

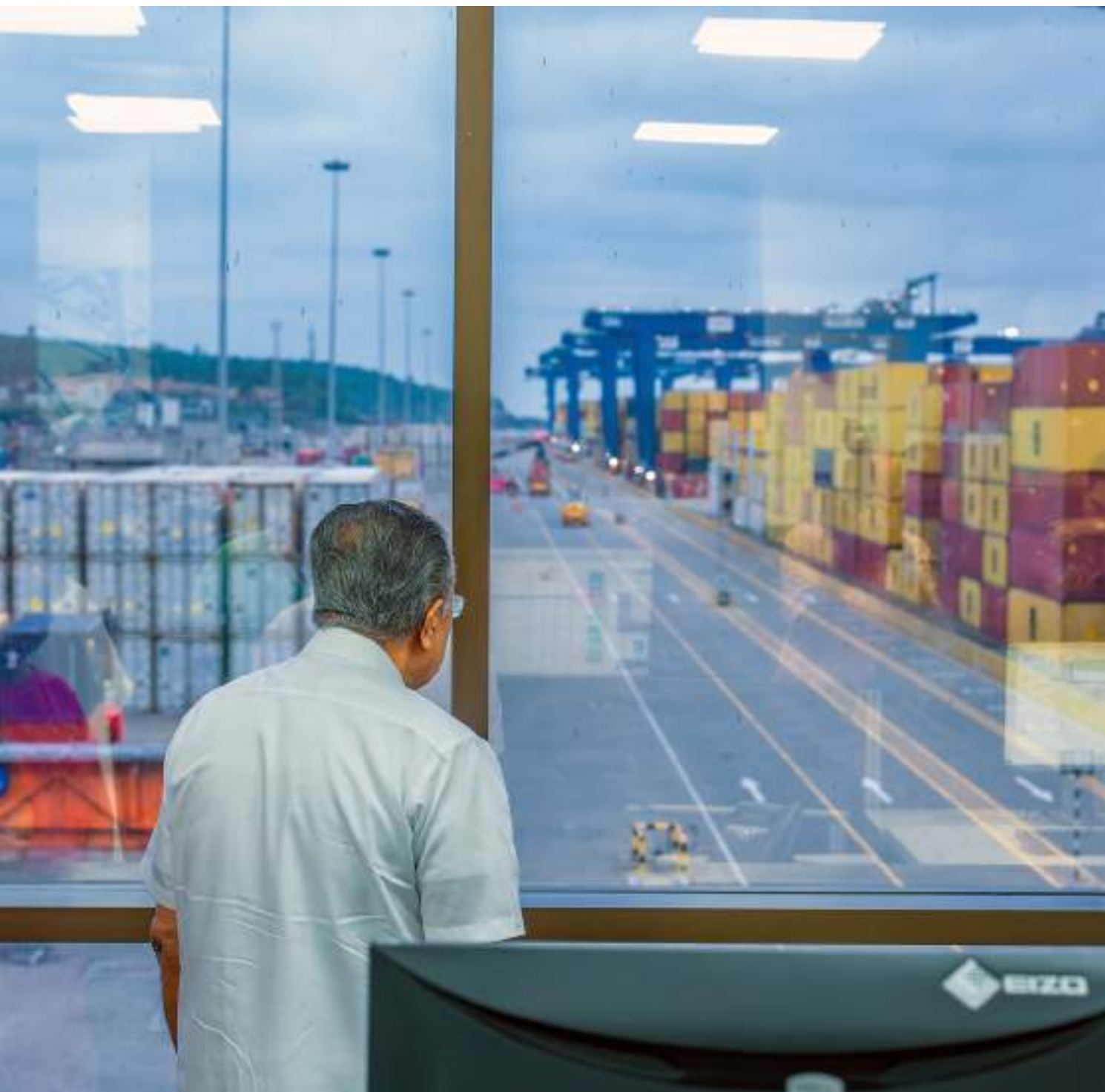


KERALA CALLING



REIMAGINING OUR FUTURE

THROUGH ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND
INTENSIVE ANTI-NARCOTIC DRIVE



Vizhinjam International Sea Port was officially commissioned on May 2nd 2025, marking a milestone in India's maritime history



A TRANSFORMATIVE ERA

The transformative power of education is universally acknowledged. The State's education sector has undergone a timely transformation, reaffirming the importance of knowledge and learning. In the penultimate year of the second Pinarayi Vijayan government, our education sector has reached remarkable heights. The Public Education Protection Mission and the *Vidyakiranam* Mission have revolutionised Kerala's educational landscape over the past nine years. Syllabus revision and a special emphasis on technology education and skill development are the salient features of this academic year. The cumulative benefits of the Rs.5000 crore investment in the education sector will undoubtedly be cherished and valued by future generations.

While we have revitalised the education sector to guide our future generations towards enlightenment, sinister forces continue to lure them into the dark abyss of substance abuse. Recognising the gravity of this crisis, the state government has taken swift and effective action. Alongside stringent enforcement measures against drug use, extensive awareness programmes and anti-drug rallies are being conducted across the state. We are leaving no stone unturned in our crusade against narcotics. The wholehearted support of the public for these government initiatives is propelling this campaign towards success.

Kerala Calling wishes all students a productive and fulfilling academic year

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SCHOOL RE-OPENING



OUR GOAL, HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS

PINARAYI VIJAYAN

Chief Minister

The ultimate goal of education is to assist the personality development of students and to mould good citizens. Ensuring quality education for all is of prime concern. It is also important to develop awareness in young minds to stay away from social vices. The education plan implemented by the Kerala General Education Department envisages



such a comprehensive vision.

Ensuring that children are acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge in each class is an integral part of the comprehensive quality plan. Learning support will be imparted to children if necessary. The learning support activity organised in April for the eighth grade children who did not get 30 percent marks as a continuation of the March 2025 annual examination is part of this. If there is a learning gap in any area, a conscious effort to resolve it is essential at the beginning of the school year.

Practical measures to develop learning process and strengthen the understanding of constitutional values such as democracy, secularism, equality have been included in the curriculum. Additionally, social

values and civic consciousness put forward by the Curriculum Framework 2023 will be imparted to children.

Awareness should be raised on issues such as personal hygiene, environmental cleanliness, traffic rules etc. In this way, good health habits and hygiene habits can be established as the lifestyle of the future generation. Naturally, teachers should lead all these activities. Parental participation should be ensured as much as possible.

Discussions should be held in classrooms on how to use mobile phones with discretion. Participation of all children in such discussions should be encouraged. Children need to have a clear understanding of digital discipline. The pitfalls that can be encountered while using digital media can also be introduced to children, considering their age.

Knowing the children and understanding the life situation of each child is a prerequisite for quality education. Only then can we know the reasons for their behavioural characteristics. Along with this, we can know where each child stands in the application of technology in the subject areas of language, science, social science, and mathematics.

Comprehensive Student, Parent, Teacher Empowerment

Koodeyundu Karuthekaan is a project designed and implemented by the Department of General Education with the goal of value-based personality development of adolescent students. The project is being implemented under the leadership of the Higher Secondary Academic Division. The project aims to create a generation that is suitable to participate in the knowledge society building. The project aims to find permanent solutions to the undesirable tendencies inherent in the developmental milestones of adolescents, such as ragging, violence, vandalism, drug use, vehicle misuse etc.

The ideas derived from the comprehensive discussions held with experts from various fields have been compiled into attractive and action-based modules conducive to experiential knowledge creation. This should be put into practice in an effective manner. Along with this, all steps should be taken to ensure the safe study of the students and the security of the schools. Wishing all the school students of our state a peaceful, creative and fruitful academic year.

The Pinarayi Vijayan government has put immense focus on reviving government schools and restoring the lost glory of general education. The Public Education Rejuvenation Mission and the Vidyakiranam Mission have revolutionised the educational sector of Kerala in the last 9 years.

PRIORITIES MATTER



V. SIVANKUTTY

Minister for General Education and Labour

The Public Education Protection Mission and its follow-up *Vidyakiranam Mission*, launched as part of the Nava Keralam action plan in the academic year 2017-18, have brought about revolutionary changes in the educational history of Kerala. The coordinated efforts of the government, teachers associations, public representatives and the general public laid the foundation for this substantial progress.

Development of Infrastructure

In the last nine years, public schools in Kerala have been upgraded to international standards in terms of physical infrastructure. With the help of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), an investment of Rs. 1,427 crore has been made in this sector.

- Out of 141 buildings worth Rs 5 crore, 139 have been completed.





- Out of 386 buildings worth Rs 3 crore, 179 have been completed.
- Out of 446 buildings worth Rs 1 crore, 195 have been completed.

The success of the project is indicated by the completion of 513 out of a total of 973 school buildings. Along with this, development works worth Rs. 5000 crore have been implemented through Plan Funds, NABARD, Local Self-Government Institutions, People's Representatives' Asset Development Funds and SSK schemes, a record that cannot be claimed by any other state in the country.

Support has also been provided specifically for aided schools through the Challenge Fund.

For quality education – Subject Minimum

Developing material facilities is certainly commendable, but for real progress, it is essential to ensure the quality of education. For this, the concept of subject minimum was implemented in the academic year 2024-25. Its aim is to ensure the basic educational capability of every student. In the first phase, 86,603 students of class 8 who did not get the subject minimum in the public examination were trained and the assessment process was

completed. It is planned to implement this in classes 5, 6, 7 and 9 in the coming academic year.

Meanwhile, the Union government has once again adopted an approach that encourages the idea of failure. This is likely to discourage children from pursuing education.

Textbook Revision and Uniform Distribution

Textbooks for classes 1 to 10 have been revised after a long gap of 16 years. The process of distributing 3.8 crore books before the opening of schools has been completed. Pre-primary and higher secondary textbooks will also be revised this academic year. The textbooks for class 10 have been distributed even before the end of the class 9 exams.

