

**ADDRESS AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE VALEDICTORY OF  
LOKA KERALA SABHA AT KANAKAKKUNNU,  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM AT 1830 HRS. ON 13-01-2018**

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Shri Pinarayi Vijayan, Hon'ble Chief Minister,  
Shri P. Sreeramakrishnan, Hon'ble Speaker,  
Shri Ramesh Chennithala, Opposition Leader,  
Shri Paul Antony, Chief Secretary,  
Shri Varadarajan, Executive Vice Chairman, Norka-Roots,  
**Priyappetta Pravaasi Suhruthukkale,**  
**Sahodaree Sahodaranmaare,**  
**Ellaavarkkum Ente Namaskaaram,**

I am very happy to inaugurate the valedictory session of the first ever **Loka Kerala Sabha**, which was convened as a reunion of Keralites spread across the globe, working hard and excelling in various fields.

Let me begin by complimenting the Government of Kerala for initiating this very significant reunion soon after the nation celebrated the **Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas** on 9<sup>th</sup> January. I hope all of you would recall the recent meeting of Parliamentarians among the People of Indian Origin in which our Honorable Prime Minister had described

Non-Resident Indians as **partners for India's development, with an important position in NITI Ayog's Action Agenda.**

It adds to my joy that this reunion, aptly called **Loka Kerala Sabha**, has also initiated a healthy debate on our approach towards the non-resident communities. The beauty of this reunion was that it attached great importance to the welfare of our non-resident communities as well as to the measures to ensure their more active involvement in our development initiatives. On the whole, this event promises to usher in a new Kerala model of development, marked by welfare schemes that cross geographical boundaries, wider sharing of expertise, increased local initiative and an ever expanding global exposure for our State.

As we all know, Kerala is one of the States which has benefited from the positive impact of people's migration to other States and nations. With the Gulf boom in the seventies, the effect of migration was clearly visible in the

social and economic life of Kerala to the extent that by 1998, remittances from abroad had equaled or even outgrown the total State budget. Today, our Economic Review says that around 50 lakh people in Kerala are dependent on Non-Resident Keralites.

I am informed that though the lure of the Gulf has slightly reduced, almost 86 percent of our non-residents work in the Gulf countries and around 3.4 percent work in the United States. Today, Canada, New Zealand and Australia have also become destinations for the Keralites. In short, there is no country in the world that does not receive the contribution of a Keralite. In this context, the **Loka Kerala Sabha** which provided a common platform for the cultural, socio-political and economic integration of non-resident Keralites with the State is a truly laudable step.

While acknowledging the contribution of the non-resident population to the growth of our economy, we must admit that we had very few schemes to make proper

use of these remittances for the State's development. We have observed how the remittances from abroad had made a great difference in the lives of people by enabling them to afford better housing, health care and education.

One of the consequences of this affluence was that Kerala grew more as a consumer state with better purchasing power, than as a producer of goods and services. This calls for new investment projects to which we could channelize the **Pravaasi remittances** for the general good of the society. I understand that the **Loka Kerala Sabha** has discussed the ways to ensure this channelization. I sincerely wish that the non-resident Keralites who are listed among the most successful entrepreneurs in the world would come forward to be part of Kerala's dream of creating 10 lakh jobs in the Information Technology, Tourism and Electronics sectors, which we hope to achieve in five years.

As we all know, Keralites are known to be among the most efficient work forces in any country. But, often we are

not aware about the work conditions which our people enjoy or endure in other nations. Though the International Labor Organization has made the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in 1998, we are yet to inquire about whether its provisions are followed in the countries where our people work. The security of our women, especially those who work in health-care and in household jobs also needs to be discussed. I hope the **Loka Kerala Sabha** has worked out a mechanism to help the State Government to make relevant suggestions to the Government of India in these matters, so that the Ministry of External Affairs could make more effective interventions.

More importantly, India is awaiting a Demographic Dividend in the years to come, with more than half the population below 25 years of age. That means, our young work force can conquer the global job market, if we equip them with appropriate skills. I feel that Kerala's efforts to enhance the employability of our youth could benefit greatly from the suggestions of the non-resident

work-force. A close interaction and sharing of views would perhaps answer our apprehensions on whether the skills we impart are what the industry abroad actually requires.

Incidentally, I am informed that Shri Najeeb, the main character in Shri Benyamin's novel, **Aadu Jeevitham**, was present in the **Sabha**. I am certain that it must have conveyed a message to people on the hardships faced by our people who are often cheated by recruiters and other agencies, when they aspire to go abroad to work. Such instances occur in spite of the best efforts of Government agencies to ensure transparency in recruitment. It would be good if **Pravaasi Help Centers** were opened in our districts by those with foreign experience to guide our job-seekers. Such Centers should also provide guidance to **Pravaasis** on their rehabilitation once they return to Kerala. I am suggesting this, because a large majority of our non resident population comprises laborers who struggle to earn a decent income.

I am happy that Seminars and interactions with

scientists were also part of the **Loka Kerala Sabha**. I would request Keralites working abroad in scientific and higher educational organizations to share their expertise with our students and researchers in Kerala. As Chancellor of the Universities in the State, let me assure you the best cooperation of our Universities to proposals which would provide an international exposure to our students. The non-resident academics should also become informal ambassadors who would promote Kerala as the right educational destination for students in the countries where they work.

I would conclude by saying that we gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the Non-Resident Keralites at the family level, community, State and National levels. Our Government is committed to frame and implement welfare policies and schemes that would prove this gratitude to our **Pravaasi** friends.

I greet all the representatives of **Pravaasi** groups and other members from the cultural, social, scientific and

other areas who participated in this **Sabha** and wish that their brilliant ideas would benefit Kerala in the coming years.

I compliment the Government of Kerala for organizing this meeting in a befitting manner.

**Ellavarkkum Ente Aashamsakal**

**Nanni**

**Jai Hind**