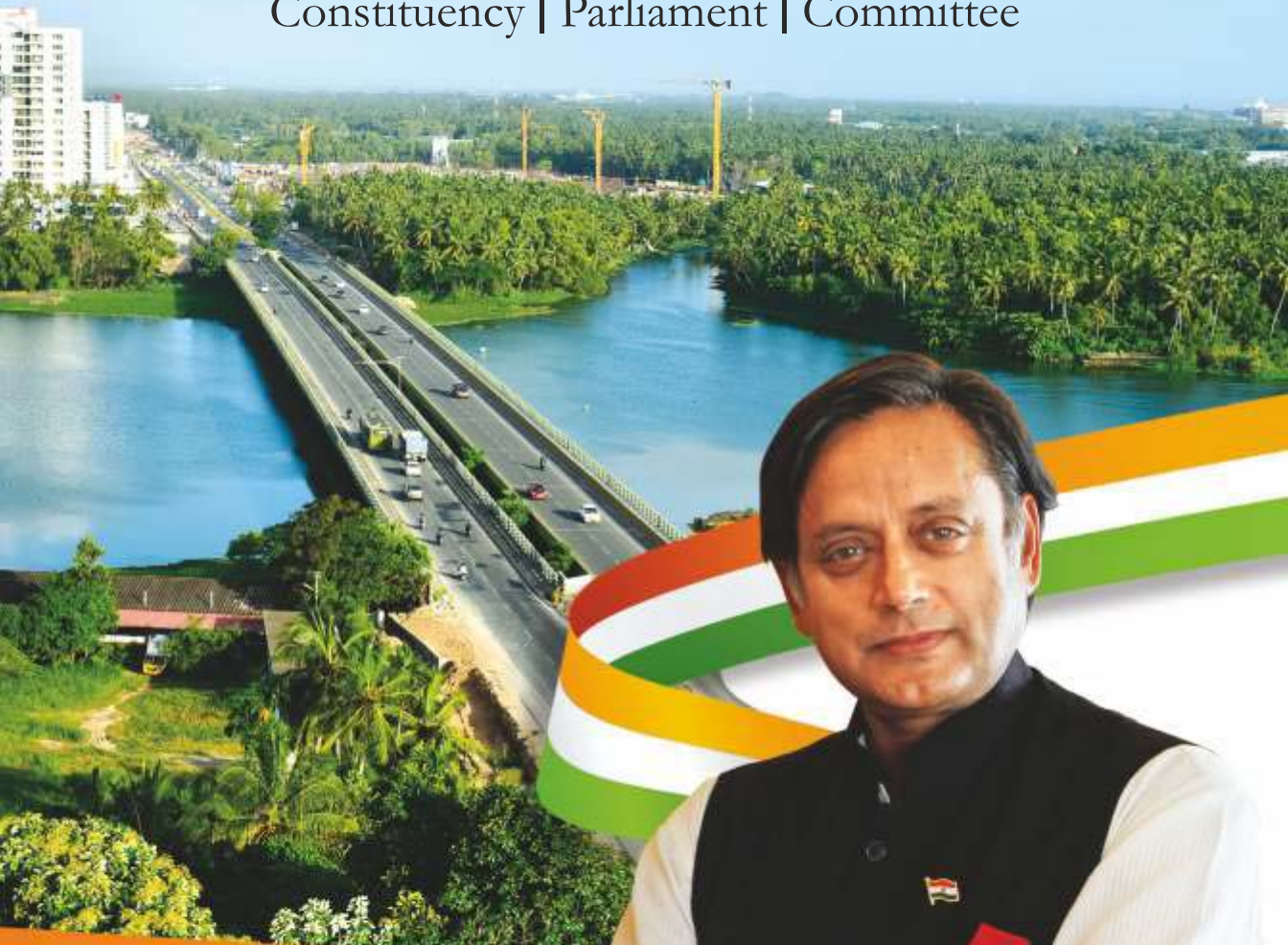


FIVE MORE YEARS OF SERVICE

Progress Report 2014-2019

Constituency | Parliament | Committee



Dr. Shashi Tharoor

MP of Thiruvananthapuram, Lok Sabha
Chairman, External Affairs
Committee of Parliament



Kazhakkootam

Vattiyoorkavu

Thiruvananthapuram

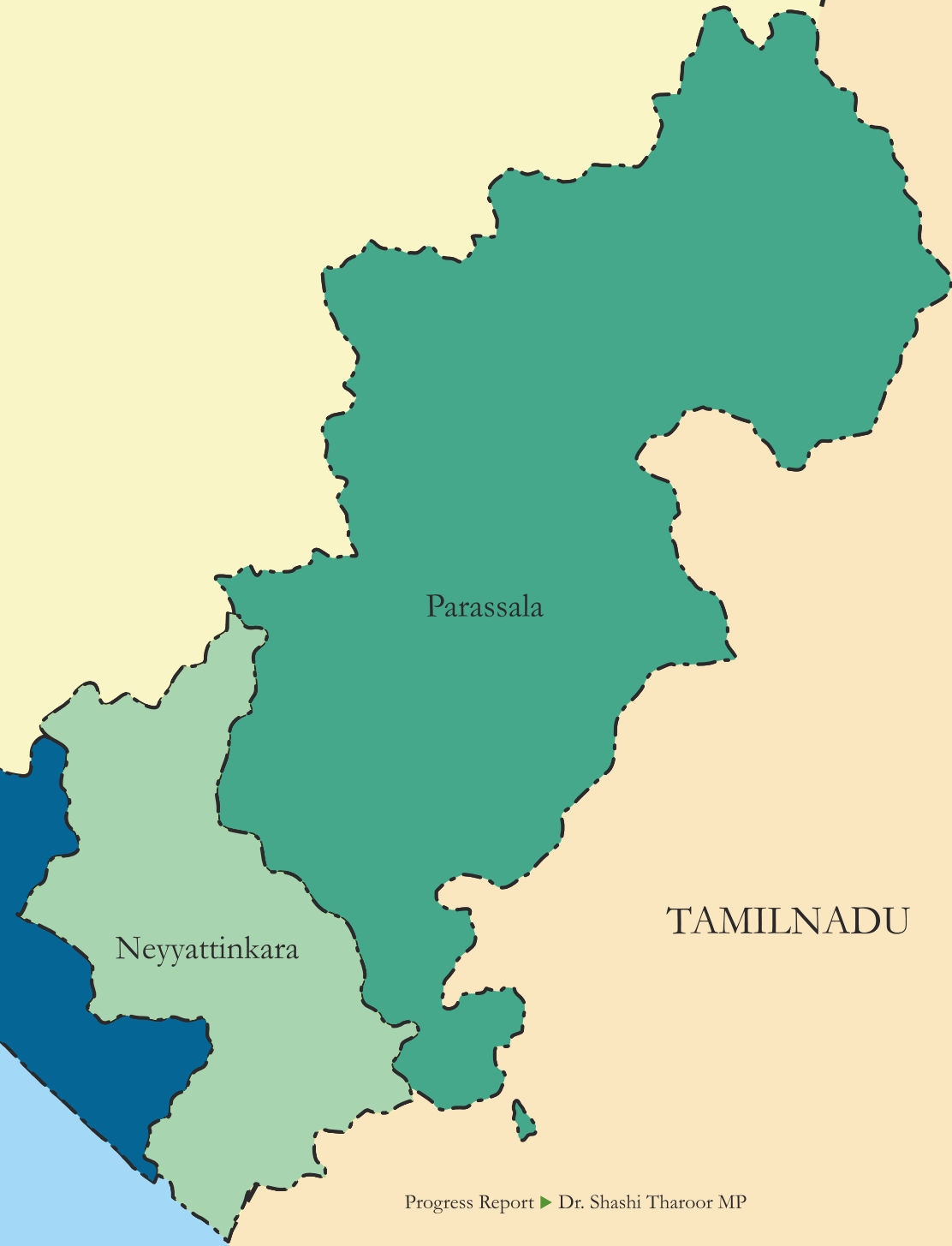
Nemom

Kovalam

ARABIAN SEA

Map of Thiruvananthapuram Parliament Constituency

K E R A L A



Parassala

Neyyattinkara

TAMILNADU

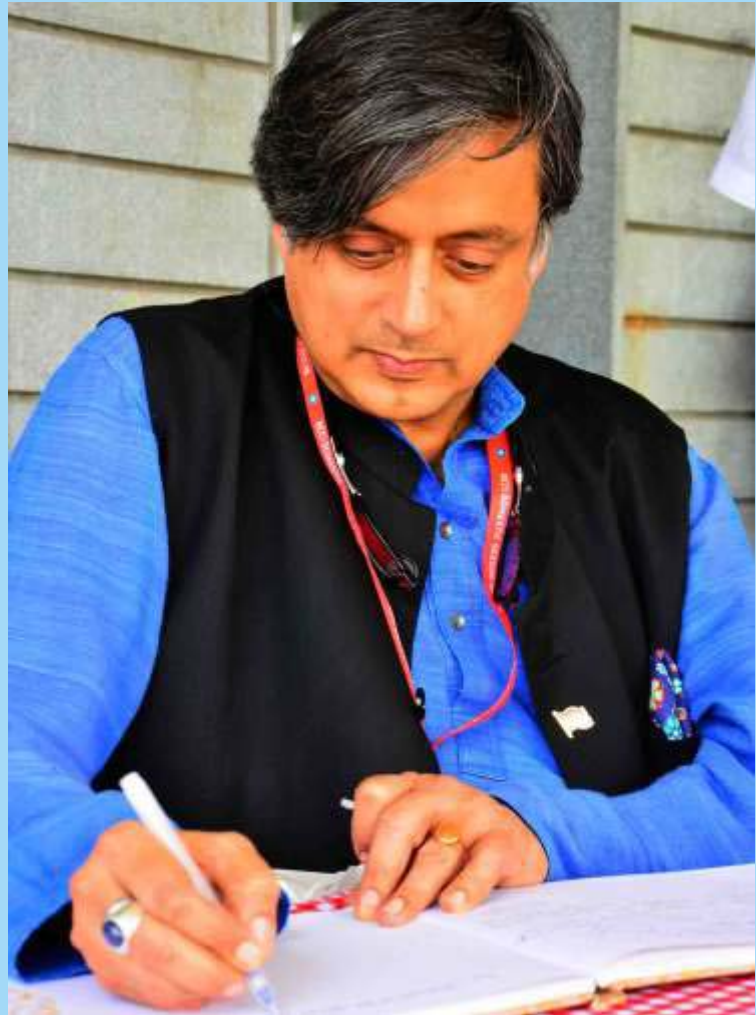
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It is a privilege to continue representing the people of Thiruvananthapuram for a second term in the Lok Sabha, to advocate the interests of the constituency in the national capital, and to speak up for the vision and policies of the Indian National Congress party. This progress report aims to update my constituents with some key aspects of the work I have undertaken so far as the Member of Parliament for Thiruvananthapuram from 2014 onwards, in continuation of my work in the previous five years.

Anshuman



ROADS

NH BYPASS (Kazhakkootam - Karode) *End to over 40 years wait*



This landmark project connecting our city with Tamil Nadu (passing through 6 out of 7 Assembly segments in the constituency) is a historic, first of its kind project in Thiruvananthapuram since Independence, both in terms of scale and costs. In addition, its potential for increasing the economic development of the district is unmatched, leading me, as your MP, to give its implementation topmost priority.

