



ELDERS' VOICE

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News Bulletin of The Senior Citizens' Forum, Kottayam

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The President's Message

P. I. John

China has 18% of the world's population, but only 7% of the world's freshwater resources. India is even worse. It has 16% population, but has only 4% water sources.

Water crisis in China started in 2007. By 2013, as much as 70% of China's rivers and lakes were polluted because of industrial waste.

China adapted a unique way of solving the problem by appointing people as river chiefs. "River chiefs are individuals who are responsible for looking after a specific part of a river or lake," They work with government and inspect their area on a regular basis and respond to reports right away. If a citizen sees something amiss in a specific portion of the river, the river chief is contacted so that the problem can be resolved as quickly as possible.

This practice was soon adopted by other provinces, and as of 2018, there is an established network of over a million river chiefs in all of China governing the rivers and lakes at various levels (central, province, city, township).

This is in contrast to the practice of having too many government departments responsible for water management and where one is accountable.

China is also creating "sponge cities" that use porous concrete, man-made wetlands, and green

spaces that capture rainwater and reuse it. These new cities are planned by building highways, roads, electricity, water and drainage systems first. Roads are always at a higher level, below that come the pedestrian walkways, and finally the ground level that has the artificial wetlands and rain gardens. Building the infrastructure on different levels allows the rainwater collected from upper levels to flow into the green spaces and also to rain gardens, which facilitates increased human-water-nature interactions.

Wuhan was the first "sponge city". 80% of all urban land will acquire sponge features 2030.

By 2030, India will be amongst the youngest nations in the world with nearly 140 million people in the college-going age. With a Graduate Enrollment Ratio of 30%, 45 million students will have to be provided university education. Considering 5000 students per university, we shall need 9000 universities.

There are 800 universities at present. One out of every three universities in India is a private university. This ratio will only increase since the Govt investment has reached a plateau.

Some of the private universities are world class. BITS Goa, Amity at Lucknow are examples. Many pri-

private universities have been set up by business houses like Birlas, Azim Premji, Reliance etc.

In a very interesting development, 45 entrepreneurs have collected Rs 2,000 Cr and have launched a new university. This may be the way future private universities would come up.

The name of the university is Plaksha. Plaksha is the mythical Peepul tree from which the River Saraswati, synonymous with learning, originated. Plaksha is the Sanskrit word for Peepul or Ficus.

The university will launch its first Tech Leaders Fellowship Programme at its Gurugram campus in collaboration with UC Berkeley, Purdue University, MIT, and University of Pennsylvania, as well as companies like Google and IBM. Their bachelor's degree course will launch in 2021.

Plaksha's primary focus will be on problems specific to India, across sectors like urban planning, mobility, agriculture, hunger, transportation, etc.



<https://www.seniorcitizensktm.net/>

Editor's Musings

Dhanya Gopinath

Many of us have nostalgic memories of rivers and streams overflowing with sparkling waters in our neighbourhoods. Alas! a lot of things have changed. These thoughts have been brought out beautifully in the poem "The River" written in 2006 by our President (see box).

We are helpless, when confronted with such situations. At best, we make a complaint to the concerned authorities and say that no action is being taken

It is in this context that we must congratulate such Men of Action like Dr Jacob George and his team. Two years back, when the five volunteers of the NGO, 'Green Fraternity', worked tirelessly for two weeks with the ambition of linking the Meenachil river with its two tributaries, the Meenanthara and the Kodoor rivers; they realized that the cleaning up of the rivers was a herculean task.

"The Green Fraternity picked up momentum, when advocate Anil Kumar, an environmentalist and a local politician, became part of their group. Anil Kumar helped them transform the project into a public-funded mass movement by connecting them to the various government departments."

Is it not interesting to know that there are many more such stories of public participation in River Cleaning projects?

Varattar that flows through Pathanamthitta & Alleppey is one such river.

The Kanampuzha river in Kannur and the Kuttemperror river in Alleppey are other such examples.

