



ELDERS' VOICE

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News Bulletin of
The Senior Citizen's Forum, Kottayam

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The President's Message



The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam, was represented by a contingent of five members at the FOSCAK district level meeting held at Ettumanoor on the 18th May, 2018. The new office bearers for the period 2018-19 were elected.

Our founder member, Dr. Mathew Parackal was honoured by the Catholic Church by giving him the "Excellence Award". He continues to be an inspiration to all our members. I wish him many more successes in the future!

This year, the World Environment Day is being celebrated on June 5. Since its beginning in 1972, it has grown to become a major platform for public outreach, celebrated across the globe. India is the global host of 2018 World Environment Day.

The theme for this year's celebrations is "Beat Plastic Pollution". Governments, industry, communities, and individuals will come together and look at options to reduce the production and excessive use of plastics polluting our environment. Plastic Pollution

has staggering statistics. Every year the world uses 500 billion plastic bags. Each year, at least 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans, the equivalent of a full garbage truck every minute. In the last decade, we produced more plastic than in the whole last century. We buy 1 million plastic bottles every minute. Plastic makes up 10% of all of the waste we generate.

India is emerging as a leader; it has one of the highest recycling rates in the world. By hosting World Environment Day 2018, the Indian government is asserting its leadership on an issue of tremendous magnitude.

The street picker-based recycling economy, along with regulatory control have established India's USP in battling plastic pollution. India flags some of the most innovative thinking about plastics recycling.

Banyan Nation, a plastics recycling start-up from Hyderabad, caught the attention of the world by winning the Dell People's Choice

Award for 2018 at the World Economic Forum in Davos. The five-year-old company is known for its work in recycling automotive bumpers and shampoo bottles. Their proprietary plastic cleaning technology removes inks, coatings, and other contaminants using environment friendly detergents and solvents to supply near virgin quality recycled granules.

It is an innovation leader through its efforts to address the key challenges in plastics recycling in countries like India. They were first in the country to use mobile, cloud and IoT to integrate thousands of informal sector last-mile collectors into its supply chain. Their Partnership with large state-wide entities and multi-national corporations towards the waste-to-product recycling for e-waste, automobile parts and consumer products packaging is also a reason for their success.

P. I. John

"What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another". – Mahatma Gandhi

ACTING EDITOR'S MUSINGS

Dhanya Gopinath



Hello Friends,

Here I am once again bringing you some positive news.

This time I bring you some good news from the Environment Front.

On May 12th, there was some newspaper report regarding a survey conducted on the Swach Bharath Mission at Chenithala in the district of Alapuzha. A house to house survey conducted by N.C.C. cadets showed that more than 64% of households burn substances, like plastic, causing atmospheric pollution. Hence authorities are planning to give due importance to the collection and recycling of plastic and other non-biodegradable substances. By integrating more sophisticated methods and advanced technologies in collection and recycling of harmful substances, the concerned authorities could bring about better waste-management. Perchance Kerala could be a winner on this front too!

We also hear reports of Jabir Karat, who launched 'Green Worms' in 2014 from Kozhikode.' When I started Green Worms, waste collection and segregation

was a job done by rag pickers. I was the first formally educated person who entered into this job, which was a surprise to many,' said Jabir in one of his interviews

Green Worms, currently owns two plastic reprocessing facilities and 6 waste segregation facilities and they help others start similar enterprises.

Let us not forget something good happening in our hometown. When the Meenachil River Protection Council started talking about the Restoration Campaign in the year 2015, people did not have much hope. Three years on, the People's Initiative has turned into one of the major River Rejuvenation programmes in our state. Yes, I am talking about the reviving and re-linking of the Meenachil, Meenanthara and the Kodoor rivers. This project is a unique model of People Government Co-operation for the protection of nature.

I will not take much of your time as you have a detailed report on Israel with photos, by your Editor Pushpa Annie Mathew.

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Back in Jerusalem, we drove through the new city viewing the Knesset, Israel's modern democratic Parliament House, the Menorah the symbol of the State of Israel, the Supreme Court of Israel and other govt. buildings. We also visited the Israeli Museum, which details the history of the modern State of Israel, focussing on historical turning points in the country's development, presenting the conflicts, social challenges and dilemmas Israel faced as well as her successes.

The Dead Sea was another inexplicable experience. Its banks are over 400 mts below sea level and due to the hyper salinity of its water, one floats without any effort. People smeared themselves with its mineral rich black mud for its therapeutic effect. My hubby had an infected toe-nail, for which he had been using an anti-fungal cream for quite a while with little or no effect. But after that one day's dip in the Dead Sea, his toe-nail is now as good as new!

Our next hotel faced the Sea of Galilee and we visited Capernaum, an ancient fishing village, which Jesus regarded as his home during his ministry. We took a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee, danced to the Jewish tune "Hava Nagila" and enjoyed a St Peter's Fish meal sitting on its shores. Then drove through Nazareth, where Jesus lived as a young man and visited the Church of Annunciation, where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary.

