

Destination Kerala

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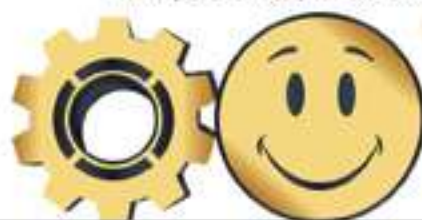
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Help #RebuildKerala



Dear Friend,

Our State is in the midst of an unprecedented flood havoc. The calamity has caused immeasurable misery and devastation. Many lives were lost. Hundreds of homes were totally destroyed and many more were damaged.

Now, we have an important duty before us, the task of bringing life back to normalcy. The people of the State must come together as the situation demands from us, a unity that would make us proud forever. The Union Government has promised all possible assistance to the State.

We become civilised only when we show compassion to those who are suffering. I urge everyone to consider this as a request from Kerala and contribute generously to the relief efforts.

Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala

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WE WILL REPORT THE
#METOO DEVELOPMENTS
FROM A KERALA CONTEXT.
THE AUDACITY WITH
WHICH THESE MEN WENT
ABOUT SATISFYING THEIR
PERVERSE DESIRES, NEEDS
TO BE CALLED OUT

#METOO A TIMELY WAKE-UP CALL, WE FULLY ENDORSE THE MOVEMENT

Have we been silent about an uncomfortable truth that is spurring a revolution of sorts? Are we, by choosing to hardly report till now, offering our tacit support to the perpetrators?

As a publication we unequivocally endorse the #MeToo movement, believe in its noble intentions, trust the survivors and hope the monsters face the music. As an individual, I am shocked by the impunity and degree to which many personalities whom we know and respect have misused positions of power and influence.

All through my corporate life I have only heard stray incidents of unwanted attention being reported among friends on the lines of pestering calls & messages, questions that are too personal, uncomfortable touch, distasteful jokes, misogynistic comments or an abusive retort. The maximum extent married men in the office would go was as far as delivering the usual pick up line of “my spouse does not understand me”. I have never come across sexting, physical aggression or blatant seeking of sexual favours intended as a quid pro quo. This is not to say they did not exist or the stories today are false. It is just that I may have been ignorant or people I know were plain lucky.

Riyas Komu has been on our CEO Roundtable panel discussion. Gouridasan Nair and C P Surendran have been names I have heard at home spoken in high esteem. It's a lot to process. We generally would like to believe #MeToo happens only in the media and entertainment industry. That is not true. The corporate world is no better place for women and needs clean up, too. The Women in Cinema Collective (WCC) press conference and the line of questioning made me wonder, will most men ever change for the better?

I don't know how we as a media platform can help? Ideas are most welcome. To start with, we will report the #MeToo developments from a Kerala context without fear or favour. The audacity with which these men went about satisfying their perverse desires, needs to be called out.

A friend of mine told me this recently: “The best thing the #MeToo movement did for us is that today many more girls instead of saying ‘I froze when he did that to me’ will most likely be able to say ‘I screamed and slapped him.’”

This is worth fighting for and certainly worthy of defending – a safe working space for all.

Jose Kunnappally

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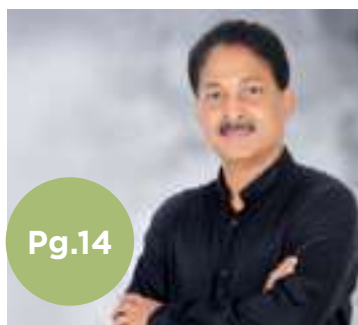
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DARK CLOUDS AND SILVER LININGS ON THE ECONOMIC HORIZON



Dr. V K Vijayakumar
Investment Strategist
Geojit Financial Services

Nobel laureate economist George Stigler once famously remarked that “abnormal is when everything is normal”. Everything turning favourable for the economy and markets is very rare. When it happens, as during 2004-08 for the global economy and markets, it is not likely to last long; euphoria will be followed by crisis. Cyclical upswings and downswings are normal for economy and market.

What is the state of the economy and markets? What are the likely trends, going forward? Let us take a look at the looming clouds on the economic horizon and the silver linings in the midst of them.

THE CRUDE SURGE

India has a structural economic issue – that is the current account deficit (CAD), which, in turn, is hugely impacted by the price of crude. The surge in crude has impacted the CAD, which is likely to be more than 2.5 per cent this year. There is the risk of crude surging again, as some fear, beyond the \$90 mark, in which case, the CAD will rise to 3 per cent. This can be problematic for the economy. Crude price is presently being dictated by a whole host of factors, including geopolitical issues.

RIISING US BOND YIELDS

The US bond yields, particularly the 10 year yield, is perhaps the most important global index, from the financial market perspective. Rise and fall in the US bond yields have the potential to unleash capital flows profoundly impacting financial markets across the globe.

The ‘ultra loose’ monetary policy implemented in the US following the global financial crisis of 2008 led to historically low levels of bond yields in the US. And now, since the US economy is back to high growth, the Fed has to normalise its balance sheet and they are doing that through gradually raising the rates. After six rate hikes of 25 bp by the Fed, the US Fed funds rate is still low at around 2 per cent, but the dollar index has moved up to around 95 and the 10 year yield has shot up to above 3.2 per cent. Since the US economy is firing on all cylinders and is at near full employment levels, the risk of inflation moving up is high and therefore the Fed is likely to tighten rates if signs of inflation emerge. Therefore, watch out for the US 10-year bond yield.

CURRENCY DEPRECIATION, IN TUNE WITH THE REAL EFFECTIVE EXCHANGE RATE IS DESIRABLE, BUT SHARP DROP CAN BE PROBLEMATIC

THE INR DEPRECIATION

The crude surge and capital outflows to the US had impacted EM currencies this year, particularly those with vulnerable CAD. The INR, which has been stable during 2015-17, depreciated sharply this year by almost 15 per cent. Currency depreciation is not a disaster; in fact controlled depreciation (India has a ‘managed float’ exchange rate system) is desirable since it boosts exports and brings about an au-

tomatic adjustment of trade and current account deficits. Also, from the corporate earnings perspective, INR depreciation is good since it boosts the earnings of exporters. But the flip side is that it accelerates capital outflows further depreciating the currency. There is also the risk of ‘imported inflation’ and rising cost of foreign debt servicing. Currency depreciation, in tune with the REER (Real Effective Exchange Rate) is desirable, but sharp depreciation can be problematic.

THE SILVER LININGS

The silver linings amongst the clouds need to be appreciated. Despite the macro headwinds, India’s GDP growth rate this year will be impressive at around 7.4 per cent. It is important to appreciate the fact that this will be the fastest growth rate among the large economies of the world. And India is favourably placed to sustain and improve this growth rate, going forward. A bright silver lining in the Indian economy presently is the benign inflation (CPI inflation is at 3.77 per cent in September), which is within RBI’s comfort zone. The fuel inflation and depreciating currency has, so far, not translated into higher headline inflation. Also, the fact that the government has taken the unpopular but courageous decision to pass on the increased cost of fuel to consumers reflects its commitment to stick to the fiscal deficit target.

To conclude, the economic and market environment will continue to be volatile, going forward. Market volatility will provide opportunities for investors.

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CRISES OFFER BUSINESSES LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

*A standard business plan looks at an array of business-related aspects but overlooks significance of factors like insurance, says **Rajesh Nair***

Business plans are something a lot of entrepreneurs work on almost every day of their life. It is often a dynamic document the shelf life of which diminishes faster than one would imagine. The vagaries of the business landscape and the complex and intense nature of competition as well as forces of nature may disrupt even the best laid plans.

Business risks have never been new to an entrepreneur and every business has an intuitive feel of such impacts and the extent to which they need to be looked at and planned for. The recent spate of floods in Kerala is a classic example of disruptions. No data is sufficient to prepare you to expect or pre-empt such a Black Swan event, the first-of-its-kind in a century!

So is there a point in all these planning? The answer is there is a greater need than ever before. For starters, it is becoming increasingly clear that climate change spawns challenges we need to pay heed to. While a flood of this gargantuan magnitude may not be a yearly reality, it has now become imperative to expect *force majeure* more frequently.

A standard business plan looks at your products and services, stresses on the financial health, a sound marketing plan, futuristic resource plan and an ambitious fundraising plan. But what we often tend to overlook, deliberately or otherwise, is significance of factors like insurance.

One may argue that we are not really an insurance economy! Personal life insurance has been hovering like



IT IS A WORTHWHILE EXERCISE TO BRAINSTORM WITH YOUR TEAM ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS RISK FACTORS AND THE CHANCE OF THEIR OCCURRENCE

an unnecessary tab on your monthly expenses, an irritating leak. Medical insurance is finding feet with the spectre of disease and disabilities looming large.

The basic parameters of environment pollution have ensured that the Indian society is facing more health risks than ever before. But these are largely the results of our behaviour which, in turn, compel us to adopt new habits often without offering choices.

For small businesses and startups also this is a moment of reckoning. In these domains also business insurance and deep thought about business risks have become matters of urgent necessity. The usual financial approach and mentality that insurance is an expense is passé.

Today, you need to prepare yourself to look at insurance costs as an investment for a risk-free future. Such a mindset will help provide us a separate lens to view our business. This would cover thoughts about aspects like infrastructure, supply chain, sourcing, communication and data, among others, that we normally do not consider as our priority.

To begin with, it is a worthwhile exercise to brainstorm with your team on the possibilities of various risks and the chance of their occurrence. The contingency plans are a great enabler for you to streamline your thinking. Deep involvement in a risk predicting process enhances our ability to do things better and more efficiently, contemplate a wide variety of things to do across fields and encourages us to seek completion of what we do rather than leaving it incomplete before the next wave of thoughts stream in.

Risk Process Engagement also does the following:

- Prepares our mind for serendipity – picking up ideas from diverse areas and keeping us receptive to interesting cross-sector insights
- Builds porous walls around ideas and helps cross-pollination of ideas
- Clears the mind and prepares it for 'deep work'
- Helps you build a mental 'to-do' library

The very act of putting it down on the drawing board makes you aware and conscious, and that itself is a first step.

(The author is Associate Partner – Markets, South India, EY)

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MANJILAS LOOKS FOR EXPANSION, PLANS TO RAISE PE FUNDING

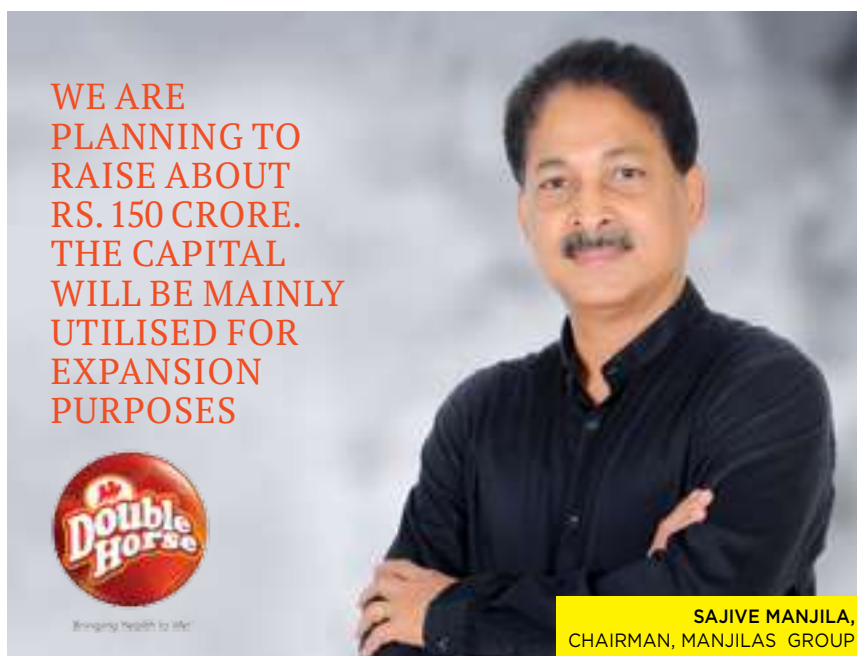
Thrissur-based Manjilas Group is planning to raise private equity funding to scale up operations and clock a turnover of Rs.1000 crore by 2021-22

Two years ago, when *Destination Kerala* featured Sajive Manjila of the Manjilas Group on the cover, the company was undergoing a major transformation from a family-run business to a family-controlled firm by separating ownership and management.

