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A Truly Golden Age of Tech Entrepreneurship

J

Jose Kunnappally
Editor



une has been a monumental month for TCS. First, the Indian IT bellwether's market capitalization (\$120 billion) overtook that of IBM (\$119.5 billion). And then when FY19 figures were reported, TCS became the third largest IT organisation in the world in terms of revenue (\$20.91 billion), surpassing DXC (\$20.75 billion).

At \$135.9 billion in FY19, software and hardware form India's top export and one of the largest employers of skilled talent. Willingness to listen and evolve according to the changing needs of their clients have ensured the tech industry's sustained growth. For quite some time now, Indian IT firms have been religiously measuring customer satisfaction scores, investing in building digital capabilities, increasing focus on developing products/platforms on new age technologies, actively mining clients for growing digital revenues, deploying automation to drive productivity and re-skilling existing employees for the new 'digital' normal.

With 7200+ tech startups (of which

400+ are in the AI and Automation space) in 2018 and 8 new unicorns, including the first one in SaaS, it is truly the Golden Age of tech entrepreneurship in India, ripples of which are felt even in *God's Own Country*, inarguably the rising star in vibrant tech ecosystems.

Kerala's 120,000-strong techie community has proved time and again that they are not just great at building tech solutions but superb human beings who can take the lead in social and cultural interventions as well as excel in an art or craft. 'Tech-A-Break' which concluded on June 6, was a spectacular show of the diverse cultural and artistic talents employed at Technopark companies. On the cover this month, is one such hyper talented group of techies from leading US tax services firm H&R Block which set up their first India center at Technopark last year. Calling themselves B Sharp, this rock band is testimony to Technopark's unwritten dictum: work hard; play hard. Read their story on page 12.

With the monsoon in full swing, don't forget to get drenched. Choose your song!

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Tech-A-Break Leaves behind Inspiring Memories

I

Hrishikesh Nair
CEO, IT Parks Kerala

t's IBS again! Kudos to all IBSians for clinching the overall championship title at the recently-held Tech-A-Break (TAB), the biggest cultural extravaganza of Technopark. IBS bagged the 'Company of the Year' trophy at TAB 2019, which marked the rebirth of the event after a hiatus of seven years. Congrats to Allianz Technology and Finastra, which emerged first and second runners up respectively. I believe all techies bid farewell to the event with high spirits, carrying inspiring memories and hoping for more. Special thanks to leaders of GTech (Group of Technology Companies) and Natana, its arts and cultural forum, for making this happen.

As you all are aware, the construction of the four-lane elevated highway at Kazhakkootam is fast progressing. For the smooth functioning of the work, Kerala Police has imposed traffic restrictions. With Monsoon at its peak, I know the techie fraternity would be facing difficult times on account of this. However, I urge all of you to cooperate as the upcoming flyover would wipe out traffic woes at Technopark main gate junction. It

will also act as a connector between multiple routes, prevent heavy-duty traffic during peak hours and function as a perfect path for efficient travel.

While on this, I would like to inform you about the relocation of Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K), the pioneer autonomous institution set up by the Government of Kerala for conducting top-grade IT, science and management courses, to Technocity at Pallippuram. The State Government had allotted 10.33 acres of land in Technocity to develop a full-fledged residential campus for IIITM-K. The first phase of the campus is now ready. IIITM-K has plans to set up five independent schools – School of Computing; School of Electronics Design and Automation; School of Informatics; School of Biosciences; and School of Humanities and Digital Liberal Arts – on the new campus.

Join me in congratulating Enfin Technologies based at Technopark, on its 10th anniversary, and Webandcrafts, which has recently shifted to a new office at Asokam Villa at Infopark, Thrissur.



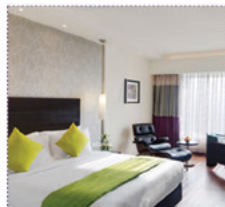
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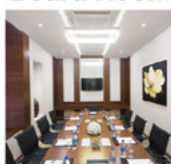


MEETINGS, EVENTS & OTHER FACILITIES

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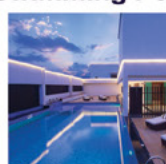
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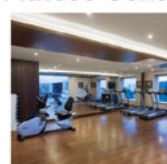
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Techies Prefer Firms Promoting Learning, Innovation: TechGig Survey

The survey was conducted to understand the perception of IT professionals about the factors which help make a firm the 'Best Company to Work For'

TechGig, India's largest online tech community, has released the findings of its survey titled 'Best Companies to Work For'. This survey was conducted to understand the perception of IT professionals about the factors which help make a firm the 'Best Company to Work For'.

The findings give credence to the fact that innovation is the need of the hour, not just to gain competitive advantages, but to retain employees as well. Most respondents (44 per cent) in this survey said they would like to work on projects that give them an opportunity to innovate, overlooking other factors like project longevity or having a good project manager.

The survey also explored if India's IT professionals are happy with the learning and development avenues provided by their company. The survey findings revealed that learning opportunities mattered more to respondents as compared to other aspects like unpaid overtime and delay in salary. In fact, the lack of learning opportunities was cited as the single biggest reason for employee dissatisfaction by the IT professionals. The TechGig survey also solicited opinion on how any ordinary company can transform to become a 'Best Company'.

WHAT MAKES A COMPANY AN 'EMPLOYER OF CHOICE'?

TechGig asked IT professionals about the most important missing element that would come in the way of their company being termed as a 'Best Company'. Any IT company that is not innovation-focussed and people-focussed is set to be a loser in the race to becoming the 'Best Company', reveals the survey findings.

Most respondents, about 31 per cent, said that they would prefer



projects that give them opportunities to learn and improve. The second highest votes (23 per cent) went in favour of companies which have a well-established career path for their employees.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE ARE 'NON-NEGOTIABLE'

Companies that strive towards ensuring a good work-life balance for their employees were also perceived as 'Best Companies' by the survey takers. In this regard, 36 per cent respondents mentioned the need for sports and recreational facilities while 34 per cent voted for good transportation facilities as a must-have in a 'Best Company'.

EMPLOYEES PREFER 'SELF-REGULATION' OVER RULES

In an aging world, India has one of the youngest populations dominated

by millennials and Gen Z workers. TechGig survey findings reveal that pursuing an archaic model of governance over this young workforce will not yield rich dividends. Employees prefer self-regulation over strict rules at workplaces.

The survey findings show that an overwhelming majority of 97 per cent survey takers want freedom from a set dress code, 88 per cent want freedom in deciding how they will use the internet and 80 per cent want flexible work hours instead of fixed working hours.

The survey findings come at a time when TechGig Code Gladiators 2019 is currently underway.

"TechGig Code Gladiators has always been a platform where some of the best IT companies get to see the brightest coding talent in action," said Sanjay Goyal, Business Head, Times-Jobs and TechGig.

SatSure Shows the Way for Startups in the Domain of Space Technology

SatSure, co-founded by an alumni group from the IIST in Thiruvananthapuram, joins the elite league of private space technology companies moving to the State

BY DEEPU ABY VARGHESE

Undoubtedly, Kerala is emerging as a key region in the startup ecosystem of the country with Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi being the hubs introducing radical changes in the IT, hardware and manufacturing industries.

