

LIFE AFTER COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN KERALA

Throughout this extended global lockdown period, Kerala has shown promise for its aggressive and tactful approach to maintaining the rampant outbreak of COVID-19 that is wreaking havoc in its efforts to keep it at bay. While doctors, police, and the government battle against the virus the rest of God's Own Country is left questioning what comes next. There's no doubt that life moving forward in the year 2020 has an air of fear surrounding it, so let's take a peek at what may follow based on the information we have now.

1. A Shift to Digital Platforms

The dependence of society on social media has spiked immensely. Being left stranded in their homes has invoked a need in the people to keep themselves busy. Many have begun to explore social media for the first time as consumers, creating identities on virtually every platform to keep engaged and entertained. On the other side of the coin, we see long time consumers becoming first time creators and influencers. The aftermath of the lockdown will be one where new avenues open up around social media, integrating it deeper into our day-to-day lives. This of course can be taken as both a good omen and a bad one, but that delicate balance has always been as old as time itself. As time moves on, online classes will take a more prominent role in our educational system ensuring that students can always learn on the go, rather than being limited by their classrooms. As companies switch from traditional advertising to social media campaigns, we see a shift as the old ways are forced into extinction and the digital platform begins to take over.

2. Significant Rise in Mental Health Awareness

The isolation caused by lockdown and social distancing has also wreaked havoc on the psyche of the people. With the normalcy of their busy lives altered by taking out many of the factors that kept it busy, people are left with time to think and reflect on their thoughts. Maybe a little too much. Despite the many apps that are helping to connect people and reduce the gaps digitally, many are left feeling even more isolated and lonely as human interaction has been stripped down to its bare minimum. Studies show that fear of death has also spiked immensely this year alongside a rampant spread of germophobia, the fear of germs. The fears are not baseless and neither are the emotions that have been cycling through the minds of every one of us throughout this surprising year. It is a year where the depth and importance of human mental health and awareness of the same have become a much more valuable realm of human existence. Going forward out of these extraordinary times, the possibilities and potential of mental health studies and mental health awareness should see a more significant rise. There is hope that learning to deal with and manifest our positive thoughts while understanding and curbing our negative thoughts will lead to a nation and a state where the populous can be more open-minded and selfless. Cheers to that selfless hope.

3. A Hike in the Financial Troubles

Many families in Kerala have felt a sigh of relief as their spending habits have been cut back thanks to the lockdown. With nothing to do but stay home, all the spending that they've made on entertainment

and eating out, among other spendings, has gone down tremendously. However, there is a flip side to this coin. There are plenty of families whose main income was dependent on the economy functioning as normal. For such families, this lockdown has been a true nightmare. The restrictions in place have only forced them to dig into their dwindling savings and wait impatiently for things to get back to normal. Yes, this sounds grim. However, for those living in Kerala, there have been developments by the government to aid its citizens in braving this lockdown without burning through their savings. Introducing an enormous Rs. 20,000 Crore financial care package, with an air of elegance and determination, the government of Kerala remains adamant in its efforts to responsibly aid its fellow Malayalees to survive these conditions with their head held high. No doubt pulling off this spectacular feat will enable Malayalees all over Kerala to stay afloat as lockdown is slowly lifted and life goes back to as normal as can be possible.

4. An Increase in Self-reliant Food Production

Financial trouble is not the only kind of trouble that has been brewing in Kerala. In these troubling times, food production will prove to become a delicate yet necessary art, without which the supplies of the state may dwindle rapidly. The state needs to be self-sufficient in producing food grains and in the cultivation of fruits and vegetables to be prepared for any eventuality in the future. It is currently dependent on other states for its supply of food grains, fruits, and vegetables, and given the Covid-19 challenge, the state has to ensure supplies of food and vegetables for the longer-term. The agriculture department, in association with the proper bodies, is planning big projects to improve the state's self-reliance. All possible ways, including kitchen gardens, rooftop cultivation, and community projects, are being explored by the state. The State will set up a modern processing unit to convert milk to milk powder. Existing dairy plants will be diversified for more value-added products. The Central government will seek a comprehensive financial package for fish farming. Fisheries will be provided with support. Abandoned ponds will be used for fish farming. Sea fish farming will be explored. Shrimp farming will be promoted. In a nutshell, the Kerala government is willing, ready, and able to consider and execute plans available through every avenue to enable it to become an independent and self-sustaining state.

The Kerala Government has done everything in its power to ensure the security and safety of its people in these trying times. Malayalees have taken to social media to stay engaged and active in these trying times, creating and consuming content and information that is detrimental to their physical well being as well as their appetite for entertainment. The people as a whole have been cooperative with those who are battling against the foreign virus, and the government in turn is working overtime to ensure that its people remain fiscally healthy as well as nutritionally. By aiding the people through financial means as well as through their efforts to provide food production on a larger scale from within state borders, the Kerala government continues to champion the fight against coronavirus on the frontlines. This is an indicator that God's Own Country is well on its way to becoming a powerhouse of creative ingenuity and emergency preparedness going forward into a brighter tomorrow.