Handloom uniforms have been distributed for the academic year 2025-26. The uniform allowance for the year 2024-25 has been distributed in full.

Qualified Teachers, the Cornerstone

Teacher qualifications and training are the basis of education. Kerala selects qualified teachers on the basis of the K-TET exam. But still, more than 2,500 teachers have not qualified for the K-TET. The

First-graders becoming writers



A book titled *Kurunnezhuthukal*, containing a few notes from the diaries written by first-graders has been published by the government. The book was edited by the Minister for General Education, V Sivankutty.

Inclusive Sports

A sports manual has been prepared for differently-abled children to demonstrate their sporting excellence and participate in sports events. The manual has been developed in the model of international competitions such as Paralympics. The School Sports Meet 2024 became a unique model of integrating differently-abled children.



exam has been announced this year for those who did not get the desired result in the last year's exam. Training programmes are also being implemented based on this.

Clarity on Differently-abled Teachers

Clarity has been achieved in the appointment of differently-abled teachers based on the Supreme Court, High Court judgments and government orders. So far, 2,350 appointments have been completed.

File Adalat – Solution to Long-pending Problems

Out of the 4,597 complaints received in the file adalats held in Ernakulam, Kollam and Kozhikode regions, 2,648 were resolved on the same day of the adalat. Subsequently, 79,140 files were resolved in the office adalat and the process is progressing at the directorate level as well.

The decisions made, actions taken and the effectiveness displayed by the state government to improve public education as part of the Nava Kerala action plan are exemplary at the national level. Kerala is taking the public education sector forward with the cooperation of teachers, public representatives and the general public at large.

Learning Support for Tribals

A learning support programme called *Padhippurusi* was implemented to ensure learning support for the children of Idamalakkudi, the only tribal gram panchayat of Kerala. The children are taught lessons in their own language. The L.P. School in Idamalakkudi has been upgraded to UP school.



New textbooks will provide ICT literacy, scientific literacy, financial literacy and knowledge about our cultural diversity

RESONATING THE WORLD TEXTBOOKS IN



DR. JAYAPRAKASH R.K.

Director, State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT)

Kerala's general education sector is a model even for the developed countries of the world. The transformation and development of our education sector has come about with the support of social renaissance movements. The creation of a secular democratic society laid the foundation for the achievements in the education sector.

We launched the Public Education Protection Mission in 2016 by taking on the very important political, social and academic responsibility that public schools are the invaluable assets of the land and should be protected. Our goal was to develop the infrastructure of government schools and thereby enhance the academic quality and transform them into public spaces of democratic secularism and raise them to international standard. For this goal, we have invested about 5,000 crores. There has been a huge leap in the infrastructure of all schools. The use of technology in the education sector has become inevitable, and more than 45,000 classrooms have been converted into



digital classrooms. Thus, the state government has adopted an approach to protect and strengthen the public education sector.

Preparing for Future Challenges

While retaining the achievements in school education, the sector needs to brace itself to face the challenges of the new era. With the aim of creating a knowledge society, the state's Department of General Education has undertaken comprehensive curriculum reform activities from pre-primary to higher secondary levels. Taking on the responsibility of reforming the curriculum, which has not been reformed for more than 10 years, SCERT completed this work in two and a half years.

Kerala has always formulated policies in the field of public education by considering the opinions and aspirations of the people. The process of formulating the curriculum framework began by collecting public opinion. For the first time in

history, curriculum formulation meetings were organised in classrooms and opinions of lakhs of students were heard. This was followed by preparing position papers in 26 areas and further developing the curriculum framework in four areas - school education, primary education, adult education and teacher education. Subsequently, the syllabus grid and textbook production were undertaken.

Evolving Texts

Kerala has formulated a curriculum that is designed to develop 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration skills, critical thinking, analytical skills, communication skills and problem-solving skills.

Knowledge society, knowledge economy and consequently creative economy have become a reality in the world. These times call for a change in the perspective that textbooks are the only means of learning. In a society that changes day by day, studying the same textbooks for years would be suicidal. Therefore, the idea of an evolving text has been given importance in this reform. This means that textbooks will be subject to change every year.

In the first phase, 238 title textbooks for classes 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 were revised in 4 languages. In the second phase, 205 title textbooks for classes 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 were also revised. Kerala also produced textbooks for parents for the first time in the country. This book discusses the skills that children need to acquire at each stage and the physical and mental support that is essential for children. In addition, the teacher text was completed within a time-bound manner, which is a commendable achievement.

Creating Multi-skilled Citizens

In order to realise the knowledge society, our classrooms also need to be prepared for a major change. Health and physical education, art education and career-integrated education have been considered with great importance in this reform phase. If this knowledge can be given to children through experiential learning, then they can acquire capabilities essential in the modern world. Efforts to provide ICT literacy, scientific literacy, financial literacy and knowledge about our cultural diversity have been made as part of this curriculum reform. Workbooks have been prepared so that children can acquire basic literacy and numeracy by second standard.

Books have also been prepared with great importance given to art education. The books

have been prepared focusing on the areas of dance, music, drama, cinema and painting from classes 5 to 10. This is the first time in Kerala that textbooks have been prepared for classes 5 to 12 with great importance for job-oriented education. In the modern world where knowledge, ability and skills are given importance, textbooks have been prepared in 12 areas so that children can choose different areas according to their interests. Artificial intelligence has been included as part of the IT textbook from class 7 onwards for children to learn and become familiar with.

Assessment is a vital component of curriculum reform efforts. We need to follow the continuous assessment process, experimenting with more performance-based assessment methods, and developing assessment tools based on modern technology.

Textbooks in 12 areas of learning (Class 5 to 12)

- Agriculture
- Food industry
- Clothing
- Furniture
- Plumbing
- Electrical and electronics
- Green technology
- Finance
- Printing and stationery
- Tourism
- Media and entertainment
- Crafts

We cannot ensure quality through textbook reform alone. Only when every teacher, by focusing on curriculum-based methodology and acquiring innovative ideas through self-study, transforms his or her classroom into creative classroom, can we provide quality education to our children. These reform efforts are being carried out in line with the democratic secular values that Kerala has always upheld and the goals set forth in the Constitution. It is hoped that these reform efforts, which consider gender justice, environmental awareness and scientific temper, will galvanise Kerala's surge forward.

AIMING FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



DR. C RAMAKRISHNAN

State Team Member, Vidyakiranam

Public schools that are stable and well endorsed by the government are essential for a democratic society. Public education plays a major role in instilling fundamental values such as secularism and democracy, and human values such as solidarity, cooperation and compassion in the society. Therefore, the stance taken by the consecutive Pinarayi Vijayan governments is that public schools should not be closed, but should be strengthened and developed into centres of excellence.

Public education in Kerala is a huge network consisting of nearly 13,000 schools, 45 lakh students, 1.8 lakh teachers and more than 20,000 non-teaching staff. Our state offers every child the facility to study up to class 12 near the vicinity of home.

The Public Education Protection Mission launched in 2017-18 and its follow-up, the *Vidyakiranam Mission*, have changed the face of public education. It is important to note that these achievements of Kerala come at a time when the central government is implementing a National Education Policy that prioritises market logic and encourages private institutions. By overcoming financial difficulties, Kerala is developing public education by ensuring equality of opportunity for all children.

Schools, classrooms and learning systems have been extensively modernised. There has never been

a period since the formation of the state, when so much attention has been paid to the development of facilities and academic matters. The development of facilities was made a reality with the financial assistance of KIIFB.

Technology Access for All

The United Nations has pointed out that Kerala is a model for the world in providing technology-friendly education to all children. Kerala has succeeded in implementing the government's vision that every child should have equal opportunity to access information technology without economic, social or gender discrimination. In a world where digital divide is real, Kerala developed a model of universalising technology.

We have provided broadband internet facilities in all schools in Kerala. More than 50,000 classrooms (from standard 8 to 12) have been made technology-friendly. Computer labs have been set up in primary and upper primary schools. In addition to these, tinkering labs and robotics labs have been set up in schools.

Teachers and students have been trained in Artificial Intelligence. Teachers have also been provided with training on how to incorporate technology into learning activities.

Another activity worth mentioning is cyber security training for mothers. Special training has been arranged to introduce technology to 3 lakh mothers through Little Kites IT clubs led by children in schools. The training was organised by the Little Kites members of each school along with the Kite Master teachers. Training was given in areas such as 'Fake News Identification-Fact Checking', which

helps in detecting, identifying and verifying fake news and internet scams.

Comprehensive Quality Education Plan

To implement school activities more efficiently schools are adopting a methodology of formulating comprehensive academic master plans and arranging activities accordingly. These academic plans will be helpful for detailed academic planning. It is only through progress in academic field can we achieve excellence in school education.

Structural Changes

If academic changes are to be sustainable, structural changes are also essential. Steps are being taken to bring about timely changes in the school education structure as per the recommendations of the expert committee appointed by the government.

Learning support projects

A learning support project called *Malayala Thilakkam* was implemented for children facing difficulty in learning Malayalam. Hello English project was implemented for English language



OLD
NEW



The government has formulated a Comprehensive Quality Education Plan with the following objectives.

- * Increase the efficiency of academic activities
- * Make the assessment methodology efficient
- * Strengthen technology-friendly activities
- * Make administrative activities efficient
- * Strengthen research activities
- * Bring timely changes in teacher training
- * Strengthen school committees and people's committees.

learning and *Sureeli Hindi* project for Hindi learning.

Various projects were implemented for science, mathematics and social science. Projects like *Ullasa Ganitham*, *Ganitha Vijayam* and *Menma* have been designed and implemented for mathematics learning. These learning support projects have been useful for progress in learning in various subjects.

