



# ELDERS' VOICE

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

MAY 2023

*News Bulletin of*  
Senior Citizens' Forum Kottayam

*Editor*  
Pushpa Mathew

## President's Message

Dhanya Gopinath

Hello Friends,

This is my very first message as the President of the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum. The team for the year 2023-24 has just taken the Oath of Office.

The five members of the Executive Committee, comprising of the Secretary Mrs. Kochu Rani Mathew, Jt. Secretary Mrs. Minnu John, Vice-President Mr. P.I.Mani, the Treasurer Mr. V.G. Shyam & I promise to do our best to keep the vigour & vibrancy built into the activities of the Forum by the previous teams.

In the new Governing Board, we have Dr. P.I. John, Prof. BabuJoseph, Mr. Manoharan, Immediate Past President Dr. Joseph Cherian & Immediate Past Secretary Mr. Simon K. Poulose in the capacity of ex-officio. We also have our Special Invitees.

Our newsletter keeps improving every month thanks to our Editor Mrs. Pushpa Mathew & Asst. Editor Mrs. ShantaKumari. Let us hope this trend will keep continuing.

Last but not least, we hope to get the co-operation of all the members of the SCF. Many of you are talented in some way or the other. Please do not hesitate to come forward to the mike. Dr. Elizabeth Philip, Mrs. Lissy John & Maya Cherian have come forward & rendered the prayer song. I am sure there are many more talented men & women in our



Forum. Let us make our programmes more interesting & launch a membership drive. All constructive suggestions are welcome.

The recently concluded Sherpas Meet at Kumarakom, in connection with the G-20 meet seemed to have been a grand success. Can we hope to remain quiet by offering good hospitality? India is the chair of the G20 & the Shanghai Co-operation Organization; hence, will be pressed to do more to show global leadership & help end the war in Ukraine. The visit by Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister demonstrates Ukraine's desire to build closer ties with India & seek its help in resolving the conflict.

Although we have expressed our uneasiness with the war & called for respecting territorial integrity, we have, so far, refused to condemn Russia. While choosing to remain neutral, we could also play a more active role in resolving the conflict. India must display leadership capabilities and use its good ties with Moscow to bring a permanent solution to the Russia Ukraine conflict.



Dr Joseph Cherian adorning Dhanya with the Presidential collar

# Editor's Musings

Pushpa Mathew

Hello Everyone,

While misogyny is rampant across the world and the Taliban has even banned girls from school and women from employment in Afghanistan, the Kottayam Senior Citizens' Forum has strode far ahead and unanimously voted for the transfer of charge of the Forum to a team of women with Dhanya Gopinath as the President and Rani Mathew as Secretary for the year 2023-24.

The collective effort of the last team of office-bearers has resulted in the excellent functioning of the forum, with memorable celebrations at Onam and Christmas. There was over-all improvement in attendance and members took turns to host the high tea. All in all, the camaraderie in the forum is palpable. We invite members to bring in like-minded family and friends to join our group.

After the disaster at Brahmapuram, it was decided to dedicate the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March to a

discussion on waste management in Kottayam. Prof P C Varghese suggested that the forum try to make Kottayam a clean town with zero-waste. Dr. P. I. John offered a technological fix for Brahmapuram. He pointed out how Indore has set up a 20-ton bio-methanation plant with the help of Enviro Resources, who help integral solid waste management and recycling, whereby the municipality gets 2.5 crore by way of royalty, apart from income from the sale of by-products. Prof Sivasankara Pillai dwelt on the social aspect of the issue.



The meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April was devoted to handing over charge to the new team of office-bearers. Prof K M Varghese swore in all the members of the new Governing Body and the new President, Dhanya, was adorned with the Presidential collar by the out-going President, Dr. Joseph Cherian.

This time we have two travelogues – one by Rani Mathew, who is continuing her sojourn across the seven sisters. This time she visits Meghalaya. The other travelogue is by Dr. P. I. John, who describes the wonders of Vienna and Venice. Isn't it enjoyable to vicariously enjoy the sights and sounds of places far away, sitting in the comfort of our arm-chairs?

How many of you were able to correctly identify Prof P C Varghese and Leelamma in last month's quiz? This time we have another one of our members for you to guess.

Until next time, then.

## Guess who is this?



Answer to last month's quiz "Guess who is this?":  
**Prof P C Varghese and Leelamma**



Dhanya Gopinath being sworn in as President



Rani Mathew being sworn in as Secretary



P I Mani as vice president

# A JOURNEY TO SEE 7 SISTERS

## Part 4 (Meghalaya)

Rani Mathew



After completing the Nagaland tour, we proceeded to Shillong the capital of Meghalaya. Meghalaya was formed on 21 January 1972 by carving out two districts from the state of Assam. The population of Meghalaya as of 2014 is estimated to be 32 lakh, which mainly consists of tribal people. Apart from English, some local languages are also spoken in the state.



At Meghalaya

As per the history of Meghalaya, the people belong to various tribes, and they had their own kingdoms until they came under British administration in the 19th century. Later, the British administration incorporated Meghalaya into Assam in 1835. The region enjoyed semi-independent status by virtue of a treaty relationship with the British Crown.

