



# THE RECCAA CLUB STORY

A STORY OF ALUMNI, COMMUNITY  
AND AN INSTITUTION BUILT ON TRUST



RECCAA Charitable Society, Kochi



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# PREFACE

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*Latha K Chirayil  
(REC Calicut, 1996 Batch)*



It was in 2011 that I first heard about the RECCAA Club. The introduction came through Shilen. At the time, I was part of the Cognizant team handling BOT operations for Arbitron India under his leadership. My own connection with our parent institution was minimal then, apart from a handful of close friends from my 1996 batch with whom I had remained in touch over the previous fifteen years.

To be honest, I was not particularly interested at first. Life was busy in its own way, and I barely knew anyone in the RECCAA community in Kochi. Five years passed quickly. By 2016, as I began planning for retirement, I took membership in the RECCAA Club, more as a part of that transition into a new phase of life than out of any larger sense of involvement.

Retirement itself took another two years to materialise. By then, some of my batchmates had returned to Kochi from different cities, and a vibrant circle of alumni friendships had begun to form around us. The RECCAA Club hosted NITCAA Kochi alumni gatherings three times a year, and through those meetings I came to know many senior alumni. The warmth, camaraderie, and sense of belonging I experienced there were beyond anything I had imagined.

People gathered there like birds of the same feather, united by memories, shared values, and an enduring bond with the institution.

During one such gathering, Shilen suggested that we start a periodic newsletter for the Club. Writing and publishing had always remained a quiet aspiration in the background of my life, and I readily agreed. The quarterly newsletters continued for some time, and it was during this phase that Chilprakash — whom I often think of as RECCAA Club personified — proposed that we should document the story of the Club itself.

What began as a series intended for publication in the newsletter soon revealed itself to be something far larger. The story of RECCAA Club could not be contained within a few episodic installments spread across quarterly editions. It carried within it decades of vision, struggle, perseverance, and collective achievement. We therefore decided that the effort deserved to become a separate volume — a record for future generations.

The project eventually extended over more than a year. I had the privilege of meeting alumni from the batches of the 1960s and listening to their memories and experiences. The more I listened,

the more deeply I was drawn into their world. The scale of vision, the passion, the drive, the focus, and above all the spirit of altruism that shaped the alumni movement were entirely new to me. I found myself genuinely mesmerised by what these pioneers had built together over decades.

**This book is a humble attempt to narrate that extraordinary journey - a story of dreams transformed into reality through collective effort and unwavering commitment. It seeks to consolidate the memoirs, experiences, and reflections of many pioneers who shaped the movement over more than forty years.**

I am aware that no such effort can ever capture every detail in its entirety. Some events may have been understood differently, and certain nuances or magnitudes may not have been fully conveyed in the way they were originally experienced. I request the reader's indulgence for such limitations, and hope that this work will be received with the same magnanimity, generosity, and spirit with which the alumni community itself approached every one of its collective endeavours.

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## CHAPTER 1

# THE PEOPLE BEFORE THE INSTITUTION

All great achievements are made by great teams, formed by great individuals. Before there was a club, before there was an alumni association, before there was even a formal plan, there was a group of people. Engineers who had studied together in the hills of Calicut, scattered now across the factories and offices of Ernakulam,

drawn back together by the invisible thread of a shared past.

Their evening ritual was simple. They gathered one and two at a time on the long parapet wall connecting Menaka and Sridhar theatres. Once enough of them had assembled, they walked to Bharat Tourist Home, where the owner's two sons were REC Calicut

alumni and Mohan Prasad of the 1967 batch was his son-in-law. There they sat over dosas and puris, talking about their work, their lives, and gradually, the idea of something more formal. Some went to watch English films at Sridhar afterwards. Others chose Malayalam at Menaka. But the conversations on that parapet wall were the first stirrings of what would eventually become one of India's finest clubs.

Many of them were members of the Institution of Engineers, the largest engineering body in India. Their meetings were often sponsored by companies, and the free food and drinks were certainly an attraction. But those gatherings had also shown them something more important: what a common identity could do for a group of professionals trying to find their footing in a new city. The thought began to form that REC Calicut Alumni Cochin Chapter deserved a space of their own.

*Early gathering*



# THE MAN AT THE CENTRE OF IT ALL

The story of RECCAA Club cannot be told without beginning with Prof. P M Jussay. He was the HOD of Humanities department and chief warden at REC Calicut when many of these alumni were students, and the relationship between him and his students was not the usual one of authority and compliance. He was, in the words of those who knew him best, every student's wish list for a teacher.

There is a story from 1976 that captures him precisely. A clash broke out between REC students and locals from Kattangal. The situation turned hostile; power and water to the campus were cut off. Students, stranded in the hostel, cleaned an old unused well and survived on leftover food supplies. Into this siege walked Prof. Jussay, carrying "packages" of "essential supplies", keeping "spirits" up, making it clear that supporting and protecting his students mattered far more than enforcing rules.

It was he who guided Chilprakash, the then Hostel Secretary to start the Mini Canteen (MC) and Driving school at REC Calicut, that touched the lives of several batches of students since.

After retirement, Prof. Jussay returned to Kochi, where he became chief editor of a news daily. He remained a commanding presence: a great orator, a scholar of Jewish studies and anthropology, a man



*Prof. P M Jussay (Late)*

who maintained personal connections not just with his former students but with their families. When a relative of any alumnus passed away, he would call M R Devadas and together they would travel, near or far, to pay their respects. Devadas, from a business family, would purchase a wreath each time. They went by bus.

Prof. Jussay had a simple but powerful belief: he wanted all his former students to remain part of one extended RECCAA family. Everything that followed was, in some sense, an expression of that belief.

*Mini Canteen*



## M R DEVADAS:

# THE MAN WHO KNOCKED ON EVERY DOOR

**D**r. M R Devadas of the 1969 batch was the person most responsible for the ground-level work of building the alumni network in its early years. Based on an address list sourced from REC Calicut, he visited each and every alumnus at home. He had a personal connection to Prof. Jussay that predated even his time at REC; Prof. Jussay's wife was his mother's classmate and a close friend of his sister. Their rapport was easy and warm, full of mock arguments that never amounted to anything.

Devadas had a natural interest in real estate and business from his student days. He had put exhibits in the college Tech Exhibition including India's second mono rail model, a self-tuning radio and a Do It Yourself record



*M R Devadas  
(1969 batch)*

player, all of which attracted coverage in national dailies. He brought that same energy to the work of building

an alumni association, treating it as a project to be executed with the same seriousness as a business venture.

When he fractured his leg in an accident and was moving around on a crutch, he still insisted on going out to meet alumni. He would tell Prof. Jussay and Sudesh Jain that there was no reason to delay. They had already gathered information on who was working where. Wherever the trio visited, someone from the alumni network would put up a notice in the office so that colleagues could gather during lunch hour for an impromptu meeting. For three months they covered Angamali, Kalamasseri, HMT, Ambalamugal and every factory in between. All travel was in Sudesh Jain's car, at his personal expense.

## SUDESH JAIN:

# THE MAN WHO SAID, LET US DO IT



*Sudesh Jain  
(1972 batch)*

**I**f one person had to be named as the reason RECCAA exists, that person would be Sudesh Jain of the 1972 batch. He was, by his own nature, a leader rather than an administrator. He found solutions, got things moving and then stepped aside without seeking credit. Those who worked with him remember him this way: selfless to a fault, bold almost to a recklessness, and absolutely dependable when it mattered.

After graduation he ran a factory in

Delhi briefly, then returned to Kerala in 1974 to establish a rubber business, first in Calicut and then in Kochi. It was during this period that fate placed him in front of Prof. Jussay, who had by then become chief editor of Kerala Times. Sudesh Jain had come to get the Rubber Merchant's association's viewpoint published. Prof. Jussay agreed, and in return asked a favour: that Sudesh Jain support the effort of M R Devadas to form an alumni association for REC Calicut. Sudesh Jain agreed and he kept his word.

# SUMA JOSEPH AND THE ACT OF PHILANTHROPY THAT STARTED EVERYTHING



*Suma Joseph*

**B**efore the association was formally founded, before there were membership drives or meeting venues or even a name, the community of REC Calicut alumni in Kochi proved what it was capable of through a single act of collective care.

Suma Joseph of the 1972 batch had been one of the most celebrated students of her time. She was exceptional in arts, sports and theatre; she was among the first to be placed after graduation, joining FACT directly. She was, by everyone's account, beautiful inside and out. Then a rare condition began to stiffen her limb joints. No treatment was available locally and

the condition was worsening quickly.

When she came across Prof. Jussay's photograph in a newspaper and called him, she had already sold her home, her car and everything else for her medical bills. She was confined to her bed, her limbs barely functional. Prof. Jussay and Devadas visited her and came away in tears. The family had been told by doctors of every discipline that the only remaining option was treatment in the United Kingdom, with no guarantee of a cure, and at a cost that the family could not come close to affording.

That was when Sudesh Jain said the words that would define the spirit of this community for the next forty years: let us do it. A plan was drawn up quickly. Alumni at every major company in Kochi were identified. Joseph Panikulam, then General Manager at FACT, organised the first meeting there. Francis K Paul provided unconditional financial support. Nearly

two hundred alumni were visited at home or at their offices. Everyone gave what they could. Arrangements were made for Suma to travel to England for treatment.

The treatment could not reverse the condition, but it stopped its progression. When she returned, friends arranged a gas agency dealership for her. Francis K Paul, with his Maruti dealership, took the lead in converting a van to allow wheelchair access. Suma went on to attend the World NITCAA Meet in Muscat in 2003, travelling in her wheelchair. The friends who had rallied for her were there with her.

If not for Sudesh Jain, and for what the Suma Joseph episode revealed about what this group of people were capable of when they acted together, the story of RECCAA might have remained a smaller, quieter thing. It was this experience that gave the founding of the association its emotional foundation.



*Francis K Paul  
(1972 batch)*

# THE ORGANIZATION ORGANICALLY FORMED

The meetings in the years before the formal founding of RECCAA were held in homes, in the offices of members who could arrange space, and over dinner at Bharath Tourist Home. A M Sadick of the 1969 batch and Francis K Paul of the 1972 batch were, in the words of Devadas, Prof. Jussay's left and right hands. Sadick's home was a particularly favoured venue, partly because his wife's cooking was legendary, having won a competition in France. Biryani, curries and Thalasseri delicacies fuelled many an evening of planning. As one of the founding members later joked, the cuisine was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the alumni chapter.

Sudesh Jain introduced the practice of a monthly free dinner for the committee, sponsored on rotation, with himself filling in whenever no one else stepped forward. He also introduced weekly Monday evening meetings. Both practices continued without interruption for more than eight years, giving the committee an unusual degree of cohesion and collective purpose. It is doubtful whether many organisations of any kind could claim such regularity.

## CHAPTER 2

# BUILDING THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The formal founding came in two stages. The first stone was laid on 12th July 1984, when Sudesh Jain hosted a dinner meeting at Matha Tourist Home, opposite the Presidency Hotel. About a hundred alumni attended, along with several faculty members including Prof. K M Bahauddin, Prof. P M Jussay, Prof. Babu T Jose and Prof. K Balasubramanian, and the then Principal of REC Calicut, Dr. Unnikrishna Pillai. Mohana Chandran, by then the Rubber Board Chairman and a senior IAS officer, presided.

Alumni Association was then formally inaugurated on 15th August

1984, Independence Day, at Sadick's house over a dinner. Around a hundred and forty people attended, including families. Prof. P M Jussay, the guiding star, MR Devadas the day one person, Sudesh Jain the driving force and Francis K Paul the back bone of the alumni movement among them. The name RECCAA was chosen that evening. Prof. Jussay became the founder President and Sadick the Secretary, they continued in the role for 18 years.



A M Sadick  
(1971 batch)

### Minutes of first formal meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July '84

A preliminary meeting of the former students and faculty members of the Regional Engineering College, Calicut, in Calicut was held at 6.30 PM on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1984 at the Matha Tourist Home with a view to form a Alumni Association (RECCAA) in Calicut. The former students and faculty members who attended the meeting were Prof. K M Bahauddin, Prof. P M Jussay, Prof. Babu T Jose, Mr. K Balasubramanian, Mr. Mohana Chandran, former faculty member, Principal of Regional Engineering College, Calicut and present on special invitation.

