



FOURTH ESTATE

Kottayam, Thursday, May 26, 2011

Most truths are so naked that people feel sorry for them and cover them up, at least a bit.

- Edward Murrow (US journalist)

In journalism, there has always been a tension between getting it first and getting it right.

- Ellen Goodman (US journalist)

Convocation Issue

For private circulation only

Roll of Honour

Best Reporting



Manish Kumar (English)

Mariya Tresa Abraham (Malayalam)



Best Editing



Chris Jonathan Peters (English)



Jaison Thomas (Malayalam)

Best Investigation Project



Shruti Karthikeyan (English)



Nidhi Elsa Francis (Malayalam)

Best Dissertation



Saradha Mohan Kumar (English)



Jaison Thomas (Malayalam)

Background Lectures



Sanjith Sidhardhan (English)

BEST STUDENT

Manish Kumar



MASCOM graduates 20 in ninth batch

By Karthika Valiathan

KOTTAYAM: Twenty students - seven men and 13 women - were awarded postgraduate diplomas at the ninth Convocation of MASCOM (Manorama School of Communication) held here today.

B Ashok, IAS, vice chancellor of Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, delivered the Convocation address and presented awards and diplomas to the students.

Dr Ashok told the students that mediapersons need to appreciate public interest in mass communication.

He urged them to respect private and public boundaries of personal behaviour-related communication.

The ninth batch included for much of the academic year, Nadia Fazlulhaq, nominee of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Foundation in Colombo, for specialised training at MASCOM.

She is the second Foundation nominee to undergo training at MASCOM, under a bilateral scheme to commemorate the assassinated Sri Lankan Foreign Minister. Nadia returned to Sri Lanka in February and rejoined the Sunday Times in Colombo.

Similarly, Amelie Benoist, a photojournalist from France also underwent training here.

She is not present at this Convocation as she joined



Photo: Amelie Benoist

READY, SET, GO: Students of MASCOM's ninth batch are (first row from left) Ansu Baby, Mariya Tresa Abraham, Karthika Valiathan, Suganya Haridass, Vishakha Sonawane, Jilson Jose; (second row from left) Nidhi Elsa Francis, Divya P, Princy Alexander, Anusha Narain, Shilpy Bisht, Rakendu Leo, Saradha Mohan Kumar, Sanjith Sidhardhan, Sreekanth Ravindran, Jaison Thomas, Chris Jonathan Peters, Manish Kumar, Chinnu Rajan, Shruti Karthikeyan, Vinu Mathew Seemon. Absent: Christy Raju.

Agence France-Presse last week in New Delhi.

Commenting on the opportunities provided to the students, MASCOM Director K Thomas Oommen said, "We hope to continue and even

expand our programme to offer training to foreign students. Both Nadia and Amelie worked hard and they set an example for MASCOM's Indian students."

The prestigious KC

Mammen Mappillai Award for the Best Student of the Class of 2011 was won by Manish Kumar, who scored an aggregate of 535 marks out of 700.

Delivering the valedictory



Courtesy: Manorama

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Then Kerala Chief Minister AK Antony unveils a plaque to inaugurate Manorama School of Communication (MASCOM) in 2002. (From right) MASCOM trustee Jayant Mammen Mathew, former chief editor KM Mathew, Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal, AK Antony and MASCOM director K Thomas Oommen.

MASCOM - a cherished memory

By Anusha Narain

KOTTAYAM: When KM Mathew became the Chief Editor of Malayala Manorama in 1973 its circulation was only 24,000, far behind the other four publications here, namely Deepika, Mangalam, Mathrubhumi and Kerala Kaumudi.

But under his stewardship it became India's highest circulated regional language newspaper, which today has a readership of 19.03 lakhs.

Mr Mathew launched a number of initiatives, one of them being MASCOM (Manorama School Of Communication), which was inaugurated in 2002 by then Chief Minister AK Antony.

Jayant Mammen Mathew, management trustee at MASCOM, said his grandfather not only raised the Manorama to its premier status in Indian journalism, he also wanted to raise the quality of journalists entering the profession and so he set up MASCOM.

The tuition fee was fixed at a much lower figure than those at other comparable journalism schools because he wanted to make MASCOM's training course affordable to worthy students, irrespective of their financial status, the grandson added.

MASCOM director Thomas Oommen said Mr Mathew was an excellent guide in setting

up the MASCOM programme. "I was never denied any help I needed and had it not been for him, I wouldn't have stayed as long as I have (nine years)."

As a person he was friendly, easy-going and understanding, an avid traveller in his younger days, a bon vivant and a lover of the good life, but always a hard worker, Mr Oommen added.

