



ELDERS' VOICE

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News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

Editor: Dhanya Gopinath

The President's Message

P. I. John

A new Executive Committee will take over management of the Senior Citizens' Forum from April. Hence this is my last message to the members as the outgoing President.

I believe that we have had an eventful and enjoyable year, starting with the Installation Ceremony held at Hotel AIDA on 26th April 2019. We continued the tradition of uninterrupted meetings, which presented talks and discussions on interesting subjects, community events and other modes of activities. These, to a large extent contributed to fulfilling the objectives of the Forum, namely, to engage the Senior Citizens in intellectual and social activities and provide them with some form of fellowship.

The subjects of the talks were eclectic, ranging over environmental concerns, health, family life, cultural diversity, farming, the future of humanity and social service.

Among visitors we honoured, I specially remember Mr. P. U. Thomas of the Navajeevan Trust. I believe that he is altruism incarnate. A long time in the past, while being confined to a hospital bed for many days, he had an epiphany of doing good to others. This journey ultimately ended with the establishment of Navajeevan Trust, a home for the homeless, which has become an institution of note in Kottayam. The Senior Citizens Forum felicitated

him and celebrated his 70th birthday.

Eminent personalities who were invited to address the Forum included Justice Cyriac Joseph, Lok Aayukta and Shri Hormis Tharakan, formerly of the Research and Analysis Wing of the Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India, among others. They were impressed by the activities of the Forum and commented on the pro-active interaction of the members.

We experimented with the idea that a few groups formed of the members would enhance the inter-activity and cohesion among the members. Though groups have been formed, they have not yet become active and hence it is too early to say whether the experiment succeeded or not.

Among the events celebrated, I recall the Onam celebrations held at the Johnny Moose Backwater Farm at Aymanam. It was a great opportunity for the members of our Forum to showcase their talents and entertain us in a very exotic setting. The Onam Sadya which followed was delectable.

Christmas was celebrated with great enthusiasm. The Christmas Message was given by Fr. Joshua. While delivering his message the father explained that "Esu", means a saviour and that the words of Christ was relevant even today. Christ be-

lieved in happiness for all. He advised all members of the SCF to face 2020 with a new determination.



As President, one of my concerns has been to raise the level of intellectual discourse and discussions in the forum. It was with this purpose that I chose to speak about topical issues of the times. These included the idea of the Universal Basic Income, startups and their evolution, concept of circular economy, existential threats to humanity, early Indians, Carbon recycling for mitigating global warming, mega science projects and Black holes. I hope the members enjoyed these forays into esotery.

The Elder's Voice, the newsletter of the Forum was published regularly, with new computerized layout and interesting content. The website, www.seniorcitizensktm.net was maintained with fresh content, including posting of the monthly newsletters, reflecting the multi-faceted activities of the Forum.

I wish to thank all the members of the Forum for their courtesy, cooperation and affection, which made my functioning as the President very enjoyable. I also wish the incumbent President and his team a successful year ahead.

"Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

For more information about the Forum, visit: <https://www.seniorcitizensktm.net/>

Editor's Musings

Dhanya Gopinath

Hello Friends!

Hope you are not too disappointed at the postponement of the International Women's Day celebrations at the Forum. The Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum must be commended for having made an announcement well in advance.

This year, by far, the most noteworthy women achievers are the centenarian Bhageerathi Amma & the nonagenarian Karthiyani Amma.

."Do not waste your time, go study, stop watching serials & looking at your smart phones all the time." These were the spirited replies given by Karthiyani Amma, when questions were posed to her at the Kochi airport, when she was waiting to catch a flight to New Delhi to receive the Nari Shakthi award, from none other than the president.

Frail & bent, though she may be, her brain is crystal clear. She

does not belong to the privileged class of women, who could get even basic education at the right time.. However she is bent on making use of the opportunities open before her, now.

Her dreams of learning computers may also become a reality, now that she has been gifted with a laptop.

The case of the 105 year old Bhageerathi Amma, who could not travel to New Delhi to receive her award is perhaps, even more interesting. Having cleared her Class 4 papers, she is now signed up for the next level, by joining the Class 7 equivalency. Her dream is to clear the Class 10 exams afterwards.

