



Shashi Tharoor @shashitharoor
On the way back to Thiruvananthapuram from the funeral, had a great pleasure of being flown by...

WRITERS ALWAYS WALKED ALONGSIDE LEFT MOVEMENT, SAYS K R MEERA



Local Self-Government Minister M B Rajesh and writer K R Meera at a session on the concluding day of the Wayanad Literature Festival on Sunday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Mananthavady

WRITERS always walked along with the left movement and not the other way around, said writer K R Meera at the Wayanad Literature Festival on Sunday.

At a session with Minister M B Rajesh on the concluding day of the festival, Meera said she didn't mean any particular political party but the broad left movement in general. "It is an ideology or a bent of mind. It is that perspective that always ignites writing," she said, adding that one cannot become a writer without upholding human dignity and freedom.

"Literature doesn't have an existence without politics and vice versa. The aim of my writing is to reflect the hopes and concerns of the people," she said. The award-winning writer said those who show aversion to politics have leniency towards a particular brand of politics. Rajesh said politics need not necessarily be imposed from the outside but is ingrained in writing. To a question from the minister as to why the motif of fear looms large in her writing, Meera said it is easy for a woman to understand fear because she is brought up in an atmosphere of fear in the family. "Dismantling patriarchy is a precondition for the establishment of true democracy," she said. Rajesh noted the

brooding atmosphere in Meera's novels may have been influenced by the traumatic experiences resulting from developments like the demolition of Babri Masjid and the Gujarat riots.

Hema report not 'men vs women': Arundhati Roy

Writer Arundhati Roy, in a conversation with actor Parvathy Thiruvothu, said the Hema Committee report cannot be made into a men versus women issue.

"We are looking for a climate of change and culture, not just criminal action," she said.

Parvathy said that at least it has begun to "stink" and there is "noise" in Mollywood. The silence, she said.

Actor-activist Prakash Raj said the murder of journalist Gowri Lankesh was a decisive moment in his life, which made him raise his voice louder.

Speaking at a session with journalist Dhanya Rajendran, Raj said he had political views but when a friend like Gowri was killed he could not remain silent.

Senior journalists Shashi Kumar and A S Panneerselvan, The New Indian Express editor Santwana Bhattacharya, AFP South Asia deputy bureau chief Peter Martell, The News Minute CEO Vignesh Vellore and Himal Southasian's editor-in-chief Roman Gautam attended a session on the future of journalism.

'Lit' up with local flavour

KRISHNA P S @Wayanad

AT A stall strewn with her creations, Selly is busy weaving 'maani pullu' into beautiful boats and hats. She stops in spurts, to explain her products and process with a smile. The booth has no signboard to identify the Panavally native or her products, but she keeps at it from the comfort of a chair.

"I have been weaving the grass since always. Though I don't know how to read or write, I get to travel far and wide thanks to my craft," she adds.

'Maani pullu' - a variety of grass endemic to Wayanad - has also accorded Seetha a sense of purpose. Despite the fact that she has recounted her story ad nauseam, she weaves another tale around the grass - adding her spin. "I am exaggerating a bit, but the grass helped keep the dignity of a queen who was cheated by a 'veppatti' (concubine) of the king," Seetha says.

They are here for the Arts and Crafts Fair, organised as part of the second edition of the Wayanad Literary Festival (WLF), touted as the largest rural event of its kind in the country.

Selly expresses her disappointment at not being able to take in the sounds and sights at the other festival venues. "I'm stuck here, busy with my work," she remarks, with a grin. Like her, there were many from Wayanad who attended the festival, organised on a grander scale in its second iteration. This year's event was spread across four days and ten venues.

A distinctive feature of WLF over the two editions - the first was staged in 2022 - has been the participation of the local population. Be it the student volunteers and teachers of Sacred Hearts HSS, Dwaraka, the main venue, most of those running the stalls at the farmers' market or arts and crafts fare, or those who have come to meet the literary stalwarts, who they have only come across



Selly at the Arts and Crafts Fair held as part of 2nd edition of the WLF

through the pages of their works.

For Jeena Jose, a nurse at the Nalloornd Government Tribal Hospital, in Mananthavady, this is her second WLF. "This year, the venues are much larger," she said. "I have been attending every day, and so has my son. My friends drop in from time to time," says Jeena, who applied for leave immediately after the event dates were announced a couple of months ago. Sheeja K V is attending to promote the Wayanad weave.

"We have a charkha and a wooden handloom machine at the venue to help guests understand our products and pricing structure," she explains, while demonstrating the weaving machine for visitors. "We are here to popularise the Wayanad weave, says Sheeja, from Thrissilery. Sreerag, a college student who lives near the main venue, was excited to be part of the heritage walk organised along the very lanes he frequents. "These are the very roads and mud tracks that flood every year," he quips.

Saritha O T, who settled down in Mananthavady a couple of years ago, says local participation has been much higher this year. "Should we insist that local people attend such events even if they are not interested in them or must we take the approach that these events are for a different crowd?" she says, adding that it is important to make WLF a platform for the two worlds to meet.

