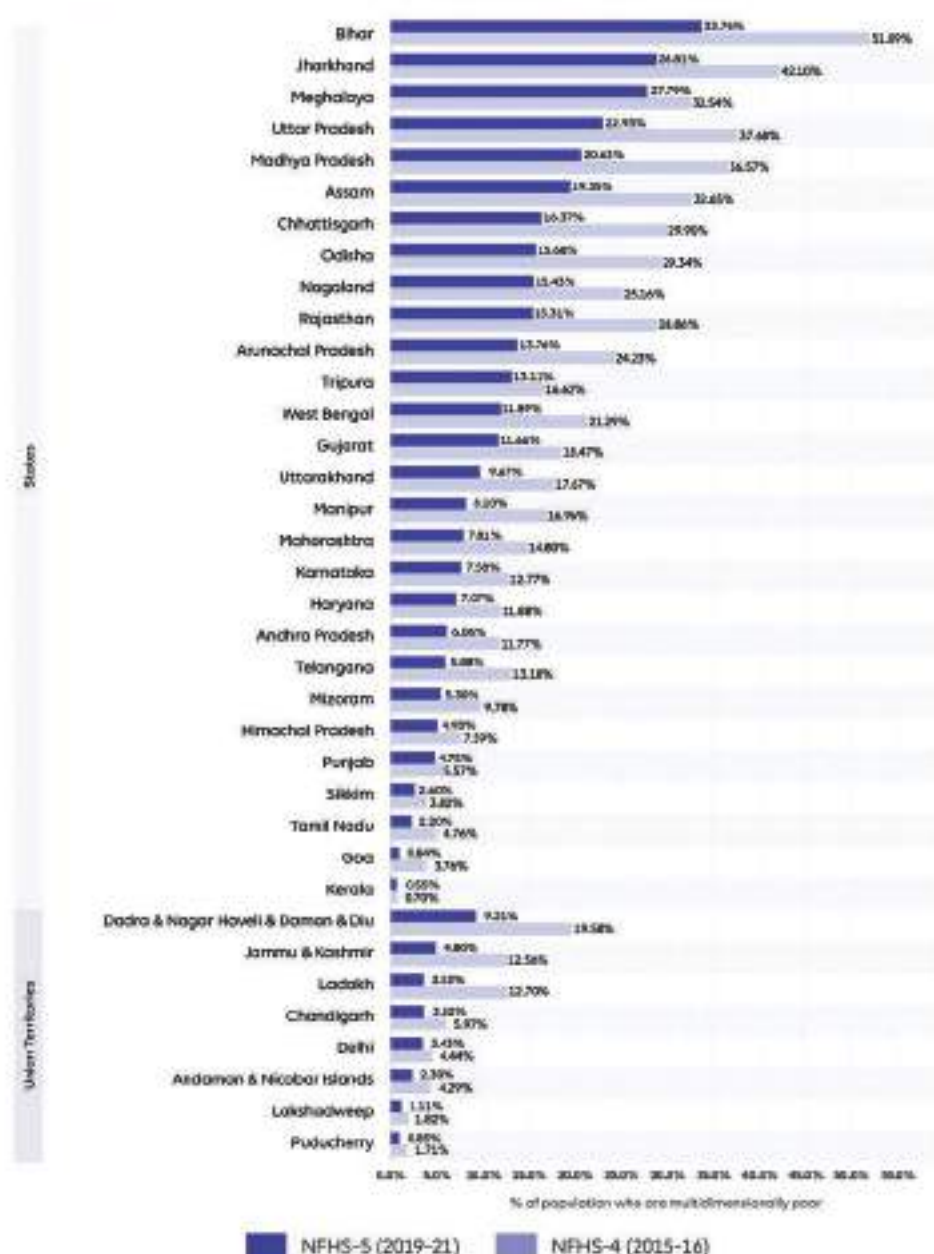
MPI: PROGRESS REVIEW 2023

Performance of States/UTs in Headcount Ratio

It is crucial to recognize the efforts of the States and UTs in reducing the proportion of multidimensional poor people in the country. The progress of each State and UT between the two periods is indicated below.

India : Headcount Ratio

Percentage of the total population who are multidimensionally poor in each State and UT



Best Green Islets Awards

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan distributed awards for the best green islets established across the state under the auspices of the Haritha Keralam Mission. The Chief Minister said that as Kerala enters a new phase in development, we need sustainable models and we should ensure environmental protection along with development. The awards should inspire us to undertake more excellent activities in the field of environmental protection and that the work of the awardees should become a model for others.

Among local government institutions, Ayyappankavu of Muzhakkunnu Grama Panchayat in Kannur won the first place. Kadamangal of Thumbamon Grama Panchayat in Pathanamthitta and Kumbalamchola of Kanjirapuzha grama panchayat in Palakkad won the second place. The competition recognised the best green islets established under the Haritha Keralam Mission, with 145 entries in various categories like local government bodies, schools, and institutions.

The function was presided over by Local Self-Government Minister M.B. Rajesh.

Emulating the Kerala Model



The state of Telangana has decided to study about Kerala's My Land Integrated Portal, the country's first Integrated Land Information System (ILIMS). A team comprising officials from the National Survey and Revenue Department of Telangana and Informatics Centre (NIC) came for a two-day visit.

The team led by Telangana Survey Joint Director Prasanna Lakshmi said: the aim of the visit is to gain a tried comprehensive understanding of the benefits of implementing the My Land Digital Survey model implemented in Kerala by integrating the Revenue, Survey and Registration departments and to study the possibility of adopting similar best practices in Telangana.

Onam creates a festive mood all over Kerala, but it has many dialectical diversity. Here are some diverse pictures of the festival from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram.



Onathar photo by Surendran Madikai, Kasaragod

Onathar visits households of Kasaragod and Kannur to invoke people to festivity.





A child participant greets Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at official Onam festival procession



Minister for Health Veena George at the venue of Boat race of palliyodangal in Aranmula, Pathanamthitta



Pulikali is a unique Onam festival of Thrissur which falls on the fifth day of the festival.



Aranmula Uthattathi Boat Race

Kottayam is the first extreme poverty free district in Kerala, which is officially announced. The systematic four-year journey of the district also reflects the grassroots processes and protocol followed by 14 districts of Kerala making the State extreme poverty free.

The Real Kottayam Story of Extreme Poverty Eradication



P.S. Shino

The land of letters, legends, latex and lakes; the natives of Kottayam, a district in Kerala often boast of made history on June 28, 2025. On this day, Minister for Local Self Government M.B. Rajesh announced the district as the first extreme poverty free district in the state and in the country in the presence of Minister for Co- Operation and Devaswam V.N. Vasavan who is in charge of the district and other officials. Looking back 36 years, on 25th June 1989 Kottayam had hit National headline as the first fully literate town in India. The first step towards extreme poverty eradication; that is; Extreme Poverty Identification Process (EPIP) has been a particularly challenging one for Kottayam, as

the popular assumption about the district being a largely prosperous and fully literate district. There was scepticism regarding the necessity of an exercise like Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP). Moreover, India's first National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report published by NITI Aayog in November 2021 lauded Kottayam as the only zero poverty district in India. But rather than resting on the laurels, the Core Committee which included the District Collector, District Panchayat President and the District nodal officer took it as a challenge to identify and eradicate extreme poverty when the EPIP was launched in September 2021. The task became particularly challenging as it was not a traditional survey conducted by officials; the entire process was carried out through social participation involving approximately two lakhs people. The entire social mobilisation has to be done within the stifling walls of covid protocol. The situation was further complicated by a series of natural calamities including landslides and flood which destroyed the eastern part of the district particularly Kootickal.

