

# Trade Unions: A Symbiont of Multifaceted Changes in Kerala

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## Abstract:

"Trade unions, as we see them today, are the vibrant remnants of the great struggle that unfolded after the 1850s when numerous large-scale industries began recruiting a large number of people in less than agreeable working environments. Despite the unfavourable conditions and appalling work, workers persevered until agitations began. Shri Lokhandey was the first person in India to form an association of Bombay Mill Workers in 1890. Encouraged by this initiative, many associations and labour unions sprang up in different parts of India. This eventually led to the formulation of various labour legislations at the national and state levels. In this study, we analyse the trade unions of Kerala, rightfully called the 'political laboratory of India,' owing to its distinguished political scenario compared to the rest of the Indian states. This study delves into the analysis of trade unions in Kerala concerning its political landscape, socio-economic factors, and legal frameworks. The historical backdrop sheds light on the roots of trade unions in Kerala, evolving from early struggles during trade expansion to their pivotal role in the Punnapra-Vayalar revolt of 1946. In the political domain, the article aims to explore the symbiotic relationship between trade unions and political parties, especially the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], which has been a stalwart presence. It also elucidates the integral role played by trade unions in the evolving political landscape. The socio-economic dynamics highlight the economic hardships and poor working conditions that fuelled the trade union movement, shifting from an initial focus on political issues to later emphasizing economic demands post-independence. Legally, the article focuses on the current Trade Union Act and its demand for legislative updates. This analysis offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of trade unions in Kerala through the examination of trade union activities, strikes, and case studies."

**Keywords:** Trade Union, Kerala, Labour Struggles, Political Scenario, Nokku Kooli.

## INTRODUCTION

The captivating narrative of Kerala, nestled in southwestern India, unfolds through a diverse tapestry woven with the intricate threads of its trade union movement, political landscape, socio-economic factors, labour militancy, legal frameworks, and future outlook. This journey, originating in the mid-19th century amid expanding trade, weaves through historical milestones, reflecting the evolution of Kerala's trade unions from welfare-oriented entities to dynamic forces deeply entwined with the freedom movement.

The trajectory of Kerala's trade union movement pivots on significant events, such as the transformative 1946 Punnapra-Vayalar revolt, shaping its post-independence character. Transitioning from a political to economic focus, the movement grapples with the challenges posed by economic reforms, globalization, and a shifting state role in the 21st century.

In the political realm, Kerala's landscape unfolds as a unique narrative, shaped by distinct sub-regions and dominated by the disciplined cadre of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)). With roots tracing back to pre-1940 Kerala, the CPI(M) underwent a metamorphosis from alignment with the Congress to emerge as an independent political force in 1939. Despite periodic challenges, the CPI(M) remains a formidable political entity, contributing significantly to Kerala's distinctive political dynamics. Socio-economic factors add layers of complexity to Kerala's narrative, revealing the intricate interplay between agricultural transitions, capitalist growth, and the rise of trade unions. The agricultural shift prompted the emergence of organizations advocating for the rights of the rural workforce. However, the state's labour militancy, symbolized by 'nokku-kooli,' introduces a paradox where protective legislation, designed to prevent exploitation, paradoxically hinders industrial growth.

The lens of case studies on nokku-kooli and temple trade unionism offers nuanced insights into the complexities of labour practices and legal interventions. Despite legislative measures, challenges persist, underscoring the need for sustained efforts to curb extortion by trade unions and foster a conducive business environment. Legal frameworks in Kerala are dynamically evolving to address unfair labour practices, exemplified by recent crackdowns on 'nokku-kooli.' Directives from the Kerala High Court emphasize the illegality of such practices, affirming a commitment to fairness in labour practices.

