

T'PURAM  
DIGEST

# Marine Ecosystems Under Threat

- **Need to save marine ecosystems**
- **Project works implemented without proper study destroys ecosystems**

● **Express News Service**

**T**here is every need to assess the biodiversity and map the fragile underwater ecosystems in the near-inshore regions of the Kerala coast, Robert Panipilla, convener of Friends of Marine Life (FML), a Thiruvananthapuram-based research forum, said on Thursday.

"The state has jurisdiction up to 12 nautical miles. That's a vast area. We should map and assess biodiversity in regions up to at least ten-metre depth," Panipilla, said, delivering a talk on marine ecosystems organised by the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ). Recently, FML discovered that a large underwater colony of Sabellariidae, a type of marine worms, at Chowara had been wiped out reportedly due to ongoing dredging for the Vizhinjam Port Project.

"We are not saying no to projects, but a thorough understanding of the marine environment will help us to avoid confusion in the future," said Panipilla, who has conducted research projects for the Kerala State Biodiversity Board. Of the state's 590-km coastline, 30 kms include ecologically sensitive regions, he said. Twelve kms fall within Thiruvananthapuram district, and of this, seven kms fall within the Kovalam-Adimalathura stretch. The remaining five kms lie off Varkala coast.

"The Kovalam-Adimalathura region alone has 30 near-inshore reefs which are rich in biodiversity," he said. While there are unmet government agencies focusing on marine subjects, very few have actually undertaken serious study of marine ecosystems, he pointed out. "When people think of the sea, they think fish. It is this notion that has to be corrected. But piscine family forms just a small part of marine life," Panipilla said.



**“We are not saying no to projects, but a thorough understanding of the marine environment will help us to avoid confusion in the future”** - Robert Panipilla, convener of FML

**Expo on Marine life**

FML is organising a photo and video exhibition 'Secrets of the Sea and Camera' at the Museum Auditorium from January 21 to January 24. The idea is to generate awareness in the general public about marine ecosystems and the need to conserve them, FML officials said.

**Saving marine life**

Need to map underwater ecosystems stressed

Twelve-km stretch of coast in Thiruvananthapuram contain ecologically sensitive regions

Few studies conducted on underwater ecosystems in this area

Recent study found that a large underwater colony of Sabellariidae, a type of marine worms, at Chowara has been wiped out due to ongoing dredging for the Vizhinjam Port Project

**Ecologically Sensitive**

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**IIITM-K workshop on software testing**

Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management - Kerala (IIITM-K), Technopark, will conduct a short-term course on Software Testing and Automation. The course, to be conducted from February 1 to 5, is intended for science and engineering graduates. The course fee is Rs 5,000. The last date for applying online is January 30. More details are available on the website [www.iiitm.ac.in](http://www.iiitm.ac.in). Phone: 0471-2784138.

**K C Vamadevan award for T M Thomas Isaac**

Noted economist and CPM central committee member T M Thomas Issac MLA and Sister Elizabeth Kattela have been selected for this year's K C Vamadevan Award. The award will be presented by renowned film director Adoor Gopalakrishnan at a function commemorating the tenth death anniversary of K C Vamadevan on January 20th at Theerthapada Mandapam, East Fort at 6pm. Instituted in the memory of veteran communist leader K C Vamadevan, the award carries Rs 15,001, citation and plaque. Sister Elizabeth Kattela will be awarded for her contributions in social work. Deputy speaker Palode Ravi will inaugurate the memorial function.

**Water supply to be disrupted**

The distribution of water will be disrupted in some parts of the city on January 16 and 17 after a leakage was found in the pipe line that supplies water from Atruvikkara to Observatory Hill. Water supply will be disrupted from 10 am on January 16 to midnight of January 17. Water supply will be completely disrupted in Pattor, Pattom, Secretariat, Statue, Pettah, Airport, Shastamangalam, Palayam, Edappazhanji, Vazhuthacaud, Kunnukuzhi, Marappalam, Gauresapatom and Ayurveda College. For queries people can contact help line number 8547638181.



A classical dance performance by students of Kalamandalam Sathyabha Dance Academy as part of the Institutes 39th annual celebrations

## A take-off from wheelchair to air

● **Anila Backer**

**T**he bliss and excitement reflected in the eyes of the few bedridden children when taken out for a trip to Kozhikode had sparked the idea of offering them an opportunity to explore the world outside their wheelchairs among the officials of the Kunnammangalam Block Resource Centre (BRC). And now, a year later, the children are on heights of joy, thrilled about getting an opportunity to experience the wonders of air, road and rail travel.

Thanks to the 'Dreams on Wheels' programme of the BRC, as many as 25 children of Kunnammal block, along with one of their parents, are setting out for a trip to Thiruvananthapuram on January 17. After reaching Vadakara by bus, the team will leave for Thiruvananthapuram by train and fly back home on January 19.

"Having little travel experience, my daughter was really delighted after the trip to Kozhikode and is now over the moon after knowing about the air trip. She makes certain sounds and gestures while hearing the sound of aero planes. Seeing her so energetic is making me contented," shares Cheekkonnu resident Ammad K about his daughter Hafeefath, who is affected with 80 per cent cerebral palsy.

Speaking about the programme, BRC block programme officer Hasees P says, "Confined to wheelchair when every other child of their age enjoys life going to schools and playing with friends, the majority of these less-fortunate children were found to be getting no opportunities to experience the world outside their homes. Majority of the bedridden children hail from economically backward families and the parents also get depressed, which restrains them from taking part in public functions and enjoyments seeing the plight of their kids. Seeing the positive changes among the 20 children taken to Kozhikode beach and planetarium last year, we



A child at Kozhikode beach on wheelchair

planned to give much more exposures to them and the Thiruvananthapuram trip is the result."

