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Drought: State faces a formidable challenge

CM knocks at Delhi for relief



Chief Minister Mr. A. K. Antony meets Prime Minister Mr. A. B. Vajpayee at New Delhi and appraises him of the gravity of the drought situation in the state.

Chief Minister Mr. A.K. Antony has sought Rs.1400 crore from the Centre as drought relief. He met the Prime Minister Mr. A.B. Vajpayee at New Delhi and impressed upon him, the gravity of the drought situation in the State. The Prime Minister has assured the Chief Minister that the Centre would adopt a favourable attitude in granting the drought relief and that measures would be taken in this regard as soon as the report from the Central team

which visited the State to assess the situation has been received.

The CM also met the Dy. PM, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Union Finance Minister Mr. Yashwant Sinha and Central Government officials at Delhi and impressed the seriousness of the drought situation on them

Talking to press persons soon after arriving from New Delhi, Mr. A.K. Antony expressed his confidence that the Centre would consider the State's case favourably and that the Union Cabinet Sub Committee would decide the quantum of assistance accordingly.

He said that the State Government had already taken steps to face the drought and Rs.120 crores had been released to the various district administrations. The Chief Minister convened a meeting of District Collectors to prepare an action plan based on the reports of the situation prevailing in the districts.

The State Government would seek the cooperation of all political parties in facing the drought situation – the CM said.



Homage to a man who loved Kerala



The unexpected demise of Kerala Governor H.E. Mr. Sikander Bakht was really a rude shock to the entire people of the State. With his forthrightness, administrative acumen and affable nature he had gained the respect and admiration of the whole state even within the short span of his administration. He had really acquired the posture of a father figure leading a quite and contented life keeping away from all controversies and was keen on the development of the State. He was committed to promote better Centre-State relations and had ideally transformed the gentleman politician in him into an impartial and seasoned administrator and a visionary.

He belonged to the venerated generation of freedom fighters who took up politics as a mission; a form of social service, and dedicated himself fully to the cause of the people and the Nation.

We were fortunate in having a gentleman politician with staunch secular credentials and wider administrative experience to preside over our developmental administration, and he did not fail us.

On behalf of the people of Kerala, I pay respects and tributes to the memory of this departed leader.

-A. K. Antony
Chief Minister

Online registration

Certificate attestation made easier

The Non Resident Keralites Affairs Department (NORKA) has started providing online registration facility for certificate attestation. As the number of gulf job seekers who queue up before the attestation centre is mounting day by day, and as the facility can handle only 150 applications for attestation in a day, the applicants are given priority numbers

and asked to come again on an appointed day. With this facility, the priority numbers and appointments can be had online on the official web site of NORKA www.nonresidentkeralite.com. This further saves time, energy and money of the gulf job seekers from coming to Thiruvananthapuram just for seeking appointment at the attestation centre.

The yellow behind the green

God's own country cools the mind with splendid visuals of green and blue, spreading the message of a water abundant state. On the contrary, the State actually has fewer fresh water per person than even that of arid states like Gujarat and Rajasthan.

While the high population density demands an increased consumption, unscientific exploitation of water sources and mindless acts of filling up ponds and paddy fields do not allow rainwater to percolate and replenish the ground water reserve.

The State's topography empties the entire collection of rainwater from the mountains down its valleys, through the plains, on to the sea, in a matter of hours. Water from terraced houses and concreted yards are piped down drains and gutters with a similar speed and effect.

What is unforgivable is also the ignorant and mindless pollution of our rivers and lakes...

The time to act is bursting at the seams. Practical measures and awareness campaigns are the need of the hour. The water conservation measures initiated by the Government are praiseworthy.

- Editor-in-Chief

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Investors Meet

Seven companies, M/s Maersk from Denmark, AMP from Australia, Adani Ports, L&T Ltd, East West Airline, Hysoncells from South Africa and Indo British Consortium of Ports sent their representatives to explore the possibility of participating in the setting up the International Deep Water Container Transshipment project at Vizhinjam. A delegation from Port of Singapore had visited the site and held discussions with the Minister for Ports Mr. M.V. Raghavan and concerned officials, last month.



Mr. Manfred Menzel, Managing Director, Rogge Marine, Germany, partner of consultants consortium for the project, talking to investors on cargo projections and viability.