Prof. P M Jussay welcomed the gathering and explained the purpose of the meeting. Mr. Bahauddin welcomed the idea and encouraged others who had been in the initiative for this very laudable venture. Prof. Unnikrishna Pillai explained briefly the aims and objectives of the Association. The following members were elected to an ad hoc committee for taking steps to form the Calicut Chapter of RECCAA.

- (1) Prof. P M Jussay - President
- (2) Mr. A. M. Sadick (OSW) - Vice President
- (3) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Secretary
- (4) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Joint Secret
- (5) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Treasurer
- (6) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (7) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (8) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (9) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (10) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (11) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (12) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (13) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member
- (14) Mr. M. K. N. Pillai (OSW) - Member

### Minutes of inaugural meeting

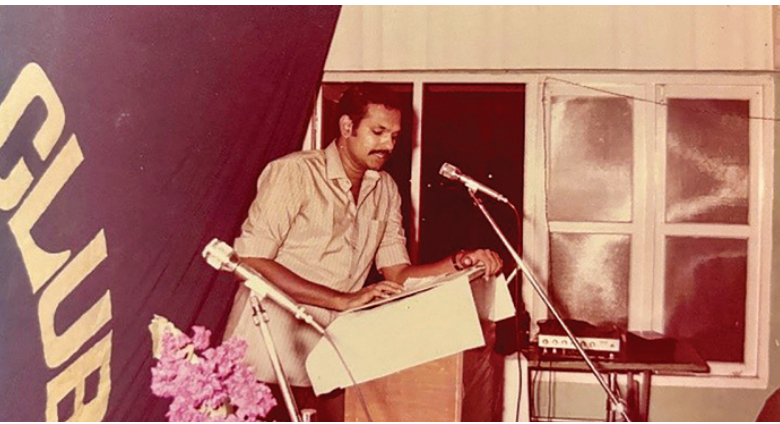
Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1984

A dinner meeting of the former students and faculty members of the Regional Engineering College, Calicut Chapter (RECCAA) was held at 7.00 PM on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1984 at the residence of Mr. A. M. Sadick, in the house, Kanchikunnam, Calicut. The following members were formally inaugurated.

The Calicut Chapter of Regional Engineering College Alumni Association was formally inaugurated. The following members were elected to the Executive Committee of the Association.

- (1) Prof. P M Jussay - President
- (2) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Vice President
- (3) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Secretary
- (4) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Joint Secret
- (5) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Treasurer
- (6) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (7) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (8) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (9) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (10) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (11) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (12) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (13) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member
- (14) Mr. A. M. Sadick - Member

# A COMMUNITY THAT MET REGULARLY AND STAYED TOGETHER



From the beginning, RECCAA Cochin Chapter operated as a living community rather than a paper organisation. Meetings happened every month at various locations. A family gathering took place every two months, attended by around a hundred people. Once a year, on 26th January, there was a full-day family event, first held in Ambalamugal, with games, cultural programmes and lunch. Family members

knew each other well. The bond was not just between alumni but between their households.

At one point in the early years, membership reached around three hundred, drawn from the factories and offices of Kochi and the surrounding industrial belt. A proper membership directory was eventually created with the help of Francis K Paul, whose office had access to one of the few computers

available at the time. The invitations to each meeting were sent by postcard with acknowledgement; between seventy-five and a hundred and fifty people would attend any given dinner.

It was Prof. Jussay who decided that meetings should be anchored to public holidays. He chose 26th January, 1st May and 15th August. His reasoning was characteristically practical: these were days when people

(Name).....)

Bringing.....of our clan.

I'm a vegetarian  Non-vegetarian

With wife & kids  Alone


I'll make it  Sorry, Can't

(Please tick the relevant reply and post this card immediately)

**REPLY CARD**

---

**15** भारत INDIA



FROM  
**REGIONAL ENGG. COLLEGE, CALICUT  
ALUMINI ASSOCIATION  
(RECCAA)**

**COCHIN CHAPTER**  
C/o Prof. P. M. Jussay

Office:	Res:
Chief Editor	XLI / 1682
Kerala Times	St. Benedict Road
Banerji Road,	Cochin - 682 018
Cochin - 682 018	Tel: 31766
Tel: 35167	
32696	

---

पिन PIN

Date: Jussay.

Cheerio. Hope to see you soon.

Rs. 15 for Couple,  
Rs. 10 for one.

Dinner Contribution: Rs. 10 for one.

others of our clan and persuade them to come.

Do come with family. Don't say no. Bring tiny tots too. They are our guests. Pass on this information to We meet next at.....at.....

Hey Reccadear.

**REGIONAL ENGG. COLLEGE, CALICUT, ALUMINI ASSOCIATION**

---

From: **15** भारत INDIA

Name: **जवाबी**

Address: **REPLY**

Office: **To**

Res: **RECCAA COCHIN CHAPTER**

Tel: Off: **C/o P. M. Jussay**

Res: **Chief Editor**

Year of passing: **Kerala Times,**

Branch: **Banerji Road,**

Present position: **Cochin - 682 018.**

Married or single: **पिन PIN**

Whether a member of Reccaa



would have difficulty finding excuses not to attend. RECCAA Cochin Chapter was among the first alumni bodies in the country to organise its gatherings on pre-defined public holidays every year, a practice that gave the calendar a rhythm and the community a set of annual anchors.

One such meeting took place in Ambalamedu, FACT guesthouse grounds

This was in the early nineties. It was during this particular event, that the first seed of thought to have an own space for RECCAA got planted into the minds of the organisers.

Regular excursions to locations across Kerala became another feature of this period. Devadas organised the logistics; Charles C George, since departed, handled the food, and his

contribution to the quality of those trips was remembered with genuine affection. One early tour went to Kumarakam, arranged by Joseph Philip at his family's place, with a boat trip to Pathiramanal. Suma Joseph was taken on the Wayanad trip in Devadas's car, with friends arranged at every stop to ensure access for her wheelchair. She was taken all the way to the top of Thamarassery Churam.



## STRUCTURE, CONTINUITY AND THE ORGANISING SECRETARY

As activity levels dipped after the initial momentum of the Suma Joseph fundraise, Prof. Jussay became concerned that without a defined next goal, the ties between members might loosen. He asked Devadas to take operations forward formally. Devadas accepted



the role of Organising Secretary on one condition: that any move to replace him would require a three-quarter majority of the chapter. This was never challenged. With a hint of laughter, Devadas would note years later that he was still the Organising Secretary.

For over eight years, Prof. Jussay and Devadas conducted elections and selections for the chapter together. The committee remained an open one, always welcoming volunteers and fresh ideas. Babu T Jose, Prof. Jussay's close colleague, was another constant force. It was he who connected Devadas to a contact at Cochin University's computer centre who helped design the RECCAA emblem for official stationery, one of the small acts of practical problem-solving that characterised this group.

Sudesh Jain also started RECCAA Times in the early 1990s, a newsletter for the Cochin Chapter that kept the community informed and connected during the stretches between meetings.

# THE NAMES BEHIND THE BEGINNING

Any honest account of RECCAA's founding must acknowledge the people who made it real through their time, effort and money in those early years. Prof. Jussay, Devadas (1969 batch), Sudesh Jain (1972 batch), Francis K Paul (1972 batch), Joseph Panikulam (1968 batch), Mohan Prasad (1967 batch), Sadick A M (1971 batch), Prof. Babu T Jose, Paulose K C, Alexander K P (late)(1968 batch), Chilprakash (1977 batch), Sathisa Baboo (1967 batch), Gopakumar (1969 batch), Joseph Philip

(1975 batch), Avrachen A G (1967 batch), Joseph Laligro (1974 batch), Mathew M Mathew (1979 batch), Damodaran Namboothiri (1977 batch), Baby John (1977 batch), Vijayaraj K (1979 batch), Joseph Zacharias (1976 batch), Charles C George (late)(1974 batch), Jayasankar R (1979 batch), Sudakaran K K (1971 batch), Sukumaran M (1968 batch), Fazal Ali (1979 batch), Chandramohan P V (1967 batch), Jayaprakash (1970 batch), Pushpangadhan (1969 batch), Paulose K J (1970 batch), Dipu K G

(1985 batch), Girisan K G (1969 batch), Michael K M (1980 batch) and K T Menon (1972 batch). The list is not complete; memory never is. But these names represent the human foundation on which everything else was built. The journey had the blessings and guidance from the faculty members Prof. Sankaran Nair and Dr. Ravindran Nair, who were an active presence in most of the discussions and deliberations.



*Paulose K C (late)  
(1968 batch)*



*K.P ALEXANDER  
(late) (1968 batch)*



*Vijayaraj K  
(1979 batch)*



*Joseph Zacarias  
(1976 batch)*



*Charles C George  
(late)(1974 batch)*



*Jayashankar R  
(1979 batch)*



*Prof. Sankaran Nair*



*Dr. R. Ravindran Nair*

# RECCAA ENCLAVE - THE FIRST HOUSING PROJECT

Several of the alumni who had come to Ernakulam for work had their home towns elsewhere in Kerala. The idea of building a housing colony where they could live close to one another as a community was appealing both personally and organisationally. An organisation that wants to sustain itself needs continuous purpose and activity. Housing was a natural fit.

It was Prof. Jussay who proposed it in 1985. The idea was to enable salaried alumni to own a residential plot on convenient instalment terms. It was, as everyone involved acknowledged, a daring venture given the scale of the undertaking and the near-complete absence of funds.

## FINDING THE LAND



*M R Devadas  
(1969 batch)*



*Prof Babu T Jose*

Devadas, whose interest in real estate went back to his student days, personally evaluated a vast number of plots and shortlisted fourteen plots. The whole committee visited each, and a final three were identified.

The best option was a plot at Padamugal in Kakkanad. It scored highest on every criterion. But there was a complication. The land and its surroundings, totalling about a hundred acres, had been frozen by the government for a housing project that had never materialised. It was informally known as the Morarji ground, after the ex-Prime Minister in whose name the original scheme had been announced. If the freeze could not be lifted, the entire investment was at risk.

Francis K Paul resolved the uncertainty in one move. He told the team that if the housing plot sales did not work out, he would personally buy the entire land. With that guarantee in place, the team moved forward. Prof. Babu T Jose remembers this as one of the defining moments in the early history of RECCAA: one person's unconditional backing enabling the whole community to take a risk it could not otherwise have taken.

The land was unfrozen through the proper channels, with Babu T Jose guiding the applications and Joseph Laligro, a GCDA engineer, providing crucial on-the-ground support. Sadick, who knew the Pappali family who owned the land, led the negotiation. The landowners transferred the land to the RECCAA alumni even before full payment was made, an act of trust that the committee took seriously. Chilprakash as the Jt Treasurer having his office at MG Road acted as the fund collection point for all the interested buyers.



*Joseph Laligro  
(1974 batch)*

# THE SEVEN CENTS



*A M Sadick  
(1971 batch)*

While the land was being measured and divided into plots, the team discovered that the total area was slightly more than seven acres. Seven cents of land were unaccounted for. The landowners did not know. The additional land had real monetary value and there were voices around the table who thought it only reasonable to keep it.

Sadick disagreed. The landowners had transferred the land before payment because they trusted REC alumni. That trust had been built on the institution's reputation and could not be compromised for seven cents

of windfall. He insisted the owners be told.

They were told. The owners, genuinely impressed, offered those seven cents back to RECCAA at a discounted rate. The founding members of RECCAA Enclave have spoken of this moment ever since as the clearest expression of what their community stood for. The straightforwardness of that decision, they believed, is what has carried NITCAA forward through every subsequent challenge.

# FIFTY-FIVE PLOTS AND A COMMUNITY

Joseph Laligro, working from his expertise as a GCDA engineer, converted the land into fifty-five housing plots of varying sizes to accommodate different needs and budgets. Wide roads were part of

the layout from the start. Most plots were taken by REC alumni; when that list was exhausted, a small number of outside buyers were admitted.

The plots were ready in 1986. Joseph



*RECCAA Enclave plot marking diagram*

Philip, who had been part of RECCAA's governing committee since its founding, was the first to begin construction. He started in 1988 and moved in on 26th January 1990. The house warming was almost a RECCAA affair, with about seventy alumni gathering to mark the occasion. Sudhakaran K K, who had been diligently photographing RECCAA's journey since the early days, was one of the first residents to follow.