The capital city has the added advantage of housing some of the most important space research and development centres of India. The vibrancy of the startup ecosystem and highly supportive government policies facilitating startup promotion in Kerala have reinvigorated startup aspirations in the space domain, encouraging players to shift focus to Thiruvananthapuram. Plans of companies like Agnikul, Exseed Space, Spacestrut, Bellatrix Aerospace and SatSure to move or expand operations to the city are marking the arrival of a new breed of enterprises. “The new breed of space companies comprises a set of people who are solving very specific upstream and downstream problems. The upstream work is primarily concerned with launch vehicles, satellites, rovers and other space assets. Downstream space companies deal with the data which is obtained from the assets that are already in orbit for the general good of society,” said Samuel John, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of SatSure which has recently expanded its IT operations to the Space Technology Applications Development Ecosystem (STADE) introduced by Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) at Technopark.

SatSure was co-founded by a group of four students belonging to the first batch of Indian Institute of Space Technology in Thiruvananthapuram. They are Prateep Basu, Ishant



Tomar, Rashmith Singh Sukhuni and Abhishek Raju. With the launch of its operations at STADE, Samuel says it is a ‘long-awaited homecoming’ for the company.

SatSure focuses on leveraging satellite data for meeting downstream requirements. SatSure uses technological advances in remote sensing, machine learning and big data analytics to provide answers to large number of questions across multiple domains. The company uses geospatial big data platform to combine satellite imagery and proprietary algorithms with weather, IoT, drone imagery, social and economic data sets, and cadastral, among others, to generate near real-time location-spe-

cific insights. Besides agriculture, SatSure offers solutions to verticals like social infrastructure, telecom and sustainable development. “We have about 15 team members working in hardcore IT to support our remote sensing experts working out of Bengaluru. I would call our facility here a Geospatial and Big Data Centre of Excellence,” said John.

FUTURE OF ASSET-LIGHT & ASSET-HEAVY SPACE COMPANIES

“The reason why IT companies grew in Kerala and elsewhere in the country was because of the positive policies which assisted them scale greater heights. What we hope as space enthusiasts is that the government will lay down a very robust startup policy within the space industry,” he observed. SatSure is one among the few startups associated with Indian Space Research Organisation’s (ISRO) commercial arm – Antrix Corporation Limited. The company signed a strategic MoU with Antrix in March 2018 with the intention to develop geospatial big data analytics.

The COO adds that the company does not have any plans as such to expand its operations to upstream space domain.

SATSURE’S OPERATIONS

While SatSure’s solutions for agriculture sector remains its single largest business, John says that the company also works for the telecom sector – mainly to help develop telecom networks based on analysis of land use and land classification using satellite images. Also, in the sustainable development sector, the company has built an elaborate portfolio by analysing data sets pertaining to land use, classification and deforestation.

The Blocker Rock Stars of Technopark



B Sharp found its way into the minds of techie music lovers, emerging winners in the recently-held Tech-a-Break cultural fest. The band comprising 15 members, all employees of H&R Block, have set a stellar example of work-life balance. Meet the rock stars of Technopark

BY DEEPU ABY VARGHESE

“B

Sharp is not a musical note! It's a made up name chosen as the title of Blockers' band," Alex K Rajan, the keyboard lead of 'B Sharp', says. 'Blockers' is how the employees of the recently-established Global Technology Center (GTC) of H&R Block at Technopark address themselves. For a second or two, I mistakenly thought that the official music band of the company was named after a musical note. B Sharp's rise as a popular band at Technopark is the result of shared passion for music among the 15 employees of the GTC who, in turn, struck a musical chord with the rest of the Technopark community. The band found its way into the minds of techie music lovers, emerging winners in the recently-held Tech-a-Break cultural fest organised by 'Natana' under the aegis of Group of Technology Companies (GTech) in association with Technopark management. Members who represented the band at Tech-a-Break were Vishnu Suresh, Harisan-

kar Menon, Amy Sebastian (all lead vocals), Alex K Rajan (keyboard), Abhilash Kala (guitar lead), Abhimanyu Kamath (percussionist) and Aben Sabu (bass guitar).

Two years ago, when the American tax preparation giant started its pre-inaugural operations at Technopark, Alex and Vishnu were just co-workers who hardly knew each other. The duo gradually became friends and began collaborating both on the work front and in life. "It all happened thanks to H&R Block," says Vishnu. During a CSR charity activity in December 2017 the two happened to visit Sukrutham, a care home for the destitute near Technopark, where they performed together for the inmates. "I sang and Alex played his guitar," Vishnu recalls. That performance saw them hit it off right away. Later, Alex and Vishnu continued their sessions enthralling music buffs as a pair which soon drew the attention of the management, too. It was just the beginning. Later, following the launch of GTC at Yamuna Phase III, the company planned a flashmob performance. "The company decided to hold the event to let everybody in Phase III know that we have officially launched and started operations. However, our music performance was included ahead of the flashmob since





VISHNU SURESH (VOCALIST)

Native: Perumbavoor

Education: BTech Electronics and Communication Engineering from Adi Sankara Institute of Engineering and Technology, Kalady (Class of 2014)

Work Experience: 4 Years

Music background: Studied Carnatic music for six years during school days

Achievements: Second prize for Light Music in CBSE State-level School Youth Festival ♦ Second prize for Classical Music in District School Youth Festival ♦ Winner of Stars of UST Global



ABHILASH KALA (GUITARIST)

Native: Thiruvananthapuram

Education: BTech in Mechanical Engineering from College of Engineering Trivandrum

Schooling: Christ Nagar Higher Secondary School, Kowdiar

Work Experience: 13 years

Music background: No formal training. Started strumming from college days

Achievements: Part of 'Vocals and Chords' band of Oracle; performed music nights at office functions and outside events (Phoenix Market City and The Leela, Bengaluru)



ABHIMANYU KAMATH (PERCUSSIONIST)

Native: Alappuzha

Education: BTech in Mechanical Engineering from Amrita School of Engineering, Kollam

Work Experience: 1 Year

Music background: School level training in Mridangam

Achievements: All-Kerala Bhavan's Cultural Fest winner in Mridangam in 2010 & 2012 ♦ South India-level Inter-University competition winner in Indian Percussion in 2014, 2015 & 2017 ♦ National-level Inter-University competition winner in Indian Percussion in 2017-18



HARISANKAR MENON (VOCALIST)

Native: Kollam

Education: BTech in Electronics and Communication Engineering from Baselious Mathews College of Engineering, Kollam

Work Experience: Fresher

Music background: Learning Carnatic music from school level

Achievements: Participating in carnatic concerts since 2008



AMY SEBASTIAN (VOCALIST)

Native: Thiruvananthapuram

Education: BTech in Electrical and Electronics from Mohandas College of Engineering and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram

Schooling: St: Thomas Residential School, Thiruvananthapuram

Work Experience: 5 Years

Music background: Self-taught in western music

Achievements: Made a few appearances on Kappa TV



ABEN SABU (GUITARIST)

Native: Thrissur

Education: BTech in Electronics and Communication Engineering from Karunya University, Coimbatore

Schooling: Holy Angels HSS, Ollur, Thrissur and CMG HSS, Kuttur

Work Experience: 1.5 Years

Music background: Self-taught

Achievements: No significant performances in the past



ALEX K RAJAN (KEYBOARDIST)

Native: Kottarakkara

Education: BTech in Mechanical Engineering from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam

Schooling: St. John's Residential High School, Kundara and SN Trusts Central School, Kollam

Work Experience: 1.5 Years

Music background: No formal training in music; self-taught

Achievements: 10 years of experience in live performance starting from 2009 ♦ Performed at over 700 stages live as keyboard lead ♦ Led church choirs as Choir Master and lead keyboardist ♦ Performed with Jerry Amaldev ♦ Composed music for 8 Christmas songs ♦ Performed in college band



BAND MEMBERS OF B SHARP RECEIVING THE PRIZE FOR BEST MUSIC BAND IN TECH-A-BREAK

we felt there may not be enough audience if we straightway break into a dance performance. So the idea was to gather more audience before we go for the flashmob,” Vishnu recalls. But this time, the two Blockers had managed to rope in two more vocalists for their performance. Following the event, the director of GTC was flooded with great feedback about the musical performance of Alex, Vishnu and team. “B Sharp soon came into being thanks to the vision and support of Hari Prasad Krishna Pillai, Director, GTC. He noticed our passion and love for music and encouraged us to take it to the next level,” says Alex. The vision behind forming the band was to encourage extra-curricular activities within H&R Block's community of professionals and facilitate brand promotion leveraging the band.