As Kerala stands at the cusp of its future, it grapples with a delicate equilibrium between ideological commitments and imperative economic reforms. The future outlook calls for reforms that create a favourable environment for private participation, streamline regulatory processes, and align with the larger goals of economic dynamism. The symphony of Kerala's trade union movement, resonating through these multifaceted changes, continues to shape the state's destiny.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The trade union movement in Kerala traces its roots back to the era of trade expansion, with the establishment of "Darrah's Mail Company" by James Darrah in Alleppey in 1858. As British influence grew, so did their capital investments in Kerala, leading to the establishment of factories and plantations. The first organized effort in the form of a Workers Association named "Labour Union" emerged in 1922 under the chairmanship of Advocate P.B. Muhammed, later evolving into the "Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union." During the early decades, the union primarily functioned as a welfare organization rather than a radical trade union. Workers initially hesitated to join, viewing the union as an adversary. However, by 1934, the first general strike of Coir factory workers in Alleppey marked a turning point, reflecting a growing progressive and radical section within the association. Trade union activities were not limited to Travancore, as Cochin and Malabar regions also played active roles. The communist movement's founding members significantly contributed to organizing unions in Malabar, intertwining the union struggle with the broader freedom movement. The 1946 Punnapra-Vayalar revolt marked a crucial moment in Kerala's trade union history, blending trade union agitation with political aspirations for freedom and responsible government.

Post-independence, the trade union movement in Kerala experienced a shift from political to economic demands. With industrialization, a growing labour force, increased union consciousness, and rising literacy rates, trade unions witnessed substantial growth. However, this period also saw heightened militancy, strikes, and agitations for better wages and working conditions. By the late 1930s and 40s, political mobilization influenced the working class, especially by outsiders advocating against British rule. This period saw a blurred line between political and economic issues, with communist ideology providing

a common bond. Political parties began using organized labour and student movements for their political purposes. Despite ideological differences, inter-union rivalries, and leadership conflicts, a significant degree of unity existed among trade unions in Kerala. The trade union movement evolved in tandem with the freedom struggle in its early phases and later became directly involved in the state's socio-economic development. However, political instability in the state during the mid-20th century tarnished the image of the trade union movement as a progressive force. The Trade Union Act, outdated in dealing with new issues, faced calls for legislative updates to address problems such as union recognition.

In recent times, the trade union movement in Kerala has grappled with the impact of liberalization, privatization, and globalization on the Indian working class. Concerns include retrenchment, wage cuts, and restrictions on trade union rights. Economic reforms have led to a decline in militancy, with unions becoming more legalistic. The state's role is shifting toward being a facilitator rather than a provider of social protection. The decline of jobs in the organized formal sector has resulted in shrinking union membership and a lack of interest in paying dues. Unions are excluded from decision-making processes, viewed by some employers as a nuisance. Labour laws are being modified in favour of capital, further dividing and fragmenting the trade union movement. The history of the trade union movement in Kerala reflects a journey from its early roots in trade expansion to periods of political mobilization, struggles for freedom, and socio-economic development. While facing challenges in recent times, the movement continues to adapt to changing economic landscapes, navigating the balance between worker rights and the demands of a globalized world.

## **POLITICAL LANDSCAPE**

Kerala's political landscape, shaped by the distinct sub-regions of Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar, exhibits diverse histories and cultures. Post-independence, the decline of one-party rule led to a coalition-based political pattern, with personal feuds, factional struggles, and communalism facilitating the Communist Party's rise to power in 1957. Kerala witnessed a transformed political landscape, with Congress and Communists becoming central, and regional parties challenging their dominance.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M), stands as the dominant political force in Kerala, renowned for its disciplined cadre, unwavering leadership, and widespread popularity. However, its strengths have also been the source of vulnerabilities, evident during periods of political wilderness in 1969-79 and since 1981. The CPI(M) upholds socialism and communism, aiming to establish the state under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its social base includes the impoverished peasantry, lower-middle-class, agricultural workers, organized labourers, and NGOs in state service. The party garners significant support from poor Ezhavas, Harijans, and a minority of Muslim, Christian, and Nair communities.

Communism in pre-1940 Kerala arose from resistance against foreign dominance, aligning with the Congress party. The imperative for an independent Communist party led to the formation of the first central organization in 1933. Leaders like P. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, K.P. Gopalan, and Moyyarath Sankaran laid the groundwork within the Congress, adopting Marxist-Leninist ideology. The secret Kerala Communist party began in 1937, converting newcomers through study classes. World War II intensified ideological struggles, leading to the Communist party's formation in December 1939. Despite being banned, the party declared formation on January 26, 1940. Communist leaders, including P. Krishnapillai, organized underground, mobilizing people and uniting organizations against the government.