Jacob Mathew, executive editor of Malayala Manorama, clarified his father's rationale for the low tuition fee. "He believed that if the student is willing and able, he should be able to reach out to MASCOM and MASCOM should reach out to him or her."

For Jayant Mathew, his grandfather's outstanding quality was compassion. The grandson said, "He was a patient listener who would never force his advice on anyone. He always weighed the effect that his decisions would have on the people involved."

"His work ethic was exemplary. He even came to work the day before he died. What more can I say?"

Jacob Mathew recalled another of his father's qualities. "He always said, 'I am an ordinary person who knows how to apply his mind in the right direction.' Every day was an experience with him and that I would describe in one word as wonderful."

KM Mathew died at 93 on Aug 1, 2010.

Manorama chief editor insists good writing has 'no substitute'

By Sanjith Sidhardhan

KOTTAYAM: "The print media should never run scared" is Malayala Manorama chief editor Mammen Mathew's advice to fellow journalists in the media industry.

The 67-year-old head of India's highest circulated regional language newspaper also stressed the importance of good writing, saying "It has no substitute."

The strengths of Malayala Manorama, which has a readership of nearly 1 crore, are "the best writing and reporting" of all Malayalam newspapers, he maintained.

Mr Mathew described Malayalees as a news hungry people, and so his daily provides "extensive coverage of local issues and a fairly good coverage of international and national news as well," he remarked.

While conceding the other mass media are growing, Mr Mathew asserted, "I see



"The print media should never run scared."

- Malayala Manorama Chief Editor Mammen Mathew

Photo: Amelie Benoist

absolutely no danger to the print media in India for the next 50 years, because the literacy rate and readership are increasing."

Also he added, because of poverty in the country, newspapers are the main source of information for people who cannot afford cellphones, television or access to the Internet.

Nevertheless, Mr Mathew warned, the print industry "should not close its eyes" to the growth of other media sectors.

On the Malayala Manorama group's latest electronic media venture, he explained, "The foray into an entertain-

ment channel was expensive but logically necessary."

Mr Mathew became the group's fifth chief editor, succeeding his father, KM Mathew, who died on Aug 1, 2010. He has held various positions in the group since 1968 including special correspondent in New Delhi and resident editor of its Kozhikode unit, before moving to the headquarters here in 1980 as managing editor and general manager.

In 1988, the centenary year of the company, he was appointed editor and managing director of the Malayala Manorama Group of Publications.



This dissertation by Saradha Mohan Kumar, titled "Survival of the Fittest," was adjudged the best by Lecturer Mohan Varughese of Mar Thoma College, Thiruvalla.

Photo: Amelie Benoist

Science finds little space in Indian newspaper columns

In an era of scams, revelations and elections, little will the reporters and editors be interested in science coverage and so will the attitude of readers be towards such stories in newspapers.

But instances of few English dailies in India will show that it is not the era but the nature of the subject that complicates reporting and publishing.

In 1818, a monthly publication Digdarshan started carrying science stories in Hindi, Bengali and English, marking the beginning of science journalism in India. Now, there are few papers that carry science stories and two national dailies - The Hindu and The Telegraph - that have pages dedicated to science and technology.

In fact, most newspapers have stopped their supplements or weekly pages on science topics and most news organisations have reassigned their science reporters. A study by The Hoot, a media monitor, indicates that science coverage in the print media is about 6.8 per cent.

Science and technology affect the day-to-day life in several aspects. Be it an environmental issue, a disease or the release of a new gadget, science has a direct impact on the lives of people.

Knowledge in science is essential, when it comes to decision-making in issues involving information inputs such as health.

Also, it is crucial for leaders to have at least a basic knowledge of science when resolving scientific issues as the decisions could affect people at the local, national and international levels.

In this context, newspapers can play a more effective role than science textbooks in educating people, as they are not only cost-effective but also easy to understand. If science reporters write articles that would be understood even by a 14-year-old, scientific knowledge can be transmitted to everyone.

In spite of the importance of science journalism being acknowledged by journalists as well as scientists, it is yet to come out of its present stage of infancy.

Several reasons stand as a barrier for newspapers to provide high-quality science coverage. It ranges from reluctance of editors in publishing more science stories due to readership concerns, to the communication gap between scientists and reporters.

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Jayant Mathew lauds MASCOM for creating 'quality journalists'

By Manish Kumar

KOTTAYAM: Malayala Manorama deputy editor Jayant Mammen Mathew says MASCOM is producing "quality journalists" who are making significant contributions to the country's print media.

Mr Mathew, 40, rated MASCOM as "one of the best" journalism schools in the country. "There are not many such institutes in India," he said.