One of the main hindrances in identifying extreme poverty has been to distinguish it from routine poverty. Different



Minister for Local Self Governments M.B. Rajesh and Minister for Cooperation V.N. Vasavan declare Kottayam as the first Extreme Poverty Free District in Kerala in the presence of Vakkom MLA CK Asha and Chief Whip Dr. N. Jayaraj.



Beneficiary Anil Kumar at his work shop started with the support of Ujjevanam project

parameters such as health, access to food, income and housing etc are set as indicators to specially identify the extreme poor. To complete the identification process in a time bound and precise manner, approximately 25000 people were trained in various stages in the district. The enumeration teams of two volunteers and one government official were formed to collect information on extremely poor families identified through community participation. The data was collected using a specifically designed mobile application. The first stage of data collection was focus group discussions involving various voluntary agencies, social activists, people's representatives aimed to prepare a primary list of extreme poor in their area. The focus group discussions alone had a participation of more than 50000 socially committed individuals. In the next stage, all the data of the families identified through the Focus Group discussions were recorded in the mobile application. The third stage was enumeration process; as a part of the process the enumeration teams have visited the beneficiaries and collected information. Their

tireless work during the time of covid restrictions involved an innovative approach as the identification process targeted those who were excluded for various reasons from previous poverty eradication schemes. To ensure the integrity, accuracy and transparency of enumeration process 20% of the total beneficiaries who have been enumerated were subjected to a rigorous super-check by officials not involved in the earlier stages.

After the super check, the final list of the poorest of the poor was approved by the panchayt/municipality committee/council and was published in the public domain including in social media in order to avoid omission of eligible beneficiaries and to exclude the ineligible. After 7 days, complaints were resolved and the final list included 1071 extreme poor families was published.

To ensure that each eligible beneficiary was identified and accounted for, the core committee at the district level has devised an innovative *Rathrinadtham*- night walk, where under the leadership of the District Collector, District Panchayat President and the District Nodal Officer, teams would search through the areas where nomadic people usually take

rest in order to ensure that all these hapless individuals are identified and no one is left out or over looked in this last mile activity. "Extreme poverty identification process was the most satisfying project during my tenure as Kottayam District Collector. During our field visit we were moved by compassion towards the hapless state of extreme poor, this

One of the main hindrances in identifying extreme poverty has been to distinguish it from routine poverty. Different parameters such as health, access to food, income and housing etc are set as indicators to specially identify the extreme poor.

inspired me to lead the process in a meticulous and accurate manner in the district,” commented Dr. P.K. Jayasree IAS, the District Collector of Kottayam then.

The survey result was an eye opener for all as it sensitised all stakeholders that there are families still living within the clutches of extreme poverty suffering from extreme unfreedoms. Understanding the unique problems faced by each family, customised micro plans have been formulated to empower them to overcome the manacles of extreme poverty. These plans have been devised by local body level committees through consultation with the families themselves. The micro plans included:

1) **Immediate Service Plans:**

To ensure urgent and easily accessible services like health insurance, social security pension and provision for food to provide immediate relief to families in need.

2) **Short Term Plans:** Developments of educational facilities, lasting health care services and development of infrastructure.

3) **Long Terms Plans:** Housing, electricity, sanitation facility etc. which needed

long term intervention.

Excluding the 74 hapless poor beneficiaries died during the process Kottayam prepared 976 micro plans for the entire families and became the first district in the state to finalise micro plans in August 2023. Kottayam showed the way in the *Avakasham Athivegam* campaign, launched by the state, which was a collective endeavour to provide fundamental civic documents and access to basic services like election

identity cards, ration cards, bank accounts and social security pension which hitherto eluded the hapless. The District Level Implementation Committee has organised series of camps at block level called *Kaithang* involving all departments from Revenue to Health where the immediate services including medical services were given to the extreme poor as a part of the drive. Mundakayam Grama Panchayat set a shining example of providing ration card to Kunjumon, Peedikaparambil within an hour in collaboration with the Taluk Supply Office. The District Core Committee took another initiative with the

support of SBI's CSR funding providing Onam kit to 232 extreme poor families who lacked ration cards while the process was on. It provided the extreme poor with a sense of identity, belongingness and sense of opportunity.

Subsequently, the plans were meticulously implemented by the local bodies. Many of the extreme poor families were landless and homeless which were addressed through the LIFE scheme and *Manasodithiri Mannu* campaign. Indicators such as health, food and income generation were

Understanding the unique problems faced by each family, customised micro plans have been formulated to empower them to overcome the manacles of extreme poverty.



Rajani, a beneficiary of Ujjeevanam project from Ayarkunnam Grama Panchayat, Kottayam



Beneficiary of Ujjeevanm project in Chempu Grama Panchayat: Leela at her Kripa Paper Bag Unit

addressed through the combined efforts of local bodies, Govt. Departments and voluntary agencies and individuals.

Vathilpadisevanam acted as the lifeline for those in dire need; it ensured the door step delivery of medicines to all extreme poor families without the challenge of hospital visit. *Jankeeya hotels* run by Kudumbashree have devised innovative ways to ensure food security of the extreme poor. The District Level Implementation Committee with the help of local bodies and Department of Education has supplied school materials to the children from extreme poor families. Palliative treatment and assistance to the bedridden and elderly were also ensured.

From the formulation stage of micro plan it took almost two years of collaborative effort of various stakeholders in achieving extreme poverty eradication. The synergy between the district team and the local bodies has played a critical role in achieving the goal. As Nirmala Jimmy, the then District Panchayat President looks into: “Based on my long experience as a people’s representative it can be safely said that in the case of Kottayam District the extreme poverty identification and eradication process

was the largest social movement since, the peoples plan campaign”.

The leadership of the District Collectors Dr. P K Jayasree IAS, Vigneswary IAS and John Samuel IAS and the District Panchayat Presidents Nirmala Jimmy, K.V. Bindhu and Hemalatha Premsagar have played a seminal role in the timely achievement of all milestones. KILA played a critical role in providing result oriented training to around 50000 stakeholders. The process involved committed effort of local body secretaries, Village Extension Officers led by Grama Panchayat Presidents and Municipal Chairpersons. All the above, Minister for Co-Operation and Devaswam V.N. Vasavan who is in charge of Kottayam District has extended the inspiration, guidance, and support to the cause.