In the pre-independence era, Communists initially represented the radical faction within the Congress. After the ban on Communists was lifted in July 1942, the party operated lawfully, intensifying agrarian and political struggles. Post-independence, the Communist Party gained power in Kerala in 1957, implementing significant measures, particularly in agriculture. The ministry, led by Chief Minister E.M.S Namboothirippadu, comprised leaders like C. Achutha Menon and V.R. Krishna Iyer. The fertile ground for Communism in Kerala included a high literacy rate, political consciousness, chronic unemployment among the educated, population pressure on land, and a commitment to social and economic egalitarianism.

Therefore, the impact of communist ideologies in Kerala has been profound, shaping the political landscape since the party's ascent to power in 1957. Despite facing challenges and periodic setbacks, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) remains a dominant force, with its disciplined cadre and unwavering principles. The ideological foundations laid in the pre-independence era continue to influence the state's political dynamics. Kerala's political arena, marked by coalition politics and the emergence of regional parties, reflects the enduring legacy of communist ideals in the quest for social and economic egalitarianism.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS**

### **Agriculture:**

The agricultural transition and capitalist growth in regions like Kuttanad and Palghat had profound social and economic implications, particularly on trade unionism and the rural workforce. Limited tenancy reforms, coupled with the decline of the janmi system, created an environment where former tenants transformed into capitalist farmers, marking a shift in the agricultural landscape. The relief from the burden of rent payments allowed these new landowners to reinvest surplus income into agriculture, fostering technological advancements and a transition to capital-intensive farming. As productivity improved, the traditional system of labour relations witnessed a decline, with an increasing emphasis on mechanization. This shift not only altered the dynamics of agricultural production but also had significant consequences for the labour force. Agricultural labourers, excluded from the benefits of land reforms, faced challenges as traditional employment opportunities dwindled. The rise of capitalism led to a polarization of class forces, with unequal distribution of benefits favoring the emerging class of capitalist farmers.

Against this backdrop, the emergence of agricultural labourer organizations became a notable social and economic response. The discontent and sense of deprivation among the rural poor found expression through organized movements. Both Kuttanad in the early forties and Palghat in the mid-sixties witnessed the establishment of unions representing the interests of agricultural labourers. These organizations aimed to address the challenges faced by the labour force, including the erosion of traditional employment opportunities and the impact of mechanization. The objective conditions of the time created fertile ground for the growth of trade unionism in the agricultural sector. The able and inspiring leadership of pioneers, coupled with active patronage from political parties, played a crucial role in fostering the formation of these unions. As the pace of mechanization and capitalist growth advanced, these organizations became instrumental in advocating for the rights and well-being of the rural workforce, highlighting the broader socio-economic impact of the agricultural transition on trade unionism.

**Militancy:**

The state of Kerala in India, often hailed for providing its workers with the highest wages and best working conditions in the country, faces a paradoxical situation where the protective labour legislation designed to prevent exploitation has resulted in a class of coddled workers. The term 'nokku-kooli,' or gawking wages, encapsulates the essence of the issue, with headload workers earning substantial amounts, averaging around Rs 2,500 per month and some reaching Rs 5,000. The Kerala High Court's recent directive to eliminate nokku-kooli reflects the socio-economic implications of the militant behaviour exhibited by trade unions in the state. This situation has given rise to a workforce highly conscious of its rights but seemingly unconcerned about corresponding responsibilities. The demands made by trade unions, particularly the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), have led to instances where goods couldn't be lifted, causing significant economic losses. For instance, the CPI(M)'s trade union wing, CITU, insisted on using its members for loading cashews worth over Rs 5 crore at Cochin Port, resulting in missed export deadlines.