The achievements of these two women, are no doubt spectacular, as they are attempting to get something that ought to have been their right. Their enthusiasm at the age when most will not even be alive, leave alone have the

inclination, is unbelievable.

These days, many women

have gone far ahead & have reached great heights. Breaking the so-called Glass Ceiling & getting leadership roles is not at all easy.

The Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum has looked around & found some women who have reached great heights & has decided to honour them, as part of the International Women's Day celebrations.

Our member Mrs. Omana Abraham has been honoured by the Indian Medical Association for her selfless service to society.

An avid Motorist, Pushpa Mathews, has sent in an article that makes it very clear that we seniors should not treat Road Safety issues casually.



Meetings in February

The 1st meeting of the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum was held on the 14th of February 2020. The chief speaker that day was our member Dr. John Kunnath. He had selected the topic Road Safety.

Dr. John discussed many pertinent points like, the Right of Way concept, Clearly marked Lanes, Having lanes for the pedestrians, Creating parking spaces & the like. He also expressed his views about the need for taking the help of experts while designing junctions.

The topic generated a lot of interest among the audience. More than eight members got up to express their views.

Prof. Babu Joseph expressed his views while proposing the vote of thanks. He felt that things could improve, as Town Planning was already being given importance in the bigger cities of Kerala like

Kozhikode & Thiruvananthapuram.

The 2nd meeting was held on the 28th of February. Prof. Thomas Kutty, retired Principal, St. Stephen's College Uzhavoor was the main speaker that day. The topic selected by him was 'My experiments and experience in Farming.'

In his presidential address Dr. John mentioned the need for sustainability in farming. Prof. Babu Joseph, who introduced the speaker said that agriculture had been neglected in India after the second Five Year Plan.

Prof. Thomas Kutty shared with members the joy experienced after taking to farming. He informed members about how nature had provided friendly insects to attack pests. These insects also get killed when pesticides are sprayed. From his experiences, he felt that Organic Farming was viable even in large farms.

Road Safety

(Contd from p 3)

All long distance vehicles should compulsorily have two drivers to overcome driver fatigue, as happened recently in the gruesome accident at Avinashi.

The above suggestions will not involve heavy use of funds but will go a long way in making our roads safer for all of us. The cost of our culpable lethargy is the loss of precious human lives everyday.

"A single overstatement, wherever or however it occurs, diminishes the whole, and a carefree superlative has the power to destroy, for the reader, the object of the writer's enthusiasm."
E.B. White, The Elements of Style

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The difficulty faced by people while crossing roads in India!

ROAD SAFETY

Pushpa Annie Mathews

Last month Dr John Kunnath had conducted a very enlightening programme on road safety and suggested various measures to make our roads safer. Road traffic crashes cause more loss of lives than all common diseases put together. They undermine our economy and push millions into poverty. Actually, road safety depends on three pillars – pedestrians, motorists and motor authorities.

Pedestrians are the most vulnerable and marginalized in our society. So they have to develop a culture for their personal safety on roads. Where footpaths and zebra crossings are provided, they should use them without fail. Many of our roads are, however, too narrow to provide footpaths. In such cases, pedestrians should always walk in the direction opposite to the traffic to get a better view of oncoming traffic. Since traffic in India keeps to the left, pedestrians should invariably walk on the right side of the road. Also they should wear clothes that make them clearly visible. Wearing black or dark coloured clothes while walking in the night / dark is positively dangerous.

Motorists should observe traffic rules and driving etiquette. Time is equally precious for everyone. So respect the time of your fellow drivers and wait patiently in a single file at signals and level crossings. Very often motorists form multiple lines, thus making it impossible for traffic coming from the opposite direction to drive across. Overtaking from the left, blocking the free left turn lane, overtaking a vehicle and then cutting across in front of it to take a turn are all too frequent causes of road accidents.

Coming to motor authorities, our country is way behind the ideal situations shown by Dr Kunnath. Exponential increase of vehicles coupled with badly designed / aligned roads along with

motorists with their tails on fire, all lead to chaotic driving. Bus stops are frequently located just next to a junction, so that when a bus stops, the entire traffic behind is held up.