Kottayam’s historical stride reflects the wisdom of Helen Keller “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” This remarkable efforts were recognised by the international think tank Skoch group by honouring with the Skoch award for excellence in administration. This milestone of becoming the first extreme poverty free district in India is not a conclusion but a stepping stone that inspires our vision towards the creation of a more inclusive and just social order. ■

The author is Secretary, District Panchayat and former District Nodal Officer for Extreme Poverty Eradication Project in Kottayam District



Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty is a herculean task. Kerala has proudly accomplished this through imaginative projects like *Ujjeevanam*.

UJJEEVANAM: Transcending Barriers



Arathy K.R.

When Vidya, a Community Resource Person at Karakkurissi, Palakkad first visited Savad's home, the situation was deeply distressing. Savad, a cancer patient requiring weekly chemotherapy, had no source of income and depended entirely on the goodwill of villagers to fund his treatment. His son was in the 8th grade, and due to Savad's illness, his wife was unable to work.

With assistance of Rs 50000 from Ujjeevanam Startup Assistance Fund, Savad opened a grocery shop. The local community rallied behind him, making a concerted effort to buy goods from his store. As a result, Savad's income began to improve significantly. "Ujjeevanam literally gave me a new life", says Savad. In myriad such ways, the Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme has touched innumerable lives.

The most outstanding feature of Kerala's Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP) is that it not only tackled the perils of poverty but also addressed the innate shortcomings in the conventional poverty eradication programmes. Keeping in mind the potential pitfalls, the project was designed with scrupulous planning and thoughtful deliberation, followed up with methodical implementation. The outcome—an inimitable project with astounding results.

Kerala's Distinctive Approach

Kerala's EPEP turned out to be unique because of the comprehensive approach and compassionate governance. The project works family by family-it identified the poorest households and made tailored plans for each, ensuring no one is left out. Therefore, for the identified 64006 extremely poor families, 64006 micro-plans were constituted.

Analysing the causes of extreme poverty of each family, it was found that 4341 families needed assistance to earn livelihood. In order to achieve this goal, a campaign named *Ujjeevanam* was launched to engage families in livelihood activities and thereby bringing them into the mainstream of the society.

The main objective of *Ujjeevanam* was to bring these families to a sustainable livelihood path by involving them in various Kudumbashree schemes. For this, necessary job training was provided to those in poor families who are capable of finding work.

Role of Kudumbashree

In order to implement the *Ujjeevanam* campaign, Kudumbashree appointed 236 Community Resource Persons (CRPs) state wide, with each CRP responsible for overseeing four Grama Panchayats. The CRPs were tasked with identifying, evaluating, monitoring and supporting beneficiaries until their livelihood



Name of Beneficiary: Shareena
Type of Livelihood: Poultry farm
Name of LSGI: Nellaya



Name of Beneficiary: Ramla
Type of Livelihood: Cloth retail
Name of LSGI: Pattambi Municipality

goals are successfully realised.

As part of the initial phase, the CRPs visited the homes of identified families to assess those willing and able to engage in livelihood activities. The beneficiary's livelihood needs, various schemes that can be utilised for employment and financial support required were recorded in a special mobile app prepared for data collection. Thus, based on the information obtained through the home visits, a list

4341 people were provided financial assistance to enable them to earn a livelihood

of livelihood activities required for each family was formulated. "The commitment shown by the Community Resource Persons in identifying beneficiary families and the suitable livelihood activity for each family played a big role

in the flawless execution of EPEP," says Arun P Rajan, State Programme Manager, Social Development, Kudumbashree.

Once the beneficiaries were identified, the next step was the preparation of project proposals, carried out with the assistance of Micro Enterprise Consultants (MECs). These proposals were then reviewed and verified by monitoring committees in each Local Self-Government Institution (LSGI) before being submitted to the district mission for fund disbursement.

Towards Self Reliance

Financial assistance was provided to the beneficiaries through various schemes of Kudumbashree such as Pratyasha, Special Livelihood Scheme, schemes in the agricultural animal protection sector, SVE schemes and Community Enterprise



Name of Beneficiary : Savad
Type of Livelihood : Petty shop
Name of LSGI : Karakurissi

Fund. Beneficiaries were able to set up tailoring units, petty shops, lottery agencies, poultry farming, goat and cow rearing, food catering units, auto rickshaws, online service centers, beauty salons and many other micro enterprises through this scheme. Shareena, a divorcee from Nellaya Grama Panchayat, Palakkad, was given assistance to start a poultry farm through the Ujjeevanam Startup Assistance Fund. “I was at a desperate juncture in my life when this project came through. Now, I am able to support my mother and daughter and lead a peaceful life”, says Shareena with a heartening smile.

“With the help of government, I was able to start a lottery agency and restart my life. I was astonished by the ease with which the assistance fund was granted to me”, says Sreedevi from Kottarakkara. Leela from Chembu, Kottayam is now the proud owner of Kripa Paper Carry

Bag Unit. “The unit was set up after considering my health conditions and capability and it has been a true blessing for me”, says Leela.

Based on the proposals prepared on the basis of the house visit, these 4341 people were provided financial assistance to enable them to earn a livelihood. The *Ujjeevanam* campaign has undoubtedly ensured that these families come out of poverty forever. More than a poverty alleviation effort, Ujjeevanam is a transformative movement that is empowering some of Kerala’s most vulnerable families.

Most poverty alleviation projects often fail because they do not address the root causes of poverty or they are poorly designed and implemented. Projects are designed without consulting the beneficiaries. Solutions imposed from outside often do not match local needs, culture or realities. Many projects give immediate relief like food, cash or subsidies but do not create sustainable income

opportunities. Once the aid stops, poverty returns. Some projects make people dependent on external aid rather than empowering them with skills, jobs or resources to stand on their own. Sustainable success needs community-driven, transparent and holistic approaches that combine education, healthcare,

Beneficiaries were able to set up tailoring units, petty shops, lottery agencies, poultry farming, goat and cow rearing, food catering units, auto rickshaws, online service centers, beauty salons and many other micro enterprises through this scheme.