Though the announced Investors Meet had to be postponed in the last minute due to the State mourning the Governor's demise, the delegations that had arrived visited the site and confirmed the suitability of Vizhinjam for the project, on account of its natural depth and proximity to the international shipping channel.

Chief Minister Mr. A.K. Antony who received the delegations in his chamber, told them that Vizhinjam is a priority project of the State Government and that the Government is committed to implement it at the earliest. He said that the project at this strategic point will do good not only to the State

but also for the entire country and that 'fast track' system will be implemented for its speedy implementation.

He assured the delegations of all possible support and assistance from the Government, for the project.

MLA Dr. A. Neelalohita Dasan Nadar who represents the area and was present at the meeting, said that the project has become the aspiration of the local people and assured all support, cutting across party and political lines.

At the interaction that took place in the Travancore Hall of Technopark, the Additional Chief Secretary Mr. Babu Jacob spoke on the State's view of the project. Minister for ports Mr. M.V. Raghavan and MLA Dr. A. Neelalohitha Dasan Nadar also participated in the interaction.

The last date of receipt of the 'expression of interest' has been extended to 31st March, on the general demand of the delegates. It is felt that suitable partners can be identified by July this year.

Additional Chief Secretary Mr. Babu Jacob, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Mr. Gopal Krishna Pillai, Special Private Secretary to the Minister for Ports, Dr. Jayakumar and Director of Ports Captain Jayaprakash, participated in the talks with the Chief Minister.

Central team arrives to assess drought damage to State

A five member team from the Centre has arrived to assess the drought damage in the State. They held talks with the Additional Chief Secretary Mr. Babu Jacob, Revenue Principal Secretary Mr. Sunderesan, Energy Principal Secretary Mrs. Lissy Jacob, KSEB Chairman Mr. T.M. Manoharan and some department heads. The team visited the drought-hit areas of various districts and assessed the drought damage to the State.



The Central team holds preliminary discussion with Additional Chief Secretary Mr. Babu Jacob, Secretaries and heads of departments at the Govt. Secretariat.

Garbage free Kerala A must for development – CM

“The development, growth and the very sustenance of the State depends on the efficient implementation of the clean Kerala Mission,” said Chief Minister Mr. A.K. Antony. “All government department, institutions, and the people

favourable climate is to be used for the development of the State, we should be able to maintain a clean, healthy and congenial atmosphere. Everybody, including residents associations, voluntary organisations, individuals and government

departments should function with one mind for this cause,” the Chief Minister exhorted.

Wastes should be treated within the compounds itself as far as possible and what is left behind should be sorted and handed over for disposal. Such a culture should be nurtured and rooted here. The local self

government institutions should be ready for a decentralised waste disposal system. Most modern technology suited for each particular area should be adopted in this regard and the services of organisations like ‘Kudumbashree’ can be used, the CM said.



An evaluation meeting of *Clean Kerala Programme* in progress. Ministers Mr. K. M. Mani, Mr. P. K. Kunjalikutty, Mr. K. Sankaranarayanan, Prof. K. V. Thomas, Mr. P. Sankaran, Mr. Babu Divakaran and Mr. C. F. Thomas are seen (right to left) with the Chief Minister Mr. A. K. Antony at the chair.

should give prime importance for the effective implementation of this project for the next three years,” he entreated.

“The State is ready for a giant leap in the Tourism, IT, Higher Education and Health fronts. An investor-friendly atmosphere has also set in. If this

Plastic bag ban will be enforced

The Local Self Government Department, with the help and cooperation of other departments and agencies will clamp down on the use of plastic carry bags with thickness below 30 micron – said Mr.

Cherkalam Abdullah, Minister for Local Self Government in a review meeting on the ban. The use of plastics has a grave impact on the health of people over and above the pollution aspect; the Minister said.

Special laws will be enacted for levying spot fines and other penalties on people found violating this directive, under section 188 of the IPC, with the help of the Police and Health departments.

As plastic bags below 30 microns are not being manufactured within the state, check posts have been alerted to check their infiltration from neighbouring states. The minister also said that the use and disposal of plastic carry bags over 30 microns are also being monitored and brought under control.

The Minister requested the people to co-operate with the ban as these measures are being implemented for the cause of public health.