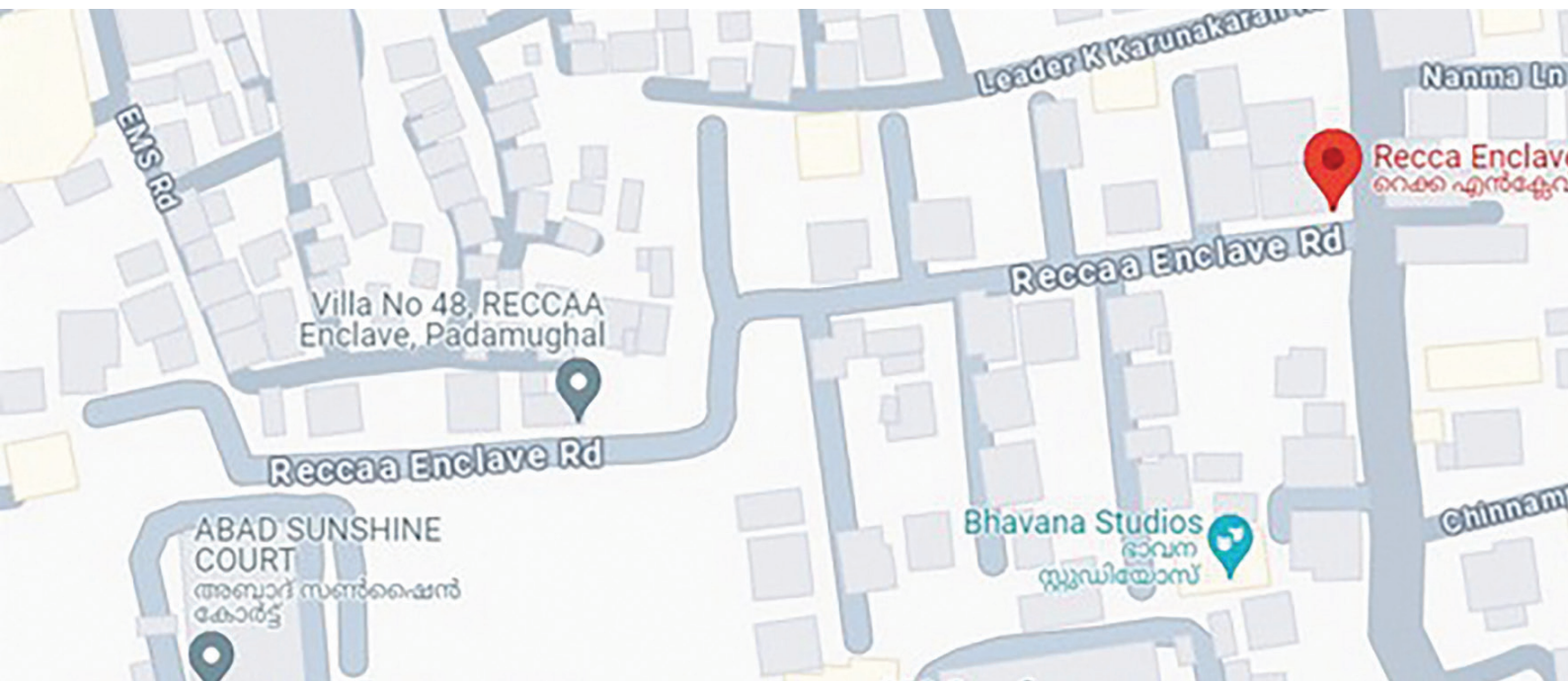


*Sudhakaran K K  
(1971 batch)*

It was also Prof. Babu T Jose who suggested that the assets acquired through such projects should be held by a separate legal entity rather than by the alumni association itself. His suggestion led to the formation of RECCAA Centre, which would hold the community's assets and handle the documentation and formalities, leaving RECCAA Cochin Chapter to remain simply the comradeship of its alumni.



*Joseph Philip  
(1975 batch)*



*RECCAA Enclave Google map*

# RECCAATEX - SPREADING RECCAA TO KERALA

Until the mid-1980s, the main beneficiaries of RECCAA's projects had been its own members. The housing colony was a community benefit. The monthly meetings were an internal matter. But there was a growing sense within the leadership that the RECCAA Cochin Chapter had the capacity to do something that would put it in the national conversation. An industrial exhibition in Kochi, the first of its kind in Kerala, would be that thing.

The idea was the All India Science and Technology Exhibition, to be called RECCAATEX. It had two stated objectives: to bring science and technology to the ordinary citizen, and to create a forum for industry and consumers to meet and exchange feedback. Neither was a modest ambition.

# RECCAATEX 92



*Chandramohan P V  
(1967 batch)*



*Mohan Prasad  
(1967 batch)*

The organisation of RECCAATEX 92 began in earnest under the leadership of Chandramohan P V and Mohan Prasad, who worked on it for a year and a half. They along with Chilprakash visited exhibitions in Coimbatore, Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai to understand how industrial fairs were run. They worked under the guidance of CODISSIA, the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association, which had extensive experience in managing such events. Initially, CODISSIA was sceptical that an alumni association could pull this off and said so, not unkindly. The team held their ground.

The logistics were conducted from a rented office: a single room in Madapparambil Tourist Home, Chittoor road. Mohan Prasad jokes that the office had precisely two clerks, himself and Chandramohan.

RECCAATEX 92 organisation work

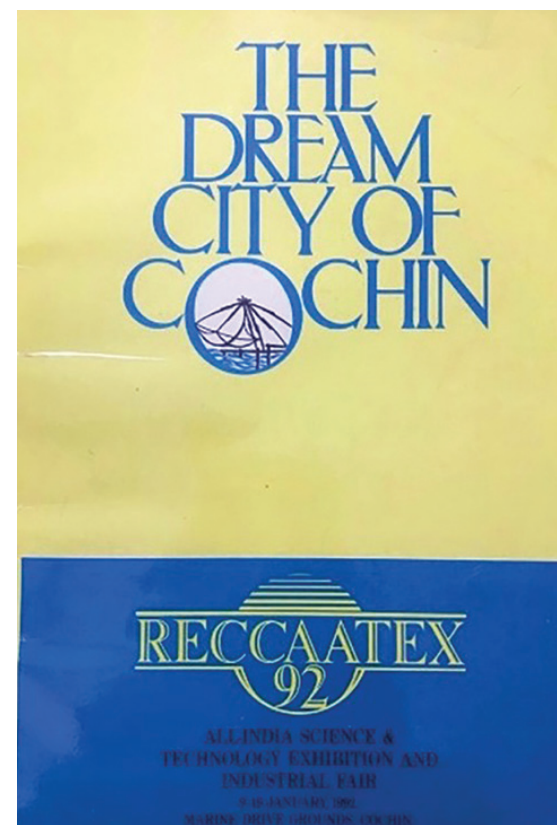
was started with the launching function inaugurated by Sri. PK Kunhalikutty, Minister for Industries, Kerala, at BTH in 1991. A multimedia campaign was launched to ensure participation of major industries from all over India. The media campaign was kept up right through 1991. Vijayaraj and Joseph Zacharia (Zach) were also closely involved. The team prepared a brochure and write-ups to brief and generate interest in potential participants, as few outside Kerala knew about the potential of Kochi. Chilprakash managed full-page newspaper advertisements in Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi and the Indian Express at no cost to RECCAA, by securing co-sponsorship from other advertisers.

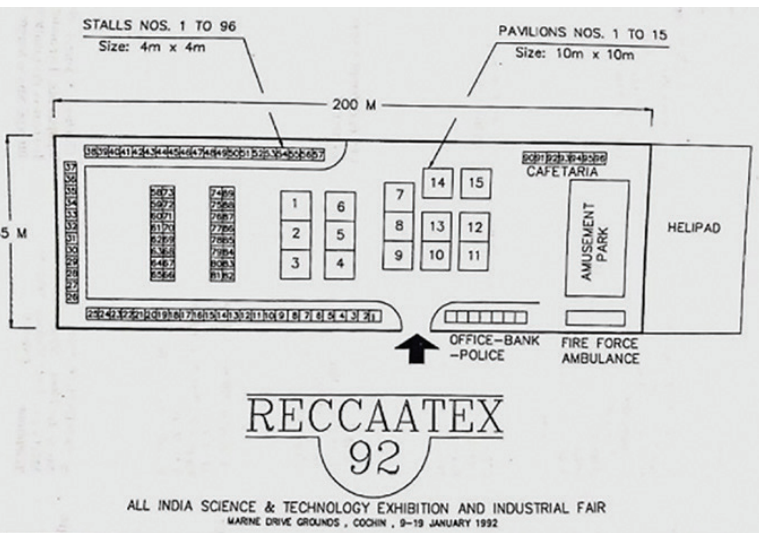
The exhibition was held at the Marine Drive grounds in January 1992, covering 13,000 square metres with a covered area of 3250 square metres for more than 150 stalls. It ran for

ten days, spanning two weekends. Central Minister, K Krishnakumar, had agreed to inaugurate but could not make it due to the inclement weather leading to cancellation of his flight; E T Mohammed Basheer was then brought in for the inauguration. The valedictory was addressed by P P Thankachan, then Speaker of the Kerala Assembly. Visitors included High Court Judges, senior government officials, politicians including Margaret Alva and Leela Damodara Menon, Lokanath Behera IPS etc.

Tata Motors, then known as Telco, chose RECCAATEX to launch their first Indian-made car in Kerala, indicating the credibility of the event. Other participants included BPL, Crompton Greaves, Cochin Shipyards, Eureka Forbes, Godrej and Boyce, HMT, Kerala Electricals, Philips, Telco, TVS, Whirlpool, Chilton, Popular Automobiles and others.

Since Kerala was lacking an industry culture, the technical exhibition was combined with circus shows, household goods etc. to ensure enough public participation. In the closing ceremony, P P Thankachan was so impressed that he suggested RECCAA start an engineering college, offering all support.





K P Paul, father of Francis K Paul and John K Paul, offered fifteen acres of land near Thrissur railway station free of cost. The team, stretched in bandwidth, let it pass. In hindsight it

remains one of the might-have-beens of RECCAA's history.

The fair made a profit of around three lakhs. Combined with personal

contributions from key members, this funded the purchase of an office space for RECCAA Centre at Mather Square, opposite Ernakulam North Railway Station.

## RECCAATEX 95



RECCAATEX95

Learning from the first exhibition, or also the team believed, RECCAATEX 95 was planned with higher ambitions. Organisation work began in 1994 with a launching function at Rotary Balabhavan. By then Chandramohan had gone to Mumbai for his PhD and Mohan Prasad took the lead role, with Prof. Jussay bringing Chilprakash more formally into the team. The operations ran from the Mather Square office. The seed capital for initial expenses had been raised through bank loans taken on the personal security of the office bearers.

The exhibition was held in January 1995 at the Marine Drive grounds on the western side of the High Court, on land that now carries apartments and government institutions. The Chief Minister, K Karunakaran, had agreed to inaugurate but changed his schedule at the last moment; Dr. Unnikrishna Pillai, Principal of REC Calicut, stepped in. The valedictory was addressed by Justice K T Thomas of the Supreme Court. New participants included FACT, the Police Department, Medical College Calicut and KSEB. There was a police band performance. Despite the hard

work the second exhibition made a slight loss.

These two exhibitions remain the most significant industrial events ever conducted in Kerala at the state level, outside of the small fairs run by district industry departments. It was an opportunity provided by RECCAA but not appreciated by the people of Kochi.

# RECCAA CENTRE, THE HOUSING SOCIETY AND RECCAA VALLEY

The success of RECCAA Enclave at Padamugal had opened the leadership's eyes to the housing needs of Kochi's growing professional class. It had also made clear that the alumni association needed a more formal structure to manage assets and business activities. RECCAA Centre was formed in 1988 with Dr. Babu T Jose as President and Sathisa Baboo as Secretary. Prof. K J Paulose of the 1970 batch served as Treasurer of RECCAA Centre from its inception. RECCAA Centre purchased around 4.5 acres of land at Kakkanad near IMG. Laligro was involved in surveying the land, literally swimming in the water-logged area! Later on, 2 acres of land was sold to Sainik Ashram project.