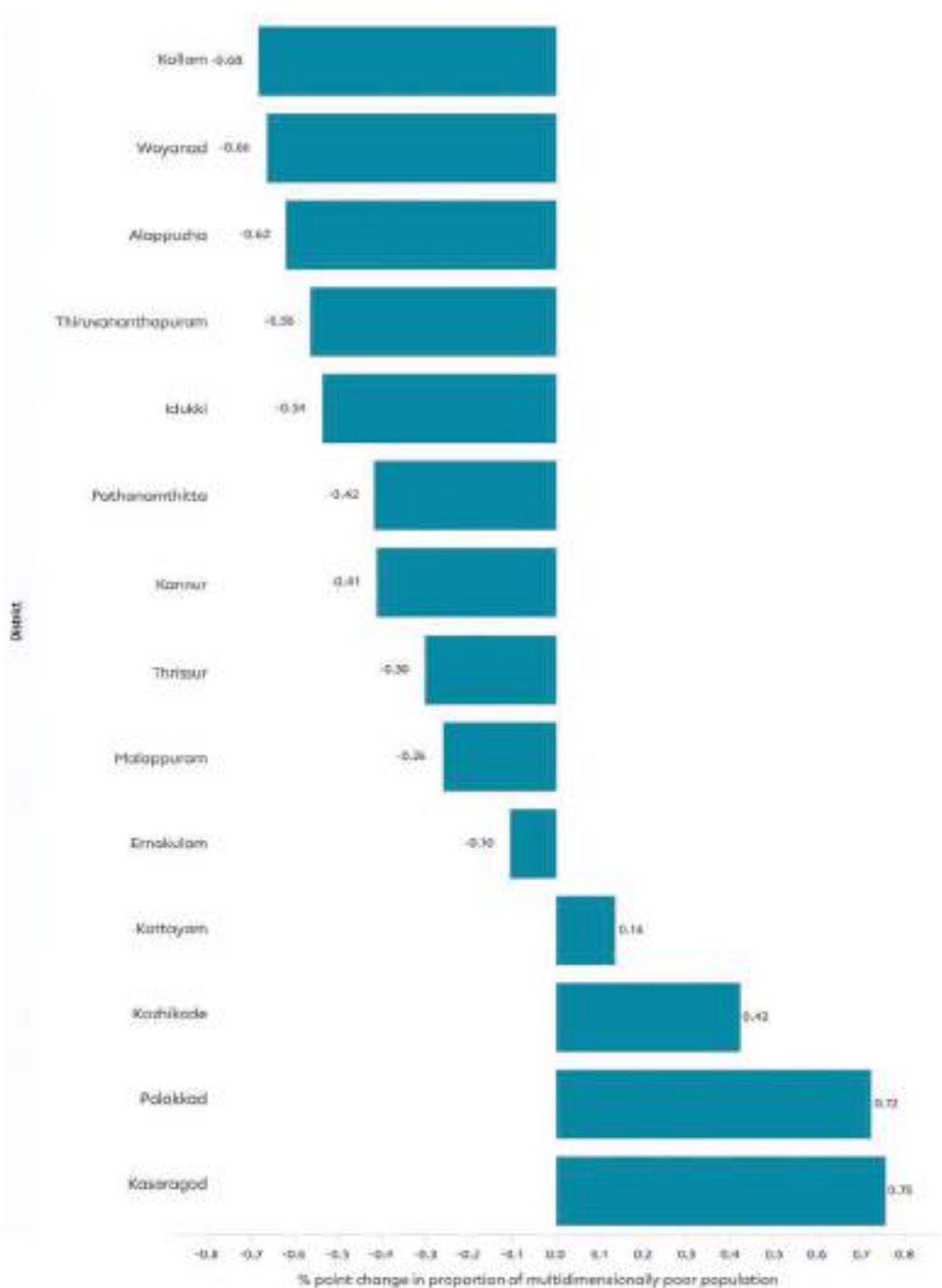
skill development and job creation. This vision makes Ujjeevanam different and makes the lives of many invisibles visible.



Name of Beneficiary : Haridasan
Type of Livelihood : Petty shop
Name of LSGI : Nellaya

Kerala: Changes over time for Headcount Ratio

District-wise percentage point change in the headcount ratio between 2015-16 and 2019-21



Elevating Lives

The beneficiaries of the Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme share their personal experience of receiving financial and moral support from the government.



A Light of Hope in Twilight Years

Destiny had taken away three children in child birth itself from the couple living in Chemman Kuzhikkara, of Marayoor Grama Panchayat in Idukki district. In old age, they lived in a temporary shed covered with plastic on the Panchayat land. They relied upon the food provided by the villagers. The Panchayat allocated the land they were living to build a house and included it in the Life Housing scheme and built a new house. With the help of the locals, they also bought household appliances. For the first time in their lives, the couple is living with peace, dignity and happiness.

Finding a Safe Haven

The beneficiary, a resident of Chennithala Thripperunthara Grama Panchayat in Mavelikkara Block Panchayat, was living in a completely dilapidated house in a very miserable condition. She and her sister had a five cent land jointly and her sister had a small pension. After her sister's death, the Grama Panchayat had provided food and medicine to the isolated beneficiary. Due to a foot ailment, she could not walk and could not fulfil her daily needs. The Grama Panchayat decided that it would be better to shift her to a shelter home. The Grama Panchayat informed the Social Justice Department through the I. C. D. S. Supervisor and the officials of the Social Justice Department visited her, identified her condition and shifted her to the Social Justice Department's old age home in Arattupuzha, Alappuzha district, where she is now living in a very happy condition.



Solace in Self-reliance



A beneficiary in Muthukulam Grama Panchayat was a single-member family. He did not have any official documents. In the first phase of the extreme poverty alleviation process, he was provided with a voter card, Aadhaar card, ration card, bank account, job card and social security pension. After getting the job card, he started working under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. He was given 100 days of employment in 2023-24. He is currently living under the care of a relative. He expressed interest in starting a lottery business and the Panchayat arranged a lottery business for him through Kudumbashree for Rs. 15,000 under the *Ujjeevanam* scheme.

Finding a Helping Hand

A family lived in a mud house in Pooppara, Shantanpara Grama Panchayat in Idukki district. Without any property, house or means of livelihood, they were really struggling. First, the government bought 5 cents of land from the family property and then included it in the LIFE project and completed the construction of the house with financial assistance. The husband, who is suffering from cancer, is being provided with the necessary medical assistance. The wife was given a job on a daily wage basis at the Panchayat's help desk.



Blurring Lines of Poverty

This female beneficiary, who lives in the Chazhoor Grama Panchayat, was born with 75 percent visual impairment. Although she studied up to pre-degree, she did not have a job with a steady income. Both children of this person are visually impaired. Due to her visual impairment, this beneficiary was also unable to work. She was given job as Haritha Karma Sena. She received training to scan QR codes and segregate waste and succeeded in the job. Currently, she earns a decent income.

Statistics reveal that Kerala was urbanised close to 48 percent in 2011 and 70% of the state is estimated to be urbanised by 2031 and is expected to reach 81 percent by 2051. India's first-ever Urban Conclave followed by the formation of the country's first Urban Policy Commission is to plan and prepare for this challenge.

Breaking New Grounds for the Urban Kerala



C.D. Rency

Poised to become a linear city state in near future, Kerala is proactively attempting to shape its urban future. In a groundbreaking move, the State Government has initiated a multi-faceted process to create an urban policy beginning with the country's first-ever Urban Conclave.

The recently concluded conclave envisages to formulate a transformative, inclusive, gender-sensitive, sustainable and climate-resilient urban policy for the state. Moving away from a one-size-fits-all narrative, the state aims at creating a more socially equitable policy customised to the needs of mega cities and satellite cities alike. The two-day conclave with the theme 'Aspiring Cities, Thriving Communities' marked a significant

step in the state's journey toward scientific and holistic urban development, said Geromic George, Principal Director, Local Self Government Department.