General Hospital gets a Cardiology unit

A Cardiology unit is being commissioned at the General Hospital campus in Thiruvananthapuram by the State Co-operative bank, at the initiative of the Minister for Co-operation Mr.M.V. Raghavan, who is the MLA from the area.



Minister for Co-operation, Mr. M. V. Raghavan laying the foundation stone of the Cardiology unit. Minister for Health Mr. Kadavoor Sivadasan and Mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Prof. J. Chandra are also seen.

Periyar Pollution Probe ordered

Minister for Fisheries and Excise, Prof. K.V. Thomas has ordered a probe on the report that paddy cultivation and fish farming are being affected by large doses of chemical pollutants in the Periyar river. This has caused acute shortage of drinking water in Kochi and surrounding areas.

Earlier, the minister had ordered an enquiry into the large-scale death of fishes in some places of Ernakulam district and at Thanneermukkam in Alapuzha district. The minister warned that stern action would be taken against those who drain pollutants into rivers and other water bodies.



CM's initiative to save paddy crop



The Chief Minister Mr. A.K. Antony has requested his Tamil Nadu counterpart to release 1000 million cubic feet of water urgently from the Parambikulam – Aliyar dam for saving the paddy crop in the drought hit Palakkad district.

As per the Parambikulam-Aliyar agreement, Tamil Nadu has to give 2322 million cubic feet water for paddy cultivation in Palakkad district.

Bamboo shoots its prospect

"The growing demand for eco-friendly products in the international markets has spurred the bamboo industry in the state to draw ambitious development plans in this sector," said

Mr. C.P. John, Vice Chairman of the newly constituted Kerala Bamboo Development Mission, at a press conference in connection with the inauguration of the Kerala Pavilion in the 7th



Renowned Mural painter Mr. G. Azheekod paints on a bamboo stump as thrilled foreign visitors looks on

International Bamboo Expo at New Delhi.

Bamboo's position as a forest produce is creating problems for its use and steps are on, to give it an agricultural status. Thought is also being given to make modern technology available to the bamboo industry. These schemes will ensure a permanent source of income for the lakh and a half people who work in the bamboo sector, in the State – Mr. John said.

Other than the State Bamboo Development Corporation and the Kerala Forest Research Institute,



The State's pavillion- in a bamboo cast

enterprises that have won acclaim in the realm of bamboo handicrafts, like Indian Bamboo Welfare Centre, Humus, Naambu, Chaitanya, Padma, Raastha etc. displayed their products at the Kerala pavilion in the 'Expo,' put up by the Kerala Bamboo Development Mission.

- V.R. Ajith Kumar, Information Officer, New Delhi

Drought portends doom for State's economy

Reports from across the State say that the water-level in reservoirs is going down fast, standing crops in vast stretches are perishing and towns and villages have been hit by drinking water scarcity.

Kerala is also headed for a severe power crisis with the storage level in major hydel reservoirs dwindling fast, forcing the State to soon rely heavily on costlier thermal power brought from outside sources.

The UDF Government has sought a Central assistance of Rs. 1,359 crores to tackle the situation. According to the meteorological centre, the rainfall received by Kerala this year was deficient by 27 per cent. The State, on an average, would have received 3018 mm rainfall but this year it was only 2,270 mm.

In 2001, the rainfall was deficient by 13 per cent and in 2002, the shortfall was a huge 35 per cent. The monsoon failure had resulted in dangerous depletion in groundwater availability in parts of the State, especially in Palakkad district, the 'rice cellar' of Kerala. According to the district administration, paddy cultivation in 30,000 hectares in Chittur taluk had perished. Vast stretches in Palakkad are fast drying up. Official sources said that the water level in eight dams in the district had come down sharply in the last couple of months. It was two months since water was released for irrigation purposes as whatever little was left in the reservoir was being preserved to save six panchayats and Palakkad town from the worst ever drinking water scarcity, the sources said.

Added to the woes of the Palakkad farmers is Tamil Nadu's reluctance to release the State's share of water from the inter-State Parambikkulam-Aliyar Project (PAP) in spite of protracted negotiations. The farmers in Chittur taluk have been on the warpath over the issue for over a month.

The fallout of the Monsoon failure on the power front appears far more serious as its effect is bound to have a chain reaction in all sectors.

According to Kerala State Electricity Board sources, the storage level in major hydel reservoirs like Idukki, Sholayar Sabarigiri, Edamalar and Mattupetty are steadily coming down.