Manchadi project

The *Manchadi* project is an in-depth mathematics



OLD
NEW

learning method that helps children learn mathematics in a fun way. The approach is to comprehensively study the mathematical concepts in the textbook using innovative learning tools. The project is implemented with the co-operation of Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council (KDISC). This project, which was implemented in 100 schools in the first phase, will be expanded to 1400 schools.

Mazhavillu

The *Mazhavillu* project aims to help children develop a new methodology for studying science. This project is currently being implemented with a focus on model residential schools.

Child Scientists

Child Scientists is a project that identifies scientific talents in higher secondary classes and provides them with scientific training. This project is being implemented state-wide using the academic facilities of colleges. The children who excel in this are given the opportunity to experience the infinite possibilities of knowledge through camps at top research institutes like IISER.

Reading

Extensive reading and reference are essential for children to learn in



OLD
NEW



the changing times. To facilitate this, schools are focusing on creating class libraries, expanding school libraries and conducting various activities that encourage book reading.

Varna Koodaaram

A learning environment that enables the multifaceted development of children is essential during the preschool period. The *Varna Koodaarams* set up by Samagra Shiksha Kerala are a valuable contribution in this direction. *Varna Koodaarams* have been set up in about 1200 schools in the state. These are active spaces that stimulate all areas of physical, mental, emotional and social development of children.

Skill Centres

Skill development centres explore how employability can be integrated into the final stages of school education. Major changes in the approach and attitude towards employment are essential. These centres can be seen as a step towards that.

Local Skill Centres and Community Education Centres

Local skill centres and community education

centres are functioning for socially disadvantaged children who need academic support. Through this, necessary arrangements have been made for academic activities outside school premises. About 720 local skill centres are functioning.

Transforming Teaching

The prerequisite for quality education is to have teachers who have in-depth knowledge in the subject areas taught and the skill and attitude to communicate that knowledge in a way that children with different learning speeds can follow. The development of science and technology is happening in a fast pace. This certainly influences teaching and learning activities. Therefore, the way of teaching needs to be reformed.

The discussions on educational reforms cannot be carried forward without recalling the experience of the world-renowned model of engaging children during the Covid pandemic. While filtering and inattention continue to be the hallmarks of market education, it is our duty to strengthen the schools of thought that strive to maintain our education system inclusive and progressive. The past 9 years of the transformation of public education system definitely provides the experience and energy to fulfil this duty.



KITE

KERALA'S AI-ENABLED CLASSROOM REVOLUTION





Kerala became the first Indian state to incorporate AI into its school curriculum in 2024.

K. ANVAR SADATH

CEO, KITE

Over the past two decades, Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE), formerly known as the IT@School project, has been a trailblazer in revolutionising digital education in Kerala, elevating it to unprecedented heights. Since its inception in 2001, KITE has spearheaded initiatives ranging from teacher capacity building and ICT content development to ensuring robust ICT infrastructure in schools and implementing e-governance systems. Today, KITE's scope has expanded to include Artificial Intelligence (AI) training for teachers, the deployment of robotic kits for students, and the integration of AI into the school curriculum. These milestones are the culmination of relentless dedication, research and innovation by KITE's techno-academic teams, positioning Kerala as a global model for technology-driven education.

The Hi-Tech Classroom Revolution

A cornerstone of KITE's achievements is its role in the Public Education Rejuvenation Mission, a state government initiative aimed at modernising education. Through the KIIFB-funded Hi-Tech

School Project, KITE transformed 45,000 classrooms across Standards 8 to 12 in 4,752 secondary schools into hi-tech learning environments between 2016 and 2019. This project, the largest ICT initiative in Indian education, was remarkable not only for its scale but also for its funding and the millions of students it benefited. Each hi-tech classroom was equipped with a laptop, ceiling-mounted projector, USB speakers, networking capabilities and access to the SAMAGRA Resource Portal, a KITE-developed digital repository.

Following this, KITE extended its efforts to primary education through the Hi-Tech Lab Project, upgrading 11,257 primary schools to match the technological standards of secondary schools. These projects collectively deployed over 4,50,000 ICT devices to government and government-aided schools, all supported by broadband internet connectivity, a five-year warranty and comprehensive support systems, including a call centre, web portal and annual maintenance contracts for laptops and projectors. This infrastructure overhaul was part of a broader vision to elevate school education holistically, encompassing academic excellence, learning environments, laboratories, libraries and extracurricular activities to international standards.

SAMAGRA:

A Digital Treasure Trove

Central to KITE's digital ecosystem is the SAMAGRA Resource Portal, a comprehensive repository of educational content for students from Class 1 to 12. SAMAGRA offers e-resources, textbooks and question banks in various formats, including images, videos, animations, interactive narrations and tutorials. Available in four mediums of instruction—Malayalam, English, Tamil and Kannada—the portal ensures inclusivity and accessibility, catering to Kerala's diverse linguistic landscape. By providing high-quality, curriculum-aligned digital content, SAMAGRA empowers both teachers and students to engage with education in dynamic and innovative ways.

Little KITEs:

Nurturing Tech-Savvy Innovators

In 2018–19, KITE launched the Little KITEs IT Clubs initiative to foster creativity and technological



KITE is developing Samagra Plus AI, a bespoke AI engine tailored to the state's academic framework.



proficiency among students. Targeting students in Standard 8, the programme selects members through an aptitude test assessing their interest in ICT. Each Little KITEs unit, comprising 20 to 40 students, is led by a unit leader and deputy leader, with activities overseen by a KITE Master and KITE Mistress—teachers nominated by the head teacher. The clubs provide hands-on training in cutting-edge fields such as AI, robotics, 3D character designing, cyber-safety and language computing through specialised camps.

In 2023–24, KITE distributed 29,000 Arduino Uno Robotic Kits to Little KITEs IT Clubs, enabling students to explore robotics and develop practical skills. The initiative promotes healthy competition by recognising top-performing clubs and students while phasing out underperforming units through

annual evaluations. By encouraging knowledge sharing and societal applications of technology, Little KITEs nurtures a generation of innovators poised to shape the future.

AI Training for Teachers

Recognising the transformative potential of AI, KITE introduced a groundbreaking AI training programme for 80,000 teachers in 2024. This three-day programme covered essential AI concepts, including summarisation techniques, data visualisation, prompt engineering and machine learning. Teachers also explored critical topics such as deepfakes, privacy concerns and algorithmic bias, fostering a culture of responsible AI usage. The training was widely praised for its

practical content and its ability to reduce teachers' workloads, equipping them with tools to integrate AI effectively into their teaching practices.

AI in the Curriculum: A National First

In a historic move, Kerala became the first Indian state to incorporate AI into its school curriculum in 2024. A dedicated chapter on AI was introduced in the ICT textbook for Class 7, featuring hands-on activities like Computer Vision, where students create AI programmes to recognise human facial expressions, identifying up to seven emotions. The curriculum also includes the PictoBlox package, akin to Scratch, which teaches visual programming and supports learning in AI, Robotics and other

ICT skills. These activities not only foster technical proficiency but also promote life skills, cyber-safety and the ability to identify fake news, ensuring a holistic educational experience.

Samagra Plus AI: A Tailored AI Engine

To address the limitations of existing AI solutions, which were not aligned with Kerala's curriculum, KITE is developing Samagra Plus AI, a bespoke AI engine tailored to the state's academic framework. Currently in the prototype testing phase, this platform supports teachers by providing curriculum-aligned digital resources, aiding lesson planning and enabling personalised learning in AI-enhanced classrooms. It also facilitates student assessments and individualised feedback, aligning with the principles of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).

Samagra Plus AI empowers teachers to create and customise digital learning materials, develop lesson plans and implement AI-integrated teaching strategies. By analysing student profiles and learning indicators, the platform identifies learning gaps and recommends targeted resources, ensuring personalised support for each student. Additionally, it enhances English language proficiency through interactive activities like puzzles, riddles and exercises in listening, speaking, reading and writing, making learning engaging and effective.

A Global Model for Digital Education

KITE's integration of advanced technologies, including AI and robotics, with Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) has created a dynamic and inclusive educational environment. By aligning cutting-edge tools with Kerala's unique pedagogical needs, KITE has set a global benchmark for digital education. Its initiatives—from hi-tech classrooms and SAMAGRA to Little KITEs and Samagra Plus AI—demonstrate a commitment to fostering innovation, equity and excellence in education.

As Kerala continues to lead the way in AI-enabled education, KITE's efforts underscore the transformative power of technology when harnessed with vision and purpose. By empowering teachers, engaging students and building a robust digital ecosystem, KITE is not only shaping the future of education in Kerala but also inspiring the world.



BUILDING THE VOICE OF THE FUTURE

INTERVIEW WITH K.V. MANOJ KUMAR



DEVIKA A.R

Every child deserves to be heard. When their right is at stake, silence is not an option and the Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights ensures it is heard.

The Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights was established on June 3, 2013, under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, and the Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights Rules, 2012.



Today, the commission is headed by Chairperson K V Manoj Kumar, former lawyer at Thalassery, Co-operative Ombudsman and Rubco legal adviser.

? Established in 2013, the Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights works to uphold child rights and addresses injustices against children. Could you briefly explain what the Commission is, the key interventions it has carried out generally for children so far?

We have undertaken several significant initiatives to protect child rights in Kerala. Training sessions have been conducted for various stakeholders. Training has been completed in 152 block panchayats. As part of the initiative to create one lakh child ambassadors across the state, training has been provided to the teachers in charge of the Student Police Cadet (SPC) programs in every district.

District-level meetings with stakeholders related to three major laws, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, the POCSO Act and the Right to Education Act, have been

completed in all districts. A state-level meeting will also be held, after which a comprehensive report will be submitted to the government.