When we met Sajive earlier this month at the firm's corporate office at Nellikunnu in Thrissur for an interview, the veteran entrepreneur had something really important to share with us.

"Discussions are in the final stages to raise private equity (PE) funding. We have identified four firms and will select one shortly," said Sajive. "We are planning to raise about Rs. 150 crore. The capital will be mainly utilised for expansion purposes. Besides, we are also planning to launch some new products. A part of the funding will be used for strengthening the supply and marketing operations of the company. If things go as per plan, we will be able to receive the fund within the next few months. I believe the company would be able to absorb the fund completely in three years. We have recently hired independent directors and consultants, who are presently supervising the entire process," he added.

Manjilas was expecting its turnover to touch Rs. 550 crore in 2017. However, the impact of demonetisation and the implementation of GST on the businesses in general affected the company also. "The real turnover was slightly short of the amount which we predicted then. Following the implementation of GST, sales showed a dip last year.



This year, our Onam sales were impacted due to the floods. But all these are temporary phenomena and we have the confidence to make a sharp recovery. With PE capital coming in, I believe we will be able to achieve the turnover target of Rs. 1000 crore by 2021-22," Sajive informed.

Earlier, there were three limited companies – Manjilas Agro Foods (rice division), Q1 Foods and Ingredients Pvt. Ltd. (spices and rice flour division) and Manjilas Food Tech (ready-to-eat and extruded products division) – and one partnership firm – M O John & Sons Exports. The two limited companies and the partnership firm merged into Manjilas Food Tech. Post merger, the company has succeeded in streamlining marketing and distribution operations.

"As we combined the operations and avoided duplication, the em-

ployee strength reduced from 1650 to 1150. The decision was taken on the basis of recommendation from our consultant that employee strength was too high compared to the company's turnover. Before merger, we had separate offices for many divisions. Some of them were working on rented premises. Now everything is under one roof. Even though we could not achieve the turnover target, the streamlining of operations helped us record a better margin as we were able to cut down unnecessary costs," he added.

On the production side, Manjilas has shortened the stocking period to just 15 days. "After an internal assessment, we found that even seven days stock is enough. We used to stock finished goods for 30 days. Actually, that was not necessary. The plan is to limit the stock period to seven days in the near future," he

said. Currently, the operations side of Manjilas has three divisions – Kerala, outside Kerala and export. “Firstly, we will entrust an agency to examine our marketing operations. As per its recommendation, we would like to bring more professionals to strengthen our marketing activities,” he said.

In the current fiscal, Manjilas has been focusing on reducing the price of products by eliminating all non-viable operations. “Till now, we only considered overall sales. We never examined if each sale was economical or not. We have identified that several ineffective sales are happening. Measures are being taken to wind up those operations and reduce the selling price to quote lesser than that of our main competitors. This will help customers get Double Horse products at a more affordable rate now,” he informed.

The company also did activity-based costing which revealed that certain products are being sold incurring losses. “At the same time, we found that some other products are giving us very good margins. Based on this, now we have to chalk out a marketing strategy,” he added.

Across Kerala, Manjilas is covering less than 13,000 shops at present. “Roughly, there are around 60,000 shops in the State. This shows an immense potential for growth. We are now looking at engaging a professional agency to manage the logistics side of the business. Major manufacturing companies outsource



SANTHOSH MANJILA, DIRECTOR, MANJILAS GROUP, HANDING OVER A CHEQUE OF RS.30 LAKH TOWARDS CMDRF TO V S SUNIL KUMAR, MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

their logistics. After production, they will collect the products, store in their warehouse and deliver to merchants as per our schedule. We have the option to track the delivery. So, moving forward, I feel we should also go for it,” he said. Sajive Manjila was recently in Sri Lanka as part of a trade delegation of Thrissur Chamber of Commerce and Industry and he visited Hayley’s Advantis, Sri Lanka’s leading logistics player.

For Manjilas, as of now, rice constitutes 40 per cent of the business. In future, rice business will come down to 25 per cent as more investments go to other segments. Rice products constitute around 50 per cent while masala is less than 10 per cent. Manjilas has its main manufacturing centre based in Pollachi with three production units. It has two processing units in Palakkad for rice. Manjilas is one among the three companies in Kerala which has rice mills approved by the USFDA.

Meanwhile, Manjilas had to defer its expansion plans in the ready-to-

eat segment as the market is not yet ready. “We had plans to invest in it. We even took a facility on lease in Kochi. But again, since the market was not receptive, we deferred the plan. People are mostly concerned in ingredients and shelf life. For instance, ‘payasam’, one of our products, had a shelf life of one year. However, customers were skeptical. They believe that if ‘payasam’ should last for a year, it should contain chemicals. That’s a misconception. No chemicals are added to increase the shelf life of our ready-to-eat products. We do retort packaging. Here, the product is packed in a special pouch and processed at 120°C under high pressure (30 psi) which in turn neutralises all bacteria to achieve longer shelf life. Unless the pouch is opened, it will have a shelf life of one year. At present, people here are averse to the practice. But I think things will change in the near future,” he said.

Manjilas has major operations in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as well. “Our approach has been to target the Malayali population in these regions. As part of our expansion plan, we will now enter Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata markets. We are in the process of manufacturing products to cater to regional taste. However, the larger plan is to have a pan-India presence for which we need some common products, which will be accepted by people across the country,” he said. Sri Lanka is another market, which Manjilas is now trying to tap. **DK**



VINOD MANJILA, MD, MANJILAS GROUP DISTRIBUTING FOOD PACKETS TO PEOPLE AS PART OF FLOOD RELIEF ACTIVITIES

TAURUS DOWNTOWN THROTTLES TO TRIVANDRUM V 2.0

Project of Rs. 1,500-cr at Phase III of IT campus to include office space, retail, hotel and service apartments; CM assures first phase completion by 2020

BY DEEPU ABY VARGHESE



CM PINARAYI VIJAYAN INAUGURATES THE PROJECT LAUNCH AS SHASHI THAROOR MP, V K PRASANTH, MAYOR, CORPORATION OF THIRUVANANTHAPURAM AND AJAY PRASAD, COUNTRY MANAGING DIRECTOR, TAURUS LOOK ON

When Technopark was launched 28 years ago, not many IT parks of a similar stature were present in the country. Even though Technopark has had the opportunity to make a head start to ride on the wave of technology, it trailed behind over the years as Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad emerged as tier I cities. But that is becoming a story of the past and Trivandrum, that tops the list in terms of governance and sustainable quality of life, is gearing up for a mega slingshot relaunch with Taurus Investment Holdings powering it.

At the project launch of Rs. 1,500-cr Taurus Downtown Trivandrum project coming up at Phase III in Technopark, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that plans are afoot to increase the IT parks space in Kerala from 1.3 cr sq. ft. to 2.3 cr sq. ft.

“Technopark is the first IT park in India. Ever since this government came to office, we have been making every effort to ensure that it becomes a world-class facility by upgrading its capacities, setting up global industries and attracting fresh talent,”



OUR THRUST ON THE IT SECTOR HAS REFLECTED IN NEW PROJECTS COMING UP ACROSS THE STATE OF KERALA

the chief minister said.

He added that a massive expansion in the IT parks space would enable creation of 2.5 lakh direct jobs besides increasing software export and attracting investors to the State.

“As a priority sector, the government is giving emphasis on creating a necessary social milieu and basic infrastructure in the IT sector, aiming at increasing software export and attracting investors,” he said. The first phase of Taurus Downtown Trivandrum project will be completed by 2020, he said, and also unveiled the model of the project on the occasion.

With a total built-up area of 57 lakh sq.ft., the project will come up on 20 acres of the Phase III campus at Technopark. Of the total 22.16 acres, 12.43 acres in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) will be exclusively for office space and the remaining

for retail, hotel and service apartments by Asset Homes.

Leading SEZ builder Embassy Group is associating with Boston-headquartered Taurus Investment Holdings for the project in setting up Embassy Taurus TechZone (ETTZ), a 33-lakh sq. ft. IT space. The Taurus Trivandrum Downtown which is conceived as a game changer for the capital city, also comprises of Taurus Zentrum, a 12-lakh sq. ft. retail space; Asset Taurus Identity, a 315-room service apartment and a 200-room business hotel.

The office space will have plug-and-play facilities for startups and small businesses. To meet the immediate operational needs of the companies which have signed up for space in ETTZ, a prefabricated built-up area of 62,500 sq. ft. named Keystone will be offered within six months. On completion, the project is expected to generate 35,000 direct job openings and indirect employment to 75,000 people.

“Our thrust on the IT sector has reflected in new projects coming up across the State of Kerala,” he added.

Shashi Tharoor MP who was also present at the launch of the project observed that it is important to think beyond politics in matters of development. “It seems to me that this is a very helpful project for the IT industry in Kerala, which can attract more companies. When these big companies come, they will need



A MODEL OF EMBASSY TAURUS TECHZONE

more office spaces which indeed this project hopes to provide,” he said.

“Taurus’ DNA is international and primarily based on accumulation of IQ not only of assets. There are of course intelligent people in all countries and continents, but few show such promising signs of domi-



nating the future marketplace of IQ, and indirectly of AI, as India,” said Lorenz Reibling, Chairman, Taurus Investment Holdings.

V K Prasanth, Mayor, Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram; M Sivasankar IAS, Secretary - IT & Electronics, Government of Kerala;

Hrishikesh Nair, CEO, IT Parks Kerala; Ajay Prasad, Country Managing Director, Taurus; Jitu Virwani, Chairman and Managing Direc-

tor, Embassy Group and V Sunil Kumar, Founder and Managing Director, Asset Homes spoke at the function.

The biggest foreign investment in the construction sector of the IT industry after Smart City, a tripartite lease agreement for the project was signed in the presence of the Chief Minister in March 2018.

With the advent of technology behemoths like Nissan Motor Corporation, Fujitsu and Tech Mahindra, the capital city is no longer a blip on the global tech radar. On the contrary, with Taurus Investment Holdings on board, Thiruvananthapuram is fast evolving into a prominent tech hub teeming with talent and other factors like direct access to talent and healthy staff attrition rates at much lower costs.



ENTREPRENEURS' MEET TO DISCUSS REBUILDING OF KERALA

TiEcon Kerala 2018, scheduled to be held on November 16 and 17 at Le Meridien Kochi, will see the participation of over 1000 delegates

With an aim to help rebuild flood-hit Kerala, business leaders, decision makers and entrepreneurs will discuss all possible ways to support the Seventh Edition of 'TiEcon Kerala 2018'. The event, touted as the State's largest Conference on Entrepreneurship, will be held on November 16 and 17 at Le Meridien Convention Centre, Kochi. Over one thousand delegates are expected to participate in the event.

Announcing it, MSA Kumar, President, TiE Kerala stated that TiE has associated with the State Government (Department of Industries) in conducting Rescue and Relief operations during the recent devastating floods. "Currently we have partnered with the Government in the massive efforts to rebuild Kerala. We firmly believe that Kerala entrepreneurs can contribute substantially to the rebuilding process. As a first step, we have chosen the theme of TiEcon Kerala 2018 as 'Rebuild Kerala – Leveraging Entrepreneurship and Emerging Technologies,'" he said.

"The Conference will bring together the most influential leaders and their innovative products under one roof in an attempt to help aid the upgradation of technologies to rebuild infrastructure, roads, houses, communication systems, weather/disaster warning systems et al," said Rajesh Nair, the Immediate Past President, TiE Kerala. As part of this initiative, TiE Kerala also proposes to conduct a 'The Rebuild Kerala Ideation Competition' with the participation of students from select B-Schools across Kerala.



THE MAIN THEME OF TiECON KERALA 2018 WILL BE 'REBUILD KERALA – LEVERAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

More than hundred speakers from India and abroad will address the conference in 40 sessions. Apart from seminars, panel discussions and key notes on subjects related to the main theme, the Conference will hold special sessions on entrepreneurship and digital trends.