The Kazhakkootam-Karode Bypass is undoubtedly the most satisfying achievement in my ten years of service as MP for Thiruvananthapuram thus far. In 2009, I took on the challenge of reviving this project -- which had been lying dormant for over 40 years then and was consistently written off by many -- because of my conviction that 4-lane



India's first Green Highway



One of the challenges I faced during the beginning of the construction of 4-laning of NH Bypass Phase 1 from Kazhakkootham-Mukkola was the trees along both sides of the existing two way road, which needed to be cut as part of the widening. The Tree Committee under the Dept of Social Forestry declined to give the NOC required by the existing law and the stalemate delayed the work by 3 months despite several high-level meetings. Finally, I was able to bring the members of the Committee to an agreement in which those trees on the median of the new alignment will not be uprooted and thus we would be able to protect around 30% of the existing trees. Though

the Committee agreed, the challenge was to get special permission from NHAI, whose codes only allowed bushes in the median, but I was successful in getting that clearance, making this highway the first green one in the country.

Later, when the Green Highways Policy was launched in 2015 by MoRTH, I believed it was a breakthrough for Kerala, for its deep rooted environmental consciousness and continuing efforts to conserve nature at its best and I made my proposal for re-plantation of the uprooted trees on the landmark Kazhakkootam-Karode Project.

Phase 1

Kazhakkottam - Mukkola StretchTotal Distance of 4-lane Road : **26.8 Kms**Project Cost : **Rs. 861 Cr**Status : **Construction underway by NHAI Contractor KNRCC**Estimated Date of Completion : **June 2019**

Phase 2

Mukkola - Karode StretchTotal Distance of 4-lane Road : **15.2 Kms**Project Cost : **Rs. 497 Cr**Status : **Construction underway by NHAI Contractor L&T**Estimated Date of Completion : **March 2019****Compensation for Land Acquisition**

Total Number of Beneficiaries: 1735 Persons

Total Number of Villages: 5

(Kottukal, Kanjiramkulam, Chengal, Karode and Thirupuram)

Total Amount Allocated: Rs. 460 Cr

Total Amount Disbursed: Rs. 435 Cr

Milestones**2012** - 3(A)1 Notification for Land Acquisition published in the Gazette**2013** - 3(D) Notification for Land Acquisition published in the Gazette**2014** - Compensation disbursed to owners of the Acquired Land**2014** - 1st and 2nd BoT Tenders issued, followed by EPC Tenders**195 Cr Kazhakoottam Flyover**

The 2.34 Km flyover coming up at Kazhakoottam, the longest one in the capital, is the fulfilment of a long standing demand of the commuters to Technopark. It will begin near the Kazhakoottam Police Station and end near the second gate of Technopark in NH Bypass. The flyover will facilitate easy movement of over 60,000 IT professionals currently employed in Technopark.

connectivity could open tremendous development possibilities for the region while also bringing to an end the suffering of hundreds of families whose land was notified decades ago for acquisition for

this project, but who were given neither compensation nor freedom to sell or build a home in the intervening period.

As a practical measure, I was successful in persuading the Government and

the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to split the project into 2 phases – the Kazhakkootam-Mukkola and Mukkola-Karode stretches respectively – with the first converting the existing two-lane road to a four-lane highway, and the second creating a greenfield four-lane road from scratch. Work on both phases is well underway and compensatory packages for 97% of the acquired land have already been disbursed. The total project cost is more than Rs. 2,000 Cr, and both direct and indirect benefits from this investment are already visible in the region at large.

As MP, I have not just continued taking an active interest in this project, but have undertaken an active role in its implementation, conducting several on-site inspections of the ongoing work with NHAI officials, contracting staff and local community leaders. In the process I have been able to identify and resolve several bottlenecks, address issues raised by local communities affected by road construction, and successfully persuade officials in Delhi to make the necessary modifications. I believe that development does not happen by auto-pilot; sustained engagement is vital to the successful completion of any such ambitious project.

Central Road Fund (CRF)

The Central Road Fund (CRF) is a non-lapsable fund created under Central Road

Fund Act 2000, procured out of the out of Cess/Tax imposed by the Central Government on the consumption of Petrol and Diesel.

During my first term, I could get a record figure of 72.75 Cr sanctioned for 7 road projects in my constituency. This term, so far, I could facilitate 41 Cr for 4 road projects. I have submitted more projects and am still pursuing them with MoRTH.

2014-15

- Venpalavattom-Kochuveli-Madavapuram and All Saints-Madhavapuram-Veli-Station Kadavu-Perumathura Road (10 Kms/7 Cr)
- Balaramapuram - Kanjiramkulam- Poovar MDR (15 Kms/12 Cr)

2017-18

- Jagathy-Killippalam- Kaimanam-Thiruvallam MDR (8 Kms/7 Cr)
- Neyyattinkara-Pazhayakada-Poovar and Pattiyakala-Paraniyam Road (15 Kms/15 Cr)

Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

PMGSY is aimed to provide good all-weather road connectivity to



unconnected villages and has been useful to fulfil some of the demands of my rural constituencies, particularly since it is not possible to allocate substantial sums for road development out of MPLADS. In total, Rs. 21.8 Cr was spent for construction of 15 roads and the details of the projects are as below:

- **Kattachalvila-Maninadu-Vandithadam-Mannamkode-Narani Road (Rs. 5.03 Cr)**
- **Pazhanjipara-Padappilthottam-Anavoor-Manvari Road (Rs. 2.81 Cr)**
- **CSI Church-Thundumaradi Road (Rs. 1.05 Cr)**
- **Panayarakunnu-Perittumala Road (Rs. 1.71 Cr)**
- **Nellimoodu-Nediyakala Road (Rs. 1.39 Cr)**
- **Mariyapuram-Market Junction-Mullamkulam Road (Rs. 2.43 Cr)**
- **Chitoorkonam-Chekkalamukku Road (Rs. 1.03 crore)**
- **Rs. 6.31 Cr for i) Anjalikonam-Kuzhinjamvila Road ii) Samudayapotta-Chirakulam Road iii) Kannaravila-SN Road, iv) Kallikadu-Thurappil Road, v) Kavinpuram- Attaramoola Road, vi) Marappalam- Muttoor Road, vii) Paraneeyam-Panankala Road, and viii) Mariyapuram-Kodangara Road**

Karamana-Kaliyakkavila State Highway

While the NH Bypass project progresses, the 29.2 Km stretch from Karamana to

Kaliyakkavila serves as the existing highway under the State Government, connecting Thiruvananthapuram with Tamil Nadu. Over the years, this 2-lane road has become highly congested. In 2009, while taking up the stalled NH Bypass project with the NHAI, I tried to bring in Central funds for the development of the state highway as well. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, however, felt that this would be a case of 'dual investment' for the NHAI, which had already taken up the Bypass project.

I was convinced, nevertheless, of the necessity to 4-lane the state highway along with the Bypass and applied all the influence I could on the State Government in this regard. Initial meetings with the then government began positively but did not fructify. The UDF Government that came to power in 2011 responded more positively and work on new alignments and land acquisition for this began promptly thereafter.

The stretch of 5.5 Kms from Karamana to Pravachambalam was earmarked as 1st phase for 4-lane expansion at the cost of Rs. 350 Cr. Rs. 276 Cr were disbursed as compensation to 818 families that had surrendered land. As many as 75 houses and 408 business establishments were removed to enable widening. The remaining Rs. 74 Cr was spent on widening work. This stretch was completed and opened to the public in 2016.

Efforts are on to work with the new Government to commence the 2nd phase without delay. Tangible improvements for commuters on this densely-congested stretch are already visible. ●

PORT

Vizhinjam International Transshipment Port

A 30 year old dream comes true

The Vizhinjam International Transshipment Port has been a dream project, not only for the people of Thiruvananthapuram but also for southern Kerala, for the last 25 years, when the first bid was made to identify an operator/developer by the government of the day. The discussion about the potential of this natural port, with an average of 22 meters of un-dredged draft located at just 8 nautical miles from international shipping lanes, dates back to

the pre-independence era. Kerala, after all, was home to prominent maritime powers ranging from the Ay kings to the Zamorins of Calicut, with links to the world beyond from the times of the Romans and Greeks. Vizhinjam itself features on some ancient Roman maps of the Indian peninsula.

Despite our glorious past and the immense potential for Vizhinjam to emerge as one of the great ports of the



Construction of accropodes to be laid for formation of breakwater

future, successive bids under various governments failed to draw up a model that could attract potential bidders for development and operation of the port. My active involvement in the project began in 2011, when the UDF Government nominated me as a Director on the Board of VISL (Vizhinjam International Seaport Ltd), a special purpose body chaired by the Chief Minister, entrusted with the task of finding the right development model and concessionaire for the post.

Ever since, I have worked tirelessly for the fulfillment of this cherished project through all phases leading up to its successful implementation.

The areas in which I could actively involve and contribute are:

- **inputs into the Master Plan to ensure a future-ready port**
- **finalizing Terms of Reference for the 3-Season Environmental Impact Assessment Study**
- **granting of Environmental Clearance from Ministry of Environment and Forests, GoI**

- **preparation of terms of RFQ, RFP and concessionaire agreement**
- **road connectivity to the NH Bypass**
- **securing of 20% Viability Gap Funding from GoI**
relaxation of Cabotage law from GoI
- **persuading the leadership of Adani Ports to participate in the bid process after the 4th bid failed to attract any viable bidders**
- **promoting the political consensus for choosing the single bid, and**
- **being available to guide those involved at every stage of the project**

In a historic ground-breaking ceremony on December 5, 2015, Adani Vizhinjam Ports Ltd commenced work on the port project, with a mission to complete the 1st phase in 1000 days. Both as MP for Thiruvananthapuram and Director of the VISL (renominated by the LDF Government), I have been following progress of the project at the highest levels, and look forward to the day the first ship will dock in Vizhinjam in early 2019.

Vizhinjam Port - Rail Interlinking

With the Sagarmala Scheme, meant for augmenting transshipment capacity in the country, I ensured the inclusion of Project - Vizhinjam Rail to be interlinked with India's railway network. Following this, an agreement was signed between Vizhinjam International Multipurpose Deepwater Seaport and Konkan Railways. The project aims to construct 12 Km rail link to Balaramapuram Railway station and is set for completion by 2022



Work Progressing

construction of accropodes to be laid for formation of breakwater



Piling in progress



Poovar Shipyard Project

Vishakapatnam on India's east coast and Cochin on the west coast are two of India's leading shipyards. However, as India will need larger ships in the future, we need more and better equipped shipyards. In this regard, I sought to persuade the Ministry of Ports that Poovar is geographically, socio-economically and ecologically, the most ideal location for the construction of a new shipyard, thereby bringing a lifeline to a long-dormant project.

At present, the project for developing Poovar as India's number one Shipyard-cum-Port-Maritime hub is still in its conceptual stage. There is some hesitation at the prospect of constructing a major coastal facility so close to the port of Vizhinjam that is currently coming up, and further talks are needed. Though there are obstacles along the way, I am continuing to work on this project with confidence.

RAILWAYS

During my first term, a considerable amount of work was accomplished in the railways sector through intense lobbying with successive Railway Ministers, Railway Board Chairmen, GMs and DRMs.

This resulted, among other developments, in the following major highlights:

- **A record of 14 new trains to Thiruvananthapuram**
- **“World class” upgradation of Trivandrum Central Station**
- **Upgradation of Kazhakuttam, Kochuveli, Trivandrum Central, and Dhanuvachapuram as Adarsh stations**
- **Stoppage of 6 trains at Kazhakoottam Station and 3 trains at the Parassala Station**
- **Starting of MEMU train services between Kollam and Nagercoil;**
- **New building for the Dhanavachapuram Station**
- **An IRCTC Rail Neer bottling plant at Parassala**
- **Additional funding for ongoing works at Kochuveli**

Kerala's Longest foot overbridge at Kochuveli Railway Station



The long pending electrification of the track from Thiruvananthapuram to Kanyakumari was completed during this period. The total distance electrified was 82.681 Track Kilometers.

