

Tree climbers to plumbers, all online in Kerala villages

Getting a plumber to fix a pipe, searching for blood donors or finding the right school for children in the neighbourhood is now just a click away. And this isn't happening in cities like Delhi or [Bangalore](#) but in villages in a Kerala district.

Contact details for all kinds of day-to-day information are available on the community portals of villages in Kannur district, thanks to a new initiative of the state government.

These portals, which even tell you where to find a coconut tree climber to pluck coconuts or employment opportunities, have become operational in nine village panchayats and one municipality in Kannur last month.

A pilot project by Akshaya, the information and communication technology initiative of the government, these village portals can be accessed through links provided on the website www.entegramam.gov.in. 'Ente gramam' in Malayalam means 'my village'.

The contents of all these portals are naturally in Malayalam.

'The portals were created as a pilot project and are funded by UNESCO. The plan is to develop portals for all village panchayats in the state,' S.B. Biju, the state coordinator of Kerala IT Mission, told IANS.

Kerala - a state with 90.86 percent literacy - has around 1,100 local self-government institutions and the unique community portals provide locally relevant information about various fields like agriculture, health, education, tourism, employment and government announcements from time to time.

Each portal also has special information specific to that area. The portal of Sreekandapuram village panchayat, about 50 km from Kannur town, has an exhaustive list of blood donors with phone numbers and their blood group.

All panchayats have incorporated a section called the labour bank where one can get the addresses and phone numbers of people working in various trades.

The education section has details of schools, courses, teachers' training programmes and even carries poems and articles by school children.

'The information is locality specific and is scrutinised by Akshaya district authorities before they are put up on the site,' Biju said.

At present, the information to be uploaded on the websites is sent by e-mail by each panchayat.

'A person is engaged just for this purpose in the panchayat and Akshaya provides an honorarium to the individual. We have two content editors at the Akshaya district office to process the matter,' said C. Bhaskaran, the assistant district coordinator for Akshaya in Kannur.

Government funds are now being used to maintain the portals, but at a later stage, panchayats are

expected to maintain it themselves, using their own resources.

The IT Mission believes it is possible to run the portal on a self-sustaining basis under panchayats.

'The portals could accept advertisements in the manner of 'classifieds' in newspapers,' Biju said.

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