The two-day event held at Grand Hyatt, Kochi brought together 3,115 delegates, including 275 academic experts, eight ministers, and 17 mayors, from 12 countries. "Kerala has always pioneered in inclusive governance models. Continuing this legacy, the state had set up India's first Urban Policy Commission, which submitted its final report earlier this year. The conclave was envisioned as a platform to translate this vision into action. We need to tailor our approach to fit the distinctive needs of our cities and towns. The sessions and deliberations focused on creating a development model that incorporates all sections of society, including children, people with disabilities, the poor, and the elderly. The policy plans to ensure clean air, water, and public spaces and in developing a charter for child and adolescent-friendly urban environments," he added.

The Curious Case of Kerala

Kerala has the potential to become the world's longest linear city, with a 700-kilometer urban corridor from Kasaragod



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan welcomes Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar at the Urban Conclave held at Hyatt Hotel, Kochi.



Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar addresses the delegates at the Urban Conclave held at Hyatt Hotel, Kochi.

to Thiruvananthapuram. Statistics reveal that Kerala was urbanised close to 48 percent in 2011. Seventy percent of the state is estimated to be urbanised by 2031. By 2051 it is expected to reach 81 percent. "All the 14 districts of Kerala except Wayanad, Pathanamthitta and Palakkad will witness rapid rate of urbanisation. This poses unique challenges to the urban planners as well as the administrators. The Urban Conclave will address this issue. Kerala needs to be ready to meet the challenges of Urban development in a planned fashion," opined Adeela Abdullah, Special Secretary, Local Self Government Department.

Global Collaborations

The conclave served as a platform for significant international partnerships. The Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) signed a Letter of Intent with the United Nations University's Research Institute (UNU-CRIS), to collaborate on research, policy support, and capacity building. This partnership is a landmark event, as it marks the UN University's first presence in Kerala and will bring world-class academic and research opportunities to the state's students and professionals. KILA also signed a Letter of Intent with UN-Habitat, the UN agency for human settlements, to strengthen the urban policy's

Kerala has the potential to become the world's longest linear city, with a 700-kilometer urban corridor from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram

global presence.

Key Recommendations

Deliberations at the Kerala Urban Conclave have culminated in a series of major recommendations aimed at charting a sustainable and inclusive future for the state's cities. The suggestions, crafted with a focus on holistic development, cover critical areas like urban planning, gender-responsive mobility, economic growth and environmental resilience.

Sustainability and Climate Resilience

Experts underscored the pressing need for urban planning that respects Kerala's unique geography and ecological balance.

Recommendations call for a shift away from conventional, sprawling megacities towards a network of compact, resilient, and people-centred cities. A key focus is on creating climate-smart cities by prioritising green and blue infrastructure, such as revitalising waterways like the Canoli Canal for eco-tourism and mobility. Panelists stressed the importance of nature-based solutions and integrated geospatial data to ensure development is built on resilient infrastructure and can withstand climate-related hazards. Urban local bodies

must lead this effort, supported by multi-level collaboration.

Inclusive and Gender – Responsive Mobility

Several sessions highlighted the need to build a mobility system that works for everyone, with a special emphasis on women. Panelists noted that women's travel patterns are often



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurates the Urban Conclave held at Hyatt Hotel, Kochi.

different from men's, involving shorter trips for household needs and occurring during off-peak hours, which increases safety concerns. To address this, experts proposed gender-sensitive transport planning that includes creating safer, more affordable public transport, and involving communities in the planning process. The lack of gender-specific data was identified as a major barrier, with calls for technology-driven data generation to inform policy and budgetary provisions for gender-responsive infrastructure.

Economic Growth and Growth Hubs

The conclave identified several regional growth hubs, including the Trivandrum-Kollam corridor and the Ernakulam-Thrissur hub, and proposed strategies to unlock their potential. The Vizhinjam Port in Thiruvananthapuram was highlighted as a major economic driver, with recommendations to establish a land bank for industrial activities and to develop a comprehensive, long-term master plan. For the Kochi-Thrissur hub, experts suggested an integrated plan that leverages

Kochi's industrial base and Thrissur's cultural heritage.

The focus is on attracting young talent, fostering knowledge-based industries, and using public-private partnerships to overcome implementation challenges and create high-quality employment.

A Wise Waste Management

Discussions on waste management called for a paradigm shift towards a circular economy. Recommendations centred on viewing waste as a resource for wealth and employment. Panelists highlighted successful models, such as Vizag's waste-to-revenue system, and emphasised the need for decentralised, localised solutions. Suggestions included creating a dedicated waste management wing, engaging the private sector, and using technology like GIS to map assets and improve collection efficiency. The social and economic empowerment of women waste workers, as seen in Thiruvananthapuram, was also cited as a key benefit of effective waste management systems.

The draft urban policy, based on the more than 300 suggestions from the conclave, will soon be presented to the cabinet. This proactive

initiative demonstrates Kerala's commitment to steering its rapid urbanisation in a way that is sustainable, inclusive and economically dynamic.

A series of major recommendations crafted with a focus on holistic development, cover critical areas like urban planning, gender-responsive mobility, economic growth, and environmental resilience aimed for a sustainable and inclusive future will soon be presented to the cabinet.

The author is Asst. Information Officer at I&PRD, Ernakulam

Soaring Heights through Unnathi



Unnathi Overseas Scholarship scheme mirrors Kerala's socio-economic development, said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. He officially made the announcement of sending more than a thousand students to study abroad and distributed this year's scholarships.

The Unnathi scheme launched by the state government to enable Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Classes students to study abroad is a historic achievement. 1104 students have been able to study in foreign universities through this scheme. 310 students have secured admission this academic year. The government has spent Rs 213.86 crore for the scheme.

The scheme was launched in 2016; 310 students are being given scholarships every year since 2023. Up to Rs 10 lakh is being given to the backward classes; 835 people from the Scheduled Caste category, 95 from the Scheduled Tribe category and 174 from the backward class have benefited from the scheme.

The project is being implemented through ODEPEC. Scholarships are given for postgraduate degrees in courses like medical, engineering, science, agriculture, management, law and social sciences in the world's top 500 universities. Preference is given to girls, physically challenged people and children of single parents.

The City of Literature, Calicut is known for its iconic eateries run by families for generations and picturesque scenic beauty of beaches. A nostalgic navigation through the heart of Calicut.



The Quintessential Calicut



Smitha Sehgal

Conferred with the honour of UNESCO City of Literature, Calicut has long been a literary stronghold and home to celebrated Malayalam writers. An array of writers – starting from S.K. Pottekkatt, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer and U.A. Khader to the generation of Subhash Chandran, many of Kerala's greatest authors have made Calicut their home, and the city now hosts the much-celebrated Kerala Literature Festival and Hortus.