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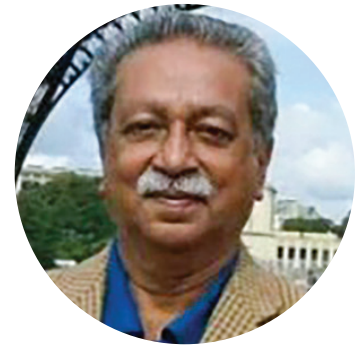
# THE HOUSING SOCIETY



Dr. Babu T Jose



Sathisa Baboo  
(1967 batch)



Prof. K J Paulose  
(1970 batch)



Prof. P M Jussay  
(Late)



Mathew M Mathew  
(1979 batch)



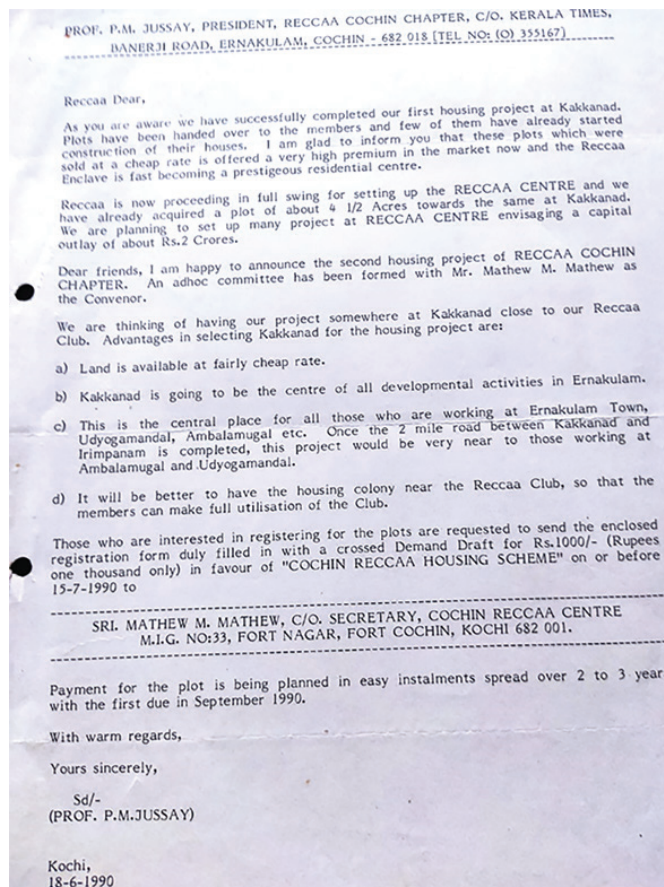
A G Avrachen

A separate organisation, the Cochin RECCAA Housing Society, was formed in 1990 with Prof. P M Jussay as President, Mathew M Mathew as Secretary and A G Avrachen as Treasurer. On 18th June 1990, Prof. Jussay wrote to RECCAA members inviting them to register for housing plots. One hundred and eleven members signed up.

A search committee headed by Devadas and Joseph Philip began a systematic hunt for suitable land.

Sukumaran, Babu T Jose, Sadick, Michael K M, Mathew M Mathew, Avrachen and Alexander K P were all part of this effort. After visiting many locations, the committee selected land at Kakkanad, close to what would later become the Infopark and SEZ corridor.

The members needed about eight acres for residential plots, but the committee decided to purchase around fifteen acres to accommodate roads, canals, drainage, a club area and future development. The land was completely undeveloped and





MR Devadas  
(1969 batch)



RECCAA Valley in 2011



Joseph Philip  
(1975 batch)

waterlogged at the time. Mathew M Mathew recalls that when the purchase was made, in 1990, the airport road had not yet been completed.

The Exe. Committee of Housing Society with Prof. Jussay, Dr. Babu T Jose, A M Sadick, Joseph Philip, late K P Alexander, A G Avrachen, Mathew M Mathew etc. were meeting on every Wednesday in Bharath Tourist Home

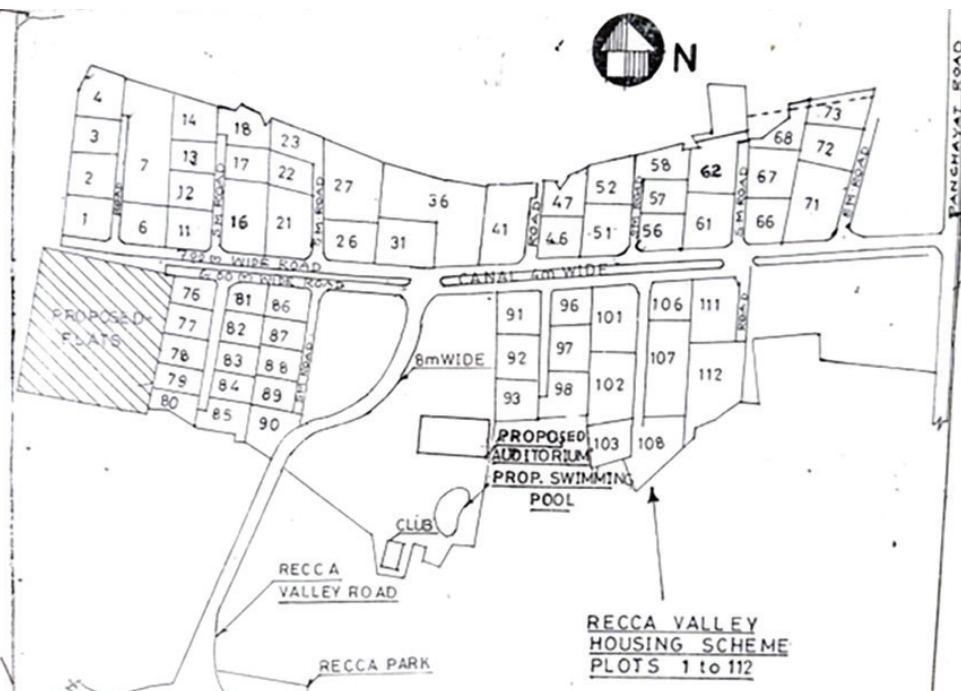
and had very detailed discussions about the project implementation.

A G Avrachen, was made in charge of the civil work almost by default. His expertise was in construction; he had been working with Cochin Port. The land procurement was already in progress when he joined the committee, and from the land-filling stage onward he was the person on the ground.

## BUILDING ON WATER

The land presented formidable challenges. It was entirely waterlogged. There were no approach roads. Only a couple of houses existed in the vicinity, accessible only by a narrow walkway that became unusable in the monsoon. The purchase was made in stages from more than forty landowners, a process that involved considerable negotiation and required the support of a local panchayat member to complete.

Once the land was acquired, a four-metre-wide central canal of about three hundred and fifty metres was constructed to manage water flow. Roads were built on both sides of the canal, seven metres wide on one side and six on the other. By-lanes to individual plots were five metres wide. The land was divided into sixty-four housing plots of varying sizes. The entire process of acquisition, plotting, development and collection of instalments took about four years, with significant effort from Mathew M Mathew and A G Avrachen. In



A sketch of the ReccaaValley plots prepared in 1994.



*Joseph Laligro  
(1974 batch)*

1994, GCDA approved the entire project under its development scheme, with Joseph Laligro's involvement proving critical once again. The plots were handed over to members between 1994 and 1996. The main attraction of the project was that the members could make the payments for the plots in instalments, spread over a period of 4 years. The remaining land, intended for roads, drainage and a future club,

was retained by the society.

A road was also constructed from the top of the hill down into the valley as a charitable gesture to the few residents of the area, significantly raising land values in the locality. The neighbouring landowners benefited considerably from this investment. In return, as Avrachen notes with some wryness, several of them created significant problems for every subsequent phase of construction.

## RECCAA HEIGHTS

**D**uring this same period, RECCAA Centre, purchased additional land near the housing project site and constructed RECCAA Heights, a three-storey housing project for members. This too was executed under Avrachen's supervision.



# LAND FOR THE TO-BE-CLUB AND FUTURE PROJECTS

The plot development was effectively managed by RECCAA Housing Society/ RECCAA Centre leading to a surplus of 3 acres of the land in the Valley which was specifically set aside for a club

The founder President of the Housing Society, Prof. P M Jussay was the President till his demise. Mathew M Mathew continued as the secretary.

During the late nineties, land prices in the area were not getting

appreciated as expected. Some of the buyers started blaming Prof. Jussay for advising bad investment. Chilprakash and Francis K Paul arranged funds and bought back the land from those who complained. Later when it was legally feasible, the pieces of land owned by individuals were transferred to RECCAA Housing society. Some land was registered in the name of Prof. Jussay in his capacity as President of

RECCAA Chapter, which in turn was transferred to NITCAA Cochin Chapter as a gesture of goodwill to the Kochi Alumni fraternity. This later became the NITCAA Tower.

A building acquired along with the land was renovated, and a stage was set up, and was the old Cochin RECCAA club. The building was later converted to staff quarters of the current RECCAA Club.



*Pre-existing building*

# DRIFT, DISCORD AND THE REBOUND

Nothing in the history of RECCAA was inevitable. There was a decade in which it could all have come apart. The initiatives had succeeded. The housing projects were done. The exhibitions were behind them. People were busy with demanding careers, growing families and the ordinary pressures of life. And then, more seriously, there were disagreements among the leadership, differences of opinion

among office-bearers that hardened over time into something that paralysed the organisation.

For close to 15 years, RECCAA Center, and RECCAA Housing Society were effectively at a standstill. The assets existed, the land at the Valley sat waiting, but the shared will to move forward had fractured. What had once felt like a family began to feel like a dispute.

## PROF. JUSSAY'S LAST REQUEST

The core group celebrated Prof. Jussay's 75th birthday with a dinner. He was the chief editor of Kerala Times at the time and in characteristic form. Then, within a week of the celebration, he was taken ill and required surgery. When the team visited him afterwards, he was cheerful as ever and made a remark that those present have never forgotten: 'God almighty was not even aware of my existence, until you celebrated my birthday, and I would not have become sick had you not done that.'

In 2004, Chilprakash, who had been consumed by a personally challenging period in his own life, learned that Prof. Jussay was unwell and went to visit him. What he found was a man physically tired, but more than that, worn down by grief. Not grief for himself, but for the vision he had spent thirty years building.

Prof. Jussay had accomplished a great deal in his life. Scholar, editor, orator, teacher. But what had truly mattered to him was that the alumni

of REC Calicut would remain part of one family and, through that unity, build something worthy of what they were capable of. The club at the Valley was the concrete expression of that dream. And it was not happening.

Chilprakash consoled him. He told Prof. Jussay that the alumni could still be brought together, that whatever was holding them back could be addressed. Prof. Jussay asked him to take it on as a personal challenge. Chilprakash agreed.

# PROF. JUSSAY'S FINAL YEARS

Prof. Jussay lived to see the resurrection of RECCAA. He died in 2007 at the age of 87, having seen the charitable society formed and the land secured. He did not live to see the club built. But he had, in a very real sense, made it happen.

*Painting by Beena K S  
(1979 Batch)*



## THE RECONCILIATION



*Chilprakash  
(1977 batch)*



*Francis K Paul  
(1972 batch)*



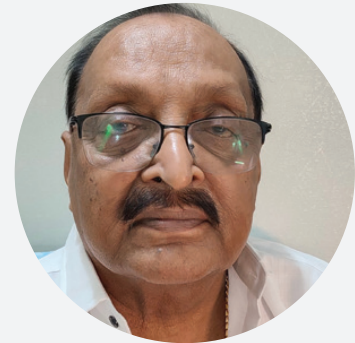
*Sudesh Jain  
(1972 batch)*



*Jayaprakash G  
(1970 batch)*



*Suresh Manimala  
(1980 batch)*



*PK Sudhakara Menon  
(1970 batch)*

In 2005, Chilprakash, Francis K Paul, Sadick, Sudesh Jain and Jayaprakash formed a committee to resolve the disagreements and chart a path forward. They worked through the differences, identified a structure that could hold all the various entities together under one legal body, and spent nearly four years planning.

As a first step toward rebuilding the community, a grand full-day gathering was organised on 26th January 2006 at Silversands Island in Vyttila. Leaders across the RECCAA network made special efforts to bring in new members and younger alumni, many from the 1990s and 2000s batches, who were attending a RECCAA gathering for the



*A M Sadick  
(1971 batch)*

first time. Prof. P M Jussay attended, almost certainly his last such gathering. Suma Joseph was there too.