Presently, Meghalaya is a North-Eastern state of India. The word 'megha' means 'clouds' and 'alaya' means abode, hence, Meghalaya is the 'abode of

'clouds'. It is a place of mountains, valleys, and plateaus.

It has rock formations with coal, limestones, sillimanite, and many more. It is bordered by Assam and Bangladesh on the northern and southern sides respectively. The literacy rate of the state is as high as 72%.

It is known for its wide range of crops, waterfalls, caves, and lakes. Most of the economic needs of the people are met through agricultural activities.

Walking on the natural root bridges was a rare experience. The banks of small canals are connected with live roots of big trees and people can walk freely on such live bridges. This is a tourist attraction. There are hundreds of natural caves located throughout the state of Meghalaya. The state has three wildlife sanctuaries also.

We visited Cherrapunji, which has the heaviest rainfall in our country, as high as 450 inches. The rainfall is heavy from May to September, There is a small water fall here and near to this, there are caves in the rock formation. We took the courage of entering a cave which is more than 100 mts long. Inside the cave it is very slippery and we had to sit and creep. Once you enter the cave the only option is to go forward and reach the other mouth of the cave. It was pitch dark inside. The only source of light was our mobile torch. It took more than 15 minutes to reach the other end. It was a rare experience.

After this we returned to our hotel for rest.

(To be continued)



Minnu John as Jt Secretary



V G Shyam as Treasurer

# WANDERLUST IN VIENNA

P. I. John

In September 2002, I joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the Head of its Physics Section on an 8-month assignment. Minnu joined me in November for a three-month stay. We started the serious exploration of the beautiful city of Vienna whenever I was free from office work.

Austria's capital offers a unique blend of imperial traditions and stunning modern architecture. We decided that our short stay had to be exploited cleverly to sample the many wares of the city. The technique we used was to do a random walk through the city using the Viennese facility of a single ticket valid for subways, trams, and buses.

Vienna's history dates to the first century when the Romans established the military camp Vindobona. Today's cityscape is

characterized by the abundance of Baroque buildings created mostly under the rule of Empress Maria Theresia (1740 - 1780) and Emperor Franz Joseph (1848 - 1916), who were largely responsible for the monumental architecture around the Ringstrasse.

Sacher-Torte, the classic chocolate confectionery is a Viennese invention. So are croissants, associated with the period of failed attempts by the Ottoman Empire to capture the city of Vienna. During the Second Siege of Vienna in 1683, the Turks had wanted to plant the Turkish crescent on Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral. A Viennese master baker named Peter Wendler created a crescent-shaped pastry to mock the Turkish crescent.

Belvedere Palace today houses the Österreichische Galerie displaying the largest collection of works by Klimt (The Kiss) and Schiele.

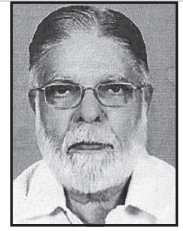
Vienna's prime landmarks are the gothic Stephansdom (St. Stephen's Cathedral), the Giant Ferris Wheel in the Prater, Vienna's old recreational park, and the Spanish Riding School with their worldfamous Lipizzaner horses. Vienna has many museums and galleries of international reputation. The Albertina is home to the world's largest collection of graphic arts and prints (60,000 drawings, 1 million prints).

Vienna is a great musical metropolis. Celebrated composers who lived and worked here included Strauss, Mozart, Beethoven, and Haydn. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the world's best and the Vienna Boys' Choir equally famous.

We decided to visit Venice during the Christmas holidays in December. At the end of the 8-hour train journey, there are several long tunnels through the Alps reaching the delta of river Po (remember Giovanni Guareschi's delightful characters Don Camillo and Peppone from this region?) with miles and miles of vineyards.

We stayed at Hotel Abbazia, in Ghetto Vecchio in the Jewish quarters, a short walk from the Santa Lucia Railway station. In the late 19th century, this rambling building of old-world charm was a Carmelite Monastery. There is a delightful garden, where we found a patch of the grounds converted into a mini-Kerala by an old staff member from Kerala.

We spent a couple of days wandering around the pictures-que city. No one comes to Venice and fails to be struck by the uniqueness of the city. For centuries Venice dominated trade on the Mediterranean through wily diplomacy, assisted by its mighty navy. Like the architecture of its signature Basilica di San Marco, the Venetian empire was dazzlingly multicultural. Venice turned arrivals from every nation and creed into trading partners with a common credo: if everyone was making money, cultural boundaries need not apply.



## WISH YOU ALL 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!*



|                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Kunjoonjamma Mathew</b>      | <b>12<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>Susan Mathews</b>            | <b>14<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>P. P. Abraham</b>            | <b>18<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>K. P. Joy</b>                | <b>24<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>Prof. Sivasankara Pillai</b> | <b>24<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>Annie Mathew</b>             | <b>26<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>Lizzy Mathew</b>             | <b>27<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>P. K. Abraham</b>            | <b>28<sup>th</sup> May</b> |
| <b>Prof. T M Philip</b>         | <b>31<sup>st</sup> May</b> |



Swearing in of the Governing Body members