"MASCOM scores over other media schools because of the attention given to practical exposure and real newsroom situations," he added.

Mr Mathew said that a broadcast journalism course would be offered by MASCOM shortly so as to meet the requirements of the country's rapidly expanding television medium. But he assured that the expansion would not be at the expense of the present postgraduate print journalism course, as "the growth story for print has just begun now."

Mr Mathew stressed that at a time when other media schools are levying lakhs of rupees in fees, MASCOM has maintained its fees until now at Rs 75,000, the fee

set at its inception in 2002 by late KM Mathew, former chief editor of Malayala Manorama.

"MASCOM has always been a not-for-profit journalism institute even though it functions at a deficit," he said.

Advising aspiring student journalists, Mr Mathew said for them to succeed in a fiercely competitive sector, they must develop a "sceptical, but not cynical" attitude in their search for news stories.

Mr Mathew stressed the need for convergence between the print and the television media.

"News on the television is instant, but lacks detailed analysis. This has to be provided by newspapers," he noted.

Asked about the prospects for newspapers 20 years down the line, Mr Mathew was optimistic about their growth.

Mr Mathew said that the proposed television course will have the same core content - reporting and editing - as the print course and only the tools would be different.



Photo: Amelie Benoist

Malayala Manorama deputy editor Jayant Mammen Mathew rates MASCOM as "one of the best" journalism schools in India.

This investigative report by Shruti Karthikeyan, titled "Inland Waterways," was adjudged the best by Manoj K Das, resident editor of Deccan Chronicle (Kerala).



Photo: Amelie Benoist

Development of waterways is trapped in poor planning

A Rs 60 crore project to develop waterways in Kerala is trapped in planning discrepancies, ecological aspects of coastal regulations and financial problems caused by escalation in project costs.

Three feeder canals in Kerala were selected for improvement based on the preliminary reports prepared by the Irrigation Department of Kerala.

The state government identified Kottayam-Alappuzha canal (23 kilometres), Alappuzha-Changanacherry canal (27 kilometres) and Kottayam-Vaikom canal of 38 kilometres, with the assistance of World Bank-funded scheme.

Bhageeratha Engineering Limited based in Kochi was handed over the Rs 60-crore contract on Aug 12, 2003, by the Inland Water Transport Division (IWT) under the Water Resources Department.

The feeder canals project received 80 per cent assistance from the World Bank and 20 per cent from the state government.

It had undertaken the contract for upgradation of feeder canals, dredging, construction of boat jetties, two terminals at Kottayam and Changanacherry and setting up navigational equipment.

With an inland container terminal set to come up at Kottayam with tourist inflow increasing and Kuttanad's connection with the outer world depending heavily on these waterways, the project envisaged removal of water hyacinths and other obstructions, strengthening of the canal shores with concrete sheets and stonewalls; deepening of the canals; 116 new wharfs and six new bridges (Illickal, Kanjiram, Thiruvatta, Kidangara, Arpokara and Pulikuttysseri) and 10 walkover bridges.

The engineering company started the work on Sept 10, 2003, and the contract was given for two years. But, an investigation done by this reporter found out that there were serious discrepancies in the implementation of this project.

The project was important as the IWT system, like any other form of transportation, caters to the movement of both passengers and cargo.

In a surprising case of graft as discovered in a Right To Information response, out of the Rs 60 crore allocated for the project only Rs 16 crore has been utilised.

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Jacob Mathew tracks role of Indian media

By Vishakha Sonawane

KOTTAYAM: Indian media executives are beginning to make their mark internationally and Jacob Mathew, executive editor of Malayala Manorama, is one of them.

Last month he was elected the first Indian to the post of president of World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), an organisation based in Europe.

Mr Mathew, only the second Asian to be so elected, had already served on the Executive Council of WAN-IFRA for four years. "With the committed team of WAN-IFRA, we should be able to handle the different challenging situations that the print medium is facing in different parts of the world," he said.

Explaining the objectives of WAN-IFRA, Mr Mathew said: "It focuses on strengthening the media and helping traditional newspapers."

In India, the newspaper growth is about 18 per cent, which means the Indian print media will survive though there is a decline of readership in the West, Mr Mathew said.

He asserted the decline is due to the availability for the past 15 years of news on the Internet.

The newly elected WAN-IFRA president is of the opinion that the print media in India is "buoyant and it will stay so in the foreseeable future, provided they give good content."

"The literacy rate in India is 65 per cent and newspaper reach is only 40 per cent because of which the newspaper industry has potential for growth."



Photo: Vishakha Sonawane