In 2007, RECCAA Charitable Society

(RCS) was formally registered. Francis K Paul became its first President and Chilprakash its Secretary. The founding members of RCS were Chilprakash, Francis K Paul, Sudesh Jain, Sadick, Jayaprakash, Sudhakara Menon and Suresh Manimala.

The land and assets held by RECCAA Centre and the Housing Society were donated to RCS. The small first-edition club that had been operating informally in the Valley under Dr. Babu T Jose and Damodaran Namboothiri was merged in too. Members of the above entities became members of the RECCAA Charitable Society. Seven acres of land came under the stewardship of this legal entity for the first time.

# WORLD NITCAA MEET 2011 - THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

The first World RECCAA Meet had been held in Muscat in 2001, organised through the initiative of Sreekumar Pai, the RECCAA leader in Oman. Prof. Jussay, Prof. Sankaran Nair, Francis K Paul and fifteen others from the Cochin chapter attended. Suma Joseph made the trip in her wheelchair. Subsequent meets were

held in Chennai in 2007 and Dubai in 2010. At the Chennai meet, Fazal Ali and the Cochin team took responsibility for the next gathering, which would fall in the Golden Jubilee year of 2011. On 26th January 2011, V M Fazal Ali of the 1979 batch was elected President of NITCAA Cochin chapter and Sandeep Krishnan KK was elected Secretary for

a third consecutive term. The most consequential achievement of their committee was the organisation of the World NITCAA Meet in Kochi, commemorating the Golden Jubilee of REC Calicut. Joseph Philip (1975 batch) was the Chairman of the WNM 2011 Organizing Committee.



*Fazal Ali  
(1979 batch)*



*Sandeep Krishnan KK  
(2002 batch)*



*Joseph Philip  
(1975 batch)*

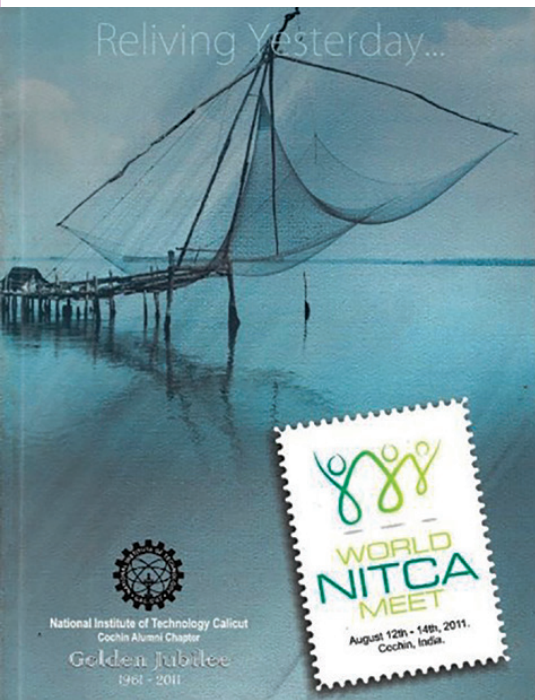
# ORGANISING THE MEET

An organising committee was formed drawing members from a wide range of batches, ensuring that almost every era of the institution's history was represented in the effort. The committee met every single week for about a year, tracking progress

systematically. Members travelled to cities across India and abroad to personally invite chapter delegates, covering all such expenses from their own pockets. The funding came from alumni sponsorships and advertising in the event brochure.

Fazal Ali, Joseph Philip and Prof. Babu T Jose travelled to Delhi to invite the

President of India, Smt. Prathibha Patil, to the event. Through former secretary Christi Fernandez, who had personal connections with Fazal and hosted the delegation at his residence, an invitation was extended. The President could not attend due to prior commitments but sent her personal greetings, which were carried in the event brochure.



**DR. CHRISTY FERNANDEZ IAS**  
SECRETARY TO THE  
PRESIDENT OF INDIA



### MESSAGE

The President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, is happy to know that the National Institute of Technology Calicut is organising a World NITCA Meet 2011 from August 12-15, 2011 to commemorate its Golden Jubilee Celebrations.

It is quite heartening to note that the alumni of NIT Calicut has come together to encourage engineering education, which is facing serious challenges of quality standards and professionalism. The President is confident that the knowledge, skills and experience of the NITCA members will go a long way in helping the betterment of technical education.

The President extends her warm greetings and felicitations to the organisers and the participants and wishes the events every success.

  
(Christy Fernandez)

New Delhi  
8 July 2011

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN  
NEW DELHI - 110004  
TEL : 011-23014930, 23013324  
FAX : 011-23017290, 23017824  
email: christyfernandez@rb.nic.in  
christyfernandez@gmail.com

### WNM 2011 Donor Delegates



# THE EVENT

The World NITCAA Meet of 2011 ran from 12th to 15th August at Bolgatty Palace and Gokulam Convention Centre in Kochi. The theme was 'Reliving Yesterday.' More than a thousand members attended, drawn from the Far East, Middle East, Europe, the United States and most

states of India, from every batch since the institution's founding. It remains the highest-attended World NITCAA Meet on record.

RCS entrusted Dr. Suresh Manimala to create a short film on daily life at REC and NIT Calicut, which when presented, drew waves of nostalgia from the audience.

Chilprakash spoke about the progress of the club construction and invited participants to take up membership, describing the club as the place where this community would come together to achieve greater things for society. Many conversions happened on the spot.



# A FINANCIAL AND HUMAN SPRINGBOARD



*Shilen Sagunan  
(1987 batch)*



*Jijo John  
(1991 batch)*

The meet generated a profit of ten lakhs, primarily from brochure advertising. This money flowed directly into the capital of NITCAA Cochin Chapter. More importantly, the event produced a new generation of leaders for NITCAA Cochin, people who brought energy, networks and fresh perspectives and who would carry the organisation forward for the decade that followed, Shilen Sagunan, alumnus of 1986 batch and Jijo John, alumnus of 1991 batch, who went on to become Secretary and President of RCS in later years, among them.

## CHAPTER 8

# MAKING DREAM INTO REALITY



*RECCAA Club Grounds in 2011*



*RECCAA Club 2016*

# THE CORE TEAM



*Francis K Paul  
Founder President  
(1972 batch)*



*Chilprakash  
Founder Secretary  
(1977 batch)*



*Damodaran Namboodiri  
(1977 batch)*



*Thomas Chacko  
(1979 batch)*



*Poullose Mathew  
(1979 batch)*



*Babu Varghese  
(1968 batch)*



*Avrachen A G  
(1967 batch)*



*Fazal Ali  
(1979 batch)*

The RECCAA Club project formally began on 13th January 2011, when the Bhumi Puja was performed. Construction started the following week. What followed was five years of daily effort, personal sacrifice, financial crisis, local opposition, technical improvisation and the kind of trust that only a community with forty years of shared history could sustain.



## THE VISION AND THE CHALLENGE



Chilprakash  
(1977 batch)

Chilprakash had spent the years before construction visiting clubs across India and abroad, studying their operations, understanding what worked and what did not. One observation was striking: in most clubs, the ratio of businesspeople to salaried professionals was roughly 80:20. In RECCAA, it was the reverse. Mobilising capital from a community of primarily salaried engineers, for a project of this scale, was a fundamentally different challenge. However, there was no shortcut to overcome it, as the focus from beginning

was to bring together people of the same wavelength.

Nobody in the core team accepted a rupee of TA or DA throughout the construction period. Every expense, including airfare and hotel stays when work required travel to other cities, was borne personally. When an income tax scrutiny was conducted, Chilprakash told the Assistant Commissioner plainly that there was no TA/DA line in the RCS ledger because no TA/DA had ever been paid. The officer closed the file with zero liability.

## THE MONEY PROBLEM



When the properties were registered under RCS, the registration fees alone amounted to twenty-five lakhs. This sum was raised by Chilprakash and colleagues within two days, entirely from personal contributions, not from any club assets. The construction therefore began twenty-five lakhs in debt before a single brick was laid.

Damodaran Namboothiri, who served as Treasurer for almost the entire duration of the project, described those years as ones of near-constant financial anxiety. The team applied to six banks for a construction loan, using the club land as collateral. The answer from five of them was no, sometimes with startling speed. The charitable society structure meant that the property could not easily be attached in case of default without government permission, which made banks nervous. The South Indian Bank was the sixth; Chilprakash was dealing with them mainly. They eventually agreed, to give a loan of Rs. 3 crores, but with one critical condition that if RECCAA puts one lakh, the bank will give one lakh loan.

A real shocker came when Bank subsequently informed that Chilprakash has to pledge his assets attested by Chartered Accountant as additional collateral for the release of the funds. Chilprakash had to take that risk to move the project forward. He carried this burden on his own for a period of almost three years, until the new Executive Committee was formed after the first AGM of RCS in 2014. The new executive committee comprising of Francis K Paul, Chilprakash, Damodaran Namboothiri, Supriya MH, Thomas Chacko individually shared their CA



*Damodaran Namboodiri  
(1977 batch)*



*Dr. Supriya MH  
(1988 batch)*



*Hashim PA  
(1979 batch)*

certified net worth statement as a personal guarantee for the loan availed.

The team then created a CD evoking REC memories and nostalgia, with script by Chilprakash and production by Dr. Suresh Manimala, who travelled to Calicut to film student life at NIT. This was presented to alumni groups across India and in Dubai, generating one and a half crores in membership revenue from people who were essentially buying into a club that did not yet exist. The bank responded in kind, releasing another one and a half crores.

When alumni memberships slowed, membership was opened to the public. When the bank's five term loans reached twelve crores, personal loans without interest or guarantee from trusted individuals made up much of the remainder. Chilprakash personally contributed around eighty-five lakhs. Francis K Paul contributed seventy-five lakhs. Sadick and Babu Varghese also made significant contributions. An additional fifty-five lakhs were raised through supplementary memberships, based on the idea from Hashim PA. All these personal loans were fully repaid, with no interest and with gratitude.

The final cost was twenty-five crores. Construction was stretched over time due to financial constraints, compliance requirements and scope expansion, each of which added to the cost. When Hameed the architect said, early on, 'build a good club and the membership will come,' he was giving advice that turned out to be exactly right. Had anyone known at the outset that the final cost would be twenty-five crores, the project would almost certainly not have started.

## THE ARCHITECT AND THE DESIGN

Finding the right architect was not straightforward. The team met several candidates. One European architect wanted money before conversation and would not so much as offer a sketch of what was possible for the

site. RCS was twenty-five lakhs in debt at the time.

Francis K Paul's former roommate, Abdul Hameed, came in with a quote of fifty to sixty lakhs for his fees. Through the goodwill attached to the RECCAA

name, this was negotiated down to seventeen lakhs. Hameed joked that he doubted even this would cover his basic expenses. His daughter Bhavana, an architect, and her husband Harsh, a gold medallist from CEPT Ahmedabad



*Abdul Hameed  
(1972 batch)*

who had completed projects including the Dubai Customs Union Museum, joined the team. In effect, RCS had three architects instead of one. They received Asia runner-up award for the design of RECCAA club building.

The design's most distinctive element is the overarching roof, open to the sky, spanning sixty-five metres and rising to nearly four storeys. It sets the entire ambience of the club. Anil Joseph, an REC alumnus who completed his PhD in structural engineering there, handled the structural design. The roof was originally planned to be assembled on the ground and lifted in one piece. Since the surrounding land was a marsh, cranes could not approach, so ten-metre sections were assembled at ground level, lifted by two cranes, and extended incrementally. When the first section was raised, it swung out of alignment and the correction was a tense and careful operation. The entire roofing structure was eventually completed from scaffolding above, without mishap.

The floors were laid in Jaisalmer stone, brought directly from Rajasthan, rough-cut near the pool and polished elsewhere. The stone and its distinctive one-inch filler joints and handrail detailing were the architects' signature. The waffle slab ceilings, constructed using fibreglass moulds customised by the contractor, gave the ceiling its distinctive grid pattern and allowed lighting to be embedded within each cavity.