The band was officially launched on November 23, 2018. However, the first official performance of B Sharp took place four days prior to the launch on November 17. “The original idea was to launch the band on November 23 which was the company's annual day. But about a week before that, Natana asked us if we could perform as part of their flood-relief campaign event named ‘Revival’. We performed at Greenfield Stadium on November 17,” Vishnu says about B Sharp's official debut at Technopark. “Our company supports us in every possible way. For example, we have to take many musical instruments on rent and we never faced funding issues when it came to such hiring requirements. Such degree of patronage encourages us to take up recreational activities even when we do not have sufficient

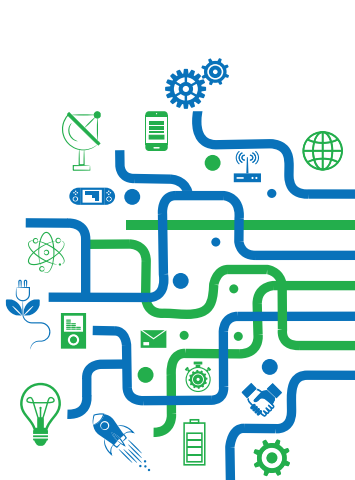


Our immediate goal is to create our own identity in the world of music. We hope to come out with an original song in a year's time



time,” Alex says. Ahead of Tech-a-Break, the band was allocated space inside the company's office premises to practice after working hours. According to Harisankar and Amy, the team members sit together and decide on the songs to perform on stage. “We try and incorporate a mix of genres like classical, western and Bollywood for our on-stage performances,” says Amy. B Sharp has no plans to confine their performance within Technopark. “Our immediate goal is to create our own identity. We hope to come out with an original song in a year's time,” confirms Vishnu. The band has also performed at cinema music live program organised as part of ‘Prathidhwani QISA Film Festival 2018’ and at an event organised by eWIT as part of Women's Day celebrations on March 13, 2019.

“We are thankful to the management which has supported us always and our awesome fellow Blockers who have cheered for us during our performances,” says Abhilash.



IIITM-K TO SHIFT TO NEW CAMPUS IN TECHNOCITY

The Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management-Kerala (IIITM-K), the pioneer autonomous institution set up by the Government of Kerala for conducting top-grade IT, science and management courses, is all set to shift to its new world-class campus in Technocity at Pallippuram in Thiruvananthapuram soon.

The first phase of the campus is ready, which will considerably enhance the facilities of the institution, which has plans to set up five independent schools – School of Computing; School of Electronics Design and Automation; School of Informatics; School of Biosciences; and School of Humanities and Digital Liberal Arts – on the new campus. This will enable IIITM-K to conduct courses such as MTech, PG Diploma and Certificate programmes. There could also be interdisciplinary programmes, running across the schools.

The State Government had allotted 10.33 acres of land in Technocity to develop a full-fledged residential campus for IIITM-K.

The Master Plan envisions world-class facilities, including an auditorium, administrative and academic blocks, students' hostel, library and laboratory wing, faculty and non-faculty residences, director's residence, and community centre. The new campus will have learner-centric envi-



PLACEMENT OFFERS

Students pursuing MSc in Computer Science streams at IIITM-K have secured internship and placement offers from top IT companies in the campus placement drive.

The companies have offered a monthly stipend of up to Rs. 25,000 for selected students. The average expected Cost to Company (CTC) for the fresh recruits hired during the placement drive is up to Rs. 8 lakh. Lead recruiters associating with IIITM-K include TCS, Infosys, TATA ELXSI, IBS, UST Global, Allianz and ABB.

The specialist competency areas of students include Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, IOT, Cloud and Blockchain.

ronment, facilitated by state-of-the-art infrastructure in cutting-edge areas in fast-paced technology domains.

Covering a total built-up area of 5,18,210 sq.ft., it is designed as a 'Green Campus'.

IIITM-K, affiliated to Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), currently has four MSc Programmes in Cyber Security, Machine Learning, Ecological Informatics, Data Analytics and Geospatial Analytics. It also has two MPhil programmes in Computer Science and Ecological Informatics, besides doctoral programmes in Computer Science.

It admits students for PhD programmes in IT-related topics in the areas of Distributed Computing and Software Engineering, and advanced computing areas like High Performance Computing, Grid and Cloud Computing, Security and Computer Networks.

IBS SOFTWARE TO ACQUIRE CANADIAN AVIATION SOFTWARE MAJOR

Stepping up its efforts to become a major technology provider in the global aviation industry, IBS Software (IBS) has entered into a multi-million-dollar agreement with Massachusetts-based Kronos Incorporated to acquire AD OPT, a market leader in aviation software that provides crew management solutions to some of the biggest airlines across the world.

AD OPT (www.ad-opt.com), founded in 1987 in Montreal by a group of mathematicians and operations research experts, was acquired in 2004 by Kronos, a multinational workforce management software and services company employing nearly 6,000 professionals worldwide.

The frontline crew planning and optimization platform of AD OPT currently powers some of the top airlines in the world, including Air Canada, EasyJet, Emirates, FedEx, Garuda, Lion Air and Qantas.

The acquisition is an integral part of Thiruvananthapuram-headquartered IBS' growth strategy to become the leading technology provider to the airline industry worldwide. Prior to this, the company has made six strategic acquisitions — three in USA, two in Europe and one in India — in its 21-year history.

IBS is a specialist in aviation software, supporting flight operations of large airlines, including British



Airways, KLM and Emirates. This landmark acquisition will help the company leverage AD OPT's deep domain expertise to provide the most advanced, end-to-end, integrated digital solution for the highly complex task of flight and crew management.

"Acquisition of world-class travel technology companies has been a deliberate strategy of IBS to fulfill its commitment to the aviation industry. AD OPT offers a sophisticated suite of airline crew planning and optimization products, a sizeable customer base and a highly experienced team of professionals. The coming together of IBS and AD OPT is, therefore, extremely relevant for the industry as it enables us to create the most advanced digital platform, delivering a holistic

solution for flight operations and crew management," said V K Mathews, Executive Chairman, IBS Group.

The acquisition of AD OPT will add more than 20 airline customers to IBS, significantly expand its footprint in North America, boost go-to-market capabilities and enhance addressable market.