The impact of this militant behaviour extends to the industrial landscape of Kerala. The cost of unloading a container at Cochin Port is significantly higher than in other ports like Madras, creating an unfavourable economic environment. As a consequence, Kerala lags in industrial development, with only 210 large and medium-scale industries, and private entrepreneurs show reluctance to invest in major industrial units. Existing industries prefer to move out due to unreasonable demands. The once-thriving cashew industry, which accounted for nearly half of the world's exports and employed over one lakh workers, faced a decline as many units moved to Tamil Nadu, attracted by lower wages. Similar trends are observed in the coir and beedi industries. The labour militancy in Kerala has become a cause for concern for economists and political leaders alike. Economist Dr. K.N. Raj warns that unless the culture of extortion by labour ends, more industries will shift to neighbouring states like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Even left-leaning leaders acknowledge that trade unions have gone too far, resisting mechanization and making unreasonable demands without evolving a work ethic. This socio-economic perspective underscores the need for a balanced approach, where the rights of workers are protected, but unions refrain from inhibiting industrial growth and competitiveness.

The intertwining of trade unions and politics further complicates the scenario. Trade unions serve as significant vote and money banks for political parties, creating a symbiotic relationship. In the last assembly elections, CITU, with a membership of 4.18 lakh, reportedly donated over Rs 1 crore to the CPI(M). In return, labour unions receive doles, grants, pensions, and special treatment. The political clout of trade unions often results in police non-intervention when workers resort to muscle power.

The multiplicity of unions, with over 10,000 registered unions in the state, exacerbates the problem. Each union competes and makes unreasonable demands, creating an environment of upmanship. Disputes over employment and wages begin even before an industry starts production, contributing to a challenging business environment.

Instances like the Cochin Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) and Cochin Port reflect the repercussions of labour problems on potential economic growth. Entrepreneurs are scared away as unions dictate employment terms and wages. The CEPZ, which started with promising potential, faces stagnation due to labour-related obstacles, resulting in a significant loss of employment opportunities.

Therefore, Kerala's labour militancy, driven by trade unions, presents a socio-economic challenge that hampers industrial growth and competitiveness. The state's image as a labour-friendly region is overshadowed by the consequences of militant behaviour, prompting the need for a more balanced and

collaborative approach between workers, unions, and industrial stakeholders to foster sustainable economic development.

## CASE STUDY

### 1) Nokku-Kooli Dispute at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram

Following the Kerala High Court's recent directive to eliminate the practice of 'nokku-kooli' (gawking wages), a noteworthy incident occurred at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, involving an Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) truck. Nokku-kooli, a term euphemistically representing extortion by organized labour unions in Kerala, became the focal point of this incident.

On a Sunday, workers and residents obstructed a truck carrying heavy equipment bound for VSSC, insisting on 'gawking charges.' Despite the cargo's weight necessitating hydraulic offloading, the workers demanded payment for permitting access to the VSSC facility. ISRO employee Rajeswari, overseeing the offloading, expressed frustration, revealing that this practice had persisted since the VSSC's inception, where locals were paid upon goods' arrival. She intended to file a police complaint due to the ongoing situation. The intervention of a labour officer and government and police officials resolved the matter, following a complaint from ISRO.

The Kerala High Court's recent emphasis on eliminating nokku-kooli underscored the need to protect headload workers' rights while acknowledging the rise in petitions against gawking charges. The court voiced concerns about the damage caused to Kerala's image by nokku-kooli, urging its eradication to correct the state's perceived wrong impression. Despite the Kerala government abolishing this practice in 2018, the VSSC incident indicates its persistence, posing challenges for organizations.

The stranded ISRO truck, delayed for over four hours, prompted the Chief Minister's office and Labour Minister V Sivankutty's intervention. After talks and protests, the truck gained entry into the high-security premises. The involvement of the CPI(M)-controlled CITU in the nokku-kooli incident brought embarrassment to the Left Front government, raising questions about law implementation against this practice and safeguarding workers' and businesses' rights.

The nokku-kooli dispute at VSSC highlights persistent challenges in eradicating this practice despite legislative measures. It underscores the necessity for ongoing government and organizational efforts to curb trade unions' extortion, ensuring a business-friendly environment while protecting worker rights. The incident serves as a case study of the intricate dynamics and contradictions surrounding labour practices and legal interventions in Kerala.