*Anil Joseph*



# THE BUILDERS



*Poulose Mathew  
(1979 batch)*

**P**oulose Mathew of the 1979 batch joined the construction team at Chilprakash's request, taking on daily site supervision while simultaneously serving as Chief Engineer at Lakeshore Hospital. He came to the site in the

morning, then went to the hospital. His civil engineering career since the 1990s gave him the technical grounding to guide the contractor on safety, process and quality. He knew Hameed professionally from an earlier hospital



*Avrachen A G  
(1967 batch)*

project, which meant he could interact directly with the architect's staff and resolve problems without the usual delays of formal communication.

On one occasion, when the drawings were causing delays and errors, Poulose took a day's leave, drove to Calicut in Chilprakash's car with the core team, sat in Hameed's office for a full day, and returned that evening with a complete corrected set of construction drawings.

A G Avrachen served as technical adviser and auditor. He reviewed every bill and every bill of quantities, insisting on purchase orders and at least two quotations for every item except specialist services. Nothing was paid without his approval.

Alex, a RECCAA club staff member, who began as the construction supervisor and would later become the club's





Alex

permanent maintenance engineer, arrived on site when the entire area was still a marshland and remained.

There were several tasks to be completed at every stage, including to get the documentation in order for the land. When land from different entities were transferred to RECCAA Charitable Society (RCS), there was a lot of process, documentation and taxation involved. Multiple visits to many offices, intermediaries and influencers to help with timely completion etc. Chilprakash was involved to the point of giving priority to this above his own business. It has never been a casual decision making for him. He meticulously studied everything to arrive at informed decisions, with the support from lawyers and chartered accountants, ensuring it was the right decision for RCS, for then and also for years to come. There were plenty of such scenarios where legal and financial decisions were involved. The whole thing was getting a bit overwhelming for Chilprakash and he requested the support of Thomas Chacko with documentation and communication.

After that was streamlined, Thomas Chacko took on the electrical work, despite being a mechanical engineer. There was no qualified electrical engineer

available locally on a consulting basis. K T Menon, an expert from the 1972 batch, was based in Oman and could visit only occasionally for complex matters. Chacko taught himself what he needed to know. He designed and specified the LED lighting system in the building's early days when the technology was still new and product information was



Thomas Chacko  
(1979 batch)

scarce. He worked with CEMA, the OEM for GE in the US, to source the full range from one-watt to fifty-watt LED fittings. He designed the lighting of every room of the club, specifying colour temperatures appropriate to each space. Then he designed and implemented the entire data and communications network, choosing optical fibre at a moment when it was just becoming affordable. It was, by any measure, an extraordinary piece of self-directed technical work.

Babu Varghese, alumnus of the 1968 batch, had moved to Cochin from Chennai by then. He had strong personal connects with Prof. Jussay and had started the RECCAA Chennai chapter and served as the founder president under his influence. He handled contract negotiations across the project. His decades of experience with major commercial projects, including work with Lulu, gave him an intuitive

feel for market rates and for how far any supplier or contractor could be moved. The core team credits him with consistently securing terms that would not otherwise have been achievable.

Meetings of the construction group used to be conducted at Chilprakash's office, at Edappaly (more than 200 meetings happened at this facility) mostly in the evening, to align with Paulose availability after office hours. Chilprakash, Francis K Paul, Thomas Chacko, Avrachen and Babu Varghese used to be there. Avrachen was much senior and was also very busy. His role was to double check bills, after Paulose's verification. Laligro was there to support civil work from 2012. There was a small portion of land with transformer, near the entry to the club, limiting the width of the entry point. With Laligro's involvement, a plot belonging to GCDA could be acquired to address this issue. There were multiple experts from different



Babu Varghese  
(1968 batch)

aspects of civil engineering. Chacko took up the task of streamlining the versions of drawing. There was a system established to authorise a document for construction. Avrachen or Paulose had to sign it. Everyone was of course contributing without compensation.

# LOCAL OPPOSITION

The construction did not proceed without resistance. The marshland had to be filled to a height of three feet before anything could be built, and that filling work triggered the first of many confrontations. When the land was just ten truck loads from completion, a local resident complained and a stop memo was issued by the village officer. Construction halted for a month. Chilprakash, Hashim and Francis K Paul met the District Collector and obtained a resumption order.

At various stages there were stop memos from the panchayat, complaints about vibration from piling, a trade union leader who demanded five memberships as the price of peace, an incident in which a local resident took the key of

a construction truck by force and the matter had to be resolved at the police station. Damodaran Namboothiri, as the most visible face of RCS in the locality, faced the most sustained pressure, including a criminal case arising from drainage works that ran briefly as front-page news across the media. Criminal case was subsequently dismissed.



*Fazal Ali  
(1979 batch)*

In every instance, the team held their ground, found legal and administrative remedies, and continued. The club's compound wall was eventually built. The access road was completed. The back gate was secured, partly through the transfer of a small piece of land that had been in Alexander K P's name.

Fazal Ali was there always to support in case of issues during construction, despite whether the challenge was technical, administrative or operational in nature, with his out of the box thinking and solutions. He still continues to drive the vision and strategy of the club and stands as a pillar of support whenever there is an external challenge.

# INTRODUCING THE CLUB IN CONSTRUCTION TO THE MEMBERS

While the construction was in progress and when the reception floor was just ready, a NITCAA meeting was conducted at the club. This was on 1st May 2013. Just the concreting of the

reception floor and the floor above was complete. There were no walls and no proper flooring. A temporary screen made of white cloth was put in place to facilitate the meeting. Food

beverages were served there. It made the people who paid for membership comfortable, witnessing the progress of construction themselves. It also enticed many to take up membership.

# THE SWIMMING POOL, THE COTTAGES, AND THE REST

The swimming pool opened on 10th May 2015. The club's soft launch was on 15th September 2015, in the presence of alumni members.

Towards making the club self-sustaining, a hotel consultant suggested to Chilprakash, to construct more number of guest rooms to ensure financial sustainability. Accordingly, it was decided to build 24 rooms, which was much higher in number than regular clubs. This proved to be a game changer. Poulose Mathew suggested to make three story buildings instead of two to maximise the lawn area. These kind of ideation and detailed planning is what made the club successful.

The basic amenities, including twelve guest rooms, were inaugurated over this period. The cottage framework was in place, with completion to follow. Initially, Ms Shilcy Antony, a staff member of Chilprakash, handled accounting and member canvassing without any

remuneration, for almost 5 years. At the time of opening there were four members of staff: Alex, Shajeer, Vivek and Nevin. Shajeer joined when the membership campaign for non-alumni started. Chilprakash or someone else from executive committee and Shajeer used to visit prospective members at their home to convince them. Initial period was pure struggle as the club was under construction. Operations had been run from Chilprakash's Chilton Tower office until the club premises were ready.

Chilprakash visited the construction site twice every day throughout the five years of construction.



Shajeer



# FINDING ITS FEET

Opening a club and running one are two entirely different things. The years after the soft launch of 2015 were ones of learning, adaptation, financial stress and, ultimately, transformation.

## EARLY OPERATIONAL STRUGGLES

Getting the restaurant running required approvals from multiple local bodies. The original staffing model, with all restaurant employees directly employed, created constant attrition. People were not looking for long-term employment in hospitality and kept moving on. After a difficult period, the decision was made to outsource the restaurant operation to a contractor, who in turn was the original head chef of the club. This model proved far simpler and has remained in place.

The bar licence required a ten-year

wait from the date of RCS registration in 2007, meaning the earliest the permit room could open was 2017. It also required an indoor badminton court and two external courts as prerequisites. The external courts were manageable, but a proper indoor badminton court was a significant investment. The bank agreed to redirect funds originally allocated for twelve additional rooms toward the court construction instead. It required minimum 5 affiliations for obtaining bar license. Since the club was in its early stages, many clubs were

not willing. The court that was built turned out to be one of the best in the locality: teak floors, proper airflow managed so that shuttle movement was not affected, and no need for air conditioning. It attracted seventeen new memberships on the strength of the facility alone, covering the twenty-five lakh investment and also funding the twelve rooms that had been deferred. When the bar opened, memberships and affiliations rose sharply. Charter membership had given way to life membership as the standard option.

# DEMONETISATION, FLOOD AND COVID

Within months of the bar opening, demonetisation struck. New memberships dropped significantly. Revenue from operations was still finding its feet. Financial pressure was relentless.

In 2018, Kerala experienced catastrophic flooding. The RECCAA Club, to the surprise of many, did not flood. Its design and the land-raising work of the early construction phase held. Many members and their families sought shelter at the club during the crisis.

RECCAA Club, NITCAA Cochin Chapter and Thrikkakara Municipality, joined hands in flood relief activities – running collection centres, delivering essentials to affected areas, post-flood cleaning of houses and wells, etc. The initiative was led by a team of more than 20 people from different batches. The team raised funds and by using in-house engineering skills, built two houses and repaired another for flood relief victims. Mohandas, Darryl, Noufal, Santhosh, Francis K Paul, Shilen, Supriya, Damodaran Namboothiri, Ashok, Thankachan Thomas and several others contributed.

Then came COVID. For nearly two years, practically every revenue stream shut down. The restaurant and bar were closed for extended periods. Events stopped. New memberships



*Mohandas MM  
(1972 batch)*

dried up. Cottage occupancy fell to near zero. Over twenty lakhs had to be paid to the bank each month regardless. Chilprakash and Francis K Paul paid loan instalments from their personal funds. At one stage the club owed Chilprakash close to eighty-five lakhs and Francis K Paul around seventy-five lakhs.

The bank, informed of the situation, offered a moratorium on loan repayments,



*Thankachan Thomas  
(1980 batch)*

which was the only external relief. The situation was so desperate that the members were invited to voluntarily contribute Rupees Ten Thousand each and many members supported. There was also an appeal for Rupees One lakh each as an interest-free loan, receiving ten thousand rupees in food and beverage coupons in return. The idea floated by Mr Thankachan Thomas is fondly remembered as Thankachan Coupons. Many contributed. Babu Varghese proposed sponsorship of cottage rooms by alumni batches and many batches ended up sponsoring the cottage rooms and other facilities to support the club during this crisis situation. Babu Varghese sponsored the video conferencing equipment; he and Mohandas sponsored two televisions for the bar. While revenue from operations were near zero but expenses for upkeep remained same or increased slightly, the club had to approach the bank again for loan. Due to the excellent track record in repayment, the loan was sanctioned instantly, over phone, at very lenient terms. Throughout the worst of it, not a single salary payment to staff was delayed. All personal expenses of committee members continued to be paid from their own pockets.

# THE TURNAROUND

The strategy that pulled the club through was built across two consecutive committees, with planning under Babu Varghese's presidency and execution under Chilprakash's.

Eleven subcommittees were formed across all aspects of club operations: food, marketing, sales, construction, electrical, affiliations, sports, IT, cultural and more.

Jijo John had taken charge of marketing team. Systematic changes were introduced to the membership process: online application forms, a structured lead database, batch leader groups and digital marketing through social media. Jijo introduced a structured onboarding process, rigorous tracking, proactive outreach before each fee revision, and a pipeline approach. The database grew to nearly five hundred prospective members. There was a comprehensive marketing video to have the brand marketing at the RECCAA club facilities brought in additional revenue. Latha took the responsibility of releasing the Club newsletter at regular intervals. Membership revenue across this period totalled around twelve crores.

The teamwork of the Executive Committee has been exceptional. Chilprakash, Shilen, Jijo, Damodaran Namboothiri and Prasanth. Each were coming to the club on most days. Membership interviews used to happen on 2-3 days per week at least. Damodaran Namboothiri continued to come to the club every day, more than once on many days. There are examples of hospitality ventures closing down because of leadership issues,



*Prasanth Pillai*

unity of the leadership has been a clear differentiator in RECCAA club.

Continuity and succession planning has been another important aspect. Most of the key people in the Governing Council (GC) has entrepreneurship background and this really helped.

Prasanth is 2002 batch who took interest in financial matters to give it a more professional face, Chilprakash from 1977 batch. People with 25 years gap, working together in a team may be very rare to find elsewhere.

Affiliations, headed by Gigo Joseph, grew to a hundred. The badminton and pickleball programs under Manu attracted footfall, the IT systems under Noufal managed ERP (Lucid) implementation and website updates. Cultural events under Ranjini Menon kept the member base engaged and generated interest in the public. All collectively contributed to a club that



*Gigo Joseph  
(1994 batch)*



*Manu J Plamootil  
(Batch 2004)*



*Ranjini Menon  
(1990 batch)*



*Noufal GK  
(Batch 1996)*

was becoming genuinely active and attractive.