The catchment areas of the Sabarigiri project area received an all-time low rainfall this year and the scenario was not different in the case of other projects, the sources said.

Kerala already has a 30 minute load-shedding for domestic consumers. If the situation worsens, extended load-shedding was in store for households, as well as for industrial users, the sources added.

- PTI

Aranmula Picked for UN Tourism Programme

Aranmula, one of the most attractive tourist spots on the banks of the Pampa river in Pathanamthitta district has been picked for launching the Endogenous Tourism Programme (ETP) of the Union Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Two other villages identified for the ETP are Kulu Manali in Himachal Pradesh and Pochampally in Andhra Pradesh.

The ETP is an important programme of the 10th five-year plan to promote local culture and crafts based Eco tourism for sustainable livelihood and integrated rural development.

The Vastu Vidya Gurukulam, an autonomous institution under the State Cultural Affairs Department for promotion of traditional architecture and mural paintings and the Vignana Kala Vedi, a 26 year old cultural and trade centre run by a French lady are based in Aranmula.

- P.T. Chacko, Assistant Information Officer, Pathanamthitta

A paradigm shift ...

B2B 
and development politics.

“The State has successfully created a paradigm shift in the minds of people from within the country and abroad about Kerala as an investment destination,” said Mr. P.K. Kunhalikutty, Minister for industries and Information Technology, inaugurating the Business to Business Meet at the Gulfar International Convention Centre in Kochi. “The overwhelming response received by the event is a reflection of this,” he said.

Later, addressing the interactive session “*Know Netherlands*”, the Chief Minister Mr. A.K. Antony reiterated the fact stating that the mindset of most of the Keralites has already undergone change for the better and that the course of the winds of change could not be altered by anybody. He said that the

Netherlands’.

Besides the presentation from foreign embassies like Australia, Canada and the Netherlands, leading national institutions and departments like Indian Railways, Director General of Foreign Trade and Directorate General of Stores and Disposals made presentations on various schemes and incentives offered by the respective Departments. Financial institutions like Canara Bank, Kerala Financial Corporation, Small Industry Development Bank of India and State Bank of Travancore also had exclusive sessions and interactions with the participants.

As part of the event, two CD ROMs – one giving details of the entire registered Kerala sellers taking part in the

Kerala's new 'dental tourism' beckons foreigners in big way

Taking a cue from dentists in Hong Kong where foreigners throng dentists, Dr. Rajkrishna from the outskirts of Kochi has launched a novel concept of ‘*Dental Tourism*,’ biting all he can chew.

For this month alone, Dr. Rajkrishna who runs a dental clinic by the same name at Tripunithura, has over bookings. He has tied up with tour operators and patients who come from abroad during the course of treatment, get to visit places. Thus he has developed a novel concept of ‘*Dental Tourism*.’

It was during a visit to Hong Kong that he realised the prospects of getting foreigners come to Kerala for treatment. He says that people, mainly from the US, went to Hong Kong for dental treatment. After putting in some effort, it was in 1998 that he had his first patient from the US.

On why people from the US came down for treatment, Dr. Rajkrishna says that dental treatment there is costly. For a root canal treatment in India, a person would have to pay Rs.2,500 for which in the US he would have to dole out at least Rs.80,000. Moreover, in the US, the waitlist for an appointment with a dentist would run into at least a month.

Dr. Rajkrishna feels that the patients mainly come for cosmetic dentistry and dental surgery. In the case of root canal treatment, the patient gets a week's gap between the two phases of treatment. It is in this interim period that tour programmes are arranged.

The doctor also asserts that there is no extra billing for a patient from abroad. He says that he has made utmost use of the latest in IT development and through e-mails and websites, he has succeeded in getting patients, mainly from the US. While in his first year he got just four patients from abroad, it has been a steady increase of over 100 a year after that in 1998. He sees immense scope in his new venture and feels that the State gains through his foray into the tourism sector.

Courtesy: The Financial Express



Opportunities face 2 face ; an interactive session - *Know Netherlands* in progress with Chief Minister Mr. A. K. Antony and the Netherlands Ambassador, Mr. E.F.C. Nieve, addressing the audience

government is concentrating on policy changes to incorporate a development polity.

The first Business to Business Meet generated a lot of interests from all over the world, meeting its desired objective of bringing international buyers face to face with the manufacturers working in the small and medium sectors of the State.