"IBS represents a well-established and logical acquirer of AD OPT — a game-changing combination which will bring meaningful expertise and complementary benefits to employees and customers of both organisations. Customers will also benefit from IBS' and AD OPT's shared commitment and passion for innovation," said Bob Hughes, Chief Customer and Strategy Officer, Kronos.

INNTOT TECHNOLOGIES WINS KFC AWARDS

Inntot Technologies won three awards at Annual Conclave 2019 organised by Kerala Financial Corporation (KFC).

The company, which works in the field of digital media receivers for electronics, was presented three awards in the MSME category. Rajith Nair, CEO, Inntot Technologies, received the awards from Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala.



The electronics startup was selected as the first runner up to receive 'Best

Enterprise in Export/Import Substitution Sector.

The company also received the first and second runner up awards for Best Enterprise in Service Sector.

The awards were distributed in the presence of Dr. Thomas Isaac, State Finance Minister and Manoj Joshi IAS, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance).

SMARTCITY KOCHI PLANS TO RAISE RS. 4000 CR

SmartCity Kochi, a joint venture company of the Government of Kerala and Dubai Holding, has drawn up ambitious plans to raise an additional Rs. 4000 crore from potential investors for its Phase III, IV and V by activating infrastructure-ready residential plots and completing the pending infrastructure development on its township side.

“The Phase III will witness residential, sports and recreation facilities and mixed-use developments in a land area covering 30 acres. Phase IV and V planning is underway where we would invest an estimated Rs. 200 crore to complete the remaining infrastructure to activate 45 acres of additional plots that could be offered to the investors for residential and social infrastructure projects,” said Manoj Nair, CEO, SmartCity Kochi.

On the township side, GEMS Modern Academy, with an investment of Rs. 102 crore, has commenced its operations.

“With these three phases opening up, and subject to timely clearances and approval from the Government of Kerala, we would create further

investment opportunities of Rs. 4000 crore to promote developments on the township side of SmartCity Kochi. Of this, a confirmed expression of interest (EoI) from a leading residential projects developer in South India is under process. The development entails residential project in an area covering 15.5 acres of land on a freehold basis with an investment of approximately Rs. 1200 crore,” he informed.



Construction work on the residential project is likely to commence during the last quarter of 2019 itself, subject to necessary clearances from the State Government. Work on remaining infrastructure development will be taken up in the last quarter of 2020.

Manoj Nair said the master plan of SmartCity Kochi has been updated and environmental study for the

expansion is underway.

As per the framework agreement with the Government of Kerala, the base investment in SmartCity Kochi was estimated to be Rs. 1700 crore. Overall, developments in SmartCity Kochi have so far resulted in an investment of over Rs. 2600 crore.

“In terms of development of IT business infrastructure, further investments to the tune of Rs. 2200 crore could be attracted. The full build out investment potential of SmartCity Kochi is estimated to be Rs. 9,000 crore,” he said.

“To facilitate co-developments by investors, we have invested in the development of 7-km-long 4-lane road with utility and services trenches, 33KV sub-station with power infrastructure, water storage and distribution infrastructure, and landscaping. Work on water treatment plant is progressing as per schedule,” he said.

Major businesses like LuLu Group International, Prestige Group, Maratt Group, Holiday Group and Schulte Group are the co-developers which have signed up to create IT business infrastructure projects.

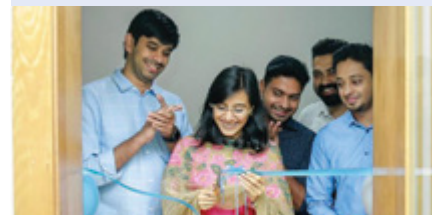
ENFIN'S DECADE OF EXCELLENCE



Enfin Technologies, based in Technopark, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. An award-winning EdTech and RTC application development company, with office also in Bengaluru, Enfin has been building, maintaining and supporting enterprise and startups exclusively for educational technology and real-time communication since 2009. The firm's flagship products include

Ofabee – an interactive and engaging cloud-based all-in-one Online Course Delivery/Selling Platform (LMS Platform) & Virtual Classroom and FutureRoom – a new age immersive virtual classroom solution, fully customized for Educational Institutions, Corporate Sectors and Skill Development Institutions to provide quality education with advanced technology worldwide.

NEW OFFICE FOR WEBANDCRAFTS



Webandcrafts, a global IT solutions company based in Infopark Koratty, Thrissur has opened its new office at Asokam Villa in the campus. Jilu Joseph, Vice President and Abin Jose Tom, CEO were among those present on the occasion. A complete web solutions company, it provides a host of services including web hosting, web designing, 2D & 3D animations and the like.

Show Up Cochin, it's

SEA FOOD at POOL SIDE

7 PM to 11 PM Daily | Choice of Food &
Beverages | Pool and City view from 10th floor

Kerala IT Overview



TECHNOPARK - THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

- India's largest, fastest growing IT Park
- 760 acres with 9.33 million sq.ft. of IT built-up space
- 'One of the world's greenest IT Parks' - Rediff.com
- Technopark Phase 3 - India's largest LEED Gold-rated building
- Over 390 companies with 53,000 IT professionals
- Technocity Phase 4 - an upcoming IT integrated township
- Rural IT Park in Kollam - for startups



TECHNOCITY - THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

- 300 acres of IT integrated township
- Knowledge City, 100 acres for knowledge-based township
- 2 lakh sq. ft. IT building coming up
- Mix of SEZ / DTZ area • 7 km from Technopark campus
- Upcoming cost-effective IT space for startups & SMEs



INFOPARK - KOCHI

- 323 acres of IT development
- 6 million sq.ft. of IT built-up space
- Mix of SEZ & DTZ areas • Cost-effective IT space
- Rural IT parks @ Cherthala & Koratty for startups



CYBERPARK - KOZHIKODE

- Emerging IT hub for Malabar region
- 45-acre campus with a mix of SEZ & DTZ
- Cost-effective IT space for startups, SMEs & MNCs
- Ready-to-occupy 3 lakh sq. ft. IT SEZ building
- Smart business centres & warm shell options
- Long-term land lease option



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Infopark Library

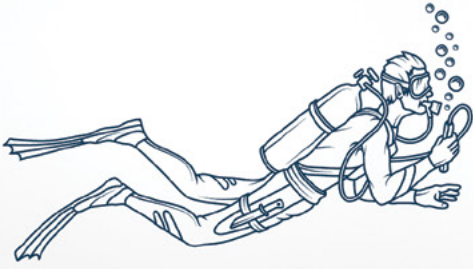
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**കടലിലെ അത്ഭുത കാഴ്ചക്കൾ
നിത്യവും കാണാം
സ്കൂബാ ഡൈവിങ്
കരിയർ ആരംഭം**



KERALA STARTUP MISSION TIES UP WITH FRENCH SPACE AGENCY



Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) has signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with France's space agency, Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), through the 'Connect by CNES' initiative, strengthening the collaboration between French and Indian space tech ecosystems, besides paving the way for global exposure.

The agreement, which will enable Indian startups to scale new heights globally and broaden their market access, forms part of the 'Connect by CNES' initiative, launched by the French space agency in 2018 to support innovative products and services using space technology and solutions.

Dr. Saji Gopinath, CEO, KSUM and Dr. Gilles Rabin, Director-Innova-

tion, Applications and Science, CNES signed the LoI in Thiruvananthapuram recently. CNES will also be connected to the space community in Kerala.