The bye-laws were thoroughly reviewed and certain sections were redrafted to align with the future direction of the club under the initiative of Geogy Thomas and Jacob Kurian, the latter handling the legal aspects. Cost discipline was applied throughout. Electricity consumption was monitored and the contract demand reduced. The Omni van was sold when the kitchen was outsourced and the vehicle had no remaining utility. The old building was renovated and converted to staff accommodation, saving on rental costs. Swiggy and Zomato were brought in as delivery partners, adding a revenue stream that required no capital investment. With social media campaigns, events booking increased hence quite a lot of people visited RECCAA and was impressed by it. Direction boards in and around Kakkanad helped. Infopark marketing happened with CEO groups being invited and treated multiple times. Entrepreneurial speaker series, as a joint project of NITCAA and RCS, brought technocrats to the club. Membership in the locality increased. Most of these were non alumni. This helped in increasing the revenue and daily footfall to the club. All major corporations in Kochi sought corporate memberships in RECCAA Club.

Demand for guest rooms increased multi fold and on many days, it was 100% occupancy. Catering to the additional demand, a set of rooms leased from Clubvale, an apartment complex built by NITCAA alumni, opposite the RECCAA

Club premises, increasing the number of total available cottage rooms from 24 to 33

By the financial year 2023-24, all loans had been cleared, four years ahead of the schedule the bank had set post-COVID. The club carried a surplus of over one and a half crores. RECCAA Charitable Society's total assets stood at seventy to seventy-five crores.

RECCAA Club was reinventing itself with plenty of new features and renovations, turning it into one of the best clubs in Kerala. A venue that could accommodate large gatherings of over 500 was much sought after. Lawn auditorium was constructed to cater to this need. Chilprakash and Shilen were the brains behind it. Paulose Mathew was involved for the construction. Many plans which were delayed because of the paucity of funds, was materialized, as the club began to have surplus revenue.

Mr Vivek Venugopal, brought in as CEO, took ownership of the club operations and provided the club with a much-needed professional face.

Biggest achievement has been to lead the strategy and implementation of transforming a loss-making establishment to one of the best clubs in India. Strategy building for that was done by Chilprakash, Shilen and Jijo. That strategy was shared to committees and sub committees and they took it forward. It is, as everyone who was part of the journey will readily acknowledge, a transformation that was not inevitable and was not easy.



*Geogy Thomas  
(1979 batch)*



*Jacob Kurian  
(1980 batch)*



*Vivek Venugopal*



*Jijo John  
(1991 batch)*

# FACELIFTING OF THE CLUB

The RECCAA Club that members experience today is a significantly different place from the one that soft-launched in 2015. A sustained programme of renovation and new facilities, led by Shilen Sagunan and team has transformed the space comprehensively.



*Shilen*

# THE KITCHEN AND THE BAKERY



The kitchen renovation addressed a structural problem that had been limiting service quality for years. When banquet events were underway, the restaurant could not be served properly from the same kitchen. An external consultant, with a background at Taj Group and international exposure, was engaged through the F&B committee.

The plan was to complete the renovation in ten days without shutting the restaurant. It was done in seven. A dedicated banquet kitchen was established with large-capacity skillets and proper ventilation. A new cold storage chain was created with a butchery unit at sixteen degrees, ensuring freshness from delivery to kitchen. A direct door was added from the main kitchen to the lobby, eliminating the need to carry banquet food through the restaurant and adding a visible accountability dimension.

A bakery was established in the space that became available after the reorganisation, equipped with a spreader and kneading machine on the recommendation of a Kannur-based consultant. The bakery now produces biscuits, cakes, bread, pastries, donuts

and other items both for the club and on order for premium hotels in Kochi. A Paris-trained chef is in charge. The Coffee Shop at the club lounge, inaugurated by John K Paul, serves the bakery's products.

*Bakery*



# THE PHI BAR



Darryl Andrew  
(1980 batch)

The bar renovation was a more complex creative challenge. The space had acoustic problems and insufficient privacy; complaints about noise and echo were regular, particularly on weekends. Darryl Andrew took personal charge of the project, eventually connecting with interior designer Likhith Job, who happened to be a regular club visitor and had been silently puzzling over the same problems the committee was trying to solve.

Likhith's design increased seating

capacity by fifty percent while improving privacy, managing acoustics with acoustic polyfibre panels carrying printed scenery on the walls, adding fluted HDF panels at the bar counter, and hanging glasses from the ceiling at Shilen's suggestion. The work was completed in twenty-six days. When the door design arrived, Darryl noticed that its pattern resembled the Greek symbol Phi, standing for the golden ratio. The name, for a space where people come seeking life's golden ratio, was immediately and unanimously adopted.



# THE LAWN AUDITORIUM



Lawn Auditorium, when it was originally built

The hangar on the edge of the lawn was built to accommodate large functions with separate entry, to provide easy access to the guests, without disturbing the club members. The built area was 6500 square feet and could accommodate 500+ pax. It is equipped with industrial ceiling fans; it was a great addition to the RECCAA Club facilities.

The Lawn Auditorium was subsequently converted to a fully air-conditioned facility under the supervision of Chilprakash and Gigo, with a seventy-seven-tonne package-type system designed for uniform cooling and partial load management. Members attending events have noted the improvement in comfort significantly.



# THE LOUNGE, THE NEW RESTAURANT AND MORE

A banquet dining area was created in the lobby space, ending the practice of serving banquet guests in the crowded lounge and creating a member-only zone beyond the reception.

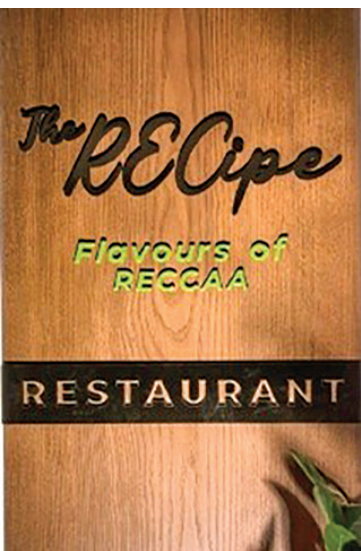
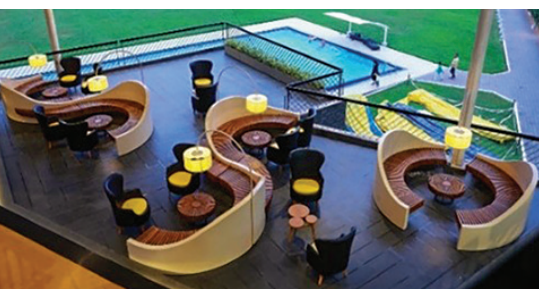
Kuttukaran Hall received new flooring, acoustic treatment and an LED screen and can now accommodate two hundred seated guests with fifty floating for buffets, along with a live food counter.

Three Private Dining Rooms adjacent to the pool, converted from unused space, have become among the most sought-after spaces in the club for small gatherings.



The lounge renovation produced the S-shaped seating arrangement visible from the cottages and facing the P2 LED screen installed at the staircase landing. The seating is movable, allowing

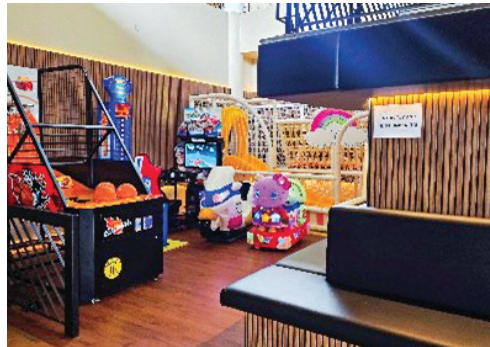
reconfiguration for match screenings. Teak wood and acrylic were chosen for the materials after two months of evaluating options for durability in a space exposed to sun and rain.





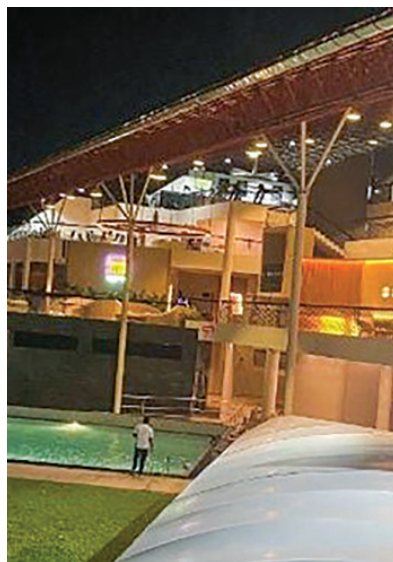
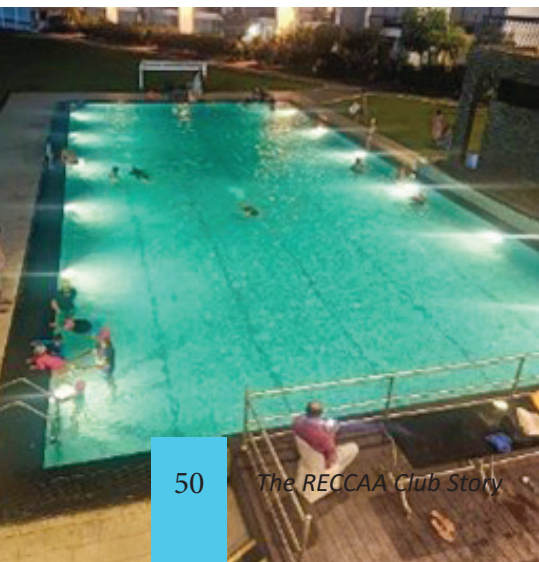
A competition to name the renovated restaurant received over three hundred and fifty entries. The winning name, RECIpe: Flavours of RECCAA, was unveiled by Mr. and Mrs. A M Sadick, a moment carrying deep symbolic resonance: the man who had been present at the very founding dinner forty years earlier, now present at this.

Two international-standard pickleball courts were inaugurated on 7th December 2025 by S Suhas of CIAL and Sushant Kurunthil, CEO of Infopark.



An arcade for younger members opened on 8th February 2026.

A 135 kilowatt solar power station, implemented under the initiative of Damodaran Namboothiri and Kunju Mohammed of the 1981 batch, now produces more than five hundred units daily. Two electric vehicle charging stations operate in the car park on a revenue-sharing model.



The pool underwent a major renovation, to enhance member experience.

# THE CLUB IN NUMBERS

The club today employs close to a hundred and fifty people directly and through contractors. It has twenty-four cottage rooms, nine studio apartments, three event halls, two board rooms, three private dining rooms, two indoor

badminton courts, two pickleball courts, a squash court, billiards, a bakery, a coffee shop, a restaurant, a permit room, a gym, a swimming pool with a separate children's pool, an arcade and one of the finest lawns in the city. It

holds a hundred affiliations with clubs across India and abroad. It is, by any measure, one of the finest clubs in Kerala.

## CHAPTER 11

# THE PEOPLE WHO DRIVE THE CLUB FORWARD

The ten-year journey and the transformation would not have been possible without the continued contribution of many dedicated and self-driven individuals.

## THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC)

The team consisting of Gigo Joseph (Secretary), Jijo John (President), Damodaran Namboothiri (Joint Secretary), Ranjini Menon (Vice President), Prasanth Pillai (Treasurer) meets frequently and are always on top of the operations, new projects and initiatives.

## THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (GC 2024-26)

GC meetings are held on a monthly basis. The GC members coordinate the subcommittees that drives project areas and initiatives.



# THE STRATEGIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The SAC comprising of Francis K Paul, Babu Varghese, Chilprakash, Damodaran Namboothiri, Fazal Ali, and Geogy Thomas provides strategic guidance and continuity of the founding vision of the club.

# CULTURAL COMMITTEE AND LADIES FORUM



Under the leadership of Ranjini Menon, the Cultural Committee and Ladies Forum have successfully organized numerous events. The cultural committee team of Vasant S, Roshan Balakrishnan, Biju George, Silvia George were taking member experience to



a new level through grand New Year celebrations, dance, drama, music, heritage arts, etc.