The Commission has taken steps toward making Kerala a child labour-free and child marriage-free state. The state was divided into two zones, and zonal meetings were organised in Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode with specially appointed Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs).

? The rising number of drug-related cases has become a serious concern. Reports of drug peddlers targeting students over the past few years have alarmed the public. Can you elaborate on the Commission's anti-drug initiatives?

We believe that projects that aim to address the root causes of these issues must be developed. One of the significant findings is that children from broken families, children of parents addicted to substances and those whose parents are either



incapable or inefficient in properly caring for them, often end up in such vulnerable situations. Our aim is to identify such children and prepare an individual care plan for each of them. We were able to realise this through a study conducted six months ago. Our team visited all 35 family courts across Kerala, to understand the psychological distress experienced by children of parents involved in court cases.

? A surge in violent incidents involving students and teenagers ranging from street fights to brutal assaults has left the state in shock.

How does the Commission plan to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for children?

Now, children have instant access to everything. So they tend to become impatient. That's exactly why the solution must begin within the family itself. To address this, the Commission has launched a major initiative in collaboration with 'Kudumbashree' under the concepts of 'Good Parenting and Democratic Parenting'. Nearly 3,000 faculty members have been trained across all districts.

This initiative promotes involving children in the family's decision-making processes and teaching them values at home. The Commission firmly believes that such initiatives will lead to meaningful and lasting change.

? The involvement of society and communities plays a vital role in safeguarding child rights and supporting children's mental health. What are the contributions to include communities in child rights protection?

Yes, we are indeed moving forward with a major initiative. To communicate the functions and importance of the Commission effectively to society, we are launching an Internet Radio. Through this platform, we aim to reach students, teachers, parents and the society at large. The network of Anganwadis and Kudumbashree will be utilised for this.

? Embedding child rights in education helps students recognise and assert their own rights and those of others. Understanding one's rights is essential for both adults and children. What steps are being taken to strengthen child rights

education within the school curriculum?

We have already submitted our recommendations to include Child Rights as a part of the school curriculum. Though teachers need to have a thorough understanding of child rights, this subject is currently not included in the course curriculum of B.Ed. To address this, we convened a consultation with registrars and deans from all universities. This is the first time in Kerala that a Commission has taken the initiative to organise such a meeting. A consensus has been reached to revise the curriculum accordingly.

? Parents and teachers, having the closest access to children, play a crucial role in monitoring their mental health and overall well-being. How can parents and teachers work with the Commission to identify and support children at risk of social or academic exclusion?

A well-structured module has been developed that focuses on how children should be approached and handled effectively, and we are now preparing to move into the second module development.

A key component is the training of school counsellors. We selected at least 10 counsellors from each district and provided them with specialised training. These counsellors then conducted studies in individual schools, collecting data related to the mental health and behavioural patterns of children. A special high-level committee was formed to examine the findings. The committee has already held two sittings, during which they reviewed the data and findings in detail. Based on this, a comprehensive report is now being finalised.

Kudumbashree is one of the most active and far-reaching systems of the government, capable of reaching the grassroots level effectively. We regularly convene meetings with Kudumbashree's district-level officers. Training will be extended to parents through Kudumbashree's networks at the panchayat, ward and micro-unit levels. Through this approach, we believe the general public will gain a strong and clear understanding of how to protect and care for children effectively.

? Two of the most important legal frameworks related to child protection in India are the Juvenile Justice and the POCSO Act, so what are these laws and how does this actually empower our youth?

For the Commission, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act holds greater significance than the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act. While the POCSO Act primarily defines the punishment and legal procedures for committing an offense against a child, and also emphasises child protection, it is the Juvenile Justice Act that lays out the comprehensive framework for how a child should actually be protected.

rehabilitated. Importantly, this law clearly states that both categories, a child who is a victim and a child who is accused, must be protected equally and responsibly.

That is why the Juvenile Justice Act is of such vital importance

? With the state's education system shifting towards a more digital and future-oriented approach. Looking ahead, what is your vision for building a more child-rights-friendly academic and social environment in Kerala?

It is true that a digital divide exists between teachers and students. Teachers are unable to present lessons in ways that meet the expectations and interests of digitally-native students leading to weak connection between teacher and student. Teachers must, therefore, design lesson delivery methods that align with how children accept and engage with information today, primarily through visual and auditory formats.

Every classroom should ideally be digitised. Students now prefer to learn by watching and listening, rather than referring textbooks.

All necessary protective mechanisms must be in place to improve infrastructure of POCSO court. A major concern is that children must not come into direct contact with the accused in any situation. Ernakulam currently has a well-functioning child-friendly POCSO court. In Thalassery POCSO court, the Commission itself took the initiative to make the space child-friendly, using children's artwork and visuals to create a welcoming environment. Our vision is that all POCSO courts across the state adopt such child-friendly practices.

The fundamental aspiration of the Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights is for children to grow up in a joyful and nurturing environment. As Oscar Wilde once said, 'The best way to make children good is to make them happy'. Our schools should be places where happiness is central, where children should be more excited to return on a Monday morning than to go home on a Friday evening.

This is the kind of positive environment we must create in our schools. Each child must have the opportunity to learn and grow in line with their individual aptitudes.



The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act outlines, in detail, how to provide care and protection to a child. Section 3 of the Act lists around 16 core principles related to child protection. These principles include, for example, the past of a child who has been punished, must be forgotten immediately after they complete the sentence, because every child is presumed to be innocent. These principles form the heart of 'Child Rights'. Sections 75 onward describe what action must be taken when a child is subjected to cruelty or harm. It also details how a child classified as a Child in Conflict with Law (CCL) should be



DOUSING THE MENACE



Kerala's relentless battle against drug abuse involves government action, public awareness and community efforts to protect future generations.

THIS FIGHT WILL SURELY BE WON



M.B. RAJESH

Minister for Local Self-Government
and Excise Department

The use of narcotics has become one of the most significant factors that weaken all the progress made by human society. Various narcotic substances, including drugs, destroy human intellect and health, causing serious negative consequences. These substances erase the creativity and energy of young people. This social evil needs to be fought collectively by humanity. Recognising the enormous gravity of this peril, our government has declared an uncompromising battle against the spread of narcotics.

The use of narcotic substances has become a serious social issue globally. In the 2024 report



of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the gravity of this issue is highlighted. According to the report, as of 2022, 292 million people worldwide were using drugs. In 2011, this number was 240 million. 64 million people face serious health problems due to drug use. In 2019 alone, half a million people died due to health problems related to drug use. The UNODC's 2021 report states that 180 million years of healthy life were lost worldwide due to drug use.

Among first-time drug users, 70% are between the ages of 10 and 15. Drug use is rapidly increasing in this group. Globalisation, consumerism and the desire to experience maximum pleasure at any cost have driven many people to adopt harmful methods. In Kerala, attempts to remove student organisations from schools and to promote political neutrality have led a small section of adolescents



down the wrong path. Identifying and nurturing the talent in children and involving them in creative activities can, to some extent, protect them from this catastrophe. Those who use narcotics and those who seek refuge in anarchy gradually adopt reverse-thinking and disruptive behaviours. This ultimately harms the progress of society and the nation. This is why anti-drug campaigns are highly significant and relevant.

Uncompromising Fight

The state government, under the leadership of the Excise Department, has conducted extensive awareness programs and strict enforcement actions against drug use. The first phase of the anti-drug campaign ran from October 2, 2022 (Gandhi Jayanti) to November 1, 2022 (Kerala Piravi Day).

The second phase ran from November 14, 2022, to January 26, 2023 (Republic Day). The third phase ran from January 26, 2023, to January 30, 2024. The fourth phase is currently ongoing.

The campaign was led by the Excise Department, Police, Health, Education, Fisheries and Scheduled Caste-Scheduled Tribe Development departments, along with local self-government institutions. In every local self-government institution and ward, public committees were formed to fight the drug menace. At colleges and schools, clubs were formed for anti-drug awareness. The programmes in schools were named *Unarv*, in colleges *Nerkkootam*, and in college hostels *Shraddha*. The Police Department also played a major role through programmes like *Janamaithri*, SPC, Green Campus and Dream Campus. Kudumbashree also extended significant support.

The government emphasises that we can save the new generation from the trap of narcotics only with full public co-operation.

Through the three-pronged strategy of preventing the smuggling of narcotic substances, creating strong awareness among the public, especially among adolescents, and providing better treatment and rehabilitation programmes for drug addicts, the government is successfully managing the drug issue.

Drug Use in Kerala

In comparison to other states, the use of narcotic substances in Kerala is very low. However, the consequences of drug addiction, even in small numbers, are significant. The government has adopted a firm stance that there will be no

compromise in the fight against drugs.

Despite the low spread, Kerala has been very effective in confiscating narcotics. Between 2020 and 2024, narcotics worth 11,311 crores were seized at ports in India, as reported by the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs in March 2025. Of the 19 seizures, eight were from ports in Gujarat, eight from Maharashtra, two from Kolkata and one from Tuticorin. There were no cases reported from Kerala, but the state's anti-drug efforts continue to be robust.

In March 2025, the Excise Department registered a total of 10,495 cases, which included 1,686 Abkari cases, 1,313 drug cases, and 7,483



In comparison to other states, the use of narcotic substances in Kerala is very low.

tobacco-related cases. In total, narcotics worth 7.09 crore were seized. In addition, 13,639 raids were conducted along with 362 join raids with other forces. During this period, 1,17,777 vehicles were inspected, resulting in the seizure of 66 vehicles related to Abkari cases and 67 vehicles related to

drug cases. Among the 1,580 people involved in Abkari cases, 1,501 were arrested, and out of the 1,358 people involved in drug cases, 1,316 were arrested. The police also caught 86 fugitives. A fine of ₹ 14.94 lakh was collected for violations related to tobacco.