Returning to Kerala is an elemental experience each time, and the seaside town of Kozhikode, historically known as Calicut, with its flaming almond trees evoke a bygone era. The city is less than an hour's drive from Karipur International Airport at Malappuram. The road winds through a picturesque landscape with tea stalls and small shops lining either side. Large bunches of plantains, yellow, red and green often three or more varieties hang outside the stalls advertising traditional Malabar snacks and cuisine.

Soon, the landscape settles down to the plains densely lined with paddy fields and coconut groves on either side before we reach Feroke Bridge, the iconic landmark which was constructed by the British more than a century ago. From here, the Chaliyar River flows toward the vast expanse of the Arabian Sea. The sea is a grey line on the horizon and depending on the time of the day one is lucky to slow down to take a closer look at the shimmering waters. Mangroves dot the banks, and The Raviz—a striking riverside property, originally a coconut grove, once upon a time

owned by an influential local family comes into sight.

One passes by Beypore, the famed port for vessels in ancient times, Meenchanda and Mavoor Road—landmark approaches to enter Calicut city. The layout has shifted with bypass roads and new developments, yet the smell of the city retains its warmth and spirit, welcoming travellers as it always has.

We settle at a quiet family home near Edakkad, within a five-minute radius of the CVN Kalari, a renowned centre for *Kalarippayattu*, Kerala's own martial art with the legacy of more than 2000 years. This will be our base for the next few days as we shuttle in and out of the city. Several beaches lie within a 2–5 kilometre radius, depending on where one chooses to go. Green buses—the city's local transport run every ten minutes, linking outlying areas to the centre. West Hill Beach, lying along the sea behind Varakkal Devi Temple is particularly notable. Each October, coinciding curiously with Diwali in Central and Northern India, thousands gather here for the ancient *balitharpanam* ritual, an offering to ancestors. Calicut, unlike much of India, traditionally did not celebrate Diwali except in small Gujarati settlements, yet it has always embraced diverse customs and cultures, becoming a melting pot of Eastern and Western traditions. Onset of summer in Calicut belongs to mangoes and temple festivals, and one can easily see Theyyam being performed in local temples.

Calicut's cuisine reflects this mingling of cultures. The much famed *Malabar biryani* and fish preparations have evolved from Arab, Persian, and local influences. The Central Market, Nadakkav Market, and *Puthiyappa Jetty* bustle with the morning's fresh catch—mackerel, sardines, prawns, mussels. Further north, the banks of Korappuzha under Elathur Bridge on NH 47 is a thriving spot for freshwater fish and crabs from the estuary, and if lucky, one might find fresh oysters too.

Some of Kerala's most iconic eateries are here, run by families passionate about food for generations. Paragon Restaurant beneath the Overbridge near the third railway gate, Topform on SM Street, Sagar on Mavoor Road, and Bombay Hotel near the beach are culinary landmarks. The old French Bakery is an iconic eatery famed for its cutlets, while Sea Queen and the Beach Hotel overlooking the Arabian Sea offer a quintessential Calicut experience.



S.K. Pottekkatt



M.T. Vasudevan Nair



Vaikkom
Muhammad Basheer



U.A. Khader



Subhash Chandran

At the heart of the city lies Mananchira Square, jewel encrusted by the emerald waters of Mananchira Lake, a reservoir originally built by the Samoothiri (Zamorin) King Manaveda. Calicut, once the fiefdom of the Samoothiri kings, flourished as a trade hub for Arab merchants, later Portuguese explorers, and then the British. Adjacent to the Mananchira is Calicut Public Library, which has a collection of rare books and Town Hall, the principal centre for public events. A stroll down the bustling Sweet Meat Street (SM Street), which intersects through a close array of shops selling clothes, dried fruits and local sweets as Calicut Halwa, in as many colours and flavours, to reach the Goldsmith's lane and Palayam, the main market famous for grains and spices, allows one to imbibe the warmth of Calicut. In the vicinity are houses of worship – Palayam Mosque and CSI Church.

While Calicut itself is rich with culture and history, it also serves as both a resting point and gateway to travellers bound to further north or south of Kerala. The city has a railway station and a major bus stand from where one can board a bus to the picturesque hills of Wayanad and Pookode Lake. To the north, one can explore Kappad Beach where Vasco da Gama landed in 1498, as well as Tellicherry (Thalassery) and Mahe, a former French enclave. Further up the coast are Kannur with its Payyannur Beach and, in Kasargod, the historic Bekal Fort. Southwards, one can stopover at Kochi and explore the Alleppey backwaters, then journey to Thekkady by Periyar river or Varkala beach. One can also choose to journey further up to Thiruvananthapuram, abode of Anantha with its Padmanabhaswamy Temple, celebrated art galleries, Kovalam Beach, Kanyakumari and the Vivekananda Rock Memorial by the confluence of the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. During sunrise and sunsets, in the interplay of light and water, the horizon becomes a living canvas where the three oceans mingle in ethereal beauty.

It may sound like a cliché, but returning to Kerala each time leaves one only more convinced as to why it is still called God's Own Country—a land where the sea, rivers, mountains, history, and living traditions converge into something timeless.

The author is a poet and legal professional based in New Delhi.

The coconut agro-based industry has to gain back the momentum as it had earlier. The author analyses the state and national scenario of coconut production in India in the wake of the World Coconut Day, which falls on September 2.



Coconut Economy of Kerala



Dr. M. Kuttappan

Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC), an intergovernmental organisation of important coconut growing countries, came into existence on 2nd September 1969. Since 2009, 2nd September is celebrated every year as World Coconut Day (WCD) to generate more awareness on the importance of coconut and to attract more investment in coconut related activities. The theme for the WCD 2025 is Boosting Innovation and Revitalising Coconut Sector Through Sustainable Action and Partnership. Coconut palm is one of the most useful trees in the world and about 360 uses of the tree and its products have been reported. It is cultivated in over 80 countries of the world and out of the global production of 62.41 million metric tonnes of coconut 75 percent is from the three Asian countries of Indonesia, Philippines and India. In

India, coconut is cultivated in 23.3 lakh hectare with a production of 22,226 million nuts and four Southern States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala and Andhra Pradesh together accounted for 92 percent of coconut production. India is the largest consumer of coconut products in the world as other important producing countries export significant share of their output. Here it is also used in all social and religious functions in some way or other and has become a symbol of national unity. With this background an attempt is made below to briefly examine the importance of coconut and its future prospects in the economy of Kerala.

Importance of Coconut Cultivation in Kerala

The coconut economy of Kerala witnessed considerable changes during the six and half decade after the formation of the State in 1956. During the first decade Kerala accounted for 70 percent of total area and production of coconut in India. Since coconut cultivation was found to be more profitable compared to other important crops of rice and tapioca, the area increased from 4.5 lakh hectares in 1956-57 to 9.3 lakh hectares in 2001-02. At the same time the share of Kerala in the country declined to 51 percent as the area in other states increased much faster than that of Kerala. During the same period the share of Tamilnadu



increased from 8 percent to 17 percent and that of Karnataka from 13 percent to 19 percent. In the case of production while Kerala's share decreased from 70 percent to 45 percent that of Tamilnadu increased from 13 percent to 26 percent. Even though the share of Kerala in the area and production of coconut in India decreased, coconut played a very important role in the economy of Kerala during the first two decades.