Much of the work initiated during my first term is still underway – for instance, the upgradation of Trivandrum Central station; the 5th escalator has been recently made operational. As of now, TVC has the following: three escalators at Platform 1 and one each at Platforms 2&3, and 4&5. It also has three extra-large lifts – one each at Platform 1,

Platforms 2&3, and Platforms 4&5.

I must confess that I cannot claim the same amount of satisfaction from the last two railway budgets, which is a feeling shared by my fellow MPs from Kerala in general. But I have left no stone unturned in pursuing better railway facilities in Thiruvananthapuram. I have met successive Railway ministers well before presenting their respective budgets and handed over detailed representations outlining our requirements. These have also been followed up with Railway Board Chairman, GM and the DRMs.



Inauguration of Escalators at platforms 1,2,3,4 & 5

New Trains:

- 22655/22656 Trivandrum-Nizamuddin-Trivandrum Weekly Superfast Express via Alleppey
- 22653/22654 Trivandrum-Nizamuddin-Trivandrum Weekly Superfast Express via Kottayam
- 19331/19332 Kochuveli-Indore-Kochu Veli Weekly
- 16355/16356 Kochuveli-Mangaluru Junction bi-weekly Antyodaya Express (via Alappuzha)

Train Extension :

- 22627/22628 Thiruchirapally-Thirunelveli Intercity Express has been extended to Thiruvananthapuram

Stoppage :

- Stoppage at Kazhakoottam for 56715/56716 Punalur - Kanniyakumari Passenger

Some other notable improvements are:

- New current reservation systems/ counters installed at Thiruvananthapuram Central
- Almost 104 new coaches added to the trains from/to Thiruvananthapuram
- Free Wi-Fi services commissioned in Thiruvananthapuram Central station
- Two nos. of limited-use subways were constructed as replacement to the existing level crossing, both between Nemom and Neyyatinkara, LC No.7 @ km.233.845 on 21.1.2016 and LC No. 5 @ km.229.745 on 20.05.2016

Station Infrastructure Development:

Thiruvananthapuram Central

In Thiruvananthapuram central station, Integrated Security system was installed and improvements were made to the parking area, fountains and landscaping, retiring room, and platform shelter costing Rs. 1.23 Cr. Women facilitation center is now available at Thiruvananthapuram station.

Provision of Divyang toilets in island platforms, provision of new auto & taxi paid counter with shelter for queuing area, improvements to passenger information center, enhancement of parking space are in progress.

Above all, this year, I have proposed for installation of 10 Three seater perforated stainless steel chairs, industrial reverse osmosis plant and sanitary napkin vending machine in Neyyatikara,

Parassala through my MPLADS. For Dhanuvachapuram railway station, four three-seater perforated stainless steel chairs h. been proposed for installation this year.

Kochuveli

Second Coaching Terminal Phase II works, which includes Island Platform-1, three new Platform lines, two pit lines, sick line shed with 3pits- and one service building, costing Rs. 15 Cr are the works implemented in Kochu Veli station.

Besides that, automatic ticket vending machines were installed in the station. Provision of Foot over bridge at Kochu Veli station connecting platforms, main entry & second entry costing Rs. 2.48 Cr. is in progress.



Ladies waiting room



Escalators



Wi-Fi hot zones



Advanced LED Display board



New Ticket Counter at Thiruvananthapuram Railway Station

Kazhakoottam

Provision for unreserved ticketing, Passenger Reservation System (through IUTS) facility are made available. Rs. 12.5 Lac were spent for installing benches and shelters.

Among other works new waiting hall was constructed and automatic ticket vending machines were installed at Kazhakuttam station.

Balaramapuram

Thiruvananthapuram division extension & raising of platform, provision of Shelter costing in total Rs. 55 Lac were completed.

Neyyattinkara

The station is now equipped with Automatic Ticket Vending Machine for booking unreserved train tickets.

Dhanuvachapuram

Construction of new station building and

waiting hall were completed in the station.

Parassala

In Parassala station, roofing was constructed above the foot-over bridge and provision of passenger amenities was enhanced.

Miscellaneous

Beyond these improvements, I have pushed for a game-changing transformation in railway travel south of Thiruvananthapuram. The allocation of Rs. 20.58 Cr for the doubling of the Kanyakumari-Thiruvananthapuram line, one of my consistent demands, is a major development as it could be hugely beneficial for passengers travelling south of the city to the rural parts of Kerala and into Tamil Nadu.

Once the doubling of the Thiruvananthapuram-Kanyakumari line is complete, more trains will be introduced in the constituency. The most important

Bifurcation of Thiruvananthapuram Railway Division

The press had reported a move by Southern Railways to bifurcate Thiruvananthapuram Railway Division in order to carve out Nemom-Thirunelveli rail corridor based on an internal correspondence. I strongly resisted this move in my letter to the Minister of Railways and the matter was finally put to rest after the Minister ruled out the chances for any events that would lead to such a situation. I had stressed on the significance of Thiruvananthapuram Division and the enormous potential that lies ahead after the completion of Vizhinjam Seaport and Nemom Coaching Terminal projects.

one among these newly proposed trains is the Sree Padmanabha Express. Starting from Thiruvananthapuram, which is home to the historic Sree Padmanabha Swami temple, the train would proceed via the temple city of Madurai onward to Velankanni, a prominent Christian pilgrim centre.

One vision I have been actively pursuing for a long time is the concurrent development of Kochu Veli Station as Trivandrum North and Nemom Station as Trivandrum South so as to decongest Trivandrum Central. Though the ongoing development of Kochu Veli has resulted in 3 pit lines and 3 platforms in

place, the work at Nemom is yet to progress at the required pace, particularly in relation to the much needed coaching terminal. This is largely due to budgetary issues concerning the cost of additional land acquisition required for the project.

Efforts are under way for the establishment of the Railway Medical College proposed at Thiruvananthapuram. Even though the original proposal to set up such medical colleges has been scrapped, I have suggested that it may be considered on a PPP basis, and continue to follow this up with the Ministry, whose verdict is awaited.



Self Ticketing Kiosk



Inauguration of free wi-fi Services

Suburban Rail

The idea of a Suburban Train Service to cater to needs of daily commuters was mooted in 2013 as the expansion of MEMU services found no progress due to non-availability of railway rakes. The Thiruvananthapuram – Chengannur route (125.56 Kms) has been chosen for first phase development and Mumbai Rail Vikas Corporation was assigned to prepare the project report.

The advantage of this project is that it will not require land acquisition or a new railway line, both of which are ordinarily causes for delays in such projects. Instead of track doubling, the capability of the existing track will be increased using Automatic Block Signalling with a Train Protection and Warning System, which will reduce by 1 Km the permissible distance between trains which run on the same tracks and in the same direction (at

present 10 Km.) This will enable more than 144 trains to service the existing route, in place of the 70 - 75 trains currently deployed.

The cost of the project is estimated to be Rs. 3063.97 Cr and is envisaged to be implemented as a State-Central project, for which the prior adoption of the project by the Railways was one of our demands. In the 2016 Railway budget, the Minister announced that “a detailed policy to build an integrated suburban ecosystem of Indian Railways will be issued in four months. It will prescribe a financial structure wherein IR will share equity contribution with the State Government including the State of Kerala to develop a suburban section in Thiruvananthapuram.” This matter will be pursued by the State government as well as by me as MP for Thiruvananthapuram.



Light Metro

The rise in the number of vehicles on our roads, and resultant accidents and issues around pollution and traffic, highlighted the need for a Mass Rapid Transit System for Thiruvananthapuram. A serious initiative for a Monorail network was launched under the UDF Government by entrusting the DMRC with the task of preparing the DPR, which was submitted in December 2012. A special purpose vehicle (SPV) named the Kerala Rapid Transit Corporation Ltd. was constituted the same year. But the global tenders floated for the Thiruvananthapuram Monorail could attract only one consortium, led by Bombardier Transportation.

In the wake of the cold response to Monorail technology, the UDF Government decided to turn the project into one of Light Metro. Though costlier, Light Metro has several advantages, such as easy raising of capacity, DMRC's expertise in the field and the potential to attract a greater number of companies who can bid for the project.

As a project that requires Central approval and funding, I have extended my support to the earlier Government as well as the new one. When the State Government finds the necessary determination to take this project forward, it will enjoy my fullest co-operation in pursuing the matter in Delhi. ●

AIRPORT

Airport Development

As Chairman of the Airport Advisory Committee, I have taken a keen interest in the development of Trivandrum International Airport as well as in ensuring the best of service for its users. The periodic meetings of the Committee, with the active involvement of the AAI, CRPF, Customs, Immigration, Airlines, Police, District Administration and trade and public representatives, are used as a constructive forum to find solutions for the various issues faced by the airport and its users.

During my first term, I had the privilege of playing my part in the completion of the new International Terminal as well as the Air India Hangar

Recently installed TRV (Iata code) and Indian National Flag



Unit. At the moment, the expansion work of the new Taxiway is underway. A new Aerobridge is being constructed at the International Terminal. As of now, there are 4 in the International and 2 in the Domestic terminals respectively. Runway recarpeting and strengthening works have also been carried out successfully in the first quarter of 2017.

One of the priority issues I am pursuing is the expansion of the airport facilities, which would also require the acquisition of 18 acres of land for the smooth functioning of the airport. This is essential to meet statutory requirements laid down by the DGCA for granting a permanent license for flight operations for the airport, and is integral to its future.

IATA Code Structure at Terminal-II:

Trivandrum International Airport has become India's first and the world's second airport to display an IATA airport code structure "TRV". The IATA airport code is three letter code (location identifier) designating the airport, defined by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The structure that I unveiled is constructed at the entrance of the airport. Los Angeles Airport was the first to build a similar IATA code structure.

Common User Domestic Cargo Terminal (CUDCT):

Keeping in mind the 50 flight movements and 200-tonnes of cargo at the airport every day, a common user domestic cargo terminal (CUDCT) was opened at the Trivandrum International Airport for a cost of Rs. 50 Lac. Those Airlines operating from domestic terminal of the

airport, namely Air India, Indigo, Jet Airways and Spice Jet now handle cargo operations through the CUDC.

CSR Green Park :

A 4,000-sq-m waste dumping ground near the boundary wall of the Thiruvananthapuram international airport on the Vallakadavu side was converted into a park by the Airports Authority of India (AAI). This includes a children's park, walkers' path, aerobic bin, and an electronic She-toilet, all of them set up at a cost of Rs. 55 Lac. The 2,000 sq. m children's park has LED lighting and CCTV facilities to ensure visitors' safety. The 210-m walkers' path will help local people to enjoy walks.

Parallel Taxi Track :

With respect to expanding the runway capacity at Trivandrum International Airport, a 1,880-meter long Parallel Taxi Track (PTT) PTT was constructed parallel to the runway. It was constructed at Rs. 62 Cr and will help to reduce the time taken and the fuel taken by an aircraft on the runway.

Other completed/ongoing projects:

- **Construction of additional apron (Bay 23) and GSE area.**
- **Provision of RESA for Runway 14**
- **Resurfacing and strengthening of runway and taxiways**
- **Standardization of Turn pad widening of existing turn pad at both ends of runway 14 and 32**
- **Replacement of ILS**
- **Removal of wing bar lights**

- **Extension of the Airside Arrival Corridor with Rotunda for 4hAerobridge at NITB for an estimated Rs. 20.98 Cr**

Air Connectivity

Trivandrum Airport is the first airport in the state of Kerala and the fifth international airport in the country. Currently around 16 airlines operate domestic and international flights out of this airport but there is still considerable demand for greater connectivity owing to the rapid expansion of city and its growing commercial importance with the upcoming Vizhinjam Port and other developments.