Seizures and Preventive Measures

In terms of narcotics, the Excise Department seized significant quantities, including:

- 566.08 grams of MDMA
- 121.01 grams of heroin
- 143.67 grams of methamphetamine
- 215.47 grams of hashish
- 574.7 grams of hashish oil
- 16 grams of brown sugar
- 2.4 grams of LSD
- 54.97 grams of Nitrosepam tablets
- 286.65 kg of cannabis
- 148 kg of cannabis mixed chocolates
- 59.4 grams of hybrid cannabis
- 22 grams of charas
- 96.8 grams of cannabis mixed bhang

In addition, 16,997 litres of spirit, 290.25 litres of toddy, 4,486.79 litres of illegal foreign liquor, 964.5 litres of fake liquor, 11,858 litres of wash, and 4,252.39 kg of tobacco products were seized.

• As part of the inspection, the Excise Department seized 1,174 grams of gold, 1.41 crore in cash, and 150 bullets. In March, inspections were carried out in 3,511 school premises, 1,150 bus stand areas, 328 railway station premises, and 469 labour camps.

The Need for Vigilance and Support

The government emphasises that we can save the new generation from the trap of narcotics only with full public co-operation. Local self-government institutions have established committees to fight the drug menace. The government's intention is to rescue those who have fallen into addiction and reintegrate them into mainstream society, while taking strict action against those engaged in the production, distribution and use of drugs.

The drug menace can affect any household. Therefore, everyone, irrespective of political, caste, religious or gender differences, must unite to fight this issue. Drugs are the real enemy. The fight must be against them. We must approach those affected by drugs with compassion, and we must adopt a firm stance against those involved in drug production and distribution. Along with protecting the new generation from drugs, we must also rescue those affected and help them reintegrate into society through loving efforts. Both homes and schools must act with vigilance in this matter. Communication with children should be more organic and nurturing, not just meeting their basic material needs. Loving, sincere and open communication is vital. Children should be actively engaged in creative activities outside the textbooks. They should be provided opportunities to explore the world.

The society must adopt a comprehensive resistance against narcotics across all sectors. The spread of drugs is not a problem that can be controlled by government institutions alone. It is a challenge that requires the awakening and involvement of the entire public. With this in mind, the government seeks the co-operation of everyone to combat this crisis.

Department of Sports has taken up a leadership role in spreading anti-drug message to the youth and guiding them towards healthy practices.

GAME ON DRUGS OUT



V ABDURAHIMAN

Minister for Sports,
Wakf and Haj Pilgrimage,
Posts and Telegraphs,
Railways

The rampant spread of intoxicants like narcotic drugs has become an extremely serious crisis in the society. A large section of the population, including children and youth, is falling prey to this deadly menace.

Sports, the Perfect Solution

At a time when drug use has become a significant threat, sports and exercise are being promoted as the perfect antidote. Sports is not merely a process of producing champions; it is also a vital solution to numerous issues, including addiction, lack of motivation and various forms of dependency. Games and grounds offer a channel for children to positively direct their energy. They bring excitement and joy, infusing life with purpose. These spaces help mould a healthy citizen capable of meaningfully contributing to the nation's future. Numerous studies have shown that sports foster not only physical health but also mental well-being. It brings isolated youth together, leads to greater social unity and encourages individuals to become more responsible within their families, neighbourhoods and communities.



To protect our children and youth from the scourge of addiction, the State Government, under the leadership of the Chief Minister, has devised and is implementing extensive programmes. In this regard, the Department of Sports has a vital role to play. Sports is one of the most effective defence against substances like drugs. It is easier to keep addiction at bay through sporting activities. With this goal in mind, the foundation of the state's sports policy was laid with the vision of Sports for All.

Decentralised Development of Sports

Exercise and physical activity are crucial in maintaining health. Games and workouts form the foundation of a society's health status. In November 2024, the United Nations endorsed the idea that physical activity is a key pathway to sustainable development. Children have drifted away from playgrounds. There are several reasons for this: the growing influence of the digital world, limited access to play facilities and the excessive academic pressure placed on children. As a result, issues like lifestyle diseases are increasing among children.

It is in this context that the Department of Sports launched the Sports Fitness Mission. The mission aims to attract people of all ages to exercise and play. Through this mission, the vision of 'Sports for All' can be realised. As part of the



mission, a decentralised development model for sporting activities is being implemented. Local sports councils were formed with this objective in mind. For the first time in India, sports councils are being established and functioning at the panchayat, municipal and corporation levels. Currently, all the schemes of the sports department are being implemented through these local sports councils, enabling grassroots-level sporting activity.

The lack of playgrounds has been a major drawback in Kerala. It was one of the reasons that led children down the wrong path. However, over the past nine years, the government has spent ₹3,500 crore on developing sports infrastructure. Under the Department of Sports, around 500 projects — including large stadiums and common playgrounds — have been completed. The dream project of One Playground in Every Panchayat is ushering in significant change. Quality playgrounds are now emerging in every panchayat. Eight grounds have already been completed, and the construction of 76 more is nearing completion. These playgrounds are equipped with facilities such as open gyms and walkways. They also serve as community centres for local residents to come together.

The Department of Sports has established 16 major fitness centres across the state. Five more are soon to be completed. Additionally, 16 open gyms have been built. These developments create more opportunities for physical activity and encourage more people to take part in sports.

Let's Rally Behind Health

The Department of Sports is taking up the responsibility of bringing everyone to the playground. To liberate our children and youth from the grip of drugs — and to prevent them from falling into addiction — the department is conducting a comprehensive fitness awareness campaign across all 14 districts of Kerala. Every individual must develop a conscious understanding of the need to be healthy. This realisation calls for widespread publicity and awareness initiatives.

The Department of Sports launched an anti-drug message rally that started on May 5 from Kasaragod and culminated on May 22 at Marine Drive, Ernakulam. This statewide anti-drug message rally toured all 14 districts. An anti-drug pledge was recited at every rally stop.

Leading sportspersons and sports organisers and people from various walks of life were part of the rally. The rally included mini-marathons, cyclothons, walkathons and sports exhibitions in two or three centres in each district. All sports organisations participated and showcased different sporting disciplines.

Reclaiming playgrounds is one of the primary missions of the rally. Abandoned or overgrown playgrounds across the state will be restored and reopened for children. Sports kits will also be distributed at these venues.

Let us all stand united to create an efficient and healthy future generation. Everyone must actively take part in this noble mission aimed at the betterment of Kerala. I hope that this anti-drug rally gives fuel to the collective fight against drug abuse.

Operation D-Hunt is a trailblazing initiative led by Kerala Police aimed at building a healthier, drug-free society through surveillance and community policing projects.

KERALA'S CRUSADE AGAINST DRUG MENACE



GAYATRI R. NAIR

Around the world, drug trafficking and abuse have surged to record levels, impacting major cities everywhere. Kerala, with its busy sea routes, airports and proximity to key international shipping lanes, has not been spared. Recognising the threat to public safety, the Kerala government had quickly stepped up, organising several high-level meetings and launching a strong Anti-Narcotics Campaign.

At the heart of the Anti-Narcotic mission is Operation D-Hunt – a strategic disruptive force initiated by the Kerala Police to exterminate the drug menace. The goal is clear: dismantle the supply networks fuelling drug trafficking and addiction and restore peace and security across Kerala.

Perils of Synthetic Highs

The Kerala Police have mounted a strong and resilient defense against the threat of drug trafficking. Tragically, it is the youth and children who are the most vulnerable. The fact that the most popular contraband today is synthetic drugs makes the fight even more urgent.

Synthetic drugs are dangerous because they are harder to detect, easier to disguise and extremely

potent. Often resembling everyday substances like salt crystals, they can be crushed, snorted or smoked easily. Even more concerning, LSD stamps confiscated show that they are designed to appeal to children, featuring cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse making them look harmless at first glance. MDMA tablets often mimic the appearance of chocolates, appearing appetising and safe to unsuspecting young minds.

A Strategic Strike

Earlier this year, Kerala Police Chief Dr. Shaik Darvesh Saheb IPS led a high-level meeting that launched Operation D-Hunt as a major state-wide offensive. The operation is backed by extensive surveillance and intelligence work. This precision strike against drug dealers and traffickers compliments Kerala Government's broader *Vimukthi* programme.