KSUM will feature CNES as one of its global knowledge partners and

The LoI will formalise collaboration between KSUM and CNES to develop Indian and French space R&D ecosystems

share information pertaining to the facilities and engagement opportunities for the international space industry. To encourage collaborations with innovative French and Indian entrepreneurs/startups, CNES will connect them to the network of experts, clusters, incubators and startups. It will also facilitate the entry of Indian entrepreneurs to the French space ecosystem.

M Sivasankar IAS, Secretary, Department of IT & Electronics; Hrishikesh Nair, CEO, IT Parks Kerala; Santhosh Kurup, CEO, ICT Academy of Kerala (ICTAK); and Dr. Jayasankar Prasad C, Director, International Centre for Free and Open Source Software (ICFOSS) were among the other dignitaries present on the occasion.

Did you know ??

With 814 startups newly on board, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recognised more than one startup every hour in May 2019. A total of 18,861 startups have been identified since the launch of the Startup India initiative.



We're on the user's side in privacy. We're on the user's side in trying to prevent fake news. I don't really believe personally that AI has the power today to differentiate between what is fake and what is not. So I worry about any property today that pushes news in a feed.

Tim Cook
CEO, Apple



STATE GOVT. INCENTIVES FOR WOMEN-LED STARTUPS

In a big boost to women-led startups, which form about 13 per cent of all startups in Kerala, the State Government has announced a slew of attractive incentives, including pre-incubation, marketing and product exposure support to further strengthen women entrepreneurship in the startup ecosystem.

Dr. Saji Gopinath, CEO, KSUM, had submitted the proposal of the scheme, to be implemented under the 'Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme'. As per the initiative, free pre-incubation support will be extended to startups led by women. This incubation, mentorship and technical support will be offered for a period of three months. Two groups of 10 women startups will be sup-

KSUM will support women founders who have a valid startup product to exhibit at national and international events



ported under the scheme. Moreover, KSUM will support women founders who have a valid startup product to exhibit at national and international events by bearing the registration cost. Travel tickets will be provided for one startup founder to take part in national and international business meets, which can be availed four

times in the startup lifecycle subject to review of the startup.

KSUM will also support marketing activities up to a ceiling of Rs. 5 lakh per startup per year, for a period of two years. The moratorium on Seed Funding Support scheme of the KSUM will be extended to two years from one year. Other highlights of the scheme include issue of fast-track soft loan against purchase order, fast-track soft loan as advance for projects received from Government departments and technology transfer support for women-led startups with a ceiling of Rs. 10 lakh. About 10 per cent seats will be earmarked for women in International Exposure Programmes.

For more details, contact:

sreekanth@startupmission.in

MiZONE HOSTS STARTUP PITCHING SESSION



With a keen eye on helping entrepreneurs from North Kerala raise funds, MiZone (Malabar Innovation Entrepreneurship Zone) organised its first edition of 'Startup Malabar-Startup Pitch' in Kannur on May 30.

The event was inaugurated by Robert Lobo, former president of Raymond Apparels and angel investor. Meanwhile, Anil Joshi, veteran investor & Partner, Unicorn India Ventures, shared his experiences of investing in startups from Kerala. Other major highlights of the event were one-on-one meetings with investors and sessions on investment opportunities. Selected startups were allowed to pitch ideas.

KSUM CALLS STARTUPS TO SUPPORT POLICE

Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) has invited proposals from startups to showcase their skills for ramping up the operations of Kerala Police through technology in its diverse tasks. As part of the initiative, startups will need to provide software and hardware solutions in IT applications, traffic management, disaster management and training programmes. Qualified startups which are enrolled under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) are eligible to apply under the initiative.

STATE HIKES TRAVEL AID TO STARTUP PROMOTERS

Giving a major fillip to the startup ecosystem in the State, Kerala Government has announced financial support to the promoters of startups attending global and national events, enabling them to gain greater exposure and expand the scope of operation.

Approving the proposal submitted by Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM), the Government notified fresh guidelines, as per which the State will bear a major portion of the travel expenses of startups attending key events within and outside the country.

Previously in a letter to the government, Dr. Saji Gopinath, CEO, KSUM, had requested the revision of the existing guidelines. According to the revised guidelines, on the first instance of a single founder's journey abroad, the State government will reimburse 90 per cent of travel expenses.

If two founders are traveling, 50 per cent of travel expenses will be provided to them. On the second instance of travel, 70 per cent travel support will be given to one member from the startup. If two founders are travelling, 40 per cent of travel and visa expenses can be obtained.

In the third instance of travel, 50 per cent travel support will be offered to one member of a startup. If two founders are travelling, they are eligible to claim 30 per cent of travel and visa expenses.

During the fourth instance of travel, 25 per cent travel support will be given to one member from a startup.

On the first instance of a single founder's journey abroad, the State government will reimburse 90 per cent of travel expenses



A startup that has availed the first and second instance of travel expenses in the first year will be eligible for the third and fourth instance of travel support only from the subsequent year. Startup promoters will be eligible for support only for two journeys a year.

The government will offer 100 per cent financial support to maximum two members from a startup for the first and second journeys to attend national level conferences. In the third journey, one member from the startup will get 100 per cent support for two-way travel. If two founders are travelling, they will get 50 per cent support.

In the fourth and further journeys, one member from the startup will get 50 per cent support. The expenditure for implementing the scheme will be met from the funds set apart for the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme. Startups that fall in the eligible category, as defined by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), can avail the benefits of the scheme.

KSUM, the nodal agency of Government of Kerala to promote entrepreneurship development and incubation activities, has been proactively supporting the startups in obtaining international exposure through various programmes. It has already supported more than 75 startups, directly during the last three years.

TECH SUMMER CAMP FOR SCHOOL GOERS AT FABLAB



SCHOOL STUDENTS ENGAGED IN DIGITAL FABRICATION LESSONS ORGANISED AS PART OF TECH SUMMER CAMP HELD AT FABLAB IN KOCHI

TRAVELSPOC AND FLOCKFORGE SIGN MoU



TARUN UDAYARAJ, CEO, FLOCKFORGE SOLUTIONS PVT. LTD. AND KRISHNA KUMAR, CEO TRAVELSPOC SIGN MoU, ANNOUNCING THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE COMPANIES

KSUM MEET UP CAFE HELD IN KOCHI



ABOVE: AUDIENCE AT KOCHI MEETUP CAFE
BELOW: AJAY GEORGE VARGHESE, MD, BIPHA DRUG LABORATORIES AND ANAND SARMA, DIRECTOR, KPMG INDIA



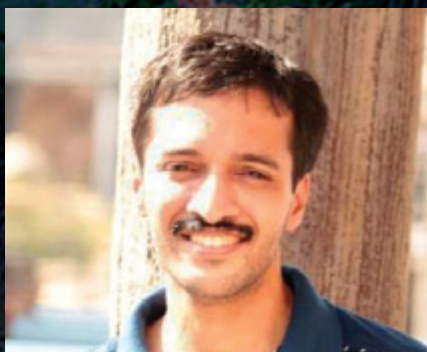
GOOGLE ACKNOWLEDGES KERALA-BASED GAMING STARTUP

TuttiFrutti Interactive becomes one of the three startups from India to attend the prestigious international accelerator program offered by Google at its Singapore HQ

Gaming startup TuttiFrutti Interactive, the first startup in Kerala to receive KSIDC Seed Fund of Rs. 25 lakh, dreams big after having been short listed by Google to attend its five-month-long 'Indie Games Accelerator 2019' program. Ajish G Habib and Bijish G Habib, the twin brothers who co-founded the company, had decided to take up a career in gaming as they were very passionate about it since their college days.