Mentoring and 'master class' sessions with entry to all will focus on topics like writing business plans, valuing a company, choosing partner/co-founder, pricing of products and services and identifying investors. Technology Expo is another key highlight wherein startups will display their products/prototypes, services and solutions. Delegates will also get a live demo of K-SWIFT (Kerala Single Window Interface for Fast and Transparent Clearance), Government of Kerala's new unified payment platform initiative, aimed at improving ease of doing business for investors in the State. Entrepreneurs can apply for all requisite

clearances in the State under K-SWIFT, providing a conducive environment for enterprises in Kerala.



**MSA KUMAR, PRESIDENT,
TIE KERALA**

Some of the key speakers at the conference are Kris Gopalakrishnan, Chairman, Axilor Ventures; S D Shibulal, former CEO & MD, Infosys; Sagarika Ghose, Journalist; Shradha Sharma, Founder and CEO, Your Story Media; Dr. Harini Nagendra, Sustainability Expert, Azim Premji University; Miki Desai, Professor of Architecture, CEPT University; Leo Mavely, Founder & CEO, Axio Biosolutions; Vinod Kumar, CEO, Subex Ltd., Anshu Gupta, Founder, Goonj; Nitin Sood and Sana H Sood, Co-founders, Happy Shappy; Lakshmi Menon, Founder, Pure Living; Manu S Pillai, Author; Robin Alex Panicker, Angel Investor & Co-founder, Basil Gregory Software Labs and Rajeev MA, Enterprise Architect, TCS.

TiEcon Kerala 2018 Annual Awards in four categories will be presented at the event. The four categories for the award are Entrepreneur of the Year, Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year, Start-up Entrepreneur of the Year and Woman Entrepreneur of the Year.

For registrations, visit www.tieconkerala.org. For details, contact, ph: +91 81293 67122 or e-mail: info@tieconkerala.org **DK**



വീടിനൊത്ത സ്റ്റൈൽ

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WTM LONDON 2018 PLATFORM FOR POST-FLOOD TOURISM COMEBACK

Led by Minister Kadakampally Surendran, Kerala Tourism is on a mission to tell the global travel fraternity that the State is back in the business

Kerala Tourism, which has made an astounding revival post the devastating floods in August, is leaving no stone unturned to make the most of WTM London 2018.

Kadakampally Surendran, Minister for Tourism, will lead the Kerala Tourism delegation at WTM 2018 along with Rani George IAS, Secretary, Kerala Tourism. Trade partners in the delegation include Intersight Tours & Travels, Pioneer Personalized Holidays, Abad Hotels and Resorts, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty, The Paul Resorts & Hotels, Xandari Resorts, Alhind Tours & Travels and KTDC.

“Being the first international travel trade event after the floods in August, this edition of WTM 2018 is crucial for Kerala Tourism as we want to tell



RANI GEORGE IAS

the world loud and clear that Kerala has bounced back and is open for business. There is no better platform than WTM to spread this message amongst those in the global travel fraternity,” says Rani George IAS.

The Kerala Pavilion will be themed around backwaters and

houseboats. Visitors will have an opportunity to don a VR headset and be virtually transported to a boat cruising on tranquil waters.

‘IDEAS ARRIVE HERE’

WTM London, the event where ‘Ideas Arrive’, to be held from November 5 to 7, will conduct a key education event to figure out how to increase travel industry sales among LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) travellers. The LGBT segment accounts for an annual travel spend of more than \$211 billion, according to Out Now Global LGBT2030 Study.

INSTAGRAM’S IMPACT

This year, WTM London’s Global Stage will kick off with a look at Instagram’s impact on travel. As the app’s influence continues to grow, the session will ask how travel marketers can get involved. This will be followed by a talk entitled ‘How to Get Billions of Video Views’, which will explain how a handful of video creators are responsible for billions of Facebook views and show ways to work with them.

BREXIT TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Businesswoman Susan Hooper, who sits on the board of the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU), will be the keynote speaker at the exclusive Leaders’ Lunch on the first day of WTM 2018.

Launched in 1980, WTM London facilitates £2.8 billion in industry deals, has around 5000 exhibitors from 182 countries and regions, and 51,000-plus participants.



TAILOR-MADE PACKAGES ARE THE FORTE OF THIS TOUR OPERATOR

Pioneer Personalized Holidays, founded in 1992, is a leading destination management company in South India with overseas marketing operations

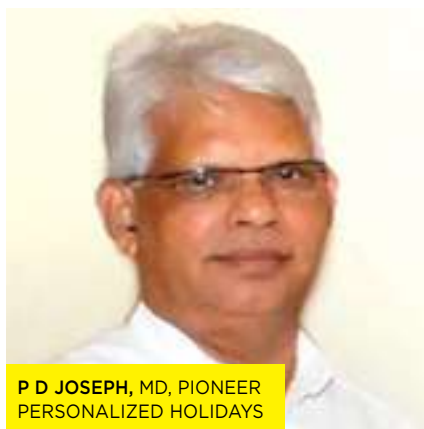
BY DEEPTHI G S

It was the passion for travelling of entrepreneur P D Joseph which led to the inception of Pioneer Personalized Holidays Pvt. Ltd. Founded in 1992, the company set up its main office in Kochi in 1995 and saw a steady expansion from then on. They soon started operating bespoke culture tours in Kerala and then rapidly grew into handling groups directly.

Joseph's son Ranju Joseph is now leading the company which has offices in Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru and Mysore. It is a leading destination management company in South India with an overseas marketing representative based in London. Besides tailor-made FIT itineraries, the company also handles group itineraries in tandem with their principal agents.

"Pioneer has always worked in the tailor-made tour space and focused on offering clients a great holiday, in the way they want and at a pace they are comfortable with," says Ranju Joseph, Director, Pioneer Personalised Holidays. "Understanding clients' requirements and creating packages accordingly has always been our USP," he adds.

In 2000, Pioneer along with leading players in the industry joined hands to form the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) Society and went on to handle the ground transportation logistics for the initial three editions of this premier event. Subsequently, Pioneer went on to bag Kerala State Tourism Award in 2005-06 and the National Tourism Award for Best



P D JOSEPH, MD, PIONEER PERSONALIZED HOLIDAYS



RANJU JOSEPH, DIRECTOR, PIONEER PERSONALIZED HOLIDAYS



Pioneer Personalized Holidays

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Approved by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India
- Accredited Member – Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala
- ISO 9001: 2008-certified Tour Operator
- Best Tour Operator Award – Government of Kerala (2005-06)
- National Tourism Award – Government of India (2011-12)
- Active member of IATO, PATA, SKAL, FHRAI, TAAI, JATA etc.

Tour Operator in 2011-12.

Shedding light on the changing trends in the State's travel industry,

Ranju says, "The tourism industry has changed in such a way that clients these days are more aware of the impact their travel has on a destination. They are looking for more immersive experiences."

Speaking about the emphasis Pioneer gives to Responsible Tourism (RT), he adds, "We have also changed our offerings to meet clients' expectations. Pioneer now offers many RT programmes as part of our packages. In 2017 Responsible Tourism Mission recognised us as the best tour operator after we offered an array of village life experiences to tourists. RT programmes have now become a regular feature in many of our itineraries."

As part of widening its operations, the company is also planning to involve more in the B2B segment. Seamlessly networking around the clock, Pioneer's team of highly-trained travel professionals and field guides extend personalized services to every guest travelling with them.

NOW, A SINGLE PACKAGE TO SEE KERALA'S MAJOR TOURISM SPOTS

Covering all the KTDC properties in the State, KTDC and Intersight Tours and Travels jointly introduced escorted luxury tour packages for tourists

BY DEEPTHI G S



In an innovative venture, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) and Intersight Tours and Travels have jointly invented a package that covers all the KTDC properties located at various destinations of the State to help tourists explore and enjoy different shades of Kerala at one go, that too, in a hassle-free manner.

Called 'Kerala on Wheels', this first-of-its-kind tour programme offers the entire range of KTDC properties to tourists at affordable prices so that they can savour the beauty of the State under a single package.

"By the time the travellers come to the end of their tour under this programme, they would have got a broad idea about the myriad shades and features of Kerala. At one go, the traveller can experience the green paddy fields, mist-clad tea gardens, backwaters and beaches," said M Vijayakumar, Chairman, KTDC. Vijayakumar launched the project at the Kerala Travel Mart (KTM) 2018.

P Bala Kiran IAS, Director, Kerala Tourism; Rahul R IRS, Managing Director, KTDC and Abraham George, Chairman and Managing Director, Intersight Tours and Travels, were present on the occasion.

'KERALA ON WHEELS' IS A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND TOUR PROGRAMME TO MAKE THE ENTIRE RANGE OF KTDC PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO TOURISTS AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

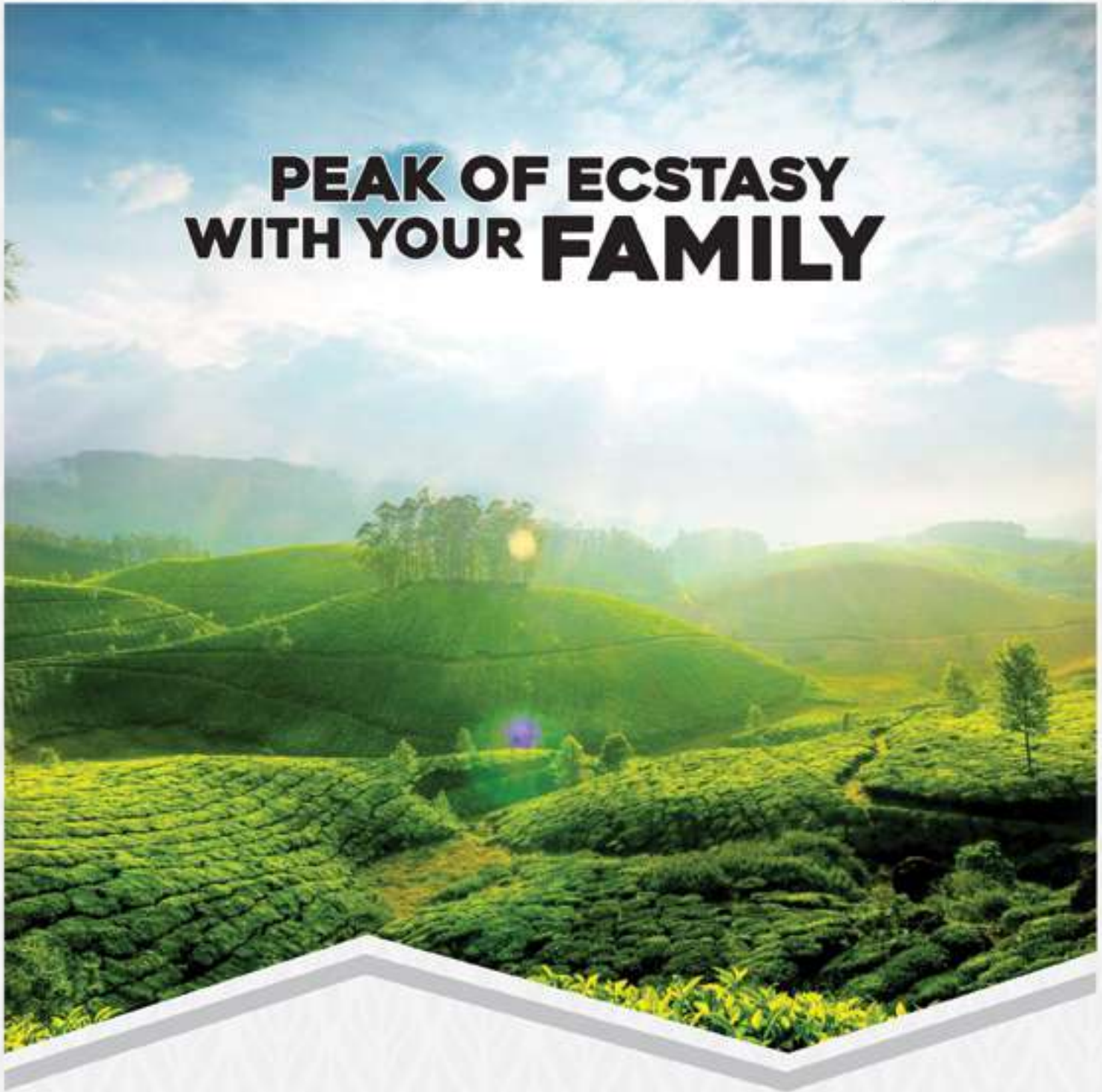
Promoted and marketed by Intersight Tours and Travels, the package having two options will cover almost all the major tourist attractions of Kerala. The first option comprises Kochi, Munnar, Thekkady and Kumarakom/Alappuzha while the second one includes Kochi, Munnar, Thekkady, Kumarakom/Alappuzha and Kova-

lam. Abraham George said the initiative providing affordable yet luxurious mobility to travellers across Kerala. "A major highlight of the package is that the tourists will not have any confusion regarding their travel in various parts of Kerala after availing this package as it covers all the prime destinations of the State," he noted. KTDC will provide the accommodation for takers of the package. KTDC and Intersight Tours and Travels will jointly facilitate transfers. According to a KTDC official, Guides fluent in English will attend to the guests.