As the local MP and Chairman of the AAC, I have lobbied with the CEOs of currently operating airline companies like Indigo and SpiceJet to increase the number of their flights as well as with

those who are not currently operating in Thiruvananthapuram, such as Air Asia and Vistara, to start their operations from our airport. I was also able to prevail upon the Minister of Civil Aviation to reintroduce the cancelled Air India flight to Bangalore, which has benefitted large numbers of people, and in particular IT employees who travel frequently to Bangalore from Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram.

I have also urged more of the country's existing airlines to expand their flights to Kerala, and have made some progress, notably with additional flights from Indigo and Jet, as well as a new direct connection by Air India from Thiruvananthapuram to Delhi. I have urged the State Government to consider reducing the ATF taxes charged on aviation fuel, which at 28% is the highest in the country and serves as a disincentive to airline companies to provide additional flights to the state.

View of 3 Aerobridges and 1 under construction in Trivandrum International Airport from the taxiway





fourth aerobridge under construction in Trivandrum International Airport.

Air Kerala

With an enormous expatriate population, especially in the Middle East, Keralites have for long protested the exorbitant airfare charged during the holiday season. One of the solutions proposed is a State-promoted airline with NRK participation, to be called Air Kerala. The biggest deterrent to the idea was the 5/20 policy of the Ministry of Civil Aviation which stipulates that any airline should have completed 5 years of domestic service and should possess 20 aircraft to be eligible to fly on international sectors. For a nascent venture catering to a niche segment, this was a huge hurdle.

I had taken up this issue with successive Ministers of Civil Aviation and managed to obtain a relaxation in the stipulation for 5 years of domestic service, but the mandatory 20 aircraft continued to pose a difficulty. In my discussions with the MoS, Civil Aviation,

however, we were able to arrive at a practical solution in terms of the type of aircraft required, whereby Air Kerala could own the majority of these in the form of smaller commuter aircraft (20 to 40 seater) which can offer services between the 3 existing airports within the state, as well as the one coming up in Kannur. This would give Air Kerala, were it to be established, an adequate fleet of 20 to be eligible to operate the international sectors to the Gulf, where demand is greatest. I have relayed this suggestion to the Chief Minister.

Meanwhile, in meetings with senior Indigo executives, I have urged that when that company completes the acquisition of additional turbo-prop aircraft, it should add short-haul flights from Thiruvananthapuram to a number of destinations, including Kochi, Kozhikode and Coimbatore. The company has been most receptive to this proposal. ●

HEALTH

SCTIMST

The Sree Chitra Thirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology is one of our premier autonomous medical research facilities, and an Institute of National Importance established in 1973 at Thiruvananthapuram. Since my first term, I have taken a keen interest in the functioning of this prestigious, life saving institution. I have also served as a member of the Institute Body during my first five years as MP.

Recently, the institute has been facing difficult times with respect to funding for existing commitments and for its proposed expansion. I have held successful talks with the institution heads as well the Minister of Science & Technology in Delhi and, as always, extended my fullest cooperation and support in ensuring the growth of SCTIMST, especially in their much needed expansion plans in the land (adjacent to their existing building) allotted to them from the estate of the Trivandrum Medical College. I also intervened at the request of the Director to defuse a public and media controversy

over a necessary hike in fees charged to patients by the Institute. I am pleased to welcome the decision of the Central Government to provide Rs. 230 Cr in funding for SCTIMST in the current fiscal year, with Rs. 120 Cr from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Rs. 110 Cr from the Department of Science and Technology, both of which I had written to and spoken to in support of this request.

PMNRF& RAN

Scores of financially constrained constituents approach me for help to cover their medical expenses. One of the ways by which assistance is extended is through the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund or the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme under the Ministry of Health. Between 2014 and 2016, I have forwarded close to 170 such cases and out of which, 109 persons have been allotted around Rs 1.70 Cr. More modest amounts are provided out of my own personal resources through the Chandran Tharoor Foundation.





Regional Cancer Centre

I have fought for some time for additional resources to the Regional Cancer Centre in Thiruvananthapuram, though my efforts, both in Parliament and in direct contact with the Minister of Health, to get the RCC upgraded to a Centre of National Importance have not yet proved successful. Nonetheless, the Government has agreed to support the RCC as a State Cancer Institute. In response to a question I raised in Parliament, the Minister of Health announced that an amount of Rs. 46.957 Cr would be released under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) as the first installment of the Government of India contribution to the RCC. This sum has been released to the State Government during the financial year 2016-17.

AIIMS – All India Institute of Medical Sciences

When the Central government announced in 2013 its intention to establish AIIMS in all states of our

country, I saw it as an opportunity to bring excellent tertiary medical care to the people of Thiruvananthapuram, which is also most eligible in terms of the scientific and research ecosystem prevailing in the region. I succeeded in persuading the state government to include the location of Nettukaltheri in Parassala, where the required extend of land is available with the government as part of the Open Prison, among the five locations in Kerala forwarded to Ministry of Health, GoI, for the AIIMS project.

Since then, the AIIMS project has been scaled down by the new central Government elected in 2014. For the moment, the Central Government has extended the AIIMS scheme only to two additional states and no assurances have been received that Kerala will be a beneficiary in the near future. I have been following up with the Central Minister of Health as well as the Ministry to expedite the visit of their expert team, which is the next step, to find the most suitable among the five proposed locations in Kerala. No effort will be spared in bringing the AIIMS to our district, and as MP, I will continue to work with the State government as well as the Centre in this regard.

SCHEMES

Swachh Bharat

I accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to me to serve as one of his original "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan" Ambassadors in a spirit of national service for a non-political cause, despite the political criticism this attracted. As my personal project for Swachh Bharat, I undertook the cleanup of a prominent section of Vizhinjam Beach, taking care to involve the local community as stakeholders in the effort. Local residents living across from the beach and members and office-bearers of the Muslim Jama'ath, together with Congress party workers, joined me



in the cleanup. I visited the area thereafter to ensure it remained clean. It has since been further beautified in a Tourism Department project for which I had obtained central funding under the previous government.

I also took the opportunity to write to the Prime Minister to ask for something more substantive than this symbolic action. With the assistance of the Collector, I submitted a 75-page detailed proposal for the revival of the historic Parvathy Puthanar canal in Thiruvananthapuram. I pointed out that cleaning it alone would not be enough, since it would be filled with waste again unless more comprehensive action was taken. I called for a scheme that would not only clear the garbage and sludge from the canal and flush it with clean water, but would be supplemented by a project to connect the houses on both sides of the canal to the city's sewage system and provide the residents alternative sites to dump their waste instead of dropping it, as at present, into the canal. With such a major project the root causes of the problem would also be solved, but it was beyond the capacity of the MP or the local authorities and required Central Assistance. Sadly, I am yet to hear from the Prime Minister on my proposal.

I have further taken up, in meetings with the sanitation officials, the need to link a number of houses in Beemapalli to the Muttathara sewage plant. I continue to pursue the implementation of sanitation and sewage projects in my constituency.



Interlocking Tiles Laid (Ariel View)



lift



Renovated Vizhinajm Light House with Elevator

Vizhinjam Lighthouse Modernization

The lighthouse at Vizhinjam is situated at a very picturesque spot and, given its immense tourism potential, I obtained from the Ministry of Shipping Rs. 2 Cr in 2014 for its beautification and renovation. A new lift has been installed, tiles laid and a viewing gallery is being prepared. While this work is going on, I also got the structure included in the list of lighthouses handpicked to be developed as tourism destinations by the Director General of Lighthouse & Lightships under the PPP model. By the end of 2019, a grand total of Rs 3.86 Cr will be spent for the development of Vizhinjam Lighthouse, to add amenities such as cafeteria and for beautification, including a musical fountain, which will make it one of the premier tourist destinations of the area.

Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)

I could effectively intervene in the

selection of Mathipuram Colony in Vizhinjam as the pilot project of Rajiv Awas Yojana in the State during my previous term. The project is to rehabilitate 1032 families into modern individual housing units with parks, anganwadis, and other amenities to improve the overall socio-economic condition of the fishing village at a cost of Rs. 72 Cr. The first phase began in 2014 and 81 units were handed over in 2015 and 140 units in 2018.

The second phase consisting of 321 units is already under construction and nearly 160 units are complete.

PMSAGY Village Adoption Scheme

Though announced with great fanfare, the PMSAGY is a scheme that has no dedicated funds for its execution. Hence, understandably enough, there has only been limited success with the scheme. Nevertheless, Kottukal Panchayat in Kovalam, which also includes the densely



RAY Project

populated fishing village of Adimalathurai, was selected for the first phase of the SAGY scheme. This has helped Kottukal benefit from additional existing Central and State Development schemes, as follows:

- **By including it in the IPDS, DDUGVY schemes, funds of 4.8 Cr were sanctioned for the electrification of the Panchayat. (300 BPL households were given free connections.)**
- **BSNL is now providing free Wifi connectivity to the Village Panchayat Office and the Village Office.**
- **Comprehensive health camps have been organized in the Panchayat.**
- **Projects for the renovation of 4 important roads in the village have been submitted.**

In the second phase, I have adopted Amboori Panchayat in Parassala, where too similar developments are expected to occur.

Smart Cities Project

I had raised strong and sustained objections to the omission of Thiruvananthapuram from the 1st round of

selection for the Central Government's Smart Cities project and have since stressed to the Urban Development Ministry the need for the inclusion of all State capitals in the scheme. As a result of these efforts, Thiruvananthapuram is back in the list of beneficiaries. The challenge is now for the City Corporation, to prepare an effective proposal and specific projects to enable Thiruvananthapuram to benefit fully from the scheme.

Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple

Sree Padmanabha Swamy is the celebrated guardian deity of Thiruvananthapuram, a city whose very name is connected with the Lord who reclines on the majestic Anantha. Under the Swadesh Darshan scheme aimed at the integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits by the Ministry of Tourism, the temple precincts will benefit from infrastructure development worth Rs. 76.26 Cr. I had requested the Central Government for a larger grant of Rs 300 Cr considering the historic and spiritual importance of the temple, but as the first allotment, the current one is satisfactory. My request for similar funding for the Sabarimala and Kurishumala pilgrimage sites is currently pending with the Government. ●

Padmanabhaswami temple



INSTITUTIONS

National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS)

The transformation of State government-run Centre for Earth Science Studies into a National Centre for Earth Science Studies under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, GoI, in 2014 was not only a recognition of the three decades of meritorious service rendered by the reputed scientists of the institution, but also a strong indication of the vital role it will play in the future in unraveling the mysteries of our planet. With its new mandate and resources, this Thiruvananthapuram-based institution will have a significant role in promoting modern scientific and technological research and development studies that are of importance to India in the field of Earth Sciences.

NCESS imparts an all-encompassing and multidisciplinary approach to understanding the earth in its totality, transcending the boundaries of organized disciplines and gaining

knowledge of the interactive and competing processes that shape the earth, from its evolution to the present status that is witnessing an ever-increasing demand for natural resources.

BrahMos Aerospace Thiruvananthapuram Ltd (BATL)

BATL is a fully owned subsidiary of BrahMos Aerospace Limited, a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India and the Federal State Unitary Enterprise NPO Mashinostroyeniya (NPOM) of Russia. The BrahMos missile is named after two rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Moskva. BATL was a Kerala State PSU named KELTEC before its takeover by the Defence Ministry.

Over the years, BATL, an institution with huge potential in defence manufacturing, has been facing issues related to fund infusion, manpower



recruitment and employee benefits. All the employee unions, cutting across the political divide, had approached me to take up the issue with the Defence Ministry as their local MP. I first met with them in detail to understand the issues, and then held a joint meeting with union representatives and BATL management to seek to iron out the problems.