Clear signages should be provided, scientific speed breakers installed and speed limits enforced on narrow village roads and residential areas. Blinking amber lights should be installed at intersections, so drivers can look out for vehicles as they approach these junctions. Cameras should be set up at frequent points. This will dissuade people from wrong-doing and also help authorities in tracking down wrong-doers.

The casual issue of driving licenses, as is happening now, should be stopped forthwith. An individual, who applies for a driving license should be tested on all traffic rules and regulations and should complete a mandatory number of hours of supervised driving before he is allowed to take the driving license test.

Penalties for flouting rules should be enforced on an ongoing basis and not just on an occasional safety week, declared by the authorities. Our road traffic police are very slack and allow motorists to break rules right under their noses. Wearing of helmets and seat-belts should be constantly monitored. Maniacal overtaking by buses should be severely fined and speed governors and GPS tracking should be installed in all heavy vehicles. Drivers indulging in activities like playing on their mobile while driving should have their licenses cancelled since they seem to have no qualms about endangering the lives of their passengers and other motorists and pedestrians on the road.

(Contd on p2)

A Matter of Great Pride



On Sunday, the 8th of March 2020 (International Womens' Day) our member Mrs. Omana Abraham was felicitated by the IMA (Indian Medical Association) for her outstanding services to humanity through the CASS (Cancer & AIDS Shelter Society), of which she has been an active member for quite some time.

For those of us who are not familiar with the activities of CASS, it stands for Cancer & Aids Shelter Society. CASS was founded by Sister Dolares Kannampuzha, a Medical Mission sister. It was started in order to highlight the public apathy & non-acceptability of the HIV affected persons. To some extent CASS has succeeded in achieving its objectives.

This is not the first time that Mrs. Abraham is receiving an award. While working as a member of the Cochin Stock Exchange from the year 1984 to 1992, she received the Mahilasiromani award for her outstanding achievement in the stock market from the Indian President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma. She was the president of the stock exchange from 1991-92.

She holds the national record in the Limca Book of Records for being the first woman president in the Stock Exchange in Asia.

The IMA has recognized the empathy shown by Mrs. Abraham towards those shunned by society.

While talking to her, one realizes how much she appreciates the encouragement given by her husband (also a member of the Kottayam SCF) to make her a effective member of the Stock Exchange. She is equally appreciative of her mother who used to take her along on her good will visits to the poor & needy in the hospitals.

Let us all congratulate this lady and wish her the very best in all her future endeavours.

The Fibonacci Sequence

The Fibonacci sequence is a group of numbers beginning with 0 and 1 in which each number is the sum of the two before it. It begins 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 and continues infinitely. The pattern hides a powerful secret: If you divide each number in the sequence by its predecessor the result converges on 1.61803, phi, the golden ratio.

The sequence has a long history. It is first mentioned by the Italian mathematician Leonardo of Pisa

in 1202 A.D. His nickname, Fibonacci, meaning "son of Bonacci," gave the series its name.

The numbers of spirals in pinecones are Fibonacci numbers, as is the number of petals in each layer of certain flowers. Sunflower seeds are packed in a spiral formation in the centre of their flower in a geometry governed by the golden ratio, too. Fibonacci and phi can be found in certain works of art, architecture and music . Some financial analysts swear they can see these numbers at markets including in this current economic crisis.

WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

May your birthday and every day ahead be filled with the warmth of love, the joy of good health and blessings in abundance!

Adv Sivamani Kaimal 5th March	Mr. George Mathew 9th April
Mrs Maya Cherian 8th March	Mr. Isac Arackal 11th April
Mr K N Nair 10th March	Mr. Kottayam Baburaj 13th April
Adv K J Kurien 13th March	Mrs. Soosy Isaac 13th April
Dr George Kurien 16th March	Er. Y. Koshy 14th April
Dr P I John 18th March	Mr. George Isaac 16th April
Mr Joseph Gabriel 25th March	Prof. George Koshy 20th April
Dr Kurien Thomas 26th March	Mr. George Jacob 21st April
Dr. T. C. Benjamin 5th April	Mr. V. G. Shyam 23rd April
Mr. P. J. Issacs 5th April	Mr. S. K. Paulose 26th April
Mr. M. Manoharan 7th April	

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