Rahul R, Managing Director, KTDC said the recent floods had generated a feeling of apprehension among the travel industry that the occupancy rates in hotels and other properties would show a decline with a likely reduction in tourists' inflow. "Instead of getting bogged down by such negative sentiments, KTDC decided to put in more effort and the results are these packages," he added.

DK

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DUTCH BUNGALOW FORT KOCHI



ABAD BROOKSIDE LAKKIDI

ABAD SET TO OPEN HERITAGE HOTEL AND RAINFOREST RESORT

Holiday getaways Dutch Bungalow Fort Kochi and Abad Brookside Lakkidi will be formally launched in November 2018 at WTM London

Abad Hotels & Resorts, one of the most popular brands in hospitality in Kerala, has announced the launch of two new properties in Kerala – Dutch Bungalow Fort Kochi and Abad Brookside Lakkidi. Both the properties will be launched in November 2018 at WTM London.

Dutch Bungalow Fort Kochi, positioned as a heritage hotel, has 14 rooms – eight heritage classic rooms, four heritage boutique rooms and two suite rooms with a patio facing the pool. The mansion was constructed by the Dutch East India Company in 1668 and they named it the Crystal Palace. The natives called it ‘*kannadi maalika*’ which translates into ‘Palace of Glass’. The British took over the



JIBRAN ASIF
DIRECTOR, ABAD HOTELS & RESORTS

building in 1796 and it was then used by its Navy. In 1874, it came into private possession. “We took the property on lease in March 2018,” says Jibran Asif, Director, Abad Hotels & Resorts. “We have been looking for a suitable property in Kochi to set

up a heritage hotel, a category which was absent in our product portfolio. However, we are particular that room rates should, more or less, match our existing price range. That’s how we zeroed in on this property. All rooms are above 500 sq. ft. in size. It is most suited for our inbound clientele especially from Europe,” he adds.

Abad Brookside is located in Lakkidi, one of the highest peaks in Wayanad district. Branded as a rainforest resort, the property has 13 brookside cottages, five garden bungalows and 12 brookside bungalows spread out in a seven acre valley with an infinity pool, Ayurveda centre and a multi-cuisine restaurant.

“This is a place for unwinding. We have designed the property to offer people an escape from their dusty, noisy and grey cities. A brook runs through the edge of the resort. The cottages have a balcony/sit-out providing an excellent view of the adjoining forest,” says Asif, who is also part of the Kerala Tourism delegation to WTM London 2018.



DUTCH BUNGALOW FORT KOCHI

IT HUB OF KOCHI TO GET THE FEEL OF HIGH-END HOSPITALITY

Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, which is making a debut in Kerala, will cater to the needs of both leisure and business travellers

Situated on the eastern side of the city, Kakkanad, known as the industrial hub of Kochi, is home to Cochin Special Economic Zone, Infopark and SmartCity. The new entrant adorning the area is a hospitality marvel, Four Points by Sheraton Kochi Infopark, a Marriott International Hotel.

Enviably positioned towards the entrance of the sprawling Infopark campus, Four Points will be open to the public in December. The design looks stunning as it flawlessly blends features of classic hospitality and metropolitan sophistication.

Four Points by Sheraton has beautifully incorporated what is quintessential to Kochi, a touch of blue, which amply reflects the hues of the backwaters that surround the 'Queen of the Arabian Sea.' Dinesh Rai, General Manager, Four Points by Sheraton, gives a sneak peek into the property from Burberry-floored



DINESH RAI
GM, FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON

plush lobby to the infinity pool on the 14th floor.

"Kakkanad, being an IT hub with nearly 30,000 people working within the Infopark itself, there was a requirement for a hotel such as this close to this place," feels Rai. "Four Points by Sheraton being a Marriott brand enjoys tremendous customer loyalty. There are quite a lot of people who trust the brand. These are people who travel a lot and they would prefer to come and stay here."

Dinesh Rai says his main priority will be the positioning of the brand. "This is the first Four Points by Sheraton coming to Kerala and being adjacent to Infopark gives us an opportunity to showcase our product very well. We will also rope in good local talents who can deliver authentic service to the guests coming from outside the State or country. The emphasis will be on giving a more local touch."

Standing tall with 14 floors and 218 rooms, the property will offer base category rooms, suite rooms

and extended stay suite rooms. The rooms are plush, spacious and aesthetically done with plenty of natural lighting, and offer captivating views of the lush greenery surrounding Kakkanad. "The concept behind the extended stay suite rooms is that people in the IT field would be staying for projects, which means they may be in residence for a longer period. For this reason, it is more like a 'feel-at-home' space which comes with a kitchenette."

"The Eatery", the main restaurant at Four Points will have a multi-cuisine menu. The specialty restaurant, 'All Spice', on the 14th floor will serve coastal cuisine. For a quick bite, check in to 'The Deli' on the ground floor. The bar, Capers, can accommodate about 40-45 guests. In the near future, there will be spa facility as well. 'Cinnamon', the ballroom, can accommodate up to 220 people. "When it comes to hosting a social event, we can cater to more than 300 people. We also have three meeting rooms," says Rai.

The interior design of the hotel lobby is based on a houseboat theme. The carpets are themed after water and the decors are inspired by traditional English style. From the lampshades to the ceiling fans, everything has a Fort Kochi influence.

"Kerala as a location has always been attracting people. Kerala Tourism is one of the best in India, delivering everything it promises. Four Points by Sheraton is all set to meet the needs of every traveller, whether it be someone who is on a leisure tour, on a business trip or those travelling in groups," he signs off.



3D RENDERING OF FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

*As one among the couple of Malayalis who made it to the ultra-exclusive billionaires' club, industrialist **Dr. B Ravi Pillai** never hesitated to flaunt his soft corner for his home State Kerala and its people even as he grew into a global citizen, expanding the frontiers of his businesses that cover different continents. Now, as the \$3.8-billion business empire of RP Group looks to expand further, this tycoon has his son **Ganesh Ravi Pillai** beside him, sharing the huge responsibility of running the global corporation. Here, in an exclusive interview with **Destination Kerala**, the father-son duo sits together and tells the story of their ever-growing business kingdom*

INTERVIEW BY DEEPU ABY VARGHESE



DR. B RAVI PILLAI WITH HIS SON GANESH RAVI PILLAI



DR. PILLAI ENJOYS THE AFFECTION OF COUNTLESS KERALITES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ELSEWHERE FOR HAVING GIVEN THEM A LIVELIHOOD UNDER THE GROUP, AND GANESH TOO, IS INSPIRED BY HIS FATHER'S HARD WORK LACED WITH HUMANENESS

F

or Padma Shri Dr. B Ravi Pillai, who rose from humble beginnings, building a successful business empire was never an unattainable goal given his skills, vision and steely resolve which helped to form the core of the entrepreneur in him. Dr. Pillai is indeed the second richest NRK (Non-Resident Keralite) in the UAE. But more than his fortune, he is admired for his kindness and attachment to his home State Kerala. He enjoys the love and respect of thousands of NRKs who are now able to support their families back home because of him. When he looks back at his 35-year-long professional life, he appears content, for he was able to build a global brand that is synonymous with trust.

The 64-year-old God-fearing Dr. Pillai always roots his commitment in trust. As the helmsman of the RP Group, Dr. Pillai built that trust through diligence, toil and most of all, camaraderie with his employees. Even as he is known for his affinity for his people on the one side, he remains a head-strong ruler of his empire who is capable of reading the vibes of even the most qualified candidate who

sits in front of him at his office.

After leading the business from the front all these years, Dr. Pillai now has a 'new partner' which is the result of a conscious decision rather than something dictated by the board meeting. He was only following his inner calling when he decided to groom his son Ganesh Ravi Pillai as the future leader of the \$3.8-billion business empire.

Even for Ganesh, the ticket to his father's RP Group was not an easy buy. Before joining as Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Group, Ganesh had a stint with the

New York-based Citibank, his first major hands-on experience in the corporate world. But for the father-son duo, it was only a warm-up before Ganesh shouldered the really big responsibility.

And this partnership had a sparkling take off in 2016 when Gulf Asia Contracting Company, the construction arm of the RP Group of Companies in the Middle East, entered the Guinness World Records for carrying out the longest concreting process in the industry. Fresh out of Citibank, Ganesh had the onus of leading the team which made this stupendous achievement possible. For Ganesh, it was nothing short of a collective achievement, one that was attained with the support of his colleagues and as a result of the determination to finish the job assigned to him on time, that too, in a professional manner.

Perhaps it was the same traits that Ganesh inherited from his billionaire father which may have prompted Dr. Pillai to think that it was time the RP Group sought his services in shaping its future. Dr. Pillai enjoys the affection of countless Keralites in the Middle East and elsewhere for having given them livelihood under the Group, and Ganesh too, is fully aware of how his father's hard work helped the Group in finding new opportunities for Kerala.

Here, in an exclusive interview with *Destination Kerala*, Dr. Ravi Pillai and Ganesh Ravi Pillai speak about their colossal business and everything related to it.

Dr. Ravi Pillai is the second richest NRK in the UAE. However, unlike many others, you are not highly visible. Who is the real Ravi Pillai? What is your foundation and what drives you?

Dr. RAVI PILLAI (DR. RP): I always wanted to lead the life of a common man. The main reason for that is I learned the lessons of life and business from the common man.





DR. B RAVI PILLAI WITH HIS FAMILY

I am a firm believer and I always pray to God to enable me to do only good things in life. I wish to offer maximum help to the people around me. Yes, it has been my mantra all this while. We all are nothing but puppets in the hands of an almighty God. We all are working the way he wants.

My policy in business and, of course, in life is not to harm anyone for whatever reason and not to make money out of the miseries of people.

Businessmen who started in GCC are moving their money to other democratic and emerging markets. What are your plans in this regard?

Dr. RP: Yes, that is true. Investment is flowing into South Asian countries like Thailand, Myanmar, Maldives and the Philippines primarily because they are emerging markets. In my opinion also, investments in these countries are very promising in terms of returns. RP Group is currently doing a large hospitality project in Maldives.

Your fellow NRK businessmen have expanded their operations outside Kerala and to north Indian States. What is RP Group's India play?

Dr. RP: I have big business projects in Delhi, Mumbai and Pune. Besides, we are also doing a project which will be the largest-of-its-kind in India. I don't want to divulge the details now. Probably, it will make headlines next year. RP Group's India play will get a boost in the coming years. That decision mainly comes from the realisation that we cannot eternally depend on the Gulf countries. Even those countries are slowly shifting their focus from traditional business models.

What do you have to say about the general investment climate in India?

Dr. RP: I feel it is going to be a very difficult time in India for the next seven months mainly due to the upcoming union elections. Everything will remain virtually paralysed until the it is over. A change in the investment scenario will happen only after the next government takes charge.

You have many interesting investments like Kingdom of Dreams in Noida and Wizcraft International Entertainment. How do you decide on making such investments?

Dr. RP: RP Group has streamlined its investment processes and we have a research group which looks into the scope of every investment that we intend to make. So we take a decision only based on its findings. It has been two years since I have invested in Kingdom of Dreams and it was made after a similar study was conducted by our investment research wing.

What are your commitments to invest in Kerala? How many Keralites could be employed in the next five years?