A recent photograph in the Times of India shows how the Williams Bridge at Orumanayoor is being lifted to remove weeds in the Conolly Canal near Chavakad in Thrissur district. The Conolly Canal, was built by the British and connects the main trade centres of Kozhikode, Ponnani, Chavakad, Kodungallor & Kochi.

While the Kozhikode part of the canal is being cleaned up by the NGO, NIRAVU in Vengeri (you



must be remembering the talk given at our Forum by Mr. Babu of NIRAVU), the Kottapuram Ponnani stretch is being cleaned up by the Kerala Waterways & Infrastructure Ltd (KWI). This stretch is part of the project to develop inland waterways from Kovalam to Bekal.

Plans are also being made to clean the Bharatapuzha river.

Along with these rivers, could we hope to see a cleaning campaign of the Karapuzha river mentioned in the poem?

Advocate Anil Kumar gives me some hope as he confidently told me that we could expect to see a change in the water flow of this river in the next couple of years.

The River	at with dread	its rebellious youth,
The river, draped in dirty green moss,	the dark green depth right under the bridge.	swollen with the torrent of the monsoon rains,
flows under the old bridge on the narrow road;	the paddy fields on the west are gone;	razing the side banks and drowning the paddles.
the journey's end, a mile down is the jetty,	On the bank there are huts, one nudging the next	The river now, stagnant pool of detritus, decay
where it submerges in the salty backwaters.	Smoke from the cooking fires seep through the roof,	waiting for death, I note with grief.
Standing by the bank, holding my grandson's hand	Grey snakes dancing in the afternoon breeze.	The old men sitting on the bank nod in agreement,
I remembered a time when I was his age	a few boats, tied, rise and fall with the waves, nodding	as I turn away, adding one more loss of the past.
and used to stand here and stare	as the river tells them stories of	P. I. John

Meetings in June

The first meeting was held on 14th June. Mr P U Thomas of the Navajeevan Trust was the Chief Speaker.

Many of us here, at the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum must have heard about the free food being served at the Medical Col-

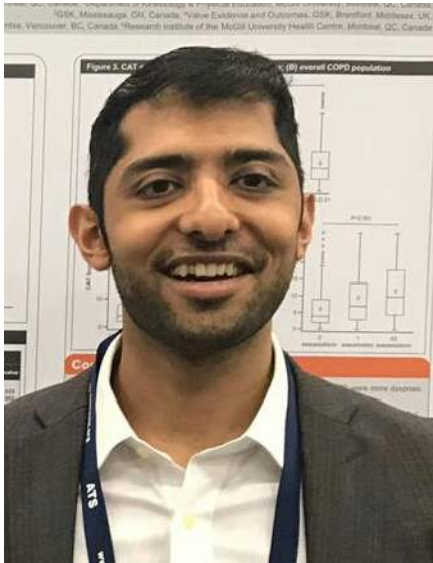
lege Hospital, the Taluk Hospital & Institute of Child Health and that there is a Navajeevan Trust behind this.

It was a great pleasure meeting the great man behind this altruistic venture.

Mr P U Thomas humbly explained how he had been confined to a hospital bed for many days

while still a young boy. It was then, that he had an epiphany of doing good to others. Step by step he kept moving towards his goal. Ultimately, in the year 1970, he was able to establish the Navajeevan Trust. At present around 5000 poor patients and bystanders eat the free food that is being distributed daily. (Contd on p.4)

Plaudits and Honour



Dr Mathew Cherian, son of Dr Joseph Cherian Punchiri and Maya Cherian has been awarded FRCP degree in Internal Medicine from McGill University. After completing MBBS from the same University, Dr. Mathew had pursued the four year course in Internal Medicine and was declared successful last week.

The Senior Citizens' Forum congratulates Dr. Mathew Cherian and his proud parents!

Membership Request

Shri Mathoor Govindan Kutty, the renowned Kathakali Artist has expressed his interest in joining the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum. He has been sponsored by Shri Gopalakrishnan Nair. This is for the information and approval of the members.