### 2) Struggles of Temple Workers and Trade Unionism in Kerala

Prof. Ramachandran Nair, in "The History of Trade Union Movement in Kerala," details the compelling narrative of struggles faced by temple workers in the state. Figures like K. C. Vamadevan, K. V. Sreedharan, and K. Narayanan Potti played pivotal roles in elevating the socio-economic status of these workers, setting a precedent for other labour groups.

The Devaswom Servants Recruitment and Conduct Rules of 1952 initially barred service associations with political affiliations under the Devaswoms. Despite this restriction, a Temple Employees' Union emerged in the early years of the Devaswom Board, advocating for improved wages through hunger strikes and protests. The entry of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) marked a significant shift in politically mobilizing temple employees. In 1956, under RSP leadership, the Maramath Work Establishment

Employees Association demanded pay hikes comparable to those of Public Works Department (PWD) employees in the state government.

In 1964, a prolonged strike by various Devaswom employees led to the formation of the Devaswom Employee's Salary Revision Committee. The committee's recommendations, implemented in 1969, marked a fundamental change by bringing contingent employees under regular service patterns and modern salary structures.

The year 1974 witnessed another wave of agitations, demanding a revised pay structure equivalent to the last grade staff in government service. Concerns among devotees about the political affiliations of trade unions prompted police actions, including arrests and imprisonments, against the agitating employees.

Various commission reports, including the K.P. Sankaran Nair Commission in 1984, recommended systematic facilities for addressing grievances without political affiliations affecting the spiritual atmosphere of temples. The S. Krishnan Unni Commission in 1993 recommended a check on trade union activities, even suggesting a ban on activities affecting temple discipline and advocating for a single union for all Devaswom employees.

The struggles of temple workers in Kerala, chronicled by Prof. Ramachandran Nair, showcase a unique intersection of spiritual devotion and political activism. Trade union movements, marked by hunger strikes, protests, and political affiliations, have not only improved the socio-economic conditions of temple workers but also posed challenges to the traditional tranquility of temple environments. This case study illustrates the evolving dynamics and continuous interplay between spiritual institutions and the broader socio-political landscape in Kerala.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

As a result of unfair practices, the government of Kerala is cracking down on the unfair practice of 'nokku kooli,' and workers engaging in this illegal activity may face job loss. The Kerala High Court has even threatened legal action against those demanding 'nokku kooli.' To make things fairer, the government has revised the charges for loading and unloading, and now there's a scheme allowing workers to claim these charges through the "Headload Workers Welfare Fund Board" offices. Excitingly, Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) has been declared the first 'Nokkukooli-free' city in the state, with plans to extend this scheme to other parts of Kerala, including Kochi and Kozhikode. In a recent incident, a truck carrying equipment for ISRO was blocked in Thiruvananthapuram, just days after the Kerala High Court criticized the state government for not effectively enforcing laws to abolish 'nokku kooli.'

In the 28th paragraph of the order given by Justice DEVAN RAMACHANDRAN, J in the W.P.(C). No.17866 of 2021, he very clearly stated, *"As far as Gawking charges (Nokku kooli) are concerned, this Court declares that any such demand by any person, headload worker, Union is illegal and unlawful; and consequentially direct the competent Station House Officers of the area concerned, to take stringent and strict W.P.(C).No. 17866 of 2021 11 action - including under the various provisions of the Indian Penal Code, depending upon the nature of the allegations – thus ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to book without any lenience - whatever may be colour of the flag they may be operating under and may hold allegiance to."*

Trade unions find themselves compelled to acknowledge the inevitability of reforms and adapt their attitudes and policies accordingly. It is advised that they make necessary adjustments and, in some instances, make modest sacrifices to enhance production efficiency and prevent the shutdown of industries. The state is shifting its stance, transitioning from a labour-friendly approach to one that is more

accommodating to capital. Economic reforms have played a significant role in the diminishing influence of trade unions, leading to job losses in the organized formal sector. In this climate, workers are prioritizing job retention over demanding additional improvements, reflecting a pragmatic shift in their concerns.