The brothers initially set up the office at their home in 2007 and began sourcing work through freelance websites. They soon cultivated a hundred per cent overseas client base. But the first turning point came when a US client (Casual Mechanics) asked them to develop an adventure game. Antique Mysteries: Secrets of Howard's Mansion, which the twins developed toiling day and night for 18 months, was launched on Big Fish Games, the world's largest publisher of casual games, and it became an instant hit.

The company's flagship game, Darkarta: A Broken Heart's Quest, went live in December 2016. In this game a US-based family comes to India on holiday and loses their daughter. The mother's search for the daughter and the challenges they



face form the theme of the game," says Bijish. "Dark adventure and scary games are big hits among game enthusiasts."

TuttiFrutti Interactive was upbeat about its releases through Big Fish. "Big Fish had great access to PC gaming market. Our games were rated as all-time popular among the games released by Big Fish," Ajish said. According to him, it took 8-12 months for his experienced team of coders and design artists and more than Rs. 1 crore to bring it out.

However, things did not go well. With the rapid shift of gaming to mobile platforms and tweaked revenue models, Big Fish failed to perform as much as team TuttiFrutti had expected. "And unfortunately, Big Fish lost grip over the market as mobile gaming market picked up momentum.

Free games being offered on mobile platforms through apps became a big hit. And, that huge market shift was not really expected by us," he added.

By securing a place in Google list of gaming startups to attend the accelerator program, the team hopes to get the right kind of mentorship from the IT giant's experts in fine-tuning their product. Talking about the company's immediate goals, Ajish said: "We see a lot of possibilities in the program to generate revenue. Google is the world's largest mobile games market and if we can make them our future client, then it will be a great opportunity. Also, we are looking for potential investors."

Further, TuttiFrutti hopes to become India's first internationally-acclaimed casual adventure game studio. "Through affordable pricing and higher quality we are confident of catching up with international gaming companies soon," Ajish added. Besides in-house game development, the company also offers game design development services – mainly in areas like game art, concept art, character art, vehicle design, 3D props, flash game art, isometric art, story boards, user interface design, cinematic VFX compositing and more.

YIP, A PROGRAMME TO EMPOWER FUTURE INNOVATORS

Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council (K-DISC), a Government of Kerala initiative, has partnered with ICT Academy of Kerala (ICTAK), to give a thrust to the innovation mindset amongst teachers, mentors and students in the State. The mandate of K-DISC is to identify and nurture a critical mass of innovations in the State and provide appropriate institutional linkages to the selected innovations. K-DISC will facilitate creation of an integrated ecosystem for innovation in government and work towards complementing the roles of other agencies in the State promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. The ICTAK was entrusted to conduct Students Capability Assessment Test for the young innovators across Kerala. The Young Innovators Programme (YIP) – part of K-DISC's societal advancement component – according to Santosh Kurup, CEO, ICTAK, aims to empower future innovators to create new products, services or models to meet emerging market requirements more effectively through a specially-designed challenge. Around 200 selected students in the age group of 12 to 22 have undergone the test.

The assessment has three parts, namely objective test, subjective test and projective test. The objective test is used to measure the various capabilities of students such as attention to detail, numerical ability and data analysis, logical reasoning and

The Young Innovators Programme aims to empower future innovators to meet emerging market requirements effectively

Santhosh Kurup
CEO, ICT Academy of Kerala



ICTAK, THE MENTORS OF FUTURE WORKFORCE

ICTAK provides customised training programmes to the corporates enabling them to upskill their employees, reduce the cost and gain competitive edge in the industry. It also conducts various programmes which leverages the link between industry and academia. These interactions are not limited to the students, but also extends to faculties too. The institute can encourage their faculties, scientists, technicians and students to interact with industry in all possible ways with the objective of deriving mutual benefits.

Retail Training Programmes at ICTAK

The retail training programmes of ICTAK includes certification for students and professionals. For graduates, the classes are held during the week and weekend sessions are dedicated to professionals. After ABCD, training in Data Science is the biggest programme conducted by the Academy. It has 150 students who get trained in Data Science in five batches. Recently, ICTAK also started a training programme in Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in association with EY. For details, scan the QR code.



spatial awareness. Through this test, the student's ability to solve problems at workplace by applying his or her aptitude is tested. Various organisations (in both government and private sectors) use similar tests for their graduate trainee selection process. The test is conducted by one of the country's best aptitude and competency management organisations called Mettl. The subjective test is used to measure the various creative capabilities (creativity skills) of students such as problem-solving capabilities, ideation and articulation skills and critical thinking skills. The tests are administered through various real life scenarios and through observing students' performance in each of such scenarios. The results will provide insights to students on the important creative traits they possess, and how to sustain or sharpen them. The Knowledge Office of ICT Academy of Kerala conducts the test.

The projective test is used to identify the personality traits and career orientation of students, based on three psychology tests – The FACE (Facts, Actions, Concept and Emotion), The Multiple Intelligence Orientation Test and Marston's Type Indicator Test, through which a student's core personality and behaviour patterns are analysed. The test is administered by Lifology.com, a Guinness World Record-winning growth ecosystem rooted in the pedagogy of Lifology, the philosophy and science of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

The results of all the tests are summarised and student's orientation on the three dimensions are provided as extensive reports for their future reference.

ICTAK TIES UP WITH SALESFORCE

ICT Academy of Kerala has joined hands with Salesforce, the world's #1 CRM (Customer Relationship Management) platform. Over 150,000 companies use Salesforce CRM to grow their businesses by strengthening customer relationships. Customer Relationship Management helps companies understand their customers' needs and solve problems through better management of customer information and interactions — all on a single platform that's always accessible from any desktop or device. ICT Academy of Kerala along with Salesforce will roll out Student Programme in institutions across Kerala, which will help engage students in learning, networking and mentoring opportunities that help them become job-



ready. ICT Academy will also provide outreach programme to corporates and working professionals, so that the benefits are passed on to the industry as well.

REGISTRATIONS OPEN FOR ABCD PROGRAMME

Applications have been invited for the one-of-its-kind future skills training programme, ABCD. The programme is designed to provide applicants with a dual certification – one on Full Stack Developer and the other on Blockchain. Participants can opt to apply for both the certification programmes, or can opt out after the completion of Full Stack Developer or continue on to the Blockchain programme. Participants with prior MEAN stack experience (a minimum of two years) can apply directly to the Blockchain training programme.

If the applicants are unemployed or studying, Government of Kerala

will offer a scholarship based on an entrance test. Students clearing the entrance test with above 60 per cent marks will be eligible for the scholarship. The registration will close by the end of June 2019.

The next entrance examination is scheduled for July 13.

The registration fee is Rs. 1500 (Rs. 500 as entrance test fee and Rs. 1000 as advance course fee). The advance course fee will be returned if the candidate did not qualify the entrance test.