Operation D-Hunt traces its origin to early 2024. D-hunt was intensified and launched on 22nd February 2025 as part of the Anti-Narcotic Campaign. The drive targets individuals and organised crime networks, smuggling and dealing drugs. Anyone found in possession of the drugs or aiding and abetting the trade will be prosecuted under the strict terms of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

How D-Hunt works

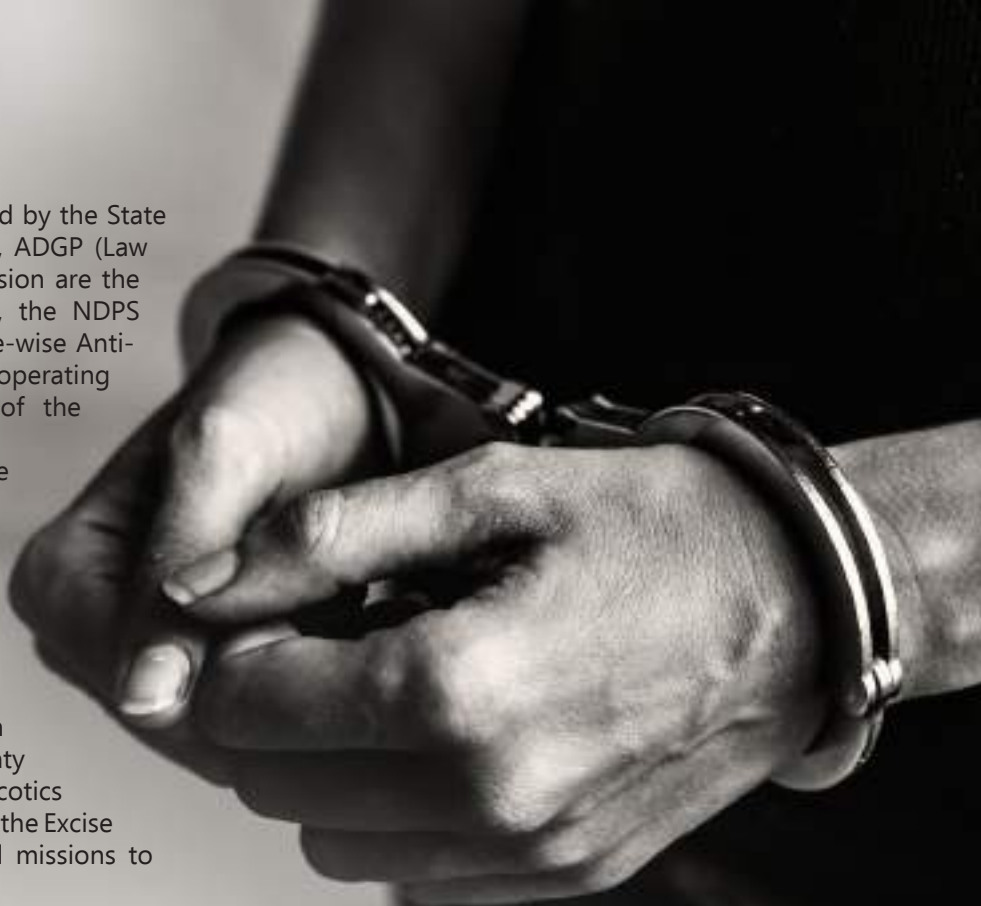
The D-Hunt operation is led by the State Anti-Narcotics Task Force Chief, ADGP (Law and Order). Supporting the mission are the Anti-Narcotics Intelligence Cell, the NDPS Coordination Cell and the range-wise Anti-Narcotics Intelligence Cells—all operating under the direct supervision of the ADGP, Law & Order.

At the range level the operations are carried out by the RANSAF (Range Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force), effectively deployed across four key zones—Kannur, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram. At the district level, the operation is implemented by the twenty DANSAF (District Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force) teams, with the Excise Department conducting parallel missions to strengthen the crackdown.

Public Spaces under Surveillance

As part of this drive the Kerala police have increased the surveillance of public spaces known to foster illicit drug activities. The Police has zeroed in on tourist hotspots, labour camps, school-college surroundings, resorts, hotels, lodges and nightlife venues. They have also roped in authorities who manage such spots and advised them to be vigilant about instances of drug use.

Educational hubs are given special attention and teachers and shopkeepers next to schools are asked to alert the police about suspicious activities. Inspections are carried out routinely on trains and buses crossing the state borders and migrant worker camps. Sniffer dogs are deployed on railway platforms to detect drugs. Recently, the



Under Project **YODHAV**, the WhatsApp number **9995966666** allows citizens to anonymously report information **24/7** via text, photo, video or voice message.



Police raided spas and massage centres, recognising it as one of the possible channels through which drugs can be transported and sold.

Technology and Intelligence

In India traditionally, drugs were smuggled through land, sea and air routes. About 70% of the total drugs were brought via sea routes, particularly the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal according to an annual report of NCB. With the advent of digital age, online illicit marketplaces on the darknet became popular. Digital drug transactions offer anonymity, lack of identification and security through cryptocurrency payments. These platforms are difficult to trace, as administrators conceal server locations. Illegal drug supply chains would ensure that parcels reach the buyer directly.

In response, Kerala Police are fighting fire with fire. Cyberdome, the department's technological research and development centre, plays a crucial role. The team consists of ethical hackers, coders, cybersecurity prodigies and law enforcement officials who monitor the darknet drug trade. To ensure faster and efficient drug detention, major police stations across the state have been equipped with drug screening kits for quick, on-the-spot substance testing. Police have also developed a comprehensive databank of known drug peddlers.

To gather intelligence from the public and to provide them with information the police have established various measures. An Anti-Narcotic Cell has been activated at ADGP L&O office and contact numbers 9497979794, 9497927797 are provided. A toll-free number, National Narcotics Helpline 1933 is also active. Under Project **YODHAV**, the WhatsApp number 9995966666 allows citizens to anonymously report information 24/7 via text, photo, video or voice message. Any information shared is treated with strict confidentiality.

National Narcotic Helpline

1933

is active for any drug related enquiry.





The Government of Kerala runs de-addiction centres across 14 districts under the *Vimukthi* programme. The *Vimukthi* De-addiction Centres are designed to offer a supportive, non-judgmental space for those seeking help. These centres operate with inpatient (IP) and outpatient (OP) services and has a dedicated team of 10 professionals, including one Medical Officer, one Clinical Psychologist, one PSW (Psychosocial Worker) and nurses.

Janamaithri Project and the Clean Campus–Safe Campus Initiative

Recognising that the fight against drugs must involve every sector of society, Kerala Police have launched targeted projects and awareness programmes to build public participation. Through the *Janamaithri* Project, police have strengthened collaboration between residents, local committees and community leaders. They play a crucial role by providing valuable intelligence on trafficking networks.

In schools and colleges across the state, Clean Campus–Safe Campus initiative has been reactivated. The movement places students right at the frontline of anti-drug awareness and action. Student Police Cadets and School Protection Groups work to secure school campuses. The Anti-Narcotics Clubs in colleges empower the next generation with the knowledge, resilience and the confidence to say no to narcotics.

Success of Operation D-Hunt

Operation D-Hunt has proven to be incredibly effective. Since its launch, there has been a notable decline in the sale and use of narcotics in Kerala. Kerala Police have credited this success to strong public participation and local community support.

The statistics speak for themselves. Between February 22, 2025 and April 18, 2025, during the intensified phase of Operation D-Hunt, 1,40,027 individuals were checked, 10,901 cases were registered and 11,437 accused were arrested.

The Operation D-Hunt is more than just an enforcement drive. The special drive affirms that Kerala is charting a powerful path toward a future free from the grip of narcotics, where our youth and children will be protected from the dangerous effects of addiction.

RANSAF

(Range Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force) deployed across four zones—Kannur, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram



20 DANSAF

(District Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force) teams at district level

India battles rising drug abuse through strict laws, coordinated enforcement, treatment programmes and awareness campaigns, aiming to balance punishment with rehabilitation for lasting societal impact.

ADDICTION'S GRIP JUSTICE'S GAVEL



ALEENA JOSEPH

Drug addiction, also known as substance use disorder, is a condition that disrupts a person's brain and behaviour, making it difficult to stop using legal or illegal drugs. It is a serious issue that affects public health, safety and national stability. In India, drug control is mainly governed by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, which sets the legal framework to regulate and prevent drug-related crimes.

This Act aims to create strict laws around the handling of narcotic and psychotropic substances, including their production, possession, sale and transport. It also focuses on seizing property linked to illegal drug trade and aligns with international drug control treaties. The Abkari Act also deals with certain liquid drugs.

Legally, the term 'narcotic' refers to drugs like opium, cannabis and cocaine, which can be addictive and have strong effects on the mind and body. However,



A national toll-freehelpline

(1800-11-0031)

is available to assist drug users, their families and the public

the legal definition is broader than the medical one. Section 2(vi) of the NDPS Act defines narcotic drugs to include coca leaves, cannabis (hemp), opium, poppy straw and other manufactured drugs. Section 2(xxiii) describes psychotropic substances as any natural or synthetic substance listed in the NDPS Schedule, such as amphetamines, ketamine, diazepam and alprazolam.

Ensuring Strict Compliance

The NDPS Act enforces drug laws through strict penalties and policing. According to Section 2(vii a), a 'commercial quantity' refers to a drug amount larger than what the central government notifies. Section 2(xxiii a) defines a 'small quantity' as anything less than the notified amount. Cases involving commercial quantities are considered serious and are non-bailable under Section 37. However, courts may grant bail if the accused is found unlikely to commit further offences. Section 31A was inserted into NDPS act 1985 to provide for capital punishment or 30 years of imprisonment for habitual offenders on the discretion of the judge.

The punishment under Sections 15 to 23 of the Act depends on the type and quantity of drugs involved. There are three levels:

- Small quantity: Up to 12 months rigorous imprisonment or a fine of ₹10,000 or both.
- Intermediate quantity (more than small, less than commercial): Up to 10 years in jail and 1 lakh fine.
- Commercial quantity: Minimum of 10 years; upto 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of 1–2 lakh.

Complicity is Culpable

Even if someone doesn't directly handle drugs, they can still be punished under the NDPS Act. If a person knowingly allows their property to be used for drug activities, they face the same punishment as the offender. The same applies to those who try, plan or help commit drug offences—including cases of abetment or criminal conspiracy. If someone is caught preparing to commit a drug crime, they will receive half the punishment of the crime they were preparing for.

Imprisonment for Drug Usage

Drug users are also treated as offenders under the NDPS Act. If a person is caught using hard drugs like heroin, morphine or cocaine, they face up to one year in prison or a fine up to ₹20,000 or both. For other drugs, the punishment is up to 6 months in jail or a ₹10,000 fine.

However, there is a provision for immunity. If a drug addict voluntarily seeks treatment, they may be protected from legal action, which encourages rehabilitation over punishment.

Efforts to Curtail Drug Use

India's battle against drug abuse is not just legal—it is also social and medical. The government leads efforts to reduce demand for drugs through programmes focused on prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and community awareness.