Dr. RP: We are ready to invest in Kerala if we find good opportunities. Remember, RP Group has played a major role in providing employment to a large number of Keralites. I assure you that it is only going to increase in the coming years, especially under Ganesh's leadership. Our businesses are booming and

headcount growth will also see an increase of 10 to 15 per cent. We are launching new operations in Africa which will again throw open a lot of new opportunities for our people. My son is very much interested in the IT sector and I think he may also explore the prospects of investing in startups.

I am trying to bring businessmen from other countries to invest in Kerala and India using my contacts. However, for doing that I should be 100 per cent confident about the opportunities available in our State.

You are heading the council of Loka Kerala Sabha which brought NRKs under one umbrella. What have been the achievements and what are the possibilities offered by the forum?

Dr. RP: At present, Loka Kerala Sabha is discussing the possibilities of starting three projects with the support of the State Government. We hope to set the ball rolling by next month (December). The State Government is studying the feasibility of the proposed projects. Thorough studies will be conducted because it is NRK money that is going to be channelled into these projects. Funds for these projects will be mobilised once we get the nod from the State Government.

I have proposed four projects. One is an NRI City which will have an international school and hospital. The second is a chain of hospitals of international standards. A medical equipment manufacturing facility is

the third one while the fourth one is a project for manufacturing titanium products. Another investment proposal which we discussed was an old-age home with most modern medical and housing facilities. I understand that the Chief Minister has taken keen an interest in that project.

THE EMPLOYEE STRENGTH WILL GROW BY 10 TO 15 PER CENT SOON. OUR NEW OPERATIONS IN AFRICA WILL CONTRIBUTE TO HEADCOUNT GROWTH

Most of your investments in Kerala were made as a result of your love for the home State. How long will you continue with these investments without considering RoI?

Dr. RP: It is very difficult to make revenue from hospitality and healthcare sectors in Kerala. We are using our own money to run operations. We are not taking loans from banks mainly because that may lead to losses. We are able to run the business because RP Group has strong finances. If you ask me how long it will go like that, well, I cannot say. Whether it has any solution again depends on a set of things. Land prices are very high in Kerala, construction expenses are huge, salary expenses are again on the higher

side and so are the prices of all other perishables in the business. On the other hand, tourists will always go to places which offer the best amenities and value for money. If we have to attract them to our properties we have to be competitive in the international markets.

Satisfied customers bring us more business. I believe it is not just the hotel's job to ensure their happiness. The travel trade and the State Government should put their heads together and figure out how we can achieve this collectively. That means through our joint efforts, starting from the taxi driver at the airport to all the people who facilitate tourism, everyone should be able to make our visitors happy. Then they will definitely come back. This is how I look at it.

Ganesh has already entered the business and your daughter Dr. Arathi is heading Upasana Hospital, your initiative in the healthcare sector. So what does this succession means for the RP Group of Companies?

Dr. RP: The RP Group has business interests in various places around the globe and we employ more than one lakh people. Our business is growing like never before. RP Group is into industrial construction, trading, hospitality, healthcare, education, construction of high-rise buildings, IT and real estate. We are going to invest more in India. Now we are present all over the Gulf and in countries

DR. B RAVI PILLAI WITH NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER



RECEIVING THE INDIAN CLUB BAHRAIN'S CENTENARY AWARD FROM THEN PRESIDENT DR. APJ ABDUL KALAM



RECEIVING PADMA SHRI FROM THEN PRESIDENT PRATIBHA PATIL

like Japan, Australia, the UK and expanding further.

My children joining the business will add to my strength and bolster my confidence. My son Ganesh has a very pleasing personality and is also highly focussed. I believe he will be able to do more than what I have done so far in my career. So is my daughter Dr. Arathi. With both of them handling responsibilities, I am sure the business is going to grow by leaps and bounds.

You have 30-odd years of experience in business. Now at the crossroads of succession, how are you grooming your son Ganesh to take over the business?

Dr. RP: I am a person who came up from the grass-roots level. But Ganesh is different. He has received quality education of international standards and hence, we cannot technically say that he is a green-horn. He has already got sufficient international exposure which even I don't have at this age. Most importantly, I think he is going to benefit from the kind of circle of friends he has nurtured after his MBA course. He has a lot of experience. As a person adept in technical aspects related to business and having the right connections, I think he can easily handle the business. So essentially, he doesn't necessarily require my training. He has a lot of original ideas.

How do you foresee your business under Ganesh? What do you expect from him?

Dr. RP: I do have great expectations about Ganesh. RP Group under his leadership is poised for huge growth. I say it because I know he is a good decision-maker, very shrewd and determined. Now it has been one year since he joined the business and currently, he is looking after the businesses in Dubai and Bahrain, mainly segments like construction and IT. I hope he will bring about substantial changes in the company. He did his MBA from one of the premier institutes in the world.

Now with Dr. Arathi and her husband Dr. Aditya taking over, how do you see the healthcare business expanding? Are they planning any new projects?

Dr. RP: We hope to go for large expansions on the healthcare front. We will definitely not settle for just one hospital. At present, we are studying the possibilities in the health sector of Kerala. Our vision is to develop a very large healthcare brand in Kerala.

Though you are not a person who is visibly ostentatious, the wedding of your daughter Dr. Arathi was a glitzy affair. Why was that?

Dr. RP: You know I have hundreds of friends both outside and within

India and many of them are holding very important positions. Hence, it was necessary and I could not have compromised on that.

Can you tell us about your ventures in the education sector?

Dr. RP: My wife Geetha is running the New Millennium School in Bahrain and we have a nursing college in Kerala. If the NRI City project proposal is approved, then we may set up an international school in Kerala also.

(TO GANESH)

Have you been influenced by your father in any way? What have you learned from him so far?

GANESH RAVI PILLAI (GRP): There are certain things which I have imbibed from my father and his business. The first thing is trust. The second aspect is his commitment to work. If he has committed to a certain work, he always sees to it that it is completed as promised. In the process he may end up making loss or profit. But for him, keeping his word is more important than anything else. Also, he puts a lot of effort into his work. There are times when he has completed projects before the stipulated time. Another habit of his which has interested me is his punctuality. Be it a meeting or any other event, he will be there well before it begins. These are some of



THE RAVIZ
RESORT AND SPA,
ASHTAMUDI

his habits which have influenced me to a great extent. RP Group is a company which my father has built brick by brick. Being his son, I have been able to watch his style of functioning very closely, and undoubtedly, it is going to help me and the company in the future. More than a professional approach, a personal touch to aspects concerning the company will help yield better results. That is how I have seen my father doing it over the years.

As for the training I have received from my father, I would say that he has always advised me to consult, read more and travel. He constantly underscores the importance of learning more about the things that we handle.

When he entrusts me with a task, he ensures that I learn every aspect of it. He insists that I follow that kind of a discipline while undertaking tasks, be they big or small. The understanding I have is to never involve in any business without acquiring the right knowledge about it. I am fully involved in all the businesses that I am looking



GANESH RAVI PILLAI

after now. It is only natural that one takes some time to understand and learn about them in detail. That way I have had great learning experiences.

What are your plans for the future of RP Group?

GRP: My father has shown me through examples how to treat each and every colleague in the com-

pany as our own family member. In the process of growing up I have seen how he has maintained good relations with the employees of the company.

I will retain that 'sense of family' in the future, too. My efforts will be concentrated towards taking the business forward the same way my father did.

Could you share with us your experience in RP Tech, the IT venture?

What are your future plans for it?

GRP: We are in the domain of SAP (System Applications and Processing). Our core strength is in providing end-to-end solutions in SAP. As the CEO of RP Tech, I am currently involved in strategic decision making. Under the guidance of my father, I am now focussed on upscaling RP Tech to the next level. There are plans to expand the verticals of RP Tech. Besides SAP, we have laid our hands on mobility, IoT and Big Data. We are already in the growth phase and my goal is to take the company to the next level. I am very excited about it.





TOURISM SECTOR GETS A GRASSROOT LEVEL PUSH

Deepu Aby Varghese examines how well the Responsible Tourism Mission has fared in meeting its goals since inception in 2017

Tourism in Kerala has never failed to attract domestic and international visitors simply because of the uniqueness of the State's offerings ranging from its varied landscapes and ubiquitous green cover, round-the-year tropical climate and mouth-watering delicacies, among others. But how far the State has been able to utilise its tourism potential for the socio-economic good of local communities is the moot question. However, addressing this issue to a certain extent, the Responsible

Tourism (RT) Mission, launched by the State Government in 2017, has emerged as the torchbearers of change on this domain of late.

Though a unified definition for Responsible Tourism was finalised at Cape Town in South Africa during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, it was Kerala which took the idea forward by developing and implementing the first working model of RT at Kumarakom village in the State.

Until 2007 neither the State's local self-government (LSG) bodies nor local communities were active participants in facilitating tourism promotion. With the launch of RT's pilot project in 2008 at Kumarakom, Kovalam, Thekkady and Vythiri, this situation slowly started to change. Later, by 2011, RT was extended to

three more destinations – Bekal, Kumbalangi and Ambalavayal as the second phase.

The basic guiding principle of the RT Mission is 'local products, local procurement and local supply.' In this system, RT Mission never receives or handles payments. "The Mission plays the role of a facilitator. Nothing more than that. We don't receive cash or handle finance associated with the stakeholders," says Rupeshkumar K, State Coordinator, Responsible Tourism Mission.

In the initial years of RT Mission, the focus was on the destination-specific model. For example, all products required at Kumarakom are sourced from there itself. RT Mission has its origins in the struggle of the local people to sell their products. RT, in a broader economic



sense, brings together all stakeholders from within and outside the industry under one roof. Though the RT Mission encourages meeting the demand of tourism-related products locally, it is also aware of the fact that RT of a specific location could become a monopoly of certain local businessmen over a period of time.

“Take for example the case of destination panchayats. Some tourism inventories may be available beyond the limits of say, Kumaarakom panchayat. So, it naturally becomes a resource for the beneficiaries of neighbouring panchayats, too and vice versa,” says Rupesh who has been at the forefront in resolving such RT issues for the last 10 years. One of the main ways for the Mission to address such issues has been to grow from being panchayat-centric to district-centric.

“Kerala’s strategy to promote Responsible Tourism is timely and it will help the State’s growth tremendously. RT is the future of



KADAKAMPALLY SURENDRAN
MINISTER FOR CO-OPERATION,
TOURISM AND DEVASWOMS

**TOURISM SECTOR
SHOULD BECOME A
SOURCE OF INCOME
FOR THE LOCAL POP-
ULATION. GOVERN-
MENT IS ENVISAGING
PROGRAMMES TO
EXPAND THE RE-
SPONSIBLE TOURISM
INITIATIVES**

product development in the tourism industry. More and more people are choosing such destinations which adhere to RT guidelines,” says Jose Dominic, Tourism Entrepreneur.

RT MISSION UNITS

The result of the first and second phase implementations of RT in 2008 and 2011 was the formation of 160 RT units at grass-roots level. Since the launch of the RT Mission last year, 7570 RT units have been established across the State. The RT Mission hopes to increase it substantially soon.