For more details, visit www.abcd.kdisc.kerala.gov.in or call 0471-2700813 or +91 80781 02119



Harmony@Work

IBS Software
(Company of the Year)

Tech-A-Break (TAB), the biggest cultural extravaganza of techies, organised by Natana under the aegis of Group of Technology Companies (GTech) and Technopark, truly lived up to its name with multiple events and competitions, giving techies a platform to showcase their talents. TAB 2019 helped reinforce the collaboration and cohesiveness among companies and employees; a true testimonial of Technopark's tagline, 'Harmony@Work'



Allianz Technology (First Runner Up)



Finastra (Second Runner Up)



Vasanth Varada (Business Development Manager, Technopark), Annie Moses (Officer HR & Govt. Liaison) and Vishnu V Nair (Secretariat Head & GM - Operations Kerala - GTech)



Hrshikesh Nair (CEO, IT Parks Kerala), G Vijayaraghavan (Founder CEO, Technopark), Alexander Varghese (Chief Administrative Officer, UST Global) and Rafeek K Mohammed (CEO, PIT Solutions)



Performance by MASALA COFFEE





Allianz Technology
(Winner, Fashion Show)



Mozanta Technologies (Winner, CSR)



Investnet (Winner, Dance)



Experion Technologies
(Winner, Rally General)



RR Donnelley (Winner, Skit)



Alamy Images India (Winner, Group Song)



Team Natana with Hrishikesh Nair, G Vijayaraghavan and Rafeek K Mohammed



Thinkpalm Technologies
(Winner, Rally SME)



Akash Surendran of QuEST
Global Engineering Services
(Winner, Acrylic Painting)



Jayadevan of Palnar
Transmedia (Winner,
Solo Classical)



Athira Raj of IBS Software
(Winner, Solo General)



Allianz Technology (Winner, Corporate Relay)



Jayanth Abraham, Dileesh Kumar D,
Allianz Technology (Winner, Quiz)



IBS Software (Winner, Capture the Flag)



A Classy Business Hotel

in the Midst of IT Hub

Located near Kochi's IT corridor and with great blend of luxury accommodation and delicious food, the hotel offers an ideal sojourn for business travellers

Kochi is witnessing unprecedented expansion of IT, ITES industries and allied infrastructure. Park Residency at Kakkanad is one such hotel located in the heart of its IT hub.

Nestled in an expanse of lush greenery in the vicinity of Kochi's IT corridor Kakkanad, Hotel Park Residency is an ideal place to stay for business travellers.

Beyond the standard mix of classy rooms, F&B outlets, conferencing facility and connectivity of a business hotel, the property offers guests a perfect ambience suited for both business and leisure travellers by providing a blend of luxury accommodation and delicious food.

The luxury four-star business hotel has an inventory of 27 spacious and elegant rooms. The well-lit rooms and suites provide features like Wi-Fi connectivity and satellite television channels.

Beyond the standard features, the property offers guests a perfect ambience suited for both business and leisure



"My wife and I were guests at your hotel recently for the first time. We were impressed how well the reviews aligned with the service we received. We will not hesitate to recommend you to our friends," said Denny Jacob, a hotel guest, in his feedback.

The hotel has all the facilities like 24/7 room service, coffee shop which serves breakfast, a lounge bar and gym.

The hotel caters to the dining needs

of its guests in an exemplary way. The restaurant Server serves spicy delicacies of all sorts while Megabyte, the rooftop restaurant providing wicker-and-velvet luxury and grand panoramic view of the surroundings, is the ideal place to enjoy buffet lunch. Java is an exclusive dining area for groups of 12-15 guests. And breakfast is usually served at the Fresh and Sunny cafe.

"A truly lovely experience. The staff was courteous, helpful and extremely responsive. The front desk team is very professional, yet warm and welcoming," said Anit Thomas, a hotel guest.

Park Residency has three banquet halls with the biggest among the three having a capacity to host 200 people. The centrally air-conditioned banquet hall also offers a breathtaking view of the city.

For more information, visit: www.parkresidency.in



A Musical Tribute to Team India from Infopark Kochi

Employees of EY at Infopark Kochi formed an informal music club, Sangeetha Sabha, inspiring fellow techies with their passion for music

Four years ago, a handful of likeminded employees working with EY at Infopark Kochi caught the habit of sitting around a table at office cafeteria, crooning their favourite movie songs. Fast forward to the present, the count of music enthusiasts of the group, which they fondly call 'Sangeetha Sabha', has grown to 25, with four music albums to their credit.

The latest of Sangeetha Sabha's production 'Let's Cricket Macha', a tribute to the ongoing cricket world cup, is now fetching great reviews on Youtube with 13,000 views and counting. "It's a song celebrating the joy and spirit of cricket dedicated to Team India, wishing them all the glory in the ongoing World Cup," said Shivani M R, a member of Sangeetha Sabha, working with EY's digital advisory team.

The song composed in Tamil is peppered with English rap lyrics. The lyrics of 'Let's Cricket Macha' honours the efforts of members of the Indian team and attempts to take a stand



against malpractices like match-fixing. The unique thing about this musical video is that the entire shoot, including bike stunts and choreography, were completed in just one day. The song has been sung, written and composed by members of the Sangeetha Sabha group.

Paadidaam Parakkam, a friendship song (2017), *Olle Olle Oh*, a musical tribute to the Football World Cup (2018) and *Ponkathironam*, an Onam musical (2018) were the three other albums of the music collective.

The team involves EY staff from various departments like IT, Audit and HR. "Our combined music sessions happen post business hours. This mix of friendship and music acts

as a great stress buster for us," Shivani adds.

The musicians of EY Kochi have their own Youtube channel named Infopark Sangeetha Sabha Kochi where they upload their group musical sessions.

"Several of our music sessions include picking up a 'raaga' and singing all the film songs that are based on that 'raaga', an opportunity to explore music in its true sense," said Karthik Kiran of EY technology team, explaining the routine activities of Sangeetha Sabha.

Going forward, the team plans to spread their love for music by doing more live shows and publishing original musicals and covers.

Own a car you love

Without the hassles associated with it

Automobile dealer Indus Motors has forayed into rent-a-car business, based on the idea of mobility and transportation as a service

Automobile industry, like other segments, is going through a phase of technological disruption with the evolution of electric vehicles (EVs), autonomous vehicles and the like. The biggest casualty would be the traditional automobile dealership model as automakers the world over are in the process of transforming themselves into mobility and connectivity service providers as well. These waves of change are visible across Kerala, too. Six months ago, the Kerala-based Indus Motors – one among the largest automobile dealers in the country, especially of Maruti Suzuki, forayed into rent-a-car business in a big way. The brainchild of Afdhel Abdul Wahab, Director of Indus Motors, Indus GO also shares the idea of shared mobility and transportation as a service.

In an exclusive chat with *technopolis*, Afdhel informed that Indus GO is now considering launching a subscription model for purchasing brand new cars. He feels that a major shift is happening in the mindset of the people wherein they don't want to hold on to assets, especially cars anymore.

"Owning cars used to be an element of social status. The trend is changing which is evident from the decline in car sales in cities like Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai and Kochi, among others. People there are adopting other modes of transport which is being leveraged by cab aggregators as well as car rental service companies. Simply put, it is a sort of I-don't-want-to-burden-myself-any-further kind of an approach. In India, automobile industry still has enormous potential as the per person penetration of vehicles in the country is still very low.



A major shift is happening in the mindset of the people wherein they don't want to hold on to assets, especially cars anymore

However, given the transformation created by disruptive technologies, we really don't know what will happen in the next decade or so. It appears that things are going towards shared mobility and optimum utilisation of vehicles, taking into consideration the looming environmental calamity. Hence, it's important to be adaptive and stay relevant," he says.

