



FOURTH ESTATE

Diverse background, common in passion



Ann Treasa Joseph

Kottayam: Each of the students had a moment when they realised they had a power vested in them. The might of the camera, microphone and above all the claim that "We are journalism students from MASCOM." That claim proceeded to be a ray of hope for some and a tiny threat to others. All of them joined MASCOM as budding journalists, stepping onto the chaotic stage of the media world, armed with nothing but a microphone, a camera, and a heart full of ambition.

The PG Diploma in Journalism batch of 2023 was a vibrant tapestry of individuals hailing from different backgrounds, each with a passion for storytelling and a hunger for truth. Bound by a shared desire to make a meaningful impact through their words, this batch is diverse in terms of interests. There are aspiring filmmakers, photographers, authors, poets and artists.

This year, the education pattern was altered exposing students to the integrated newsroom by providing training in print, broadcast and digital media. The

students now are better prepared to understand how the contemporary newsroom works.

While working for the college weekly Fourth Estate/Jalakam and lab bulletin Mascom News, exclusive stories were covered by these aspiring journalists. Stories included the first bio-control for cardamom, 97 year old dancer Bhavani Chellapan, demolition of illegal Chinese nets, Telegram scam, interview with Kerala's Health Minister and the state's first personal luxury boat Dialga. Some of these stories were later picked up by the mainstream media.

In addition, they have acquired knowledge from interactions with working professionals including Mariam Mammen Mathew, Johny Lukose, Shani Prabhakaran, prominent scriptwriter Harikrishnan and many more.

This batch also has students who came from other parts of India for this learning experience. Despite the barriers of language they acquired knowledge that is bound to give them upper hand at their new workplaces. "I have only visited Kerala for vacations but staying here was a different feeling. MASCOM was a different feeling altogether, I always felt at

home, I have learned a lot, especially talking to people. When we had to report I could do that with the bare minimum Malayalam I knew. Today I am working at CNN-NEWS18 and mostly using everything that I learned from MASCOM", says Satish Raj Acharya.

All of them have many stories to share from their experiences like the stories about their first news report coverage that intimidated them and ended up doing blunders while covering reports for college weekly and bulletin.

Learning through practice becomes a great adventure, where misspoken names, rogue microphones, and accidental photobombs are embraced as stepping stones on your path to becoming a media maestro. With each blunder and blooper, they learned to transform the occasional mishaps into anecdotes that will leave classmates chuckling over tea and snacks from the MASCOM canteen at the end of a long day.

With the acquisition of comprehensive skills and knowledge in their respective fields, the batch of 2023 is anticipating their graduation on the momentous day of July 14th, 2023. These individuals stand poised to embrace the challenges and opportunities that await them in the real world.



MANORAMA SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

BATCH 2022-23



Kerala needs to do more for mental health: Veena George



Telmiya Margret Thomas

Thiruvananthapuram: Despite a lot of initiatives and projects undertaken by the state, it still fails to provide proper care for mental health patients, admits Kerala's Health Minister Veena George. The major reason is the absence of required number of specialty hospitals. The state has three government mental health centres in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Kozhikode. Many of them do not have enough beds. The state capital Thiruvananthapuram itself is short of 200 beds.

"There are about 500 patients in the Thiruvananthapuram hospital, but only 300 beds are available. So we find it difficult to care for the other patients", says Minister Veena George.

Also, most patients end up living in the hospital even after their treatment, as the family members are not interested in accommodating them. "Nearly 200 people admitted in Thiruvananthapuram hospital are certified by doctors as mentally stable. They are still remaining in the hospital since no one has

come forward to get them discharged. Such cases are reducing the treatment needs of other patients, since resources and amenities are limited", the minister adds. The number of such abandoned people is on the rise.

In such scenarios, the state is forced to provide rehabilitation measures as most patients have no external support. The Kerala Govt has set up a two-member committee, with an official from the Medical Education Directorate and the second from Health Department to look into the issue. A campaign was organised recently by the health department to find the original addresses of the abandoned patients as most of them were admitted with

fake addresses. The state is also planning to give skill development training to the patients. One such centre is being constructed in Kozhikode, the minister added.

Nowadays admission to the hospitals have also been made stringent. Number of examinations and certifications even from the police are needed to avoid human rights violation. While reiterating that mental health is important, the minister also explains that, if the admissions are made simpler, it would be used as a ticket by some families and relatives for selfish needs.

"There are a lot of taboos and stigmas associated with mental health. People generally avoid mentally ill persons, without recognising

that it is a type of disease", says Veena George.