Of the total 451 buyer registrations, 303 actually participated in the Meet. 218 people were from other states in the country, 41 were foreign delegates, 19 from embassies and consulates and 25 from within the State.

The foreign delegates were from UAE, Saudi Arabia, Austria, Geneva, Muscat, Bahrain, Kuwait, Singapore, Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Mexico, Turkey, Korea, Philippines, & Italy. Eight foreign embassies participated in the meet and the Netherlands delegation led by their Ambassador, Mr. E.F.C. Nieve, had an exclusive session ‘*On Doing Business with*

Meet and the other, providing detailed information about the ten key sectors showcased in the event, were released. A directory titled “*Seller Info Book*” and a guide on investment opportunities titled ‘*Resurgent Kerala*’ were also brought out during the Meet.

Mr. K. Sankara Narayanan, Minister for Finance, Mr. K.V. Thomas, Minister for Fisheries & Excise, Mr. V. Ramachandran, Vice Chairman, State Planning Board, Mr. N. Chandrasekharan Nair, Chief Secretary and Mr. C.P. John, Member, State Planning Board addressed the participants in the various sessions of the Meet.

The three-day event focusing on the small and medium industries sector of the State, showcased the State as a strong manufacturer, contrary to the earlier perception as a consumer. The government proposes to make B2B a regular calendar event, including more sectors in the portfolio.



When Malayalam's laughter stopped...

The laughter of Malayalam which entered the world literary platform from Tiruvilvamala, now reposes on the banks of the *Nila*, filling the eyes of all friends and readers, with tears. It was a laughter that reverberated in the cultural gatherings and get togethers since a long time in Thrissur that came to an abrupt stop.



Vadakke Kuttale Narayanankutty Nair used to say that newspapers wouldn't give a damn if one died on a Sunday and the fact that he passed away on a Sunday followed by the holiday of the Republic day, became a black humour.

People from all over the state arrived to pay homage to this *king of laughter* who had evolved his own style of thought and humour.



Mr. G. Karthekeyan, Minister for Cultural affairs in VKN's room, from where he churned out his humorous satires. VKN's widow Mrs. Vedavathi Amma and Trissur District Information officer Mr. V. K. Sharaffuddin are seen.

"The Cultural department will take appropriate steps to immortalise the memory of VKN who was a Malayalam writer without a parallel" - said Mr. G. Karthekeyan, Minister for Cultural Affairs, who went to VKN's house at Tiruvilvamala on hearing the news of VKN's demise. He spent some time in the room, where VKN created his characters- *Chathu*, *Payyans*, *Chathans*, *Nanwar*...

Mr. K. Radhakrishnan MLA, presided over the condolence meeting after the cremation of this master of satire.

-V. K. Sharaffuddin

District Information officer, Trissur

Kerala Tourism's Growing presence at Berlin ITB

One of Asia's top tourism brands, *God's Own Country*, is increasingly making its presence felt at international forums. The State is grabbing a lot of global attention at the ongoing trade fair at Berlin *Internationale Tourismus – Borse (ITB)*. Kerala will lead India's largest delegation at the fair being held from March 12-16.



ITB is the largest annual travel trade show in the world held in March, every year. It attracts high-ranking professionals with decision-making powers and sees to the participation of every sector of the worldwide tourism industry. Exhibitors at the show include government offices, national and regional tourism organisations, tour operators, hotels, airline carriers,

insurance companies, communication and information systems, travel agencies and the such, from around the world. This is hailed as the perfect place for establishing new customer contacts and transacting business.

Germany is the second largest market for Kerala and new products and experiences that are developed by the state is introduced to the world at the ITB every year. Apart from promotional materials - brochures, folders, travel guides, CD-ROMs etc., this year, the world gets a fresh taste of Kerala through unique traditional items like coconut shell products, bee wax candles etc.

To showcase Kerala to a wider audience, Kerala Tourism will be conducting a road show at the Grand Hyatt in Berlin. Apart from key members of Kerala Tourism, leading tour operators and members of the travel media from the State will also participate in the show. Kerala and its unique tourism products will be presented to the travel trade as well as the German media here.