To understand how widespread the problem is, a National Survey on the Extent and Pattern of Substance Use was conducted to assess how many people are affected and what substances they use.

Several ministries, including Health & Family Welfare, Finance, Social Justice, and Youth Affairs & Sports, run media campaigns and awareness programmes. A national toll-freehelpline (1800-11-0031) is available to assist drug users, their families and the public.

Victims or Offenders?

Drug users are often both victims and offenders. Their addiction leads to physical, mental and emotional damage, making them victims of their own condition. At the same time, the law treats them as offenders. These cases are sometimes considered 'victimless crimes' because they don't directly harm others.

Still, drug users suffer from stigma, not only from society but also from the legal and medical systems. Instead of focusing only on punishment, authorities are treating drug users as individuals in need of help, supporting treatment and rehabilitation to prevent repeat offences.

Drug mafia uses social media to spread drugs and this has reached our adolescents too

LEST WE LOSE OUR CHILDREN



DR MOHAN ROY G,
Professor and Head of the
Department of Psychiatry
Government Medical College Kollam

"Believe you can, and you're halfway there." – Theodore Roosevelt

Recently, a case came up before me in which the parents were concerned whether their 17 year old child is using drugs. Generally, this child has been rebellious and stubborn. As he grew older, his aggressive nature started to show, particularly with cruel behaviour towards younger siblings. Recently, he went as far as cutting off the tail of the family dog.

When the issue was discussed, the child denied using drugs and challenged the parents to conduct a drug test. There was a small twist in the situation that neither the parents nor the child were aware of: drug usage can show up in tests even after a few days. The tests revealed that the child was indeed using cannabis. Further discussions revealed the use of other substances as well.

Factors Contributing to Drug Use

Peer Pressure: Teenagers often spend most of their time with peers, which lead to pressure to conform. Adolescents might feel compelled to use drugs to gain social status or to become a hero among their peers.

Stress and Mental Health Issues: Children often feel bogged down by academic pressure and other personal challenges. It has been proven that such children are more likely to turn to drugs as a coping mechanism.

Curiosity and the Desire for Excitement:

Adolescence is a period of mental development, and the growing brain leads teens to explore new experiences. The one-time use out of curiosity may quickly escalate to addiction.

Family Influence: In some households, alcohol use has become normalised. Children growing up in such environments may believe that drug use is an accepted part of life.

Availability of Drugs: Studies show that when drugs are easily accessible, the likelihood of adolescents using them increases. Reports from global organisations such as the United Nations have shown that drug mafias use social media to spread drugs and this reality has reached our adolescents as well.

Lack of Awareness: Adolescents often do not fully understand the dangers and long-term consequences of drug use. This ignorance contributes to the onset of addiction. The most unfortunate aspect is that the educational curriculum does not address this serious issue adequately.

Strategies to Prevent Addiction

To manage addiction among adolescents, a multifaceted approach that includes resistance strategies, timely and effective intervention and treatment is essential.

Preventive Strategies

- o **Education and Awareness:** Global efforts to combat drug addiction have heavily relied on awareness campaigns on the physical and mental problems caused by alcohol and drug



use. Awareness campaigns should also address other addictive behaviours like excessive gaming or social media use.

- o **Parental Involvement:** Teenagers spend a lot of time with their peers, but open communication at home is crucial. Parents should guide children on how to assertively say "no" to situations that may encourage drug use. Family discussions on how to deal with pressures and health-related issues are essential.
- o **School-Based Programmes:** There should be discussions in classrooms on how drug use affects the brain and its subsequent impact on cognitive abilities, learning and social relationships.

Early Identification and Intervention

- o **Recognising Behavioural Changes:** Changes in behaviour, withdrawal from family or social circles, declining academic performance or mood swings may indicate drug use. Parents should be observant of such signs, and should

address these concerns promptly.

- o **Testing and Intervention:** When signs of drug use are detected, it's crucial to discuss the negative impacts with the child. If necessary, mental health professionals should intervene to support the child. Parental support during this phase is essential.

Treatment and Follow-up

- o **Addiction Counselling:** Misconceptions about addiction medications being harmful need to be addressed because anti-drug medications are effective and safe. Unfortunately, misconceptions in society often prevent parents from seeking treatment, which is a grave injustice to the child.
- o **Family Therapy:** Family involvement is crucial in reintegrating an adolescent back into society. Blaming or punishing them won't help, but supportive and loving intervention will foster hope and encourage long-term recovery.
- o **Healthier Alternatives:** After treatment, adolescents should be encouraged to engage in sports, music, art or volunteer work. These activities serve as excellent substitutes for drug use, helping the adolescent build social connections and reducing the likelihood of returning to addiction.

Long-Term Support

Long-term support is crucial to ensure that they do not relapse into drug use. If any signs of relapse appear, the child should not be punished but encouraged to seek further help.

- o **Stress Management:** Long-term care should also include stress management techniques to help the adolescent cope with pressures that might otherwise lead them back to substance use.
- o **Monitoring and Accountability:** After treatment, ensuring they understand the importance of a drug-free future and remaining accountable will help them avoid relapse.

Addressing adolescent drug addiction requires a collaborative effort involving family, schools and healthcare professionals. Prevention, early intervention, effective treatment and long-term support are all essential in breaking the cycle of addiction. Only through a comprehensive approach can we protect our youth from the devastating consequences of substance abuse.

A pioneering initiative by Kerala Police, D-DAD tackles digital addiction in children with counselling, education and expert-led interventions across six specialised regional centres.

UNPLUG TO RECLAIM LIFE

STAFF REPORTER

One evening after school, Jacob, a 17-year-old boy (name changed for anonymity), came across a digital de-addiction pamphlet in his mother's handbag. He was subsequently informed that she received it as part of a digital addiction awareness campaign organised by the D-DAD centre. The pamphlet was about healthy smart phone habits and the social, psychological and physical consequences brought on by digital addiction. What struck Jacob's attention was the questionnaire to check one's dependency on digital gadgets that was attached to it. The questions asked included: "Do you always feel an urge to message or call someone?", "Do you experience discomfort or anxiety when you don't have your smart phone with you or when the phone's battery is below 50%?" etc.

When he checked, Jacob found that his answers indicated a high level of digital dependency. He was hooked on his device 24/7, mentally drained and physically weakened. His uncontrollable mobile usage was isolating him socially. Realising the dangerous extent of his smart phone addiction, he wasted no time. Jacob contacted the Chiri Helpline at 9497900200, and his call was forwarded to the regional D-DAD Centre.





It is rare for children to take the initiative to seek help voluntarily, but Jacob had recognised that his lack of control over his mobile usage was serious. At the de-addiction centre, he was consistent and attended all his therapy sessions with his family's support. The staff was amazed at his punctuality and his commitment to free himself from the addiction. His journey inspired others who witnessed this transformation. By the end of the programme, Jacob discovered that he had regained his old self back and reconnected with his life beyond the screen.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently included Gaming Disorder in its 11th International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). This move acknowledges that gaming addiction is now recognised as a diagnosable health condition. In today's digital age, where internet and online consumption are widespread—the boundary between the real and virtual world is becoming increasingly blurred. As internet usage surged, many individuals, particularly children and teenagers, are engaging with it excessively, often to the point of compulsion. Such digital overuse can negatively impact brain function, emotional wellbeing and social relationships.

Digital addiction

Digital addiction is a complex multilayered issue. While technology is essential to modern life, with services like banking and shopping to education and entertainment now all digital, this constant availability makes it difficult to disconnect. The allure of the digital world can often outweigh real-life interactions. This issue intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, as people became more reliant on digital platforms. During that stressful period, addiction appeared in various forms—such as social media, video games, online gambling and auction sites.

Like other behavioural addictions, digital dependency can lead to obsession and compulsive behaviour. It often disrupts daily routines, personal responsibilities, relationships and overall wellbeing. Individuals suffering digital addiction tend to act impulsively, ignoring social bonds and personal health. Children are particularly vulnerable—they're more trusting and easily influenced. During the pandemic, kids turned to digital screens for education and entertainment, leading to significant hours being spent online. As online threats grow, children's presence in the digital space has become a concern.

Operation D-DAD

Kerala's Unique Response

To address this growing concern, the Social Policing Division of the Kerala Police launched Operation D-DAD (Digital De-addiction). This initiative builds on the success of an earlier project CHIRI, a telephone counselling service that can be reached at 9497900200. It was established during the



pandemic to help children manage mental stress. While CHIRI remains active, D-DAD is more advanced and focused. It offers targeted counselling and therapy sessions for children struggling with digital addiction, involving both the affected individuals and their families. D-DAD serves as a central point of contact for those seeking information, guidance and support related to digital dependency.

Currently, D-DAD operates through six centres located in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Kannur. As of March 21, 2025, these centres had handled 1,709 cases: 770 still in treatment, 175 referred to other specialists, 735 successfully resolved and 29 where clients

dropped out. The project is set to expand across all districts in Kerala, with eight additional centres proposed in Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Wayanad, Malappuram, Palakkad and Kasaragod. D-DAD brings together trained experts who have created advanced therapy methods, educational programmes, screen-free retreats and scientifically designed tools to help children manage their behaviour and emotions.

How D-DAD Works

D-DAD addresses not only the child but also their surrounding environment—including families

Warning Signs: The '5 Cs'

D-DAD recommends watching for the '5 Cs' of digital addiction in children:

- **Craving** – Constant desire to use digital devices.
- **Control** – Losing control when the device is denied.
- **Coping** – Feeling good once the device is given back.
- **Compulsion** – When device use becomes a habit.
- **Consequences** – Facing physical, emotional or social problems due to excessive use.