In late 2016, I followed up the matter in a very productive meeting with the then Defence Minister in the presence of the CEO and MD of BrahMos, as well as the MD and senior staff of BATL, to iron out the issues and to create a sustainable road map for future growth. Some of the solutions discussed are yet to be fully implemented. With the change of guard in the Defence Ministry, I have been following up the matter by correspondence and will undertake another round of discussion as necessary.

NISH University

The National Institute of Speech and Hearing (NISH) in Akkulam, is an initiative to provide high quality education to people with disabilities. The critical role it played in the society as well

as the need for a research centre offering education and treatment for visually impaired, autism affected and mentally challenged persons resulted in the demand to turn it into an institute of excellence, which the Central Government agreed to and was declared as a University in the 2015 budget speech.

According to the budget declaration, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will spend Rs. 390 Cr for the first five years of expansion of the university which will have infrastructure as well as operational components.

But even after years since the budget declaration, the Central Government has not yet introduced the NISH University bill in the Parliament and I have reminded the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment in early 2018 to expedite the same.

CMFRI, Vizhinjam

In a bid to expand the breeding and seed production for Indian Pompano, the National Fisheries Development Board under Ministry of Agriculture had sanctioned Rs 5.64 Cr in 2017 for Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute

NISH Institute



(CMFRI), Vizhijam. The MP report of 2009-2014 had previously mentioned about the completion of a new building for CMFRI.

Privatisation of HLL Lifecare

HLL Lifecare is a premier Central public sector enterprise in my constituency which has been running on profit for past 50 years. The recent decision by the Central government to privatise the PSU has provoked widespread resistance from the employees and opposition from all the trade unions.

I strongly supported the demand of the employees' unions to consider HLL's record on the merits. Along with their representatives, I met the Central Finance Minister personally and urged an immediate freeze to the privatisation move. The Minister has assured me that he would place the matter on hold but the level of orders provided by the Central Government to HLL has fallen significantly resulting in layoffs and

subsequent losses which has affected the future of the institution.

Retention of ICCR Regional Office

The decision taken by Indian Council of Cultural Relations to merge functions of its Thiruvananthapuram Regional Office with Chennai office got deferred, after my intervention on the matter with the Minister of External affairs, along my follow-up meeting with the Deputy Director General of the Council. I had pointed out that the excessive distance between Thiruvananthapuram and Chennai could strain students while pursuing any assistance from the Council.

I also explained the significance of having a regional office in Kerala to catalyse various cultural and academic activities, fostering relationship between foreign nations and the State of Kerala. The present decision adds much to the relief of students and employees in ICCR's Thiruvananthapuram Regional Office. ●

INTERVENTIONS



Cyclone Ockhi

Cyclone Ockhi devastated parts of Southern Kerala and Tamil Nadu, particularly the fishing hamlets in Thiruvananthapuram and took the lives of hundreds of fellow human beings. I witnessed first-hand the aftermaths of Ockhi disaster on the shore and its terrible toll on marginalized fishermen in Thiruvananthapuram who, owing to the lack of a timely cyclone alert, had ventured out to sea, unaware of the impending danger.

On the day after it struck the sea and the coast, I joined the fishing communities desperate to know about the whereabouts of their family members out in the sea, concerned and confused about the rescue mission. Sitting in the Parish office in Poonthura, my senior party colleagues, Diocese heads and

representatives of the District administration and I followed up with the Defence Minister, the Shipping Minister, the Coast Guard and the Navy and stayed with them until the rescue missions got into full swing. I also ensured that a message from the Director General of Shipping was transmitted to all the ships travelling close to our international waters to look out for survivors and missing persons, which resulted in several rescues of valuable lives.

I travelled to each and every fishing village in my constituency affected by the cyclone, to console the families, step-up the rescue efforts and bring in relief.

In the aftermath of the disaster, I was able to mobilize the Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy for their assistance in search and rescue operations. The Indian Meteorological Department failed to

inform the fishermen who went out to the sea, 24 hours before the cyclone struck. In the Parliament I had asked Government as to what steps it had taken to improve the Four-Stage warning system on the Western Coast. Unfortunately, the Government has failed to provide any response on what steps it has taken in this regard and has even claimed that the Doppler Radar in Thiruvananthapuram worked effectively during the period of Ockhi, without explaining as to why the tragedy took place, if it indeed was effective.

Additionally, I held discussions with the Central Finance Minister and the Agriculture and Fisheries Minister seeking immediate comprehensive assistance to the fisher folk affected by Cyclone Ockhi. During the parliament session, I raised concern over IMD's existing four stage warning system and the present effectiveness of the Doppler Radar system.

Another proposal I made to the concerned ministries is to form the marine equivalent of our Territorial

Army, training selected fisher folk on how to carry out search-and-rescue operations in partnership with the Coast Guard and the Navy. Such a reserve unit, will be highly effective in the fallout of any disaster that hits the coast.

Shifting of Neyyattinkara RDO

The recent decision of the State government to form a new revenue division in Nedumangad, which included 21 villages of Neyyattinkara and Kattakada taluks from Thiruvananthapuram revenue division created resentment among people of Neyyattinkara and raised concern about the distress it could cause the people. I had opposed this decision and urged the Chief Minister either to retain Neyyattinkara taluk in Thiruvananthapuram revenue division itself or establish a new revenue divisional office in Neyyattinkara. The revenue offices at the civil station in Kudappanakunnu were much more convenient to the people of Neyyattinkara and other taluks. But, the new arrangement has created disruption, as people would now be required to travel excessive distances. I have brought the matter to the attention of the Chief Minister.

AAI Colour Coded Zoning Map

I closely engaged with the crisis affecting 20 wards around Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, emanating from the implementation of the Colour Coded Zoning Map (CCZM) which placed severe restrictions on construction in the neighborhoods around the airport. My letter to the Minister of Civil Aviation demanded reconsideration of AAI's guideline, sought that residential



buildings up to 6 metres in height be exempted from the NOC requirement and that occupancy permits be issued to those individuals who rightfully secured building construction permits before the notification came into effect.

My request received a swift response from the Minister, who assured all support on the issue. A revised guideline was later issued by AAI which reduced the red zone area from 20 km to 5km, providing relief to many.

Shifting of CGHS Dispensary in Sasthamangalam

Following my intervention, the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, withdrew the decision to shift the dispensary under Central Government Health Scheme from Sasthamangalam to Kannur. However, I also welcomed establishment of more CGHS dispensaries in the state instead of relocating existing ones, since the total card holders registered in Kerala, which stood at 14,896, demands far more than the existing three dispensaries in the state.

Airport User Development Fee (UDF) hike

Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) and the Civil Aviation Ministry, following my intervention, decided to revoke the hike in User Development Fee at Thiruvananthapuram Airport. I was concerned about the economic burden this would bring to the large number of low-wage workers using this airport.

KSRTC bus services to Technopark and Airport

To ensure hassle-free public transportation facilities for the general public, I

have always insisted on uninterrupted bus services in the City, essentially on the routes where major chunk of commuters ply. In this regard, following my communication with the State Transport Minister, KSRTC bus services to Technopark was restored after an inordinately long suspension of the service. Further to its effect, the KSRTC has launched new air-conditioned bus services from the Airport to East Fort and Thampanoor.

CAO post reinstated in Southern Railway

Following my immediate intervention, the Railway Ministry's decision to transfer the position of Chief Administrative Officer to Kolkata was withheld. I argued that an officer in this rank is crucial for streamlining various rail development works and the earlier decision would have adversely affected the realization of projects being undertaken.

Malayalam option in Railway Examinations

Following my intervention on 16 February, 2018, the Minister of Railways has reinstated Malayalam in the list of languages that applicants can choose as the medium of examination.

The Indian Railways will now conduct its recruitment exams in six regional languages - Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Odia, Telugu and Bengali. A previous notification had excluded Malayalam. It is to be noted that over 1.47 Lac candidates have since then availed this opportunity.

Groynes in Panathura-Poonthura-Beemapalli

Over the years, these areas have lost

several meters of coast due to sea erosion. Various studies have pointed out the highly eroding nature of this coastline where seawalls have continuously collapsed. The fast receding beach is threatening the livelihood of the fisher folk and I have repeatedly urged the Central Government to take urgent measures to strengthen and repair the groyne in the interest of the local fishing community. A renewed request has been made before the start of the current monsoon season.

Conservation of Vellayani Lake

I have submitted my proposal for conserving the freshwater ecosystem of Vellayani Lake to the Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change. Despite an area of 490 hectares, this home of more than 100 species of birds and 42 species of fish is being threatened due to rapid urbanisation along with unchecked increase in

farmlands. The Central Government blamed their non-response on the lack of an official request from the State Government, to which I have also raised the issue.

Increase in basic pay to AIIMS nurses

I have stood by the demand of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Nurses Union with my intervention for increasing the basic pay of nurses citing the recommendation of the 7th Central Pay Commission, and the demanding nature of their jobs and the stringent qualification requirements of the Indian Council of Nurses.

UGC recognition of SDE courses under KU

Over 50, 000 students pursuing distance education under Kerala University were severely affected when the University Grants Commission (UGC) de-



Vellayani Lake

recognized courses offered by the School of Distance Education (SDE). I successfully appealed to the Distance Education Bureau of University Grants Commission, demanding immediate steps to address the crisis, and also urged the Kerala authorities to take the necessary steps to fulfil UGC requirements. The crisis was then defused.

Increase in Medical PG entrance and AIPG dental seats

The disproportionately low allocation of postgraduate dental seats for All India Postgraduate quota (AIPG), caught my attention in March, 2016 for the then postgraduate counselling sessions at different colleges in Kerala. I took up this matter with the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, seeking his consideration, citing the Hon'ble Supreme Court's judgment in Ashish Ranjan Vs Union of India directing all State governments to allot 50 percent of postgraduate seats in government medical colleges to AIPG quota.

Similarly, I noticed an insufficiency in exam centres for postgraduate (PG) MD/ MS/ M. Ch./ MDS entrance examinations conducted by National Board, after all slots for centres within Kerala filled up within a period of two days, leaving a number of students unable to write exam in Kerala. My appeal was strongly pressed, leading the authorities to raise the number of exam centres in Kerala.

Malayalam Language Bill

The Malayalam Language Bill, passed by the 13th Kerala State Assembly under the UDF government in December, 2015, aimed at protecting and promoting the

Malayalam language in schools. However, the bill was pending transmission to the Rashtrapati Bhavan despite submitting it before the Ministry of Home Affairs. My request to the Minister of Home on this matter helped to expedite the process leading to its ratification by the Hon'ble President of India.

More funds for Integrated Power Development Scheme

In July 2016, I appealed to the Minister of State for Power to allocate more funds to Thiruvananthapuram for the implementation of the Integrated Power Development Scheme. In spite of the Needs Assessment Document's (NAD) estimate of Rs. 127 Cr for Thiruvananthapuram, only Rs. 26.35 Cr was allocated initially. My intervention helped the Central Government to identify the urgency and deficiency in funds, for which Thiruvananthapuram later received a revised allocation.

Affiliation for the Distance Learning Centre

The revocation of affiliation for the Distance Learning Centre of the Kerala University was brought to my attention by its Vice Chancellor. I immediately wrote to and personally met the UGC Chairman and the Minister of HRD to discuss the issue, which is still under active consideration of the Ministry.

AICTE Approval to Vattiyoorkavu CPT

In the case of denial of AICTE approval to the Vattiyoorkavu Central Poly Technic, I visited the Central Polytechnic and also personally met and exchanged correspondence with both the AICTE Chairman and the Minister of HRD



Vattiyoorkavu Central Poly Technic

requesting the reinstatement of affiliation.