At present, registered RT units are focussing on inventories, products and services like home stays, farm stays, tented accommodation units, local tour operators, shikkara operators, country boat operators, chauffeurs, art and cultural units; handicrafts and souvenir units, and paper and cloth bags units. Units providing perishable products like milk and vegetables, and value-

Before RT Mission (2008 to 2017)

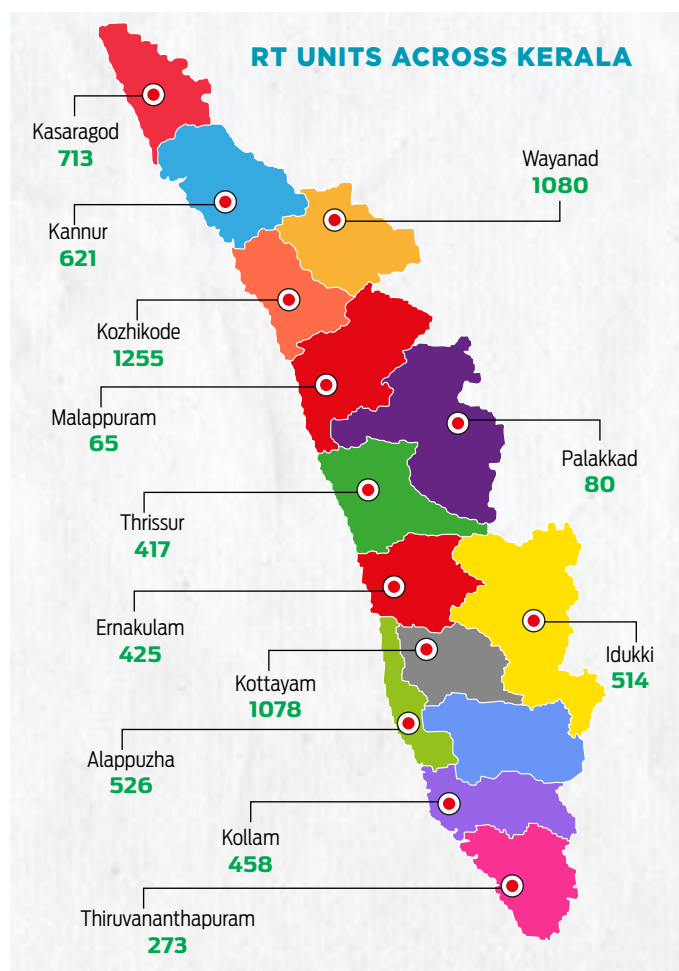
RT Units	Direct Beneficiaries	Indirect Beneficiaries	Beneficiaries of various trainings	Experiential Tour Packages	Income generated
197	843	2529	1280	7	₹ 12 cr



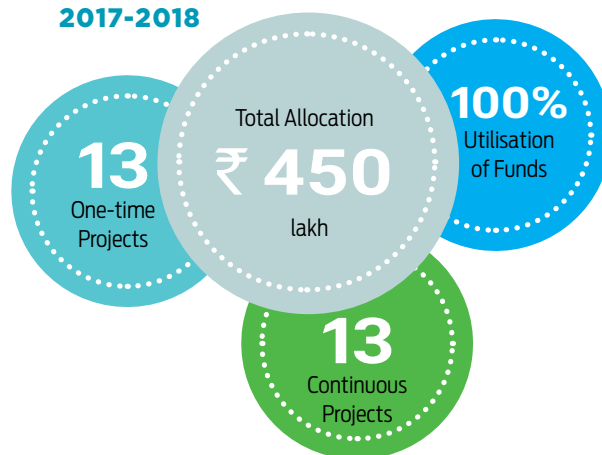
330 % Rise in Income

7570	15,543	26268	2444	40	₹ 5.26 cr
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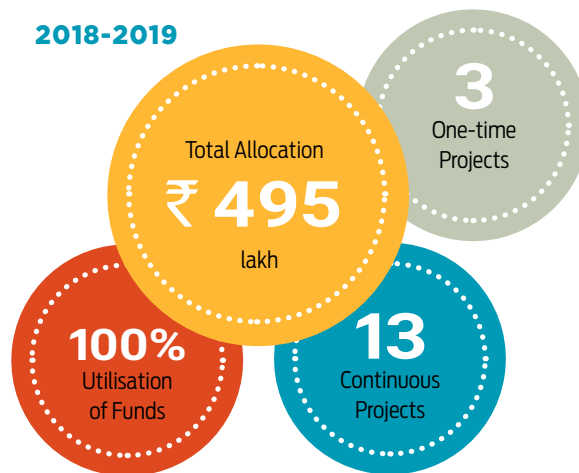
RT Mission (2017-18)



2017-2018



2018-2019



KEY FUNCTION OF RT MISSION

- Initiating community level tourism activities
- Creating tourism trade-community level linkages
- Encouraging adoption of RT principles and practices by tourism trade and other stakeholders
- Developing local entrepreneurship in tourism
- Promoting socially relevant activities by RT units
- Capacity building of community at various levels
- Promoting local employment and local procurement in tourism sector
- Conducting training, research and studies in the specific fields
- Promoting green principles and protocols in construction, architecture and waste management
- Protecting and promoting local arts and culture through tourism



added food products also function under the umbrella of RT Mission. More than 15,500 people directly and 26,260 indirectly are benefitted through the activities of RT Mission.

The strategic change in the approach to RT has helped register Rs. 5.26-crore revenue in 2017-18. Thus RT generated an income which is 330 per cent more than what it used to generate annually in the years before. Although the Mission aimed at generating revenue of about Rs. 20 crore, the flood situation adversely impacted this goal. However, the Mission is poised to help register an increase in income through RT in the 2018-19 financial year, according to the officials of the RT Mission.

The identification of beneficiaries of RT happens in two ways. One is the destination-specific way under which awareness programmes are conducted. Here, district coordinators and gram panchayats will identify prospective units through discussions and meeting with local communities.

The Mission collects data on the requirements of tourism inventories at various tourism spots. The Mission also identifies the local products which could help meet demands of a particular area. It is only after such careful analysis that Responsible



RUPESHKUMAR K
STATE COORDINATOR,
KERALA RT MISSION

Tourism units are formed. “It is a very big participatory exercise and we don’t straight away go into unit formations on a bulk scale,” says Rupeshkumar.

ONLINE PLATFORM TO OFFER LOCAL PRODUCTS

In mid-October, the RT Mission had announced that an online platform to market local products, both perishables and non-perishables, sourced from registered beneficiaries, will be launched in November. The online platform with a focus on local economic empowerment is expected to benefit tourism and its inventories in the State. According to RT Mission officials, it will have details on what products are available and at which locations. The online

platform will also offer products which are exclusive to certain places in the State like the world famous *Aranmula Kannadi* and *Karimeen* (Pearl Spot Fish) which is indigenously seen at Kumarakom and nearby areas. “The economic benefits of the RT Mission units will increase once the network is up,” Rupeshkumar says.

The changes that have been brought about by the Mission, little but significant, vindicate the State Government’s determination not to downplay RT as a showcase mission. “The trial of this project, which ran between 2008 and 2010, succeeded at Kumarakom but didn’t do well in Kovalam. However, over a period of 10 years, it has succeeded at seven places in the State. In the second phase, the government is intensely supporting the Mission and that has reflected in the changes it has brought about,” he says.

CHALLENGES AND TARGETS

‘Creating a better place for people to visit and a better place to live,’ a main guiding principle of Responsible Tourism, is idealistic. However, in practice, RT is one of the most challenging endeavors a stakeholder in the tourism industry can commit to. “For the common people of

the State, RT happens when tourism comes to them and only then a tangible change will occur in the social, economic and environment fronts envisaged by the Mission,” Rupeshkumar observes. To create a better place for tourism and the people, environmental protection has to be ensured and that is why it has been the core of RT. As part of its environmental responsibility, RT Mission has been taking up initiatives to reduce plastic usage in the tourism industry, put in place proper and efficient waste management systems at destinations and protect local varieties of trees and mangroves.

“I think Kerala always had an orientation towards RT and when it actually took off, it was hailed as a welcome change. RT Mission will provide a fillip to the whole cause,” Jose Dominic observes.

Similarly, under the Clean Vembanadu Lake campaign spearheaded by the Mission, regular scientific waste management training sessions are being conducted for houseboat owners and employees in Alappuzha district. Recently, the initiative had made headlines when 55 truckloads of plastic garbage were removed from the lake.

“As part of the waste management initiatives of RT Mission, a registered RT unit is collecting plastic waste from different places of



Kottayam and Alappuzha districts, processing it and converting it into plastic bricks which will be utilised for different purposes,” says the RT Mission’s State Coordinator. The awareness created by the Mission has encouraged resorts in Thekkady and Kumarakom to replace plastic straws with environment-friendly straws made from coconut leaf or bamboo. Similarly, according to RT Mission, all resorts in Kumarakom and Thekkady have replaced plastic water bottles with glass bottles in guest rooms.

‘PEPPER’ PROJECT

People’s Participation for Participatory Planning and Empowerment through Responsible Tourism (PEPPER) is the project introduced by RT Mission to ensure local community participation from the planning stage to the implementation level of an RT project at a specific destination.

“Without local support tourism sector cannot survive in the long term. RT practices in the pilot phases proved that industry-community harmony elevates the market value of a destination,” Rupeshkumar says. The project has been implemented at Vaikom on a pilot basis and is being extended to 10 local bodies across the State.

HOW PEPPER WORKS

Under the PEPPER Project ‘special tourism grama sabhas’ are convened in the LSGs with an aim to discuss tourism possibilities of the respective areas.

This is followed by focus group discussions. Subsequently, resource directories will be prepared to record the details of various products, including experiential tour packages. Suitable areas will be identified for providing training and capacity building, and training will be imparted to all stakeholders before developing the area as a ‘new destination.’



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EBIN AND JOHNCY

LEARN MORE ABOUT TRIPS FROM THIS COUPLE 'ON THE MOVE'

The traveller couple, Ebin and Johncy started their travel blog 'Trip Jodi' which now has more than three lakh viewers

BY HEMA SREEKUMAR

A

re you the kind of person bitten by the travel bug? One who plans for months before making a trip to somewhere and saves every penny for your trip? If you are, then this couple, Ebin Ephrem Elavathingal and his wife Johncy John, have many surprises in store for you. Hailing from Angamaly (Ebin) and Thodupuzha (Johncy), they hardly miss the opportunity to grab their backpacks and set off on their bike to explore places, mostly spots unexplored by tourists.

But that's not just it! The traveller Coimbatore-settled couple, has found a way to generate viable revenue while pursuing their passion.

Micro influencer marketing forms the couple's source of revenue when followers of their social media pages go by their recommendations to check into accommodation in a particular property. "We charge properties a minimum of 20 to 30 per cent for promoting their services. Now, we promote hotels and homestays. Our dream is to run a chain of hostels conceptualised our way; a Trip Jodi-certified stay facility in almost 10 cities in the State," says Ebin, who works as an Assistant Professor at Karpagam College of Engineering, Coimbatore.

The couple started their travel blog 'Trip Jodi' in September 2017

that has now more than three lakh viewers. The site provides an insight into their trips – the destinations they covered, the specialities found on each location, the 'must sees' and many more. "Ours was an arranged marriage. I always loved travelling and Johncy also shared the same interest and that is how we decided to explore places in the most economical way," he says. Though their initial trips were to nearby places they gradually began undertaking trips to distant spots.

"Before marriage, travel was not something much appreciated in my family. When I came to know that Ebin had travel interests I was more than happy to join him on his trips," says Johncy, who works as Associate at Amazon. Once the couple started uploading content in social



SOME PEOPLE APPROACH US SEEKING OUR HELP IN PROMOTING THEIR PROPERTIES. BUT WE DO THIS AFTER ENSURING THAT THE PLACE IS 100 PER CENT SAFE AND SECURE

media regularly, they came across a plethora of requests for travel recommendations. “That is how we decided to start a YouTube channel, an Instagram page and Facebook page which now has 10,000 viewers, 12,000 viewers and 7000 followers respectively,” Ebin adds.

Their online interaction platforms have also helped people get acquainted with lesser-known places and hotels. For instance, Darpan Wood House at Kotagiri has received good number of customers who arrived after reading their post about the homestay on their Trip Jodi blog.

“If we do not know the businessmen personally, we charge a commission from them for promoting their business (like hotels, resorts and homestays). Some people approach us seeking our help in promoting their properties. But we do this only if we are convinced that the place is 100 per cent safe and

secure for stay,” Johncy says. At present, trip Jodi has tied-up with 23 property brands where each brand may have 10-20 properties under them. The visitors who get referred to properties through Trip Jodi can avail a discount of around 45 per cent. “Once ‘Trip Jodi’ gets registered in two months, we will also stand to gain financially,” he says.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY TRIPS

One of the main highlights of the trips undertaken by this couple is their economical nature. They prefer public transport for travelling. “We have stayed in Goa for 23 days spending just Rs. 900! The expense incurred on a trip is based on your priority. The more the luxury, the higher the cost,” feels Johncy.

Among the number of destinations they covered across Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Goa, surprisingly the couple has no favourite

destination as such to suggest. For them, each place offers a new experience on subsequent visits. “We have visited Ooty more than 10 times and each time, the place had something different to offer,” says Ebin.