KSEB begins preparations for the summer of 2025

Board anticipating a maximum demand of 6,000 MW next April

MANOJ VISWANATHAN @Kochi

Short-term purchase

- Currently, KSEB is getting 1,600 MW power as central share and 570 MW through long-term agreements
It is planning to go for short-term power purchase and swap agreements with states like Punjab
It is considering to rope in a private firm to establish a thermal plant outside Kerala and supply power under a long-term agreement

ANTICIPATING a surge in demand during summer months, the KSEB has begun preparations to ensure availability of power during peak hours. Kerala's power demand had surged during the months of March, April and May, which left the KSEB scrambling and forced it to purchase electricity at exorbitant rates from real time market to avoid load shedding.

The state's power consumption had set an all-time record of 5,854 MW at 10.40pm on May 2. The maximum daily consumption was 115.96 million units on May 3. The KSEB is anticipating a maximum demand of 6,000 MW next April. It is getting 1,600 MW power as central share and 570 MW through long-term agreements. The plan is to ensure 1,600 MW from hydroelectric projects. Still, it may face a shortage of 700 MW in April. For this, it is planning to go for short-term power purchase and swap agreements with states like Punjab.

The KSEB had purchased short-term power for 24 hours at ₹7.13 per unit in April and ₹4.35 per unit in March last year. However, the rate during peak hour hovers around ₹10 per

unit. The board has received a quota for supply of power at peak hour at the rate of ₹9.80 per unit.

Though Coal India Ltd has allocated coal linkage, the KSEB is not keen to establish a coal-based power plant in the state. It is considering a proposal to rope in a private firm to establish a thermal plant outside Kerala and supply power under a long-term agreement.

Since coal-based plants are highly polluting, the KSEB feels such power projects are undesirable in Kerala's context. Be-



sides, it will invite stiff resistance from environmental groups.

The Coal India Ltd has allocated coal from Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) in Talcher, Odisha for the generation of 500 MW. The coal supply from MCL is scheduled to begin in August 2025.

"It is not feasible to establish a coal-based power plant in Kerala considering pollution issues and the huge transportation cost - the coal needs to be transported from Odisha by rail. We are planning to rope in a private firm who can establish a power plant near the Talcher coalfields. We will sign a long-term power purchase agreement. We have to invite a tender to select the power generator agency," said KSEB chairman Biju Prabhakar.

According to the KSEB, it cannot afford to establish a coal-based plant as it needs an investment of ₹5,000 crore. Besides, arrangements have to be made for transportation of coal and transmission of power from the plant to Kerala.

"The coal has been allocated from Talcher and IB Valley coalfields that are located around 380 km apart in Odisha. We are planning to invite a tender and the selected firm will have to make arrangements for transportation of coal to the plant. Then we have to set up power lines for transmission of power to Kerala," said Prabhakar.

Social security pension fraud: 9 govt staff suspended

EXPRESS READ

T'Puram: Nine staff members of the forest department, who were found to be illegally claiming social security pension, have been suspended from service pending an inquiry. The suspension order was issued on the direction of Forest Minister A K Saseendran. The suspended employees include a lower division typist, a watcher, and seven part-time sweepers, informed the minister's office on Sunday.

Uthra murder convict's mother booked for forging documents to get parole

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @T'Puram

THE Poojappura police have registered a case against mother of Sooraj S Kumar, who was convicted for murdering his wife Uthra using a venomous snake, for allegedly forging documents to facilitate an emergency parole for her son.

Renuka Surendran has been booked under non-bailable sections for forgery and other related charges and the case will be handed over to the Kottarakkara police as the alleged offence took place there.

A source said Renuka had filed an application seeking emergency parole for her son claiming that her husband Surendra Panicker was in a critical condition. During the routine scrutiny, the fraud came to light. Source

certificate, the doctor said some of the things that were written on the certificate were not entered by him. Those were allegedly added by Renuka to convince the prison officials that Sooraj's father was critically ill.

The source said the application and the medical certificate were sent in November and upon detecting irregularity, the prison officials filed a police complaint. The prison superintendent can provide 10 days leave/parole to the prisoners in emergency situations. The Prisons Director General on his part can grant five more days leave. Beyond that, the state government can grant leave up to 45 days. The emergency parole is granted to prisoners, who are yet to complete two-years jail term. Those who complete a two-year jail term can seek normal parole.

Uthra, 25, died of snakebite at her husband's house in Anchal on May 7, 2020. It was alleged that her husband Sooraj, bought snakes - first a viper and then a cobra - to kill Uthra. Sooraj's brutal act of using a snake to kill his wife came to light after Uthra's parents raised suspicion leading to a detailed police investigation.

Man kills son after argument in Andhra

Visakhapatnam: A father allegedly killed his 33-year-old son in Lakshmi Nagar, Venkunesipati, Narsipatnam, Anakapalle. The incident occurred on Saturday night, when Kothari Ramana, 62, a retired army employee, struck his son Kothari Bhaskar on the head with a stone. Town Circle Inspector (CI) Govindra Rao confirmed that the deceased, Bhaskar, had been financially dependent on his father. Police revealed that the father and son had been in a long-standing dispute over Bhaskar's extravagant spending.

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