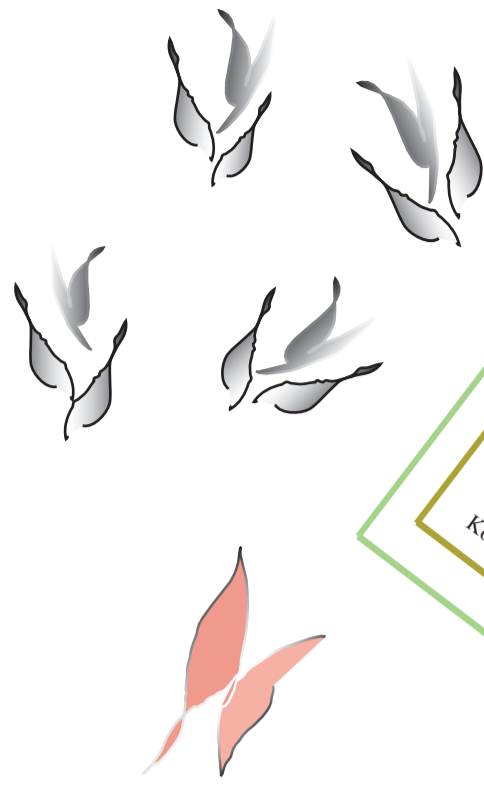


Pictures that tell tales...



READING FINGERS: A blind girl uses her fingers to "read" her notes written in Braille at Government Blind School in Olassa, Kottayam. Photo: Amelie Benoit



'DEEPANGAL SAKSHI': Devotees pray at a pool at the Dakshina Mookambika Temple in Panachikkadu, Kottayam. An idol of Saraswathy Devi - the goddess of knowledge and victory - is at the bottom of the pool. Photo: Sanjith Sighardhan



CIRCLE OF COURAGE: A Kalaripayattu performer demonstrates Kerala's martial art form by leaping through a ring of fire at a performance in Thekkady. Distance education centre IGNOU is offering courses in martial art forms to create job opportunities for these performers. Photo: Anusha Narain

What you have captured on film is captured forever

...it remembers little things long after you have forgotten everything.
- Aaron Siskind
US photographer

Photography takes an instant out of time, altering life by holding it still.
- Dorothea Lange
US photographer



HARBINGERS OF HEALTH: A street vendor is surrounded by vegetables in Kottayam market. The increase in the prices of vegetables has drastically affected the income of roadside sellers like him. Photo: Sreekanth Ravindran

Some of the photographs taken by MASCOM students for their stories in the lab journal.



ANTIQUE ON WHEELS: A 1927 Ford Model A, displayed at an automobile exhibition in Changanacherry. This Ford is one of the 22 vintage cars owned by Pala businessman Siyad Kohinoor. Photo: Shruti Karthikeyan

Cultivate investigative skills early in journalism career

By Saradha Mohan Kumar

KOTTAYAM: "For aspiring journalists, the spirit of investigation has to be cultivated, nurtured and encouraged right from the student-stage," maintains Srinivasa Prasad, who joined MASCOM faculty in 2010 after a 29-year career in journalism with some leading media houses in India including *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times*.

Defining his role at MASCOM, Mr Prasad said he does not teach, but instead "works" with the students. "I was dealing with journalists; now I am dealing with aspiring journalists," he added.

Remarking that basic language training is imperative for journalists, he said, "Language skills are essential for reporters and editors." His keen interest in the proper usage of English led him to



The real challenge in journalism training is to bring the newsroom into the classroom.

- Srinivasa Prasad
MASCOM faculty

write a blog - "A Reporter's Diary" - at www.southernsting.blogspot.com. His blog is concerned mainly with the nuances of English when reporting. One of his posts firmly states, "When you catch an adjective, kill it."

Apart from language skills, he said students should also be inquisitive. During his career, he has posed as an HIV patient to investigate quacks in South India, whose "medicines" for AIDS patients were mostly steroids.

Mr Prasad said the "real challenge" in teaching journalism is to "bring the newsroom into the classroom and MASCOM does this extremely well."

Explaining why he chose to join MASCOM last September, Mr Prasad said, "I found this place sincere and not commercial. Those who set up MASCOM didn't do so to make money."

"I am looking forward to the next batch and hope to shape them into good journalists."



TWIN BLOSSOMS: Water lilies bloom in a pond in a garden in Thrissur that attracts butterflies and moths. These so-called butterfly gardens are gaining popularity and the one in the grounds of Kottayam Collectorate is the only garden to be built in an urban area of the state. Photo: Vishakha Sonawane

Quality of media training is on the decline in India

By Sreekanth Ravindran

KOTTAYAM: Though the proliferation of media training schools is a welcome trend in India, it has brought down the quality of journalism education in the country, says VK Jotheendrakumar, a member of the MASCOM faculty.

Remarking that most of these academies don't even have basic infrastructure to impart comprehensive training, he said, "It is high time that a control mechanism is introduced to check the mushrooming of ill-equipped journalism institutes."

Mr Jotheendrakumar's primary responsibility at MASCOM is shepherding students seeking a career in Malayalam journalism. He emphasised that his students must master reporting local news as vernacular dailies give priority to these events. Listing the prerequisites



Apart from writing skills, students must have multi-disciplinary knowledge and be able to adapt to changing media trends.

- VK Jotheendrakumar
MASCOM faculty

for journalists, he said they should be able to recognise newsworthy events, gather relevant information and present it in a readable manner. "Apart from writing skills, students must acquire multi-disciplinary knowledge and the ability to adapt to changing media technologies," Mr Jotheendrakumar explained.

Even though his students are headed to work in the Malayalam medium, he maintains that they need to have "reasonable working knowledge of English."

The medium of instruction at MASCOM is in English, giving the Malayalam stream students extra exposure to the language. They are also trained in spoken English and this could enable them to switch from the vernacular medium if so desired, he added.

Mr Jotheendrakumar worked as news editor of *Kerala Pathrika* and then joined the journalism department of Kerala University in Thiruvananthapuram, where he was designated professor.