Coconut covered about 25 percent of the gross cropped area and contributed over 30 percent of the agricultural income of the State. Besides being a valuable adjunct to the everyday diet of Keralites it is source of raw material for many industries. About 70 % of the coconut husk was utilised for the extraction of fibre from which many coir products were manufactured and exported. The coir industry provided employment to around 5 lakh persons, mostly women. Around 25,000 workers were regularly employed in tapping toddy which was the most important liquor consumed in Kerala. The trunk of the tree was extensively used for the construction of residential houses and cattle sheds and other parts of the tree were important source of fuel for cooking. Thus, coconut played a very important role in the economy of Kerala which was largely woven around coconut and its by-products. Now Kerala lost its superior position in the Indian coconut production map as the state accounted only

34 percent of area and 27 percent of coconut production during the triennium ending 2023-24. The productivity i.e. the number of nuts per one hectare in Kerala is only 7287 as against all-India average of 9170. According to the latest data Karnataka emerged as the largest coconut producing state accounting 28.5 percent of production. Kerala was the home of coir industry in India but now major portion of coir is produced from other states. Out of 7.5 lakh persons employed in this industry in India only 1.5 lakh are from Kerala. During the first two decades per capita income and household monthly expenditure in Kerala was lower than the all-India average. As such most of the by-products of coconut palm were used in Kerala as mentioned earlier. But after the migration of large number of people from Kerala to Gulf countries and the consequent large remittances, the standard of living of the people improved considerably. The future prospect of coconut industry in Kerala depends very much on increasing the productivity and better utilisation of coconut and by products. The average yield per bearing tree in a year in Kerala is only 30 nuts whereas the potential is 150 to 200 nuts. One important reason for the low yield rate is the incidence of root-wild disease and the attack of *Mandari* pest. Besides diseases the wide fluctuation in the price of coconut, high cost of production etc, have weakened the interest in coconut. Though research works have been carried out in India during the last few decades, no effective solution has been found out for the root-wilt disease. For increasing productivity of coconut and for the better utilisation of various parts of coconut tree and coconut products all the coconut growing countries have to work together with a team spirit. ■

The author is former Director of Economics and Statistics Department, Govt. of Kerala

Charting KSRTC's Transformational Voyage: Visionary Overhauls, Redefined Transit, Tech Integration and Public-Centric Service Excellence

Wheels of Time Reimagined; WHISPERING NEW DREAMS



"KSRTC has always been a pride of Kerala, and today we are taking that legacy forward by combining modern technology with better amenities. These new buses are not just additions to the fleet – they will completely transform the travel experience for our people. This success is a testament to the hard work and dedication of every single member of the KSRTC family."

K.B. Ganesh Kumar

Minister for Transport, Govt. of Kerala



Aromal Anil





In the lush, rain-kissed tapestry of Kerala's landscape, the crimson and white buses of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) have long been a symbol of resilience — of public service unfurling through winding ghats, coastlines, and crowded city lanes. But in recent years, this enduring emblem has reawakened as more than just a state utility. KSRTC has rewritten its narrative — from near-collapse to one of the most ambitious brand rejuvenations in public transport history.

A Legacy at the Crossroads

Founded in 1938 and formally established as KSRTC in 1965, the organisation had once stood tall as a model of public sector efficiency. Yet, by the second decade of the 21st century, it found itself worn down by fiscal strain, operational stagnation, and waning public confidence. Then came a turning point — a recalibration driven not only by the need to survive, but to transform.

Revival on the Move: The Past Five Years

The last five years have been nothing short of a renaissance for KSRTC Kerala. It began with a clear-eyed diagnosis: the brand had grown dated, and the services needed to meet the expectations of a fast-

modernising Kerala. A comprehensive overhaul was launched — not in haste, but with a quiet determination that mirrored the people it served.

1. Dual Branding: KSRTC & KSRTC-SWIFT

In 2021, the state launched a strategic bifurcation- KSRTC-SWIFT, a separate operational wing under KSRTC, designed to handle long-distance and inter-state routes with commercial agility. This allowed for faster decision-making, modern fleet management and significantly reduced operational losses. The KSRTC-SWIFT branding brought with it a sleeker design, revamped livery, and a new philosophy: efficiency without compromising on heritage.

2. A Visual and Functional Rebirth

A design overhaul saw the introduction of modern, aerodynamic buses-particularly the 'Hi-Tech, Super Deluxe, and Volvo multi-axle services'. Each bore a refreshed version of the iconic KSRTC insignia, while retaining the beloved red-and-white base that had become culturally ingrained in the Malayali imagination.

Terminals too underwent upgrades, with LED displays, passenger information systems, better seating, sanitation and surveillance infrastructure- transforming the bus station experience into one aligned with urban standards.

Kerala's KSRTC has not just rebranded. It has reawakened. And in its wheels now hum the dreams of a state in motion.

3. Technology at the Wheel

KSRTC embraced digitisation with uncommon vigour. From online booking platforms and real-time bus tracking to the KSRTC-chalo app, commuters were invited into a new era

of convenience. Contactless ticketing, QR code-based payments and even digital passes for students and senior citizens placed the commuter at the centre of the experience.

4. Green Roads, Clean Future

Environmental consciousness was no afterthought. The rollout of electric buses under the 'E-Mobility' project, especially in cities like Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode marked KSRTC's transition into a climate-responsible transporter. These electric fleets with zero emissions and whisper-quiet rides, are not only cost-effective but also deeply symbolic of Kerala's ecological ethos.

5. Workforce Reorientation

Perhaps the most human aspect of the transformation has been within KSRTC's own ranks. The corporation invested in driver training, staff digital literacy and welfare schemes. A focused recruitment drive for women drivers and conductors was launched -emblematic of Kerala's broader push for gender equity in public spaces.

Moreover, feedback mechanisms were formalised, giving passengers a voice in service reviews, grievance redressal, and route suggestions-a democratic approach to public transport administration.