Kerala Tourism's increasing presence in the international tourism scene is clearly an indicator of the State's growth in tourism - which has been underlined by the World Travel & Tourism Council's study findings that predicted a tourism growth rate of 11.6% per annum in the next decade - which is among the highest estimated tourism growth rates in the World.

Kerala has been a domineering participant at ITB's India pavilion since the last 14 years. The 17- member Kerala delegation at the ITB this year is well represented by the travel and trade fraternity. The delegation includes two leading hotel chains, *Le Meridien* and KTDC other than beach resorts like Kadavu Resorts, Kadappuram Beach Resort, Isolo de Coco, Coconut Bay Beach Resort and Kairali; Ayurvedic Resort like Poovar Island Resort, Travancore Heritage Resort, Vagamon Hide Out and tour operators like Jayasree Travels, Great India Tour Company and Kerala Travels Interserve Ltd.



Leading the Kerala team this year are Mr. P. Sankaran, Minister for Tourism, Mr. T Balakrishnan, Secretary – Tourism and Mr. Alkesh Kumar Sharma, Director Tourism, of the State government.

The Kerala pavilion, with stunning images of the State is generating a lot of interest, among the participants.

State-of-the-art Sports School on the anvil

“The G.V. Raja Sports School will be transformed into one of the best sports school in the country” – said Mr. Nalakathu Soopy, Minister for Education. He was laying the foundation stone of the G.V. Raja Sports School which is being shifted to Mylam from Shanghummughom in Thiruvananthapuram. Administrative sanction has been accorded for Rs.13.52 crores and the construction is entrusted to the State Construction Corporation.



Minister for education Mr. Nalakathu Soopy laying the foundation stone. Minister for public works Dr. M. K. Muneer is also seen

The sports school is being constructed in 2 stages in a 12 acre plot at Mylam near Aruvikkara, in Thiruvananthapuram district. The first stage encompasses the administrative

block, hostel, quarters, stadium, playground, roads and water tanks. The second stage will have a swimming pool, indoor stadium, hockey court etc.

The Minister for Public Works, Dr. M.K. Muneer, who laid the foundation for the hostel and library buildings, said that the first stage of the school building would be completed within an year.

Summer coaching camps

The Kerala Sports Council will be conducting free coaching camps in all districts of the State for the benefit of school children below the age of 14. About 5000 sportsmen and women will be admitted to these camps, numbering 152, which will be held in Athletics, volleyball, swimming, basketball, kho-kho, kabadi, cycling, table tennis, wrestling, cricket, hockey, ball badminton and boxing (for both men and women). Football coaching will only be for men.

The coaching will be from 7 to 9 AM and from 4 to 6 PM on all days from 5th to 30th April 2004.

Anamudi & Pambadum Sholas declared as National Parks

An extent of 131.80 ha. and an extent of 750 ha. in Marayoor Village, Devikulam Taluk in Idukki district have been declared as Anamudi Shola National Park and Pambadum Shola National Park respectively by the State Government. These areas are identified as having great ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological and zoological significance. This declaration is for ensuring long term protection of the majestic vegetal stretch, which contains many botanical rarities and novelties of science.

Malayalee honoured in National Handicraft Fest



Mr. Pratap being handed over with the Award by the Haryana Chief Minister Mr. Om Prakesh Chauthala.

The award for the best handicraft expert, was won by Mr. A. Prathap, a Malayalee craftsman, at the 18th National Handicrafts Fair held at Surajkhund in Haryana.

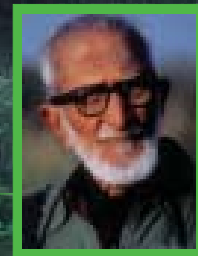
Mr. Prathap, a resident of Thycaud in Thiruvananthapuram, has been chosen for the award from among 300 artists, by a judging committee headed by Ms. Jaya Jetly.

For Mr. Prathap who is a winner of the National Award, this is the second time that laurels come his way at the Soorajkund festival. He had won this award earlier in 1996.

The award was presented to him by the Haryana Chief Minister Mr. Om Prakash Chauthala, at the closing ceremony of the fair.

-V. R. Ajith Kumar, Information Office, New Delhi

Birds of Kerala Released

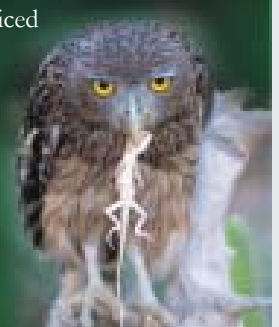


World renowned ornithologist, Dr. Salim Ali's *Birds of Kerala* has been revised in a reprint by the Forest Department.