The Ladies forum led by Usha Nair and team organised Women's Day programs, fashion shows, exhibitions,

ladies picnics, charity work etc.

These vibrant initiatives not only witnessed enthusiastic participation from members, but also significantly enhanced the name and fame of the RECCAA Club.



Thomas Mathew  
(1979 batch)

# SPORTS COMMITTEE

Headed by Thomas Mathew, this team ensures addition of new sports facilities and up keep of existing ones. With Pickleball courts being a fascinating new addition to the club, and specialized coaching classes with experts brought in internationally, sports facilities have

been buzzing with participants. There have been summer camps and sports competitions as prelude to club day covering all sports categories conducted by a team comprising of Ajish, George John, Augustine, Mathew Thomas, Sachin, Laligro, Manu and Biju George.

# THE ELECTRICAL COMMITTEE

Headed by Kunju Muhammed, this committee is responsible for the most critical part of club's operations. They led the massive solar implementation, in two phases. With total production capacity of 135 KW, we are able to produce more than 450 units per day, which covers about 34% of power

requirement of the club. As a step towards sustainable future, through Solar generation we have achieved approximately 205 tons of reduction of carbon emission in a span of 1 year. The team is comprising of Damodaran Namboothiri, Mathew, Harris and Shyam.

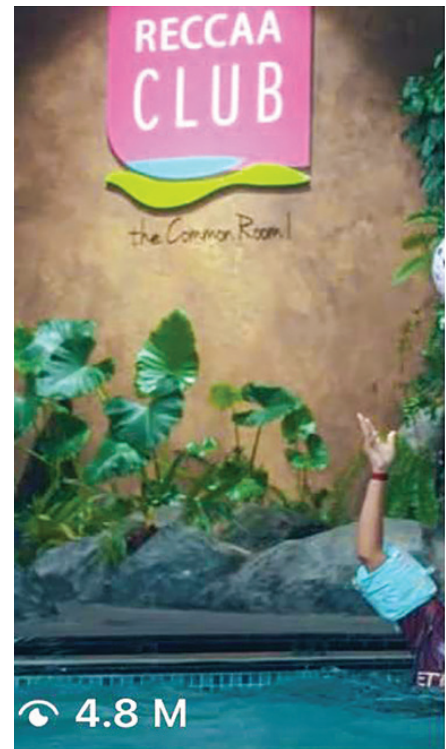


Kunju Mohammed  
(1981 batch)

# MARKETING COMMITTEE



This team has been spreading word about the club, focusing on visually engaging and professionally crafted reels that highlight the club’s world-class amenities. These efforts culminated in a remarkable milestone—our content reached nearly 5 million views in social media. Our Google rating stands proudly at 4.5 stars, a testament to the exceptional experiences we offer. This consistently high score places us among the top-rated clubs in India. Key people driving this initiative are Sushil, Noufal, Santhosh, Sachin, and Mithun.



# CHARITY COMMITTEE

Charity is one of the major aims of RECCAA. Starting from 2007, even during the days of the financial struggles and heavy burden of bank loans, there has been an amount set aside for charity on monthly basis. This gradually grew as the club became stable financially. There are different ways the club is touching lives of people, such as supplies for kids, keeping our facility

open for differently abled and socially sidelined, recognizing outperforming students, donating medicines et al. In the recent years, RECCAA Club donated a home care van and also funded an ambulance for the District Co-operative hospital. The team that makes this difference is Ashok, Namboothiri, Santhosh, Noufal and Ranjini.



Ashok Kumar B  
(1978 batch)



Santhosh Melekalathil  
(1996 batch)



# THERE ARE MORE...



*Rethish Kumar  
1976 Batch*

The construction team headed by Rethish Kumar is the silent force behind the renovations and upliftment

happening at the club. The IT Infrastructure Committee headed by Sushil Cherian, ensures seamless internet connectivity and smooth functioning of the IT systems. Latha drives the affiliations committee, bringing in new affiliate clubs from all over India and abroad after a thorough vetting process. The team of Latha and Leena Mathews captures the glimpses of various events happening in the club and combines that with the creative contributions from the members to create a quarterly Newsletter which provides an engaging reading experience for the members.



*Sushil Cherian  
(1995 batch)*

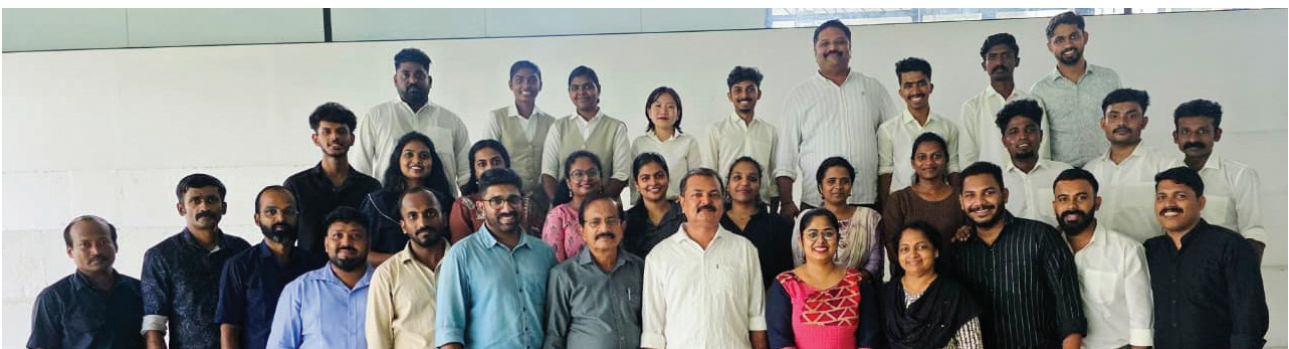
With the growth in internal and external stakeholder engagements, there is an increasing need for proper minuting and documentation in legally defensible format, which is ably handled by Manu.

## BATCH LEADERS' GROUP.. THE NAVIGATORS



There are more than 100 people contributing in the Batch leaders' group. They are the advocates of the club, making the membership drives successful attracting people to the club; also the critics that ensure seamless operations at the club. The Batch leaders meet up periodically, renewing the bond, getting themselves up-to-date on club's initiatives and more importantly act as a feedback mechanism helping to streamline operations.

## THE OPERATIONS TEAM



It needed a lot of intervention to run club operations earlier. Each function used to be handled by a designated GC member. Now the club operations are

autonomous with the CEO, Vivek and his team. That was a major change, in the club operations, making the system accountable.

# LOOKING BACK

Looking back, the word that comes most readily to those who were part of this journey is trust. Not as an abstract value but as a practical operating principle that shaped every decision.

Land was transferred before payment was made. Loans were given without receipts. People flew between cities and paid their own fares. Architects worked for a fraction of their usual fees. A treasurer oversaw nearly ninety-five percent of the capital expenditure of a twenty-five-crore project without ever claiming a personal expense. The income tax officer who scrutinised the accounts found, as Chilprakash had told him he would, that there was no TA/DA line in the entire ledger because no TA/DA had ever been paid.

The individuals who made the difference are too many to fully enumerate. But some must be mentioned.

**Francis K Paul** was the longest serving president of RCS. He brought in significant organisational management experience which helped RCS to thrive and prosper during some of the most difficult times. His unconditional backing allowed the leadership to take risks it could not otherwise have taken.

**Babu Varghese** brought negotiating skills that the team describes as close to magic. He consistently secured commercial terms that no one else had thought achievable, always with a calm demeanour and without antagonising anyone.

**Thomas Chacko**, the electrical engineer who was actually a mechanical engineer, made the lighting and communications systems of the club work through sheer persistence and self-directed learning. His contribution is embodied in every light fitting and data cable in the building.

**Poulose Mathew**, from Blueprint to Building; the engineer of the RECCAA Club. He interfaced with the architects' team, corrected drawings, worked with the construction team ensuring their safety, verified bills, attended meetings, all while working double time, over and above his regular job.

**A G Avrachen**, the technical adviser and auditor for the civil work, reviewing every bill and bill of quantities, insisting on purchase orders and at least two quotations for every item.

**Damodaran Namboothiri** served as Treasurer for nearly the entire life of the project. He came to the club every day, often more than once. He scrutinised every invoice. He never lost sight of the numbers while others were absorbed by the construction.

**Fazal Ali**, is the strategic visionary who is fondly known as 'Godfather' in his close circles within the club. He organised the World NITCAA Meet of 2011 that generated the community momentum that made the club's construction possible. His out of the box solutions helped the club solve critical issues many a time.

And if one person has to stand apart from all the others, it is **Chilprakash**. The core team is unanimous. His contribution was not in any one domain but across all of them: the fiscal planning, the legal and documentation work, the construction oversight, the daily site visits, the membership campaigns, the contractor relationships, the regulatory battles. He gave this project the most important thing it needed: someone who would never let it stop.



# WAY FORWARD FOR RCS

What began as a seed of goodwill, planted quietly into the collective consciousness of a few kind, capable, and dedicated individuals over forty years ago, has grown into a mighty tree. Its roots run deep into the values of integrity and selfless service that

defined this community from the very first gathering on a parapet wall in Ernakulam. Its canopy now shelters more than two thousand members, a hundred-fifty-strong staff family, and a facility that stands among the finest clubs in India.

## RECCAA CARES

is a senior living facility within the RECCAA Valley ecosystem, within walkable distance from the club.

## RECCAA GIVES

is an initiative through which RCS can fund charity projects creating beneficial impact to the society.

## RECCAA SMART

is a proposed coworking cum startup incubation and skill development hub on the RECCAA property near IMG.

## RECCAA INNOVATE

is a concept which leverages the technical and entrepreneurial expertise of the RECCAA fraternity to convert new ideas and concepts into real life solutions.

## CHAPTER 14

# RECCAA SPIRIT – SUCCESS OF THE CLUB

Shilen asked Chilprakash once. “I have developed many organisations, in US, Kochi, Kannur etc. I never had problem with funds... there was enough always. But, in RECCAA Club, you didn’t have the funds and had to start the work at a deficit of Rs 25 lakhs. Still, you managed to complete the project, how?!”

Chilprakash did not have an answer right away. He pondered over this and finally got the reason – **‘only because of true RECCAA Spirit!’**

Having spent more than 40 years in Cochin RECCAA, Chilprakash says RECCAA Spirit was amply demonstrated...

- When a number alumni loaned funds to the tune of Rs 1.8 crores – without any collateral or any interest - to a project which just existed on paper trusting the words of a few friends selling a vision for the future. Of course, every penny was repaid – but without any interest charges.

- When many of them turned up during crisis situations like the Sinking Crane Incident, leaving aside their family and career priorities – to stand with the core team and find speedy resolutions.

## THE SINKING CRANE INCIDENT



During construction stage, a huge crane – brought in at a rent of Rs 1 lakh per day – started sinking while lifting the heavy space-frame of the roof. The team at the site was worried and helpless. Chilprakash made a few phone calls, and in no time 7-8 alumni cars reached the spot. The engineering brains quickly sat together and brainstormed to bring a new crane to lift the main crane and fix the space-frame. This is an event which is fondly narrated in some of the alumni gatherings even now.

- When the external agencies like income tax department and GST department, came with large teams for scrutiny and left with no findings.

- When the members travel, work, plan, and burn midnight oil for building this facility without taking any remuneration or claim. A principle of financial discipline which is strictly followed by all the committee members until this date.

- When other organisations with similar ideas of constructing a club, express their admiration nearing envy by stating that RECCAA could pull this off only because of the complete absence of egos, hidden agendas and personal interests

- When we evolved a structured and thorough system to engage with alumni from the junior batches, involve them in decision making process through sub-committees, expose and align them to the RECCAA Spirit, provide them with opportunities to contribute wherever possible and create a next level of leaders through a time-tested succession planning process.

- When the seniors who toiled for years to build this epitome of alumni fraternity, willingly decided to move aside to allow the next generation of leaders to take their positions.

- When the seniors could happily watch the new leaders, taking the club to new heights with a modern outlook and still upholding the RECCAA spirit to its core.

Let us all stand together to make our RECCAA Club even more prestigious in the long run.

The journey ahead will need the same spirit, as it is ambitious, yet fraught with unforeseen challenges. But if the last forty years have taught

us anything, it is that this community, when it decides to do something, finds a way to get it done – We call it the RECCAA spirit.