KSRTC Travel Card: Toward Seamless Digital Ticketing

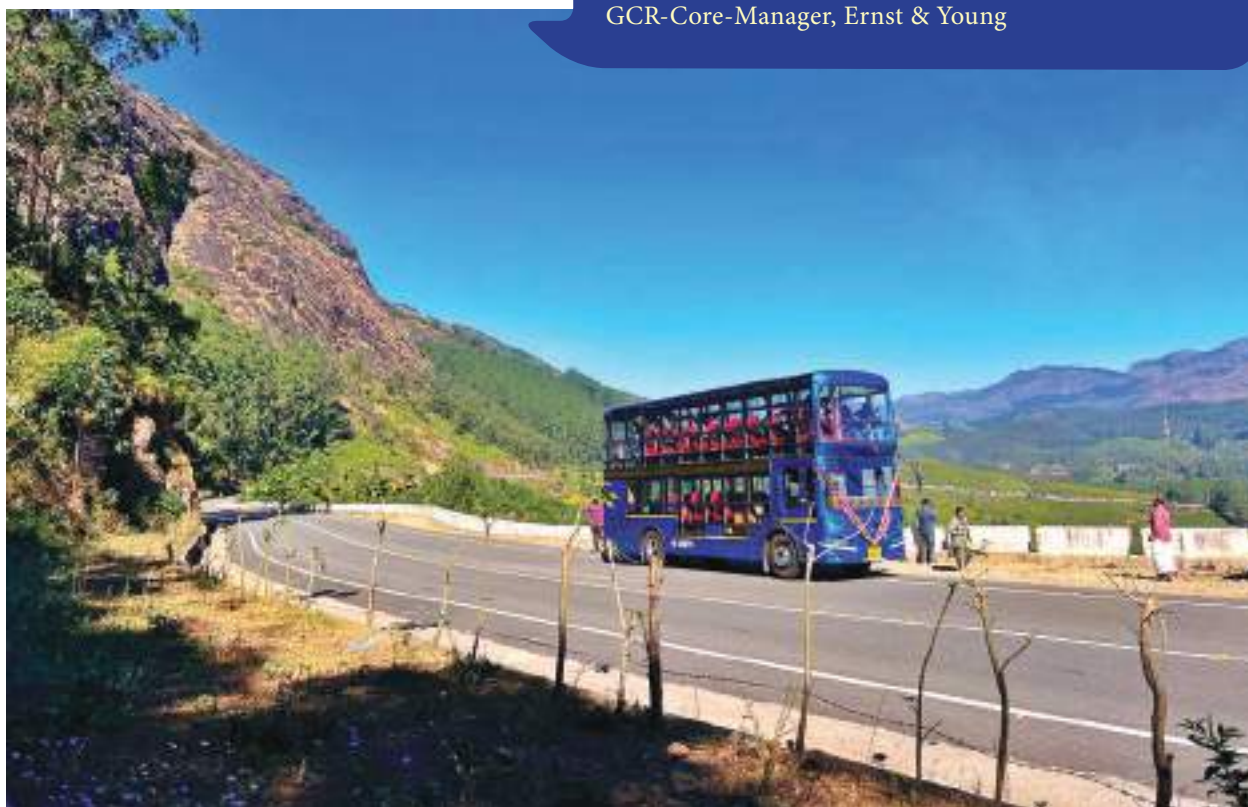
Kerala State Road Transport Corporation's new Chalo travel card and app is transforming bus travel by easing payment hassles and reducing reliance on exact change. Since its launch, the card has gained considerable popularity among commuters for quick, cashless transactions on KSRTC buses.

KSRTC's Budget Tourism Trips Win Hearts Across Kerala

Kerala's KSRTC is redefining travel with its widely popular Budget Tourism Cell (BTC), offering over 1,500 affordable packages across the state. From serene temple trails and forest treks to luxury liner cruises and heritage circuits, the tours cater to all ages and interests. Prices range from Rs.200 to 6,500, often covering food and accommodation. Sleeper buses double as stay-in options, adding novelty and comfort. The initiative, active in 90 depots, has boosted KSRTC's revenue and environmental sustainability while building community spirit, with passengers forming lasting bonds over shared journeys through Kerala's scenic and cultural heartlands. Rs.1.50 crore could be generated from Kollam district alone as part of the BTC, which was widely covered in dailies ,citing the achievement .

As a working woman, KSRTC buses are my lifeline—affordable, reliable, and safe. They ease my daily commute while helping me save money for my future.

**-Navya Jayachandran,
GCR-Core-Manager, Ernst & Young**





Cultural Continuity Meets Modern Momentum

What makes KSRTC's brand journey remarkable is not just its revival from debt and disrepair, but its ability to evolve without erasing its identity. The red bus still reigns on Kerala's roads, but it now does so with new purpose, new systems, and renewed public trust.

In every distant rural village and bustling metro junction, KSRTC today isn't merely a service — it is an institution restored, deeply rooted yet forward-looking.

KSRTC's "Royal View" Double-Decker Bus Adds Charm to Munnar Tourism

The Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has launched a unique tourism initiative in Munnar with its "Royal View" double-decker bus service. Designed to offer panoramic views of Idukki's misty hills and tea gardens, the glass-roofed bus features 38 upper-deck seats and 12 below. The journey spans key viewpoints like Lockhart Gap, Anayirankal, and Rock Cave, operating thrice daily. With added comforts such as on board refreshments, music, and charging points, the ride blends scenic beauty with modern amenities. Affordable fares and strong tourist response make this venture a vibrant addition to Kerala's eco-friendly and experiential travel offerings.

I always choose KSRTC for my vacations—the comfort, safety, and affordability make every journey memorable. As a true KSRTC fan, I trust their service to turn every trip into a joyful experience.

-Prem Chandran, Student

Revamped Bus Fleet

At the Transpo 2025 exhibition in Kanakakunnu, the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) unveiled a striking new fleet of 143 buses, signalling a bold new era in public transport. The lineup includes redesigned Ordinary, Link, Fast Passenger, Super Fast Premium, and various AC sleeper and seater buses. Built on Tata chassis with bodies by ACGL, the new buses combine sleek contours, improved aerodynamics, and passenger-first features like Wi-Fi, USB charging ports, digital ticketing, and CCTV surveillance.

What truly sets this rollout apart is its artistic identity. The buses feature vibrant tri-colour liveries with modern design elements and subtle nods to Kerala's cultural motifs — a fresh visual language crafted by designers Adithya Krishnan and Amal Jokin Salat. These buses aren't just upgrades; they're moving canvases of design, comfort, and technology, reflecting KSRTC's renewed commitment to connectivity, safety, and commuter pride across the state.

A Story Still in Motion

The brand journey of KSRTC tells us that public transport, when envisioned with clarity and compassion, can transcend utility. It can become an emblem of governance, a keeper of sustainability, and a daily reminder of what public service truly means.

The author is Assistant Information Officer, I-PRD

Chasing Away the Blues



Blue Tides, the Kerala-European Union (EU) Blue Economy Conclave, was held at Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram.

This high-level event brought together ambassadors of the European Union (EU) member states, senior policymakers, diplomats, industry leaders, academicians and experts in the field of blue economy.

The event discussed the challenges, opportunities and the potential of the blue economy.

Different sessions delved into the scope of marine fisheries, aquaculture, coastal infrastructure, circular economy, energy transition, smart ports, tourism, education and skill development.

The event also served as a platform to strengthen India-EU partnership and highlight Kerala as a hub for collaboration and innovation in the Blue Economy.

Blue Tides was jointly organised by the Central and state governments and the European Union.

Award for Excellence



Minister for Higher Education and Social Justice Dr. R. Bindu presents the Minister's Award for Excellence, which honors higher education institutions in the state that have achieved NAAC A++, A+, and A grades and have topped the NIRF and KIRF rankings.



Initiative by

KERALA STATE COMMISSION FOR
PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS

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