Since the intervention of the State Government was imperative in both the cases, I also met the State Education Minister and discussed the issues in detail to initiate the necessary steps required to tackle these problems. I am pleased to report that the affiliation has now been restored.

Non Resident Malayalees

As a Member of Parliament as well as Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, I receive a large number of requests daily from non-resident Malayalees abroad, or recent returnees, or members of their families, for assistance in a variety of situations. These have ranged from the repatriation of mortal remains, aid to people in distress, maltreatment by employers, non-payment of dues by employers, complicated passport-renewal cases and similar problems, to

cases involving Indians under arrest or in custody abroad. The overwhelming majority of such cases relate to Indians in the Gulf countries. I have been able to assist a large number of people in such situations through timely intervention and follow-up with Indian Embassies and Consulates in the countries concerned.

In a number of cases, I have also been able to assist constituents seeking to travel abroad to obtain visas, through my relationships with the Embassies of a number of foreign countries. In many cases individuals whose applications were initially rejected received favourable reconsideration after my intervention.

Fishermen Caught In Diego Garcia

Thiruvananthapuram has a long coastline that is home to a large number of fishing villages. Occasionally, some fishermen drift into deep sea and are lost for days, finally ending up in other countries' waters, in particular, Sri Lanka. On a few

occasions, they end up as far as Diego Garcia, a US Naval and Military base under British Administration located in the British Indian Ocean Territory. In the last two years alone, there have been three incidents of batches of fishermen held in custody by the British authorities who were released after my intervention through the British High Commission in India.



Stoppage of Toll Collection at Akkulam Bridge

In response to popular demand, I was able to take up with the authorities the abolition of toll-collection at the Akkulam bridge during the construction of the National Highway Bypass from Kazhakoottam to Karode. This was approved and vehicles are now allowed to travel unhindered on this stretch.

Hugging row – Disciplinary action revoked

The controversial incident, involving two

students who were expelled on disciplinary grounds for public display of affection, was brought to a settlement with my intervention. Considering the academic interests of the students, whose careers could have been affected by the incident, and mounting public concern, I initiated a dialogue with the students, their parents and the school management, which resulted in an amicable "win-win" settlement. The students involved were reinstated and allowed to appear for their annual examinations, while the school's reputation was restored. The children were able to resume their academic careers, following which, in a remarkable achievement, the boy who was involved in the incident scored 91.2% in his Class 12 board exams. I wish the girl well in her final year of school in the coming academic year.

Nepali Boy Stranded in Thiruvananthapuram

Late 2014, teachers at the Government School for Deaf & Dumb, Jagathi, brought to my attention the pathetic condition of 14-year-old Rojan Sreshtan from Nepal, who was staying at the Poojappura Children's Home. Rojan had travelled through many a part of India before ending up in Thiruvananthapuram after leaving home near Kathmandu. Rojan's parents, who stay at Hetauda (around 4 hours from Kathmandu) were traced with the help of the Indian Embassy in Nepal and his travelling expenses, as well as that of an accompanying escort, were paid for by the Chandran Tharoor Foundation. Their reunion after many months was a matter of joy not only to the family but also to others like me who had taken an interest in the welfare of the young man.



Kerala Floods

The devastating floods that engulfed Kerala after the torrential rains in the last monsoon season resulted in the deaths of 483 individuals and displaced several lakhs of citizens to over 3000 temporary relief camps. In what has been the worst incident of flooding in the state since 1924, the material destruction included (but was not limited to) damage to over 50,000 houses, 23 bridges, 10,197 and 60,000 km of PWD and LSG roads respectively, as well as 8000 hectares of agrarian losses, to the tune of approximately Rs. 800 Cr and an estimated overall damage of Rs. 31,000 Cr.

I was horrified and saddened after witnessing the tragic situation during my visits to the flooded areas and while

attending to the concerns of evacuees from 18 different relief camps when the flooding was at its peak on August 15-17. It was after the rains subsided in Thiruvananthapuram and the evacuees returned to their homes that I left for Europe to fulfil other commitments.

Soon afterwards, to my dismay and disappointment, I came to know about intensified flooding in other areas of Kerala, following which I consulted the Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan directly regarding discussions I could hold with higher officials at the United Nations and Red Cross regarding possible assistance that could be availed for relief, restoration and rehabilitation in the flood-affected areas. As a former UN Under-Secretary General and with the



wide network of contacts I have in the international humanitarian community, I felt I should explore possibilities of international assistance and support, to help alleviate the sufferings of people affected by the floods in my State. It was the moral responsibility I had as a Keralite that prompted me to reach out to these international organizations at my individual capacity and my own expense.

On August 20-21, 2018, I held a series of high-level discussions with the senior leadership of the World Health Organization (in particular the Deputy Director-General for Emergency

Preparedness and Response), the United Nations (both its Director-general in Geneva and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), and the President of the International Red Cross. I briefed them on the devastating floods that had hit our state and had explored possibilities for support in relief, rehabilitation and rebuilding operations in the state. It was the impressions I gained from these discussions in Geneva and possible course of actions for the state that were later shared with the Kerala Chief Minister.

In all my meetings I explained the scale of the humanitarian crisis the state was experiencing, and discussed the 5 R's that needed immediate consideration in the state: Rescue (this was almost over at that time), Relief (this was well under control thanks to the efficiency of the state administration and the solidarity of the Indian public), Risk of diseases, Rehabilitation & Rebuilding. The discussions and deliberations were well received by respective branches of the international system focused on responding to health emergencies, disaster management and mitigation. Later, I also briefed the Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador Rajiv Chander, in detail on both August 20 and 21 about my meetings.

Following the extensive discussions, I arrived at the following conclusions & recommendations which I shared with the public and presented in more detail before the Chief Minister of Kerala:

- State Govt should consider a request for the 2 million WHO stock of anti-

cholera vaccines to minimise the risk of grave water-borne diseases;

- State Govt should examine whether it requires a Multi-sector needs assessment by UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, OCHA);
- State Govt should examine the need for the ICRC/ Gujarat University Forensics support for dead body management;
- Depending on whether the quantum of long-term reconstruction assistance from the Central Govt is adequate, the State Govt should give thought to holding an international reconstruction conference to 'Rebuild Kerala better' in partnership with the UN system.

I made it clear that since the Government of India did not wish to request international assistance directly, it is entirely feasible to operationalize any and all of the above by negotiating with the UN system to have the UN offer what we need, on a no-objection basis from the GoI. The Chief Minister proved attentive and responsive. The State Govt



proceeded to go ahead with an international multi-agency mission for damage assessment, and is drawing up plans for the reconstruction and rebuilding phase.

While as MP my duties are confined to monitoring the progress of flood relief work in my constituency, which

fortunately was one of the least affected parts of Kerala, I have stayed involved in overall policy discussions on the subject and continued to speak out on the direction taken so far by the State and Central Governments to bring adequate assistance to the flood-affected people of Kerala.

Tharoor recommends state's fishermen for Nobel Peace Prize

SHASHI THAROOR MP has recommended Kerala's fishermen, who rescued thousands of stranded people during the mid-August floods, for the Nobel Peace Prize. The fishermen have been collectively nominated for the coveted award.

"It was during the height of this tragedy (floods) that fishermen groups of Kerala, at great risk to their lives and potential damage to the boats that are the source of their livelihood, jumped into the fray to save their fellow citizens," he wrote in his letter to the Chairperson of Norwegian Nobel Committee.

"They took their boats inland, and with their expert knowledge of local conditions, their participation in the ongoing relief operations proved to be a game changer,

as not only were they able to pick up stranded people in their vicinity, but were also instrumental in guiding boats of other rescue teams amidst the swirling waters."

"Fishermen groups across the country represent some of the most socio-economically underdeveloped segments. Kerala's fishermen are no exception," Tharoor wrote.

"In spite of these conditions, as their life-saving service during the floods clearly demonstrated, there is an extraordinarily altruistic spirit that animates and drives these coastal warriors of the state. The lasting image of a fisherman bending low in the water so as to allow an older person he had rescued to climb on his back and get on his boat is a particularly striking reflection of this spirit that has been etched into the hearts of a grateful community," he wrote.



It was during the height of this tragedy (floods) that fishermen groups of Kerala, at great risk to their lives and potential damage to the boats that are the source of their livelihood, jumped into the fray to save their fellow citizens

- Shashi Tharoor

MISCELLANEOUS



UAE Consulate
in Manacaud
Thiruvananthapuram

UAE Consulate

In 2010, when I was Minister of State for External Affairs, I made a request to the Foreign Minister of the UAE that they open their second Consulate in India in Thiruvananthapuram. Efforts were sustained in the years thereafter, culminating in the announcement by the Ambassador of the UAE of the decision to open their consulate in Thiruvananthapuram in 2014. The Consulate building is now fully functioning in Manacaud with key staff including the Consul-General based in Thiruvananthapuram.

With the presence of the Consulate of Maldives, Honorary Consulates of Sri Lanka and Russia and the visa facilitation centre of Germany, Thiruvananthapuram is for the first time becoming a city of diplomatic importance.

Lifestyle

Thiruvananthapuram is a city of rich heritage and history. In recent years, a complaint has emerged among younger citizens and IT professionals that despite the excellent quality of life, with clean air, moderate traffic and a temperate climate, our city lacks modern lifestyle amenities found in other cities of the country with which we compete in the IT and Services field. Numerous CEOs of major IT companies have also personally told me that this has been an obstacle in bringing top talent to work in Thiruvananthapuram.

I took this up as a challenge and managed to persuade three world-class lifestyle developers to open outlets in our city: the Mall of Travancore near International Airport, which has begun to

attract huge crowds and where I have inaugurated several events; the LuLu Mall at Akkulam, which has started construction work and is expected to be complete by 2019, and the Taurus Down Town complex proposed in Technopark Phase 3, which will incorporate office space, residential apartments, retail outlets, entertainment, restaurants and hotels. This too is expected to commence construction work very soon.

In addition, I have been an avid supporter and promoter of the Trivand-Run, the Walk for Health and the Sports Hub, and make every effort to support similar activities and institutions that encourage healthy living in our city. I also continue to support efforts to bring cultural, musical and literary events to Thiruvananthapuram, most notably the Mathrubhumi Literature Festival which I inspired, initiated and served as Patron of, and which was a huge success, attracting tens if thousands of attendees and being confirmed by its sponsors as an annual event on the capital's cultural calendar.

35th National Games of India

As Chairman of the Games Relations Committee, I played a part in steering the preparations of the 35th National Games in Thiruvananthapuram. This involved chairing meetings during the preparatory phase, inspecting arrangements relating to the facilities provided for the distinguished guests and other visitors, joining the Minister of Sports in a press conference and speaking to national media. The Games were widely hailed as a major success for the State.

High Court Bench

My tireless efforts to restore the High Court Bench in Thiruvananthapuram, which began in my previous term,



continued with further unsuccessful meetings with the new Government's two Law Ministers. The principal obstacle remains that the Government of India cannot move to create a bench in Thiruvananthapuram without the consent of the Chief Justice of Kerala who, in turn, speaks for the High Court judiciary as a whole. No Chief Justice of Kerala, in over six decades, has so far given his or her consent to the establishment of a bench. The matter remains an emotional issue for the people of Thiruvananthapuram, and I continue to lobby the judiciary on the matter, even raising it in the course of the memorial lecture I was asked to deliver at the High Court on the occasion of its 60th Anniversary. In addition, I have introduced a Private Member's Bill in the Lok Sabha that seeks to provide for a permanent High Court bench in all state capitals, as means of ensuring that Thiruvananthapuram's legitimate claims are addressed through an alternative route. The Bill awaits discussion in the House.