Want to Keep your Brain Sharp in Old Age?

"Learning is the mechanism for development no matter how old you are," writes Rachel Wu, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of California Riverside in a paper published in the Journals of Gerontology, Series B.

Wu's study took an ambitious approach: have seniors in their 60s, 70s and 80s immerse themselves in a college-like atmosphere, enrolling in three somewhat rigorous courses simultaneously. They participated in at least 15 hours of class a week, and also



Computer Familiarization class

did homework assignments, over three months. Classes included

Spanish language, music composition, painting/drawing, photography and instruction on using an iPad.

The results were impressive: After just six weeks, participants' scores on standardized tests assessing thinking and memory abilities were similar to a middle-age adult's scores — a significant improvement over their scores before the study began. That is, their brains functioned more like those of a person 30 years younger.

www.nbcnews.com

Motivational Quotes by Nelson Mandela

"There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires."

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

"There can be no greater gift than that of giving one's time and energy to helping others without expecting anything in return."

"One of the most difficult things is not to change society, but to change yourself."

20 Books About the Future

Will the future be dystopian? Can the human race even survive climate change and the ongoing mass extinction? Or does technology promise a far better and more hopeful future?

The nonfiction books listed here offer a wide range of perspectives on these questions. They explore the impact of artificial intelligence and advanced robotics, the emergence of molecular nanotechnology, the private-sector space race, as well as climate change, the threat of a global pandemic, and other questions.

Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think by Peter H.

Diamandis and Steven Culture

Radical Abundance: How a Revolution in Nanotechnology Will Change Civilization by K. Eric Drexler

The Sentient Machine: The Coming Age of Artificial Intelligence by Amir Husain

Beyond: Our Future in Space by Chris Impel

The Future of Humanity: Terraforming Mars, Interstellar Travel, Immortality, and Our Destiny Beyond Earth by Michio Kaku

Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think by Viktor Mayer-Schoeneberger and Kenneth Cuvier

(Continued on p.4)



Former SCF member G George entertained us with a magic show on 28th June



Adv. Anil Kumar spoke on "Saving our Rivers" On 12th July

(Continued from p.2)

What is amazing about this man is that he has not confined himself to providing free food to the needy, he has gone far beyond that and is also taking care of the destitute and the mentally ill.

The second meeting of the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum was held on 28th June.

Keeping in mind, the request from members to have a few lighter moments, once in a while, at our meetings, Mr G George had been invited to take us to the World of Magic.

Interspersed with jokes, the magician managed to keep the audience look on with wonder at the way in which he performed tricks using cards, photo frames,

flags and the like.

After that members went ahead with the Group Formation that had been suggested by Prof. George Koshy. The four leaders, Mrs Omana Abraham, Mr Shiva Shankara Pillay, Mr P T Abraham & Prof K M Varghese noted the names of members who were to become members of their respective groups.

(Continued from p.3)

The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power Is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World by Jeremy Firkin

Thinking Machines: The Quest for Artificial Intelligence and Where It's Taking Us Next by Luke Dormehl

Megatech: Technology in 2050

edited by Daniel Franklin

Homo Deus by Yuval Noah Harari

Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth by Mark Hertsgaard

The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History by Elizabeth Kolbert.

Inadvertent Error

Last month Mrs Lally Matthew's birthday on 1st June was not included in the list of June birthdays. Kindly accept the Editor's apology.

Happy Birthday!!

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!

- Mrs. Molly Abraham 1 July
- Dr. Elizabeth Philip 2 July
- Mrs. Pushpa Mathew 4 July
- Dr. George Jacob 7 July
- Dr. Mrs Rachel Kurien 13 July
- Dr. C Radhakrishnan 16 July
- Mr. Cherian K Joseph 19 July

- Mrs. Minnu John 20 July
- Mrs. Valsa Koshy 23 July
- Dr. E C Raju 26 July
- Mr. V K G Nair 28 July
- Dr. Joy J Peediakal 28 July
- Mrs. Mariamma Poullose 29 July