The remarks came on the backdrop of a statement by Kerala Human Rights Commission(KHRC) which said 1,646 patients had gone missing from three mental health centres in the state in the last 13 years. Also there were worries about the lackadaisical implementation of Mental Health Care(MHC) Act, 2017, which came into force from 2018. In the beginning of 2023, five Mental Health Review Boards were constituted as per the act. This was done six years after the implementation of the Act.

The minister said this during an interaction with the students from Manorama School of Communication.



'Healthy' discussion: Veena George addressing students of Mascom Credits: Salumon P

We don't believe in sensationalising news: Jayant Mammen Mathew



Mary Catherine

Kottayam: "Media should be credible. There should be no misappropriation of facts," says Jayant Mammen Mathew, the Executive Editor and Director of Malayala Manorama, one of the largest newspapers in India. He is also a former president of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS).

"When you're not established enough, you may depend on WhatsApp and Facebook links and catchy headlines," he says in response to competition from popular mobile journalists and YouTubers. "These days, content has to be tailored for social media with provocative headlines for clickbait. However, you can only report what you see and know in the news. You cannot sensationalise headlines and cause alarm. Manorama does not resort to clickbait," says Jayant.



Jayant Mammen Mathew

there is cause for concern in attracting younger readership, especially since social media algorithms favour independent channels. "As a media company, we prefer direct traction. Social media is just an additional distribution channel. Recently, Facebook also changed its policy, affecting many organisations. Our credibility, however, keeps our position intact."

According to him, fake news is another threat that makes gullible people fall prey. "Facts are sacred. Media should be credible for people to place faith in you," he says.

When asked about journalistic freedom in the

state, he was upbeat, "When it comes to Kerala, I don't believe our journalists are being curbed. No one is being pressurised or threatened here", he states. Against the backdrop of journalists being sued in the state, he says this is something to be expected. "Politicians and the government will always push back and deny the truth. It's the responsibility of the media to lay out the facts bare and publish it." He has a golden rule: "Verify, crosscheck and respond."

Jayant stresses that it is Manorama's policy to support the stories brought in by their reporters. "We will always stand by our

journalists even if there are legal issues".

Over allegations of media houses taking sides aligning with their editorial policy, Jayant denies Manorama ceding to such politics. "We will report every angle, including articles on the opinion page, even if it's against our editorial policy. For instance, in the K-Rail issue, we published both sides". However, he adds that their stance as a newspaper will reflect only on their editorial page.

He counters the argument that journalism is not a woman-friendly vocation. When asked about the number of bylines women get in Malayala Manorama, he points out that all exclusive stories are given bylines. Also, even when a story is not exclusive, a write-up by a woman journalist is highlighted by mentioning *Swantham Lekhika*. "When you compare percentages, television and online have more women journalists. More women are joining the newer mediums. So the argument that journalism is unsafe for women does not hold as television is more challenging as you have to fight it out on the ground and run with a camera, rather than a print job that requires more desk work", he added.

His message to upcoming journalists is to be tech-savvy. "Our newspaper journalists in Manipur also had to report for television with mobile cameras." However, he is concerned about the lack of on-the-ground reporting nowadays.

"There is no substitute for going out and reporting. If you don't go on the ground, your reporting will lack a deeper grasp of people's issues and their emotions".

Jayant Mammen Mathew

In the age of reduced attention span, he admits

Handicrafts - new route to empower women



Manna Menachery Akshaya M

Thiruvananthapuram: Threads and needles used to be the companions of Rechitha K from a young age. When familial life brought in new responsibilities, this passion was just confined into a hobby. Four years ago, she was selected by Uralungal society to be trained in

hammock making which changed her life. Rechitha, used the same hammock making technique for other handicrafts item as well. Since this art doesn't require knitting needle, she replaced the usual cotton threads with nylon which is more appealing. "Kerala Arts and Crafts Village provides a platform for many gifted artisans to exhibit their skills. I find it as a blessing that my craft too is getting attention," says Rechitha. "There is demand for decorative items among visitors and I am getting a revenue," she

added. Like Rechitha there are other women who found a way of living through craft making. Empowering women was one of the key initiatives of Kerala Arts and Craft Village. In collaboration with the Development committee of Handicrafts (DCH), under the Ministry of Textiles and Kudumbashree they reached out to the homemakers in close proximity to the Craft Village. Hundreds of such women were trained by master

craftsmen from Kerala. After the programme, handpicked the best of them and assigned them a job at craft village. Now all the shops of the village are attended by women, whereas some of them excelled by putting on a shop to sell their products. "The Craft village of Kovalam is a Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. Women empowerment was one of the key projects for us. We were surprised to see the novel crafts they came up with" says Satish Kumar, Business Development Manager.

Congratulations

Best student of batch 2022-2023

Sreeparvathy S