Sometimes, they also include more people, especially couples, on their trips, upon request from them. Recently, a foreign couple – husband from Spain and wife from Korea – had accompanied Ebin and Johncy on a trip. “Travelling has helped us understand each other better. Also, we both will have different takes on each place and this helps us develop a complete view of a place. Through ‘Trip Jodi,’ we encourage people to travel at an affordable cost,” they affirm. They are also in the process of branding their Trip Jodi blog. Since both of them love hospitality sector, they are also planning to start a youth hostel, meant mainly for couples who are looking for an economical and are safe stay.

Ebin and Johncy are also setting out to explore Ladakh in January, their first North Indian trip.

For more details, visit their blog, www.tripjodi.in.

LULU FINANCIAL GROUP HELPS DONATE MORE THAN RS. 7 CRORE TO CMDRF



LuLu Financial Group, the leading financial services company with more than 200 branches around the world, helped donate Rs. 7 crore to the Kerala Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF). A memento commemorating the milestone was presented to Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala, by Adeeb Ahamed, MD, LuLu Financial Group in Abu Dhabi during the former's recent official visit to the UAE.

"We know that those affected by the floods in Kerala have an urgent need for the basics of life, including shelter, food, water and clothing.

We are honoured to have been able to assist the people on the long road to recovery after the floods," said Ahamed.

"We have also actively supported local relief efforts and will continue to help communities as they recover," he added.

LuLu Financial Group was one of the first organisations to waive off transaction charges for those sending funds to CMDRF, through all its branches in GCC and APAC. The group was also on the ground reaching out to relief camps in the State by providing essential items on a regular basis.

KERALA TOURISM GETS CENTRAL AID

In a major push to pilgrim tourism, Kerala has secured the Centre's approval for a Rs 91.72-crore proposal to improve tourist amenities at 147 pilgrim centres of different faiths across the State. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, endorsed the proposal submitted by the State Government in this regard, as part of the Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan.

Stating that pilgrim tourism is a priority area for the State, Kadakampally Surendran, Kerala Tourism Minister, said that a detailed project report on the scheme will be submitted to the Centre soon. "We will give priority to pilgrim tourism, considering the growing importance of this segment," he said.

The main objective of the project is to develop basic infrastructure at major pilgrim centres by building facilities including food stalls, halls for serving food and restrooms.

SML ISUZU LAUNCHES THREE HEAVY DUTY CARRIERS IN THE GLOBAL SERIES OF TIPPER, TRUCKS

Commercial automobile major SML Isuzu launched its new series in the cargo truck segment called Global Series in Kochi. The three new heavy-duty carriers introduced are Samrat GS tipper, and two trucks Samrat GS HD19 and Sartaj GS turbo-CNG. Yugo Hashimoto MD and CEO, SML Isuzu, launched the global series. Junji Tonoshima, Senior Vice President, Marketing; Naval Kumar Sharma, GM (Product Sales and Customer Service); V Nilakantan, Chief Manager, Marketing and MR, and Dicklus C Valloor, MD, Valloor Motors were present at the launch. Valloor Motors Pvt. Ltd. is the authorised dealer in Kochi.



MANAPPURAM FINANCE INVITES SMALL DEPOSITORS TO INVEST IN RETAIL NON-CONVERTIBLE DEBENTURES



Manappuram Finance, the non-banking finance major in India, issued a tranche of Rs. 1000 crore retail non-convertible debentures (NCD), inviting small depositors to invest. The tranche 1 of the issue was opened for subscription on October 24.

Tranche 1 Issue of the redeemable NCDs with a face value of Rs. 1,000 each, has a base issue size

of Rs. 200 crore with an option to retain oversubscription up to Rs. 800 crore.

“We are targeting small depositors through this NCD issue. The minimum amount one can invest is Rs. 10,000. Strong banks offer 7-7.5 per cent interest a year whereas the yield from this NCD is 10.46 per cent, which is 40-45 per cent higher. If someone is getting an interest

income of Rs. 10,000 per year, he will be able to get about Rs. 15,000 by investing in our NCDs,” said V P Nandakumar, Managing Director & CEO, Manappuram Finance.

The Tranche 1 Issue is scheduled to close on November 22 with an option of early closure or extension as decided by the Board of Directors or the Debenture Committee of the company as the case may be.

V-GUARD Q2 PROFITS UP BY 9 PER CENT

In the financial quarter ended September 30, 2018 V-Guard Industries posted a 9 per cent rise in profit despite the recent flood-situation in the State. Net revenue from operations for the half year stood at Rs. 1232.47 crore compared to Rs. 1132.96 crore in the same period of the previous year.

Commenting on the company's performance, Mithun K Chittilappilly, Managing Director, V-Guard Industries said, “We continue to make good progress in the non-South markets, and plan to extend our new products into further



markets in the second half of the year. We are hope-

ful of recovering a part of the topline growth in the coming months. Some pricing actions are being planned which will help recover the impact of input cost increases.”

TIRUN ANNOUNCES EXCLUSIVE INDIAN CRUISES FROM KOCHI TO GOA, DUBAI AND ABU DHABI

TIRUN Travel Marketing, the exclusive India representative of the award-winning cruise line Celebrity Cruises, has announced India-specific sailings aboard its recently revitalised ship, Celebrity Constellation. The six and eight-night itineraries to/from Kochi and Mumbai have been tailor-made for the benefit of Indian guests. According to the promoters, the cruise package gives a unique opportunity to guests to embark on a luxury cruise from their own country and sail through various ports in the UAE and India. The added incentive of the cruise is the option of enjoying special New Year and Christmas celebrations on board with an exclusive view of fireworks in Dubai on New Year's Eve. Furthermore, a two-night stay in Dubai and an overnight stay option in Abu Dhabi and Mumbai give more reasons to guests to set sailing in December, giving them an opportunity to explore great



tourist destinations in the itinerary, while the cruise ship serves as a hotel for the night. “As the market for cruise tourism widens and matures in India, sailings such as these are a natural progression to better capture this burgeoning customer base,” said Ratna Chadha, Chief Executive, TIRUN Travel Marketing.

What adds to the appeal of the cruise package announced by Celebrity Cruises is that the holidays will be all-inclusive. Meals with a special Indian menu and standard beverages are part of the offering starting at \$731 per guest.

KSUM, CPCRI SIGN MoU TO GIVE FILLIP TO AGRICULTURE STARTUPS IN KERALA



In a big boost to agriculture startups, Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) and Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to guide budding entrepreneurs to convert their enterprises into commercially successful ventures with the backing of technology.

As per the MoU, the CPCRI will provide technological assistance to startups that come up with innovative entrepreneurship ideas in the agriculture sector while KSUM will offer guidance for marketing using modern tools, including consultancy to sharpen their entrepreneurial skills.

The CPCRI has developed more than 30 technologies for agriculture entrepreneurs.

Dr. Saji Gopinath, CEO, KSUM and Dr. P Chowdappa, Director, CPCRI signed the MoU in the presence of Justice P Sathasivam, Governor of Kerala, at the Innovators' Meet held in Kasaragod recently.

Dr. Raju Narayana Swamy IAS, Chairman, Coconut Development Board (CDB), and N A Nellikkunnu MLA, Kasaragod were also present on the occasion. The MoU envisages conduct of seminars to implement innovative technologies in the agriculture sector and the introduction of new technologies for the benefit of farmers.

FEDFINA SELLS 26 PER CENT STAKE

Fedbank Financial Services Limited (Fedfina), a Federal Bank subsidiary, entered into an agreement with True North, the leading private equity player to subscribe to equity shares of Fedfina.

As per the agreement, True North's share subscription will constitute 26 per cent of the share capital in Fedfina.



The agreement also allows True North to further acquire additional equity shares of Fedfina, constituting up to 45 per cent of the share capital in Fedfina. Further to this, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the proposed transaction on October 5.

The investment will help Fedfina augment its capital base primarily to support its growing asset business and grow its branch network. It will help further improve the company's financial fundamentals by strengthening its capital adequacy and diversifying its funding sources.

KPL OIL MILLS LAUNCHES SHUDHI RICE BRAN OIL IN 1L, 500 ML OPTIONS

KPL Oil Mills, launched their new product, KPL Shudhi Rice Bran Oil, in one litre and 500 ml PET bottles and pouches recently.

KPL has also set up new storage tanks and packing machines and put in place stringent quality control measures so that only the best and pure oil reaches the customers. Based at Irinjalakuda, KPL has over 75 years of expertise in the edible oil industry. After conquering the local Kerala market and the all-India market with its bulk packing of KPL 15 kg tins, KPL launched its consumer brand KPL Shudhi Coconut Oil in 1995. KPL registered good growth over the years and introduced products like KPL Shudhi Sunflower Oil, KPL Shudhi Gingelly Oil, KPL Shudhi Coconut Milk Powder and



KPL Shudhi Virgin Coconut Oil.

In May 2018, KPL also entered the pickle market with their brand KPL Shudhi Pickles made using tender mango, cut mango, lime, garlic, fish and prawns. KPL is now exporting their products to GCC countries, South East Asian and African countries, the USA and Europe.

KERALA GOVT. PARTNERS WITH KHAN ACADEMY TO PROMOTE E-LEARNING



In an endeavour to empower teachers and enhance the learning experience of students, Government of Kerala announced its partnership with Khan Academy India (KAI). An MoU was signed recently at the Chief Minister's Office.

Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala; C Raveendranath, Education Minister; Usha Titus IAS, Secretary, Higher Education and Chairman, Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE); Anvar Sadath, Executive Director, KITE; Sudheer Babu, Director, Higher Secondary Education; Sandeep Bapna, India Managing Director, Khan Academy India and

Mathu Shalini, India Strategist, Khan Academy India, were present at the launch.

Presiding over the signing event, Raveendranath said, "Under our Hi-Tech Schools programme, with the right infrastructure and resources, the aim is to provide personalised training to all our students."

The partnership with Khan Academy will be for a period of five years. Beginning this year, the partnership shall aim to cover 4775 government and aided schools having close to one lakh teachers and over 20 lakh students, enrolled from Classes 8 to 12, for Science and Mathematics.

UDAY SAMUDRA WINS HOSPITALITY AWARD



Uday Samudra Leisure Beach Hotel won the award for 'Best Five Star Hotel in Kerala' at the Hospitality India Travel Awards 2018. The award was received by Rajasekharan Nair, Chairman and Managing Director, and Radha Nair, Executive Director, UDS Group at the glittering ceremony held in New Delhi in the presence of K J Alphons, Union Minister of State for Tourism (I/C); Vijay Goel, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Ramdas Athawale, Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment.

EAST INDIA STREET CAFE SETS UP NEW OUTLET IN KOCHI

Kochi-based comfort coffee shop chain 'East India Street Cafe' has opened its new state-of-the-art outlet at Panampilly Nagar.

The cafe focuses on providing healthy and delicious dishes which are carefully prepared using pesticide and chemical-free produce. It is procured from Aroma Horticulture Products, a subsidiary of Aroma Group of companies, which specialises in organic farming and the retail sector under the brand name Aroma Fresh.



AL SAFINA TRAVEL GROUP OPENS NEW OFFICE IN KOCHI



The new office of Al Safina Travel Group was inaugurated in Kochi recently. Anilkumar G, Executive Director, BNI Cochin and Jolly Antony, Founder & CEO, Al Safina Travel Group, jointly inaugurated the facility in the presence of Santosh V R, Director. Headquartered in the UAE, Al Safina Holidays is one of the most preferred vacation planners in the Middle East and India.

AVA GROUP'S MULTI-SPECIALTY AYURVEDA HOSPITAL SANJEEVANAM, A BLEND OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN CONCEPTS, OPENS IN KOCHI

Understanding the offer for Ayurveda in today's times, AVA Group has launched Sanjeevanam, multi-specialty hospital at Pallikara, Kochi. The Group, otherwise known for its popular brands such as Medimix, Melam and Kaytra, opened the hospital in October.

"Our family has a 400-year-old tradition in Ayurveda. It has been the core of our business and we feel that it is time to give back to society through the science of Ayurveda. The aim of Sanjeevanam is to act as a catalyst in combining the best of age-old Ayurveda and modern concepts of medicine. Our vision is to make Sanjeevanam the best Ayurvedic medical facility available in India. AVA Group also has an in-house R&D Centre dedicated to the study of Ayurveda," said Dr. A V Anoop, Managing Director, at an event announcing the launch of the hospital.