"Among the 65 bedridden children in the block, those having favourable health conditions for travelling are going for the trip," he adds.

The trip is being organised with sponsorships from the staff of the BRC raised from headmaster's forum in Kunnammangalam and through other philanthropists. The children will be visiting Thiruvananthapuram zoo, Museum, Secretariat, Planetarium, Shangumugham and Kovalam beach.

Mullappally Ramachandran MP will

flag off the trip at Vadakara railway station. MLAs K K Lathika and E K Vijayan will be present on the occasion. Kunnammangalam block panchayat president K Sajith will also travel with the children.

Thanks to the 'Dreams on Wheels' programme of Kunnammangalam Block Resource Centre, 25 children of Kunnammal block, along with one of their parents, are setting out on a trip to Thiruvananthapuram

After reaching Vadakara by bus, the team will leave for Thiruvananthapuram by train and fly back home

## A flight from forest to state capital

● **Express News Service**

**B**uoyed by the success of the community policing initiative titled 'Kattil ninnum kadaillekku - raniye kannaan' (From forest to sea to see the queen), selected tribals from the forest areas of Thrissur-Ernakulam districts will get a chance to fly down to the capital of the state from Cochin International Airport.

Retired cop T K Thomas, who coordinated the first trip when he was the DySP at Chalakudy in Thrissur Rural in 2013, is the brain behind the new project. But this time the air trip is aimed at cementing the relationship between mainstream society and Adivasis, who used to lead a cloistered life, and familiarising them with urban life.

The trip is organised and funded by Rotary Club, Angamaly.

According to Thomas, who is also president of the Club, selected tribals from Peringalkuthu, Pokalappara, Vazhachal, Perumbara and Marankode colonies will be taken to Thiruvananthapuram by an Air India flight on February 4. The tribals will visit various places like Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram zoo and Shangumugham beach. Later, they would be brought back to Angamaly by a train, he said.

Earlier, the state police had formed tribal vigilance committees in the forest areas falling under 76 police stations in central Kerala, in the wake of the reported Maoist presence in the Western Ghats. The new initiative is a step aimed at strengthening these vigilance committees along with instilling a sense of confidence in the minds of tribals, besides dissuading the tribal youths from being attracted to Maoist principles, said Thomas.

In the first trip, a group of around 100 tribal people was taken to Cochin International Airport at Nedumbassery, Smart City area in Kochi, Cochin shipyard, Willingdon Island and to a shopping mall in Kochi.

The tour ended with a lunch and a boat ride along the backwaters onboard Sagar Rani, operated by the Kerala State Inland Navigation Corporation.

**YOU SAID**

### What's your take on Mayor's exclusion from VP's functions?

The alleged exclusion of Mayor V K Prasanth from the official programmes of Vice-President Hamid Ansari has stirred up a hornet's nest. Some prominent personalities react



**“It is sheer irresponsibility on the part of the protocol officer. He is duty bound to follow the protocol manual and give due respect to the Mayor's post. His explanation on the development is ridiculous”**

— V Sivankutty, MLA and former Mayor



**“It is important to follow the protocol while receiving and seeing off VIPs to maintain dignity of the guest and our state. The government should examine whether protocol was violated. There wasn't such a single incident during my tenure”**

— Prof J Chandra, Former Mayor



**“If knowingly or unknowingly he was avoided, it is sad. Such acts are a disgrace not only to the Mayor but also to the people of the city. It should not be repeated in future.”**

— Palode Ravi, Deputy Speaker



Ganga and Lakshmi

## Creating customised hanging gardens

Green Piece Terrariums go potless, with its newly-launched 2016 collection

● **Arya P Dinesh**

**T**he tale of the fabled Babylonian Hanging Gardens has fascinated many of us. With the intricate art of kokedama (Japanese for 'potless indoor plants') now available in Kochi, you can create customised hanging gardens in your balcony. Just dial Green Piece Terrariums, where owners Lakshmi Raju and Ganga Fischbeck will help you create your own bowl of green.

In these intricate indoor gardens, little balls of sphagnum moss fastened with strong threads hold the plant together. This product line—inspired by the Orient—is part of the duo's collection for 2016, which also includes closed gardens (enclosed terrariums) and customised designer ter-

rariums with aquaponics priced up to ₹25,000 (on request). "One might even spot imported miniature figures of pink flamingos and bright-feathered parrots (from Australia and Germany) placed artfully in the Kokedama as themed indoor plants setting is a speciality of our collection," says 33-year-old Raju.

New experiments From misty rainforest-themed terrariums to sandy ones, the six-month-old initiative's products are mostly seen using climate compatible plants such as syngoniums, cactus, succulents, slow growing ferns and moss. Built in imported Borosil-quality glass bowls (from Thailand), the terrarium plants are sourced from nurseries in

Pune and Bengaluru. Despite their backgrounds in agri-tech and microbiology, the duo states that coming up with their current product range was not an easy task. "Our endeavour is the result of trial and error sessions which went on for months. We have started experimenting with both interior and exterior landscaping this year," concludes Fischbeck.

₹400 onwards. Details: [greenpieceterrariums.com](http://greenpieceterrariums.com)



**“One might even spot imported miniature figures of pink flamingos and bright-feathered parrots placed artfully in the Kokedama — Lakshmi Raju”**