CHANDRAN THAROOR FOUNDATION

In the course of my work as an MP, I frequently come across situations of distress requiring help that cannot be assisted out of the central government funds available to a Member of Parliament. Rather than declining assistance, I provide what little aid I can through the Chandran Tharoor Foundation, a family charity which is financed principally through my own resources. The Foundation accepts no government funds and pays no salaries, devoting its modest resources to alleviating a variety of human problems. These have frequently included: marriage aid to poor couples, medical assistance to beneficiaries in need, educational scholarships, and sponsorships of meals and outings for the Federation for the Blind and the Home for the Aged. In addition, somewhat more unusual cases involved assistance in meeting cremation expenses for a very poor family, the purchase of a boat for an island community, and the issuance of an air ticket for a 70 year-old athlete to enable him to participate in an International veterans' competition.

PARLIAMENT

Representing the people of Thiruvananthapuram in the Lok Sabha is a rare privilege, and I have sought to make the most of the opportunity through active participation in parliamentary debates, frequently raising questions to Ministers under Question Hour, and introducing a number of Private Members' Bills that have sought to expand the frontiers of freedom for all Indians in the spirit of the founding Fathers of our Constitution. While conscientiously raising all issues of concern to the people of Thiruvananthapuram, I have also spoken for the Indian National Congress Party on a wide variety of subjects, and tried to elevate the tone of debate on a broad range of issues of

national importance to India as a whole.

Amongst the range of topics, I have paid particular attention to the areas of education and healthcare, as these are matters of great concern to our State. As part of this, an issue that I have constantly followed up on is the need for the creation of an AIIMS-like institution in Trivandrum. This issue has been raised through both, a notice under rule 377, as well as with Questions to the concerned Minister that the Government has been obliged to address (though so far not positively).

As your MP, I have on every occasion sought to enhance the quality of education and employment



opportunities. I have spoken frequently and consistently in favour of better standards of education in our country, for freedom of expression on campuses and for enhanced security for our students. I brought up the need to ensure safe return of Mr Najeeb Ahmed, the missing JNU student, and ensure the security of students on university campuses to the attention of the house. I have participated in direct discussions with the Minister of Human Resource Development on the draft New Education Policy, being one of barely a dozen MPs who attended his first round of consultations on the subject. In my interventions, I have called for increased funding, better training for teachers and a massive overhaul of Information Communications Technology (ICT), amongst other things. Moreover, I also obtained information from the Government through my questions in Parliament about the failure in the implementation of the RTE in numerous states across India, following which, I wrote to the Chief Minister of Kerala suggesting ways in which the implementation of the RTE can be improved in our state.

Health issues in the constituency remain a priority for me in Parliament. I have raised in the Lok Sabha the need to set up the proposed National Institute of Medicinal Plants in Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, and in my speech on the Budget, mentioned this as well as the need to upgrade the Regional Cancer Centre to an Institution of National Importance.

Among other issues, I raised, as a matter of urgent public importance, the need to provide additional funds for the National Rural Drinking Water Programme in Kerala. In addition I have raised the cleanup of Parvathy Puthenar



(as described in the section on Swachh Bharat above) also in parliamentary interventions to the Hon'ble Minister of Water Resources and during discussions of the Swachh Bharat Scheme. I have described the need to provide financial support to the artisans of Balarama puram in Kerala by including the handloom industry there under the Mega Cluster Scheme of the Government.

In all these cases I have followed up my Parliamentary interventions with personal meetings, for instance, with the Hon'ble Minister for Textiles after my interventions in Parliament on the weavers' issues.

The matters facing our servicemen and women are a matter of concern to me as your MP. In this regard, I have on several occasions raised the issues of the 7th Central Pay Commission, through questions in Parliament, as it affects pensioners and military personnel, in



addition to following up with the Minister of Health and Family Welfare to express my concern and protest against a proposed move to shift the CGHS wellness centre at Sasthamangalam to Kannur. I have also met the Minister of Defence to personally see to it that the concerns of the Brahmos workers are addressed at the earliest.

I have also met with the contract workers of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Center in Trivandrum to hear their concerns and seek a solution to the challenges they face, following which I raised the issue in Parliament under Rule 377, and will continue to fight for their rights.

The issue of demonetization is one that has deeply affected our home. From the chaos in our banks to the dumping of vegetables on account of low consumption, I am deeply troubled by the burden passed on to our citizens by the

Central Government. I have spoken in the Lok Sabha on behalf of the Congress Parliamentary Party on this issue, and in my remarks, sought assurances from the Government on the then immediate injection of cash money into our State's economy.

I have also used Parliamentary interventions to raised issues relating to human rights. I spoke in Parliament about the need to enact a comprehensive refugee & asylum law to correct the gaps in the present treatment of asylum seekers. I have also raised interventions on the need to abolish the death penalty, as well to ensure the safety and security of women athletes in Sports hostels and SAI centres, and to expand the rights of transgenders and other sexual minorities.

More recently, following the horrors and destruction wrought by Cyclone Ockhi across not just Thiruvananthapuram, but the Kerala coastline at large, I

raised the issue of the lukewarm government response and the failure of the Central Government's agencies to adequately warn citizens or prepare for cyclone circumstances, through a range of interventions and questions in Parliament, including by speaking about the issue under Rule 193. I also urged the Government to grant a comprehensive compensation package to assist those affected by the Cyclone, especially the fishing communities which lost their breadwinners and means to earn an income, particularly through my response to the budget proposal of Minister of Finance for 2018-19.

Further, noting the difficulties that local fishermen are facing due to coastal erosion, I also suggested, through my questions in Parliament, that the Government should incorporate a special component under the 'National Scheme of Welfare of fishermen' to provide assistance to these fishermen, which, unfortunately, was not accepted by the Government.

Legislative Work:

I have introduced several private member bills which deal with a variety of issues of national importance and reflect my persistent attempts in Opposition to expand the frontiers of freedom and political liberty in India.

These include:

- **The Domestic Workers Welfare Bill, 2016, to provide for the rights and the provision of good working conditions for domestic workers;**

- **The Constitutional (Amendment) Bill, 2016, to reform Urban Local Bodies and to provide for the direct election of Mayors so as to increase the direct delivery of services to citizens;**
- **The Asylum Bill, 2015, to establish an effective system to protect refugees and asylum seekers by means of an appropriate legal framework to determine claims for asylum and to protect the rights of refugees in line with India's legacy of being a haven for persecuted communities, whilst ensuring national security at the same time. The Bill also seeks to align our process of granting asylum with international best practices;**
- **The Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2015, to redefine 'sedition' by revising section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 to ensure that citizens are not deprived of their right to legitimate protest;**
- **The Establishment of Permanent Benches of High Courts at State Capitals Bill, 2014, which provides for the establishment of a permanent high court bench in all state capitals to address the massive backlog of cases across our nation's courts;**
- **The Public Records (Amendment) Bill, 2014, to facilitate the automatic declassification of public records**

by amending the Public Records Act 1993 in an effort to establish a strong mechanism for accountability and transparency;

- **The Protection of Traditional Knowledge Bill, 2016, to protect the livelihood of our artisans and custodians of Traditional Knowledge, such as practitioners of Ayurveda and the weavers of Balaramapuram by ensuring that the accumulated Traditional Knowledge will be kept free from patents and private ownership for profit; and**
- **The Anti-Discrimination and Equality Bill, 2016, to seek an end to social discrimination through a humane and comprehensive legal framework including the creation of a National Equality Commission.**

In addition to these bills, I also made two attempts to introduce a bill to read down Section 377 of the IPC in order to decriminalize consenting sexual relations between adults, in recognition of every

individual's fundamental right to personal liberty and privacy. However, both attempts were defeated at the introduction stage itself, a development without precedent in the history of private members' bills. The matter now lies before the Supreme Court, which has agreed to hear a curative petition.

In addition to the Private Member Bills that I have introduced, I have submitted the following Bills for introduction and consideration in the Lok Sabha. These include:

- **The Data Privacy and Protection Bill, 2017, to establish an effective regime to protect the right to privacy of all-natural persons and personal data concerning them, to set out conditions upon which surveillance of natural persons and interception of communications may be carried out and to constitute a Privacy Commission to protect the fundamental right to privacy;**
- **The Death Penalty (Abolition) Bill, 2017, to abolish the death penalty in India, due to the lack of deterrence it serves and due to the arbitrariness on part of Courts in awarding the death penalty;**
- **The Protection from Lynching Bill, 2017, to punish acts of lynching on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation, ethnicity, to punish acts of dereliction of duty on part of functionaries of the State, as well as to provide for**



designated courts for the expeditious trial of such offences and for rehabilitation of victims of lynching and their families;

- **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2017**, to designate serious criminal offences such as stalking, sexual harassment and voyeurism as non-bailable offences. I also met the Home Minister on this matter, and he has assured me that he will consider my proposal;
- **The Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2018**, to remove the pre-censorship powers of the Central Board of Film Certification and to restrict the powers of the Government to ban films in India.

In addition to submitting and introducing Private Member Bills, I have also submitted numerous amendments to important Government Bills. These include:

- **Amendment to the Employee's Compensation (Amendment) Bill, 2016**: The Bill requires that employees in companies of a certain size should be informed about their rights in writing. I moved an amendment where the rights need to be conveyed to employees orally as well, since a large number of workers in India are illiterate. Unfortunately, the amendment was defeated in the Lok Sabha;
- **Amendment to the Repealing and Amendment Bill, 2017**, to



remove the offences of sedition, blasphemy, criminalization of same-sex relations, from the Indian Penal Code, 1860. I also moved an amendment to remove the legal immunity to marital rape, however the amendments were not taken up owing to disruptions in Parliamentary proceedings;

- **Amendment to The Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017**, to ensure that the benefits under the Bill would apply to employees in the private sector, in line with the benefits received by employees in the public sector. The amendment was not accepted, as the Bill was hurriedly passed in the Lok Sabha by the Government, without any debate;
- **Amendments to The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016** to enable couples apart from married heterosexual couples to have surrogate children, to align the definition of infertility under the Bill with WHO standards, to curb the excessive delegated powers of the National



Surrogacy Board, and to enable couples to have surrogate children even if they suffer from medical reasons apart from infertility;

- Amendments to The New Delhi International Arbitration Bill, 2018, to restrict the control of the Government over the proposed New Delhi International Arbitration Centre, as well as to ensure that the Centre works in a transparent and efficient manner, in order to build India's image as an arbitration hub;
- Amendments to The Fugitive

Economic Offenders Bill, 2018, to enable the Government to take action against fugitive economic offenders even if the siphoned amount involves less than Rs. 100 crores, to remove the unconstitutional aspects of the Bill, and to remove arbitrary powers of the Government;

- Amendments to The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018, to hold Government service providers accountable to their consumers, to remove the arbitrary powers of the Government in order to ensure that consumer forums under the Bill are independent

and efficient, and to prevent companies from circumventing the powers of the consumer forums by making consumers enter into contracts with arbitral clauses or limited liability clauses.