Goals of D-DAD Centres

D-DAD centres have six main objectives:

1. **Early Detection:** Spot digital addiction in children under 18 by working with schools, NGOs, doctors and community networks.
2. **Scientific Intervention:** Understand the root causes of addiction and provide appropriate treatment, follow-ups and referrals.
3. **Digital Literacy & Awareness:** Educate children, parents and teachers about safe digital habits. Promote healthy screen use and inform the public through media.
4. **Legal Support:** Provide help to children in distress, initiate police action when necessary, and coordinate with legal agencies.
5. **Research:** Study the scope and impact of digital addiction to improve methods and strategies for treatment.
6. **Promote Healthy Usage:** Encourage responsible internet habits through workshops and discussions with policymakers and social- influencers.

and teachers. Each centre has a psychologist and a project coordinator. Departments of Health and Education actively assist in conducting D-DAD operations and in organising awareness programmes. A designated police officer from the local station also serves as a Police Coordinator for each centre.

The psychologist leads the clinical work by evaluating the child, diagnosing behavioural or emotional issues, and developing a custom treatment plan. Once therapy starts, monthly sessions are conducted with children and parents, with ongoing communication in between. If the addiction is linked to deeper mental health conditions like ADHD, the child is referred to medical experts for further help.

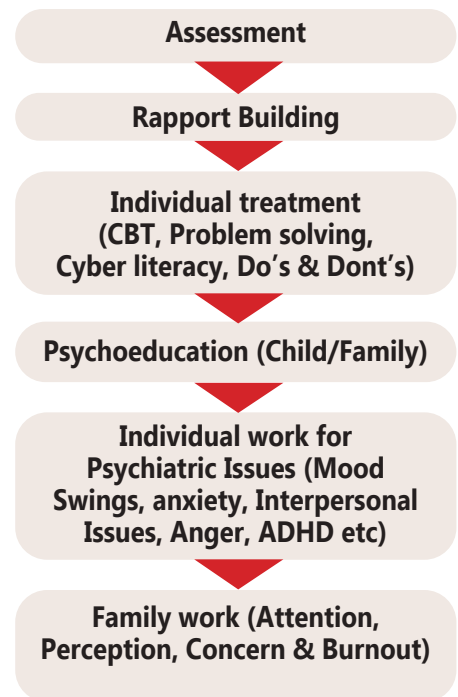
The Project Coordinator is responsible for managing day to day operations and supporting the psychologist in the implementation of the treatment plan. Meanwhile, the Police Coordinator addresses legal requirements, facilitates school visits and takes part in digital safety awareness campaigns. Oversight for the project comes from the Social Policing Directorate. Principal, Police Training College is the Additional Director for this programme while DySP, Cyber Operations is the Officer-in-Charge.

Children may become irritable when denied access, feel instantly better once they get their devices and increasingly depend on digital platforms for happiness. This often leads to fatigue, back pain, vision issues, mood swings, isolation and declining academic performance.

Focus on Family-Centred Recovery

A major part of recovery focuses on the family. D-DAD stresses the importance of involved parenting. Children often cite emotional distance from parents as a reason for turning to screens. D-DAD encourages families to spend meaningful time with children and to serve as role models for balanced digital use.

Treatment typically starts with psychological counselling and may include medical referrals if the child also shows signs of anxiety, depression, ADHD, or substance abuse.



D-DAD is a compassionate and proactive solution by the Kerala Police to address the growing concerns of digital addiction among children and to promote safe internet practices. By combining professional counselling and widespread awareness initiatives the programme not only supports healthier digital habits but also ensures emotional and psychological well-being of young users.

FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Kerala's FYUGP has completed a successful year. This programme is more than just an extra academic year—it represents a paradigm shift towards nurturing well-rounded, globally competent individuals.

CATALYST FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCE

The Fast Track (N-1 Model), allows students to finish the degree in 2.5 to 3 years if they accumulate the required credits early.



NANDHANA JAYAN

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."
-Martin Luther King Jr.

Charting a Bold Course in Higher Education

In a groundbreaking move, Kerala had introduced Four-Year Under Graduate Programme (FYUGP) in the last (2024-2025) academic year, thus becoming the first Indian state to fully implement such a programme. This reform aligns with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and embodies Kerala's broader aim of evolving into an international education hub. The new system combines academic excellence with social development, allowing students to earn internationally accepted qualifications. FYUGP also eliminates the need to repeat undergraduate studies when pursuing higher education abroad.

Why Shift to Four-Year Model

Globally, most top-ranked universities operate on a four-year undergraduate framework. Recognising this international trend, Kerala decided to revamp its higher education structure. The state government set up three expert commissions to study the current system and propose changes. Drawing on these reports, the FYUGP was designed with two core goals:

- Enabling students for international standard higher education
- Endowing youngsters with employment

Dr. R. Bindu, the Minister for Higher Education and Social Justice, remarked, "We hope to make higher education a system in which students will contribute to the growth of the society so that Kerala becomes a knowledge-based economy."

Structure and Features

The FYUGP empowers students with flexibility and ownership of their academic journey. Each student can select a major, alongside minors and electives from a wide range of disciplines. This interdisciplinary model ensures broader learning and greater customisation.

The guidelines for students who completed the first year to change their major, transfer colleges or switch universities have been approved. Students who passed all examinations in the first two semesters could apply for inter-university transfer. Students from Universities outside Kerala can also apply to study in Universities of Kerala from the third semester.

A key innovation is the compatibility of Kerala's credit system with global frameworks such as those used in Europe and North America. This allows students to transfer credits easily if they choose to study abroad.

Students may exit the programme after three years with a standard degree. However, those continuing into the fourth year have two options:

- Capstone Project Honours Degree - focused on applied learning.
- Research Honours Degree - which can open a direct path to PhD studies.

Another novel feature is the Fast Track (N-1 Model), allowing students to finish the degree in 2.5 to 3 years if they accumulate the required credits early.

Student-Centric Innovations

The restructured programme prioritises flexibility, relevance and global mobility.

- **Global Compatibility:** The degree framework now mirrors international norms, making transitions to global universities smoother and eliminating course repetition.
- **Research Opportunities:** The fourth year encourages research and project-based learning, including opportunities at international institutions.
- **Skill-Based Curriculum:** Internships, real-world project work and employment training are embedded in the curriculum to enhance employability.

- **Academic Flexibility:** Students can take academic breaks and return later to complete their degrees through the Academic Bank of Credits system.

Notably, Kerala diverges from the NEP model by not encouraging early diploma exits. This ensures that students, especially those from socially and economically backward backgrounds, are less likely to drop out prematurely.

Widespread Implementation and Institutional Support

The FYUGP has been uniformly adopted by all universities under the Higher Education Department, including autonomous and government colleges. Key support mechanisms include:

- Comprehensive teacher training
- Revised syllabi tailored to the new structure
- Establishment of high-standard research centres and laboratories
- Launch of schemes such as the Nava Kerala Post-Doctoral Fellowship and Kairali Research Awards to promote research excellence

Even the University Grants Commission (UGC) has taken interest in Kerala's model, particularly its Fast Track option, for potential national rollout.

Paving the Way to Proficiency

A model unified academic calendar applicable for all the universities under the Department of Higher Education has been approved. New minor courses which offer more employment potential and flexibility will be started.

Kerala's FYUGP equips students with a strong academic foundation, relevant skills for professional life and opportunities for international exposure. It helps Kerala to become a knowledge-based economy.

"Our goal isn't just to produce graduates," Dr. R. Bindu emphasised, "but to foster leaders, researchers and innovators who will reshape society."





AADINARAYANAN S. S.

Christ Nagar College, Maranalloor
1st year, Bachelor of Business Administration

FYUGP offers flexibility, interdisciplinary learning and more research opportunities. I believe its success largely depends on proper implementation.

On the positive side, students can explore multiple fields, exit and re-enter with credentials and even pursue Honors with Research degree. Most of the foreign universities demand a minimum eligibility of Honors degree so that it could further help the students in attaining a better position.

In my opinion, if implemented thoughtfully with adequate support systems, FYUGP has the potential to transform higher education in India for the better.

MEGHA K.

Government Engineering College, Palakkad
Electronics and Communication Engineering

The FYUGP provides flexibility with major-minor choices and multiple exit options, which is helpful. It promotes skill development and research exposure, especially in the 4th year. However, the additional year may feel like a burden for some students. There's still confusion about its implementation and how it impacts career plans. It's a promising idea but needs better clarity and execution.



PRIYA V. S.

Parent of FYUGP student
Ex-teacher, Currently a home-maker

Adapting to the curriculum takes time for both teachers and students. The faculties should be given adequate training to perform well. Students have a heavy workload. Since these are initial times, obtaining study references and materials is a challenge.

SHYMA K. SHAJI

Assitant Professor
Dept of Journalism and mass communication
SDV College, Alappuzha

The FYUGP offers skill-oriented, outcome-based education with more student choices, research opportunities and a potentially shorter PG duration. In contrast to 3-year UG programs, FYUGP provides flexibility in subject selection, updated syllabi and wider opportunities. However, initial communication issues and student confusion about the program's structure and benefits need to be cleared. A clearer understanding will emerge once the first FYUGP batch graduates.



AISWARYA SANTHOSH

BA in Journalism and Mass Communication
Semester -2, S. D. V College of Arts and Applied science, Alappuzha.

As part of the first FYUGP batch, I am impressed by this programme. Being able to choose subjects from other departments for a broader knowledge base, interacting with teachers and students and building relationships have come out as the positive aspects of FYUGP. Having to prepare for exams without previous year question papers is a challenge.



Setting an exemplary model for Indian democracy, Pinarayi Vijayan government published the progress report for the 9th year,



listing the promises made during election time and the respective measures taken.

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High than
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