The 110-bed multi-specialty Ayurveda hospital combines the science of Ayurveda with other wellness practices like Naturopathy, Yoga, Physiotherapy and Modern Diagnostics. The hospital has an expert medical team, includ-



ing Ayurveda doctors, dieticians, physiotherapists and masseurs. Sanjeevanam also has visiting consultants. The hospital offers specialised treatment for musculoskeletal, obesity-related and neuromuscular disorders, obstetrics, organ care and gynaecology.

"Sanjeevanam means rebirth. Our hospital will be a place where a patient is 'reborn' through better lifestyle management and modification. Our treatment techniques will not only heal the body but also revitalize the mind," said Dr. Ravi Pullanikattil, Director, Sanjeevanam Hospital.

The medicines are prepared at the hospital itself. It also provides food

that is healthy but does not compromise on taste. Those who have an appetite for fresh vegetarian food can choose from a nutritious menu for their daily meals. Sanjeevanam also has a non-vegetarian restaurant.

The hospital is also designed to use eco-friendly features and leaves behind a minimal carbon footprint.

As a first-time initiative in the State, hot water is made available by using heat dissipating from the hospital's HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems. The system is so designed that the recycled water is used to maintain the gardens and other non-critical areas.

KTDC ROLLS OUT MEMBERSHIP SCHEME FOR INDIVIDUALS, INSTITUTIONS OFFERING SEVEN NIGHTS OF FREE STAY A YEAR AND HEAVY DISCOUNTS

Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) has unveiled Premium Life Membership and Institutional Membership schemes for individuals and institutions at affordable rates, offering seven nights of free stay in a year and substantial discounts on all its premium facilities, including hotels at hill stations and beach resorts. The scheme was formally launched by Dr. T M Thomas Isaac, Minister of Finance in the presence of Kadakampally Surendran, Minister of Tourism, at a function held in Thiruvana-

nthapuram. The fee for Premium Life membership has been fixed at Rs.



10 lakh and institutional membership at Rs. 15 lakh, both inclusive of taxes. "This attractive scheme reflects our firm commitment to bring more visitors to Kerala and position the State as a major international destina-

tion for institutional conventions and meetings," M Vijayakumar, Chairman, KTDC said.

KTDC MD Rahul R IRS, said the membership scheme is sure to elicit a keen response from the country and abroad from individuals and institutions. A Premium Life member is entitled to 50 per cent discount on room rent on all stays in KTDC properties, in addition to the seven-night complimentary stay. Any requirement of additional rooms as part of such stays will be offered at 40 per cent discount on rent.

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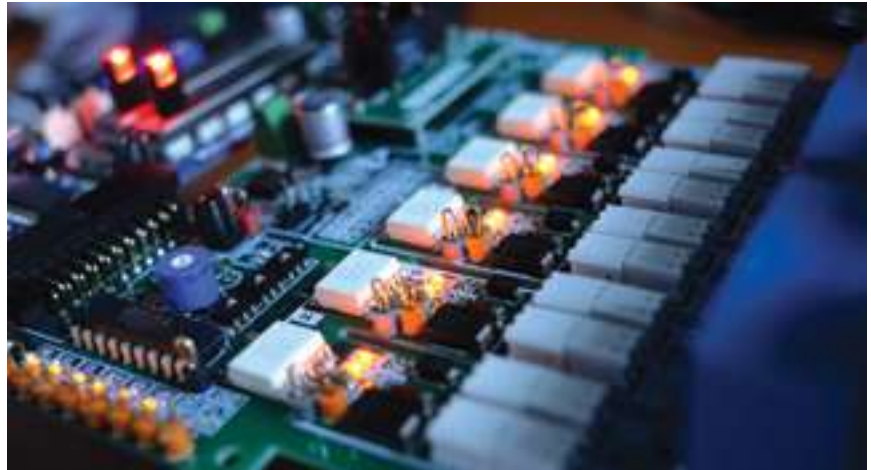
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KINFRA RECEIVES RS. 10 CRORE CENTRAL AID FOR EMC

KINFRA is set to establish an Electronic Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) at Kakkanad in Kochi with assistance from the Union Ministry of Communication and Information Technology under Electronic Manufacturing Cluster Scheme. The industrial park, with all modern facilities which would come up on 66.87 acres of land, will cater exclusively to the electronics manufacturing industry.

The objective of the project is to attract investment to Kerala and create large-scale employment opportunities. Kerala with its vast talent pool of engineering graduates/postgraduates and diploma holders in Electronics presents an attractive proposition for the electronics manufacturing industry.

KINFRA has already identified the land under its possession having road access and easy connectivity to airport and seaport. The identified



land is adjacent to the already existing Industrial Park.

ning to execute the EMC project in a phased manner.

The Union Government will provide Rs. 50 crore as grant of which Rs.10 crore has already been received.

The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MietY), Government of India has already accorded final approval for the project with KINFRA as Chief Promoter.

FRA Electronic Park Pvt. Ltd., for implementing the project.

TARGET GROUPS

Manufacturers of desktops, laptops, netbooks, tablet PCs, telecom equipment, mobile handsets, parts and accessories, colour TV sets, set-top boxes, LEDs, CFLs, LCDs, semiconductors, electronic components, memory cards, USB drives and other electronic manufacturing services are the target beneficiaries of the Cluster project.

Another objective is to create connectivity with all major cities in the country and on a global scale. Connectivity by means of infrastructure such as an extensive rail and road network, communication, services of major cellular operators, land availability, an investor-friendly environment, single-window clearance facility and availability of trained manpower are some of the factors that make Kochi an ideal place for the implementation of the project.

KERALA, WITH ITS VAST POOL OF ENGINEERING PROFESSIONALS AND DIPLOMA HOLDERS IN ELECTRONICS, IS AN ATTRACTIVE PROPOSITION FOR THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

land is adjacent to the already existing Industrial Park.

The proposed Electronic Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) will provide the necessary infrastructure required for export-based electronics manufacturing units. The units that will come up in the Cluster will be eligible for benefits under Modified Special Incentive Package (M-SIP) Scheme. KINFRA is plan-

The total project cost is Rs.140.01 crore.

Accordingly KINFRA has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Government of India and also opened an Escrow account for implementation of the project. SFO Technologies Pvt. Ltd. is the anchor investor.

KINFRA also constituted a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), KIN-

KINFRA TO PROSPER AS KIAL COMES UP

Speaking at a seminar on 'Opportunities in Industry and Tourism with the Commencement of Kannur International Airport Ltd.', conducted by the North Malabar Chamber of Commerce in association with *Mathrubhumi* daily recently, Sunil G, General Manager, Planning and Development, KINFRA, said that the Park is all set to play a major role in assisting the developmental initiatives in North Malabar, with Kannur International Airport (KIAL) as the epicentre of development. "This model of development is being implemented in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Hyderabad and Kolkata, which has proved to be successful. It will attract companies with international standards to invest in large-scale



E P JAYARAJAN, MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES AT THE SEMINAR

projects," he said. The new KINFRA Park project, planned to be built on 128.59 acres at Mattannur in Kannur, has the added advantage of close proximity to KIAL and, Kannur-Coorg and Thalassery-Coorg highways. According to KINFRA officials, it will be the largest industrial park in Kannur. Along with the new airport, the new Park is also expected to

make significant contributions to the development of the district. KINFRA will also be acquiring 4000 acres of land for developing industrial infrastructure related to the airport like warehouses, logistic and catering facilities.

E P Jayarajan, Minister for Industries and Sports inaugurated the event.

KINFRA INVITES INDUSTRIES TO SET UP UNITS IN THEIR PARKS



KINFRA has a total of 253.1 acres of land available for setting up industries. KINFRA Textile Centre, Nadukani, at 54.7 acres, has the most area of land available among all the Parks in the State. KINFRA Mega Food Park in Palakkad is next with 42.18 acres of land. While KINFRA Defence Park, Ottapalam has 33.01 acres of land, KINFRA Integrated Industrial and Textile Park, Palakkad has 31.75 acres. KINFRA Hi-Tech Park, Kalamassery has 20.58 acres of land and KINFRA Techno Indus-

trial Park, Kakkancherry, Malappuram has a total of more than 17 acres of land (15.06 acres of land in Special Economic Zone and 2.05 in Non-SEZ area). KINFRA Small Industries Park in Adoor has 14.24 acres of land while KINFRA Small Industries Park, Kunnamthanam, Pathanamthitta, has 12.14 acres.

The other KINFRA Parks have less than 10 acres of land for industrial development. They are KINFRA Industrial Park, Ottapalam with 9.52 acres of land, KINFRA Small Industries Park, Kasaragod

with 5.82 acres of land, KINFRA Small Industries Park, Wayanad with 5.6 acres of land and KINFRA Small Industries Park, Thalassery with 4.02 acres of land. The KINFRA International Apparel Park, Thumba has the least area of land with 3.08 acres.

KINFRA calls for industrialists to come forward and set up their industries in the available space in the respective Parks. A total of 534 units have been operating till date in an allotted space of 820 acres of land across all Parks.

KERALA INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

(A Statutory Body of Govt. of Kerala)

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BUSINESS OUTCOMES ARE BINARY, THERE IS NO PLACE FOR 'GRADE'



C Balagopal
Founder President, TIE Kerala, Angel Investor, Mentor and Author

We've got this terrific idea and plan to present it to potential investors in an effort to get them to back our venture. So we put together a presentation that we believe will persuade the investor to write a cheque. But we make some mistakes when we do this for the first time.

- We prepare a snappy presentation filled with attractive graphics and data. This looks so good that it would fetch an A+ at a classroom exercise
- We then practice our delivery of this presentation, till we have got it perfect. Team members seamlessly enter and leave the narrative, like a well-oiled machine
- The big day arrives, and we put up a good show. The competitors too are good, we are forced to admit. But we stand a good chance
- When the result is announced, we are perplexed because the team that won did not seem to be a front-runner

We then learn the first lesson of life, that what happened at school and university is very different from what happens in life. Our education system tests for and rewards certain attributes that, while useful, are in themselves not sufficient to ensure success in the real world. Quick and snappy answers that are 'smart' are not what are required in the real world. You are expected to know how to ask the right questions,

where to look for answers, and find the answer that best suits the context of the problem.

Another lesson we learn the hard way is that what matters is what the investor or customer or client thinks, and not what you and your team thought about your pitch. If we spend more time on finding out what they are looking for, we are likely to succeed in presenting something that will interest them.

OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM TESTS FOR AND REWARDS CERTAIN ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE SUCCESS IN THE REAL WORLD

A third lesson we learn, again a hard one, is that in life, there are no grades. There is only success or failure. In business there are only binary outcomes. You either got the order or you did not. Your loan was either sanctioned or it was not. In business, and in real life, it is all about jumping across the ditch: you either make it across, or you land in the ditch. That is another outcome of our educational system. We are constantly measured and judged against our peers, and so we think that these relative assessments are meaningful in terms of life outcomes. It is often those factors that do not get measured at school that determine life outcomes. These include determination, commitment, integrity, persistence and unremit-

ting hard work and practice.

But the good thing about this binary character of life outcomes is that you will learn from failures and mistakes. Of course, you should try and avoid mistakes. But, fear of making a mistake should not prevent you from trying something. How can you innovate, or be creative, if you are afraid your trial may fail? Learn from your mistake, and move on to the next trial.

Your idea may be brilliant, but you may still fail to get the investor to back you. That is probably because, while your idea is technically brilliant, your business plan is not convincing. This is something many people often forget. An idea becomes a business only if you get a sufficient number of people to buy your product or service at a price that makes you enough money to reinvest in your business after paying all your expenses. The same idea, in the hands of two different entrepreneurs will look different, purely on the basis of the business plan each has drawn up. A business plan is a strategy to build a business using the product or service, and is based on several assumptions about the customer, the market, growth, all based on a certain view of the immediate future. It is this vision, and the credibility with which it is projected and supported by the promoters, that convinces an investor to back the project.

What you have to ask yourself is this: will my presentation convince the guy to write out a cheque? The answer to that question is quite different from the answer to the question, will this presentation blow this audience away?



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