- **Amendment to the Representation of The People (Amendment) Bill, 2017, to remove the restriction of only allowing proxy-voting for overseas citizens, thereby giving NRIs the choice to adopt E-postal ballots in future.**

In addition, in situations where I believe that the amendments alone won't cure the defects in the Bills or policies proposed by the Government, I have provided detailed suggestions to the Government through letters and emails to the concerned Ministries. These include:

- **Comments on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, sent to the Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, urging him to re-draft the Bill so as to supplement the constitutional rights of the transgender community, as recognized by the Supreme Court in NALSA v Union of India;**
- **Comments on the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018, sent to the Hon'ble Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, providing various suggestions to strengthen the law in favour of consumer rights;**

- **Comments on the Draft National Forest Policy, 2018, sent to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, highlighting the need to involve the forest dwelling communities in the management of forests, as well as the need to reflect the safeguards under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and Constitutional provisions, in the proposed policy;**
- **Comments on The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, sent to the Hon'ble Minister of Women and Child Development, highlighting the need to incorporate the suggestions of the Supreme Court appointed Panel Report on Trafficking, the need to amend the ITPA as well as to involve sex workers' collectives in the fight against human trafficking.**

I have also participated in debates in the Lok Sabha on the following Government Bills:

- **The Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill, 2014 & The Merchant Shipping (Second Amendment) Bill, 2014: The Bills provide for anti-fouling measures and to align the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 with International Labour Organisation's Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. While I supported the amendments, I highlighted the need to provide for a grievance redressal mechanism while detaining ships, so that the interests of**



shipping industry are protected, as well as the need to extend the application of the law to foreign vessels in Indian waters. I expressed my concern about the Bill allowing children from the ages of 16 years and above, to be taken in as apprentices on ships, I suggested that this be raised to 18 years in order to comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2014:** The Bill permits Courts to try juveniles between 16-18 years of age, as adults, if they are accused of committing heinous offences. I opposed the Bill as there are numerous instances where the treatment of children as adults, under criminal law, has

failed to control crimes committed by juveniles. Sending children to prisons instead of juvenile homes will cause them to become hardened criminals and defeat the purpose of the Bill. I also pointed out how the Bill falls foul of the Constitution of India as well as international law and urged the Government to invest in the reformatory system of juvenile justice, instead of enacting retributive laws.

- **The Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets (Imposition of Tax) Bill, 2015:** The Bill criminalizes the concealment of foreign income and assets, in a bid to deter tax evaders. I supported the Bill, however I pointed out that the Bill cannot be implemented in spirit unless the Government provides for an efficient way to obtain information about concealed foreign assets abroad. I also raised concerns about the possible misuse of the unbridled powers the Bill vests on tax authorities.
- **The Regional Centre for Biotechnology Bill, 2016:** The Bill provides for the establishment of the Regional Centre for Biotechnology as an institution of national importance. I supported the Bill, however suggested certain changes such as, a better regulatory framework and infrastructure to incentivize the field of biotechnology. I also suggested focusing on reconciling Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights with

Indian patent law and to foster a greater relationship between private companies and biotechnology educational institutions.

- **The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Ordinance, 2016:** It bars the application of inheritance laws on enemy property. I opposed the Ordinance as an urgent situation to warrant its promulgation as per Article 123 of the Constitution, had not arisen. The Bill retrospectively removes the rights that even Indian citizens have over property designated as 'enemy property', and therefore is in violation of international conventions as well as the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution, hence I opposed the Bill.

- **The National Institutes of Technology, Science Education and Research (Amendment) Bill, 2016:** The Bill establishes NIT, Andhra Pradesh as an institute of national importance under the National Institute of Technology, Science Education and Research Act of 2007. I highlighted that the creation of additional NITs would not improve the quality of education in the country, rather the Government must invest greater in the infrastructure and faculty of the existing NITs.

- **The Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016:** The Bill provides for the required healthcare and services for people with mental illnesses and the need to protect their rights during the course of their treatment. I highlighted the need for counselors in schools to assist





students facing mental health problems, and the need to provide mental health facilities to military personnel. I also suggested that the list of mental health practitioners in the Bill should be expanded to include psychoanalysts, psychotherapists and counseling psychologists.

- **The Employee's Compensation (Amendment) Bill, 2016:** The Bill mandates companies of a certain size to inform their employees about their rights in writing. During the course of the debate, I suggested to the Government that the notification of rights to employees must be conveyed orally as well, since a large number of them are illiterate. However, this was turned down by the ruling party.
- **The Taxation Laws**

(Amendment) Bill, 2017: The Bill amends various provisions of laws governing excise and customs tax, to comply with GST. While I welcomed the need to amend laws, to align them GST, I also pointed out the flaws in the Bill which enables tax authorities to act in an arbitrary fashion, and how the removal of Beedi Welfare Cess and the failure to impose Water Cess on industrial use of water, is detrimental to public interest. I also suggested that the Government should allow oil companies to claim credit, for expenditure owing to VAT on goods and services used for production of petroleum products.

- **The Indian Institutes of Management Bill, 2017:** The Bill confers IIMs to be institutes of

national importance to enable them to achieve standards of global excellence in the field of management. I highlighted flaws in the bill, stressing that the designation of “national importance” must be backed up by sufficient budgetary allocation as not enough money was being invested in higher education leading to a dearth in facilities, resources and faculty. I also stressed on the inadequate reservation in faculty posts for SC/ST communities and the need to regulate the fees in IIMs taking into account the economic inequality in the country.

- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill, 2017: The Bill allows the Government construct 'public works' within the statutory buffer zones around ancient monuments and archaeological sites. I opposed the Bill on the grounds that it would harm ancient vulnerable structures, and I pointed out the lack of manpower and facilities with the NMA to effectively control construction which may damage these structures. I argued that the Bill threatens our national heritage and violates Article 51A and Article 49 of the Constitution.**

In addition, I challenged the External Affairs Minister's statement during Question Hour that she was prepared to spend 400 Cr rupees of taxpayers' money to promote the use of Hindi at the United Nations. I pointed out that Hindi was an

official language, but not the national language, of India, and that such expenditure would be a colossal waste of resources. If the Prime Minister or the Minister wished to speak in Hindi at the UN, they were already free to do so, with an Indian diplomat translating into English, from which the other language interpreters could translate into the other official languages of the UN. But making Hindi India's official language at the UN would deprive future External Affairs Ministers from non-Hindi-speaking states the opportunity to express themselves in a language more widely understood around the world than Hindi is. The resultant debate led to widespread discussion in the national media, with strong support from Southern states.





Statistics on Dr Shashi Tharoor's interventions in Parliament since 2014 *

Number of Questions Asked in Parliament	410
Number of Supplementary Questions asked in Parliament	35
Number of Issues of Urgent Public Importance Raised (Rule 377)	19
Number of Matters of Urgent Public Importance Raised (Special Mention)	17
Number of Private Member Bills Introduced In The Lok Sabha	8
Number of Private Member Bills Pending Submission To The Lok Sabha	5
Number of Government Bills To Which Amendments Were Moved	7
Number of Short Duration Discussions	3

*Note: it should be remembered that the number of issues raised does not correspond to the number of efforts made to raise issues. Interventions in Zero Hour, and under Rule 377, are governed by a lottery system, and despite my submitting issues every week, I have not always been fortunate to win the balloting to speak on the subjects submitted.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, which I have had the honour of chairing since August 2014, has been an exceptionally active committee, with more than 70 sittings convened in three and a half years. In addition to hearing and approving the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs and the erstwhile Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, the Committee has had several sittings to review ongoing developments in India's international relations and has done in-depth reports on several urgent matters of national importance to Indian foreign policy. The Committee has also received

its distinguished counterparts from 7 foreign parliaments.

The External Affairs Committee reviewed and achieved consensus on the Constitution Amendment Bill that finally settled several complex issues surrounding the land boundary between Bangladesh and India. Hearings were held with representatives of several Ministries and the State Government of West Bengal.

The Committee's report on the recruitment, training, financing, and working of the Indian Foreign Service, and its separate report on the use of “soft power” and cultural diplomacy in Indian



foreign policy are landmark achievements. The Committee's recommendation on lateral and mid-career entry into the Ministry of External Affairs has been accepted and is being implemented initially in the Policy Planning Division of the MEA. The Committee has also engaged in a comprehensive review of several options for the provision of voting rights for Non-Resident Indians, which will allow the Indian diaspora to have their voice and say in the electoral processes back in the country.

It has also reviewed, in-depth, the operations of the country's passport offices and issued a report in 2017 containing an in-depth review of India's relations with Pakistan. It has also closely engaged with the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce to consider the safety and security of our nation's overseas migrant workers. In total, the committee had presented 21 reports to parliament since 2014. In 2018 it is in the process of studying India-China relations and will issue a report to Parliament on the subject later in the summer.

Throughout my tenure as Chairman, I have sought to increase governmental accountability by calling for joint meetings with representatives from other Ministries. For instance, after the so-called "surgical strikes" across the Line of Control in September 2016, the Committee held hearings with not only the Ministry of External Affairs, but also the Defence Secretary, the Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, and the Director-General of the Border Security Force, among others. Similarly, the Committee has also closely followed matters related to Sino-Indian relations, particularly the dispute at Doklam, as well as a broader, comprehensive review of India's multifaceted engagements with China.

Since India's foreign policy cannot be carried out without support from the other branches of our national and state governments and from the public at large, I have also made it a point to broaden the scope of inquiry by seeking inputs from experts in the field, including senior diplomats and scholars.

In recent months, the Committee has also considered other matters of critical importance to Indian foreign policy including our relations with Sri Lanka, particularly within the context of the arrests of fishermen from both sides of the maritime border for straying into foreign waters and the resolution of this critical issue. It has also engaged with other topics of international importance to India including the developments -the Korean peninsula and the long-standing Israel- Palestine issue.

In addition, as someone who has lived abroad for a number of years, I am well aware of the hardships Non Resident Indians face when dealing with even the





Leading Parliament's External Affairs Committee on visit to PassportSevaKendra Kolkata

most basic of processes with Indian Embassies and the Government of India. As such, in an effort to streamline and make our efforts more efficient, I have convened several meetings to discuss various issues, most recently the issue of providing Voting Rights to NRIs. (This was a meeting that was held with the representatives of the Ministry of Law and Justice as well). While strongly critical of the Government's proposal to introduce proxy voting for NRIs, we continue to make every effort to come up with a formula that would be most effective in granting NRIs this right, while also allowing for a smooth, effective and secure voting process.

Moreover, as the Member of Parliament from Thiruvananthapuram and during my tenure as Chairman of the Committee on External Affairs, we have spent a considerable amount of time and resources to ensure that the plight of migrant workers is significantly reduced. From the need to crack down on illegal

agents to ensuring that those who are stranded are returned safe to their families, the Committee has and will continue to work with the Ministry of External Affairs to bring both their considerable resources to together towards this issue. I have continued to press for a comprehensive Emigration Bill to update the grossly inadequate 1983 Emigration Act.

Finally, I have worked hard to ensure that the Parliamentary Standing Committee of External Affairs has worked more effectively and in a time-bound manner. We have and will continue to play an active part in the nation's foreign policy by ensuring that our citizens and diplomats receive the support they need, that our reports set high standards of scrutiny and accountability, and that the nation's foreign policy objectives are accomplished with appropriate parliamentary review and support. •

MPLADS



The Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme allows each MP to allocate Rs 5 Cr a year, within specified rules, for development projects of his choice in his constituency. Given that Thiruvananthapuram involves seven Assembly constituencies, and that 25% of the funds must be earmarked for SC/ST projects only, this leaves some 50 lakhs of rupees per assembly constituency each year. (By contrast, a Kerala MLA has twelve times the amount of funds at his disposal – Rs 6 Cr a year for just one Assembly constituency, while the MP has 50 lakhs available for general

disbursement in each of his seven constituencies.)

Given the modest sums available, I have tried in recent years not to finance big-ticket projects but rather to allocate the sums to small but worthy causes that fulfill deeply-felt needs – high-mast lights in poorly-lit areas, bus shelters, toilets, school buses, minor drinking-water projects, smart classrooms in schools and a few roads and small bridges. This has permitted me to distribute small sums more widely and thus to reach a larger number of beneficiaries. However, it has not prevented me from financing important special projects as well, like a Mobile Lab for the Kerala Agriculture University.

Full information on every rupee spent during my first term as MP was made publicly available, in a precedent-setting initiative, and published in my annual and mid-term reports. All information available regarding grants made by the MP under the MPLADS scheme in my second term is available as a separate booklet.





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