(To continue in the June issue)

[Govt asks schools to go plastic free, form teams to clean beaches and riverfronts](#)

In the run-up to World Environment Day celebrations on June 5, the Union Environment Ministry has asked schools to stop the use of plastics in their premises and constituted 19 teams to undertake cleaning.

SHALOM!

Pushpa Mathew



A visit to Israel had always been on our bucket list. So when our travel agent announced that she was organising a trip to Jordan and Israel, we enthusiastically joined in. When I told Dhanya about it, her immediate response was "Please come back and write an article on your trip for the "Elders' Voice"! So here goes.

Since many of our members may have already visited the Holy Land, I propose to not go into the religious aspects but restrict my article to my general observations of the places we visited. Our trip began with a flight to Queen Alia International airport at Amman. Amman is the capital of Jordan and its economic, political and cultural centre. The US has an enormous embassy located in Amman to further the US-Jordanian strategic cooperation in the region. We learnt that women in Jordan are generally more educated than the men! Public transport in Jordan is scarce and hence the roads are always clogged with traffic. To reduce the traffic, cars are very expensive and petrol is heavily taxed. Incidentally, most traffic police in Jordan are women.



The Mount of Olives

Our next stop was Petra, a UNESCO Heritage site, situated between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea. Built as the capital of the Nabatean trade route, its location served as the crossroad between China, India, Arabia and the Roman Empire. The entire city was carved into the surrounding red Stone Mountain with temples, buildings, treasuries, tombs, arched gateways, colonnaded streets and even diversion dams for water management – all carved into the rock! The entrance to the city is by a narrow passage cut in the sandstone

and from afar, one can hardly make out that there is an entire city underground! Petra has been the location for several Hollywood films like Indiana Jones and The Mummy Returns.

After our three-day stint at Jordan, we walked across the border into Israel for the rest of our tour. Here we were greeted by our luxury bus with Osama, the driver (a Christian) and Agha, our tour guide (a Jew), who were to take us around Israel. I learnt that these first names do not indicate the religion of the persons, just as our names like Dhanya and Pushpa. We then drove to our hotel, situated on top of the Mount of Olives. The panoramic view of Jerusalem as it lay before us made us gasp – the Dome of the Rock, Al Aqsa Mosque, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden of Gethsemane, Wailing Wall etc. We spent the next few days walking along the narrow winding lanes of old Jerusalem city, stopping at the holy sites of the three monotheistic religions, absorbing the depth of history, faith and culture. The roads of the old city are very steep and we wondered how Christ carried that heavy cross up those roads.

Our visit to Bethlehem was unique. The West Bank, we learnt is divided into 3 zones – A, B and C. While Zone A is under the Palestinian authority and police, Zone B is under Palestinian authority but Israel Army and Zone C is wholly under the control of the Israeli authority and Army. Since Bethlehem falls in Zone A, with a prominent sign saying "Entrance for Israeli citizens is forbidden", we had to dispense with our Jewish guide and take on another guide, a Christian. In Bethlehem we visited the Church of the Nativity and the Shepherd's Field.

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Excellence Award for Dr. Mathew Parackal



Dr. Mathew Parackal, one of the founder members of the Senior Citizens' Forum, has been honoured with the most reputed award of 'The Changanassery Archdiocese Excellence award' for his excellence in his services and social involvement.

His Excellency Archbishop Mar Joseph Perumthottathil of the Archdiocese of Changanassery will confer the award on Dr. Mathew Parackal during the celebration of 'Archdiocese Day' in Thuruthi Marthamariam Forane Church. His Excellent record of teaching in the field of medical education, value based services in the field of medical care and extensive and broad based social services are the basis for the award.

His autobiography, MY LIFE - A BLESSED JOURNEY was published recently by Current Books.

CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY



The members of the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum wish to place on record their condolences on the sad demise of Mr. C.G.Vasudevan Nair, former President of the SCF.

He retired as the Dy. Director of the Statistical Department. He had been the Secretary of the Kottayam Public Library for 31 years. This illustrious member of our Forum has served as the president of various organizations like the Sasthra Sahithya Parishad and the Kodimatha N.S.S.Karayogam. He was also the recipient of the first P.N.Panicker memorial award given by the State Library Council and the KANFED Dr.P.N.P.Pillai memorial award.

May his soul rest in peace.

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!

Baby Mathew	1 st May
Mrs. Kunjoonjamma Mathew	12 th May
K M Mathew	15 th May
K B Viswanathan Nair	15 th May
Mrs. Sosamma Varghese	17 th May
Er. Joy Jacob	19 th May
Dr. Babu Chacko	21 st May
Dr. K P Joy	24 th May
Mrs. Annie Mathew	25 th May
P K Abraham	28 th May
Prof. T M Philip	31 st May