Since the publication of *The Birds of Travancore and Cochin* in 1953, several important events of far reaching consequences such as the linguistic reorganisation of the states of the Indian Union, led to the publication of the second edition as *Birds of Kerala* by the author in 1969.

Kerala encompasses a rich and varied bird habitat, including the famed Periyar, Parambikulam, Silent Valley, Eravikulam, Peechi, Vazhani, Neyyar, Aralam Sanctuaries and other protected areas, which harbour pelagic, coastal, forest and hill birds. These species have been described and illustrated in this third edition of the *Birds of Kerala*.

This revised edition of the concise yet comprehensive coverage of the ornithological treasure house that Kerala is, has 520 pages and is priced at Rs. 600/-. The books are available at discounted prices for wholesale purchasers/book sellers from the Forestry Information Bureau. More details can be had from the bureau on 0471-320155, 2529203 and 2529205.





State Film Awards announced



The State Film Awards for the year 2003 have been announced. 'Margam' directed by Mr. Rajeev Vijaya Raghavan won the award for the best feature film and Mr. Sibi Malayil won the best director's award for directing 'Ente Veedu Appuvinteyum.' This film also won the award for aesthetic appeal and public acclaim. Mr. Nemom Pushparaj is the debutant director with his 'Gowrishankaram.'

Mr. Nedumudi Venu is the best actor (Margam) and Ms. Meera Jasmine is the best actress (*Kasthuriman & Paadam Onnu Oru Vilapam*) Mr. P. Jayachandran is the best playback singer (Male) and Ms. Gayatri is the best female playback singer.

The second best feature film is Mr. T.V. Chandran's *Paadam Onnu Oru Vilapam*. The best book on cinema is Mr. Rajan P. Thodiyoor's 'Nizhal Chitrangalude Porul.' The award for the best documentary goes to 'Nishadom' directed by Mr. Madhu Eravankara.



Nishagandhi Festival 2004, organised by the department of tourism, is scheduled from April 5th to 12th 2004, at the sprawling environs of the Nishagandhi and Suryakanthi auditoria at the Kanakakunnu Palace. This year's festival includes a classical dance and music festival, a folk festival, crafts bazaar, food festival and an ethnic plant and flower show.



Celebrated artistes from various parts of India will present an array of Indian Classical Dances and Music during the 8 day festival. The culture rich state of Andhra Pradesh which is a partner state for the Festival, will perform Andhra folk arts on all days, at Surakanthi.

The inaugural function would be marked by a duet Bharatanatyam recital by cinema artistes Vineeth and Lakshmi Gopaldaswami. Paushali Chatterji and Group will perform Odissi and Manipuri group jugalbandhi, Rajendra Gangani and Deepthi Omcheri will perform Kathak and Mohiniyattom group Jugalbandhi, Ghazal singer Anoop Jalota will perform gazhals and Bhajans, Shila Mehta Group will perform Kathak and Vikku Vinayakram will perform the Saphthakshara, a ghadam percussion ensemble.



The food court at Sooryakanthi will be held by 15 leading hotels of Kerala, serving a wide choice of cuisines. A folk art presentation by Andhra Pradesh on the Suryakanthi stage, will be a part of the food court.

There will be a large number of craftsmen and artisans participating in the crafts bazaar from different regions of the country.

Ethnic Plant show, where local flowers, plants and herbs of different varieties will be exhibited and sold, by leading nurseries will also be a part of the festival.

The Kanakakunnu Palace and the Museum-Vellayambalam avenue will be illuminated with special effect, creating a dream ambience. The speciality of the festival is that it is declared eco friendly and plastic free. The entry is free.

75 years of Malayalam cinema

Kerala State Chalachitra Academy announces fellowship programme

Kerala State Chalachitra Academy has announced its Fellowship programme for the year 2004-2005. The fellowships have been instituted to encourage serious writing and critique of Malayalam cinema which is on to its 75th year and for which there is no available body of research .

Five part-time fellowships are offered for the study of Malayalam Cinema. The Kerala State Chalachitra Academy hopes to publish Studies found to be of international standards. Details of the programme are available at the Academy office.

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