Afdhel's concept is simple. Why do you want to buy a car when you can subscribe for it, and even earn decent revenue out of it? "For instance, consider a person who wants to use a car only on weekends. He can subscribe a car from me for a monthly fee. Whenever he is not using the car, he can give the vehicle to us for rent-a-car business. I will share a certain per cent of the revenue with him. And, we become sort of partners. Similarly, consider an NRI family which owns a car but is not able to use it for months. Instead of buying, subscription would

be an option for them, too. When you buy one, you will be required to pay EMI, which is a liability. And, you have to take care of the maintenance and insurance renewal aspects. In the other option, one needs to just subscribe and we will take care of these things," he informs.

Is it not contradicting your existing business model? "Yes, some people would say so. However, the whole concept of shared mobility is meant to bring down the car population and the world is moving towards it. We are actually going to where the market wants us to be," he says.

Indus GO provides mobility services all over Kerala with a fleet of around 250 cars. That the customer can drop the vehicles at a location of his or her choice makes Indus GO more user-friendly. "We have applied for licence in Chennai and Bengaluru. We are also looking for Venture Capital funding for scaling up," he says.



TECHIE
SHOTS!

SILENT THRILLER

'Song of Silence', directorial debut of techie Sajjan Cherian Mathew has been released. The 25-minute-long non verbal musical thriller, produced by Babu Footloosers, is an unflinching depiction of growing incidents of child abuse cases, relying completely on background score. To watch the movie, scan the QR code.



IS THERE A ZOOTOPIA 2?

An investigative thriller with a strong element of suspense, some inspiration on chasing your dreams and a strong message against stereotyping – that's what Zootopia is all about! Now, rumors are rife that Walt Disney is working on Zootopia 2 and perhaps a third edition too. There is no confirmation so far but reports say an unknown animated project has been slated by Walt Disney for release in 2020. Can it be a Zootopia sequel? Any way, in the mean time, check out Zootopia on available digital formats. Kids would certainly be interested in an animated 3D.



A Film That 'Bridged' the Decades!

The decades-old Nagam-badam bridge in Kottayam refused to give in despite every attempt to bring it down, while the Palarivattom flyover under construction didn't wait for any external efforts to bring itself down. The strong monsoon rains and the news about building, demolishing and rebuilding bridges, bring back memories of one of my favourite political satires of Bollywood, *Panchavadi-palam*. This 1984 masterpiece by K G George was an adaptation of a story titled 'Paalam Apakadathil' penned by veteran satirist Veloor Krishnankutty. The names of the characters are one noticeable aspect of the movie. The henpecked and indecisive panchayat president is named 'Dussaasana Kurup', the crafty character who creates fights between parties, taking everyone for a ride is 'Shighandi Pillai', the bootlegger-sex worker of the locality is 'Poothana' – so goes the very 'creative' list of names! The exaggerated storyline and the animated acting by the finest cast of Bollywood which included Bharath

Gopi, Thilakan, Srividya, Sukumari, Nedumudi Venu and Jagathy Sreekumar, among others, helped provide absolute onscreen bliss. The makers also didn't forget to take a dig at God-men through V D Rajappan's 'Swami' character!



Dileep Choyappally

Director, Mozanta Technologies

There are two particular sequences that I love to highlight. While the opposition party objects to the idea of a new bridge, the ruling party ropes in an engineer to inspect the bridge. He comes, get bribed, intoxicated and finally, recommends demolition of the bridge. The opposition party alleges that "it is a clear case of bribery. The engineer has even puked on the bridge". In response to this, the pancha-

yat president says, "Don't worry the bridge will be cleaned first and then demolished!" and that sums up a lot of problem-solving methods that we practice these days!

Sreenivasan has portrayed a very subtle and silent character, a wheel-chair (cart)-bound local guy who anticipates a new bridge with a lot of passion and is amused by the political fights going around him. The final scene of the movie shows his cart floating in the river along with the pieces of the fallen bridge. Each time I see my friends fighting in the name of politics, I remember the floating cart of Panchavadi-palam!

A muted opposition, utopian ideas, fighting politicians joining hands to make money, corruption, red tape – believe me, each sequence in the movie is still very relevant! If you recall all the movies you have watched and try to find out their relevance now, you will see that there are hardly a few movies that stand out and *Panchavadi-palam* undoubtedly is one among them. Watch it again, just to be sure that we haven't changed a bit!



പഞ്ചവടിപ്പാലം

Role of Good Governance in Running a Company



C Balagopal
Founder President, TiE
Kerala, Angel Investor,
Mentor and Author



It is the duty of the company Directors to see that it operates according to the governance policies set out by the Board



I have sometimes been asked by friends to study their companies that were facing difficulties, and suggest ways of coming out of troubles. It has been found in several cases that the problems were less of management and operations and more of governance. In many SMEs, little attention is paid to governance, under the mistaken impression that governance is something that is relevant only for large companies.

What is governance? The word is derived from the verb 'to govern' which refers to 'control, guide, regulate'. The management of a company is tasked with operational responsibilities such as manufacturing, marketing and sales, financial management, administration and so on. At the beginning of the year, a business plan is drawn up. Thereafter, each component of the management team goes about their tasks in particular areas. But is that sufficient?

Each company is defined by the vision set out by the founders which, in turn, determines the policies and strategies that will be pursued. One company may opt for the highest quality and to be content with its focus on customers willing to pay a higher price, while another may choose to make cheaper products to cater to a mass market. It is the duty of the company Directors to see that it operates according to the governance policies set out by the Board.

If the vision for the company is to be fully compliant with all rules and statutes, then it is the duty of the Board of Directors to monitor the progress of the company periodically to ensure that it is doing things in accordance with the vision. This is spelt out in clear policies that will lay out what is and what is not an acceptable way of doing things. This can apply to matters such as procuring business, dealings with business associates, dealings with people and staff, payment of taxes and other statutory dues, and other aspects of doing business.

While the operations of the company are no doubt important, the Directors will be interested in the aspects mentioned in the previous paragraph, and seek reports at

Board meetings on those aspects to be given regularly to the Board by the management. Statutory compliance is usually a non-negotiable priority. If the Board is serious about the vision and policies being followed, they will engage third party auditors to study and report on key aspects of such statutes. For example, safety and occupational hazards are an important part of statutory compliance, and will usually be reported in terms of whether permits and licences are current. If one really wants to know whether these are being observed not only in letter, but also in spirit, regular audits and mock drills conducted by independent auditors will be necessary.

Ethical dealings with business associates are another aspect that defines a company and, in fact, affects business outcomes in many ways. Paying bills only after several reminders has become a standard practice of Indian businesses. In Japan, however, it is an insult to remind someone about a bill falling due in a few days! Repeated late payment obviously is not a viable business strategy. Taking refuge behind arcane contract conditions is another favourite business tactic.

In dealing with employees, businesses can either stick to the letter of the rule, or can be flexible to allow for an unusual situation. Displaying a humane approach will not adversely affect the company, but will also turn into a huge asset. The converse of this is that all dealings with employees affecting their service conditions and promotions should be rule-based and transparent. If this is done, people will tend to accept decisions more readily.

The importance of rule-based governance covering the interface between the company and its employees, customers, government and regulators, bankers and the public at large, is most important in the case of wholly privately-owned companies. Successful family-run businesses were started by entrepreneurs who acted in a way that made every employee think it was their company and that made the government respect it. A good set of governance principles and guidelines will help take the company along the course charted out by its founders.

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