## **FUTURE OUTLOOK**

The State of Kerala finds itself grappling with a paradoxical situation as it endeavours to balance its ideological commitments with the imperative for economic reforms, particularly in the realm of Ease of Doing Business (EoDB). The latest EoDB rankings, initiated by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) in collaboration with the World Bank, place Kerala at an underwhelming 20th position, a decline from its 2015 ranking. The Finance Minister, Dr. Thomas Issac, quoted the great social reformer Sree Narayana Guru during the budget speech, emphasizing the inseparable link between economic progress and industrial progress. However, this rhetoric seems to be at odds with the state's actual performance in EoDB.

The Communist-led government in Kerala appears to grapple with a certain antipathy towards business reforms, rooted in its historical stance against capitalism. The 'Make in India' initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is viewed with suspicion, and labour reforms are perceived as sacrificing labour rights for profit. The ideological resistance to terms like 'privatization' and 'liberalization' has been a consistent theme, reflecting a reluctance to embrace market-oriented policies. Despite the government's attempt to position itself as reformist, evidenced by the appointment of liberal economist Gita Gopinath and engagement with advisory firms like KPMG, the actual progress in implementing business-friendly policies seems sluggish.

The Communist government's aversion to liberalization and privatization is compounded by the diminishing presence of large and medium-scale industries in the state. Kerala's migration to Gulf countries, coupled with policies such as the contentious liquor ban, paints a complex picture of economic challenges. The state's debt-ridden economy, coupled with high unemployment rates, underscores the urgency for pragmatic reforms.

In the context of EoDB, Kerala's ranking reflects a need for a substantial overhaul in its approach. While the state has shown progress in environmental reforms, issues like labour reforms remain unaddressed. The state's communist leaders might need to reconsider their ideological stance in the face of economic realities. The proposed reforms should include a more favourable environment for private participation, streamlined regulatory processes, and a focus on developing a strong local governance system. The emphasis on 'Rubber Economy' should be complemented by efforts to tap into geographical advantages and attract investments, moving beyond the traditional economic paradigms.

The impending challenges, such as the oil crisis, aging population, and unemployment, demand a pragmatic reassessment of the state's economic policies. The aversion to market-oriented reforms may no longer be sustainable in the face of these pressing issues. A rightist solution, involving deregulation, reduced government size, upholding the rule of law, and fostering entrepreneurship, could be the path forward for Kerala. The vision of communism, with industries run by the workforce, needs to align with the larger goals of EoDB reforms, facilitating opportunities for all based on their abilities and ushering in a new era of economic dynamism.



## CONCLUSION

The kaleidoscope of Kerala's history unfolds a dynamic narrative of its trade union movement, political dynamics, socio-economic shifts, labour challenges, legal transformations, and future trajectories. This intricate tapestry encapsulates the evolution of trade unions, which have proven to be not just historical actors but living entities adapting to the changing contours of time.

From its nascent roots in trade expansion to the politically charged decades and socio-economic development, the trade union movement has metamorphosed in response to the evolving needs of the workforce. However, the onset of liberalization and economic reforms has ushered in a paradigm shift, challenging the traditional prominence of these unions. The landscape now witnesses a decline in militancy, alterations in labour laws favouring capital, and a transformation in the state's role, prompting unions to navigate a pragmatic shift in worker priorities.

In the political sphere, Kerala's distinctive sub-regions have given rise to a coalition-based pattern dominated by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The enduring influence of communist ideals, rooted in the pre-independence era, continues to shape the state's political dynamics. Despite occasional setbacks, the CPI(M) remains a dominant force, steering through the complex interplay of historical principles and contemporary challenges.

Socio-economic factors, particularly the transition in agriculture and capitalist growth, have propelled the emergence of trade unions advocating for the rights of the rural workforce. The challenge lies in striking a delicate balance between mechanization-driven progress and safeguarding the well-being of labourers, reflecting broader socio-economic implications.

Kerala's labour militancy, exemplified by the 'nokku-kooli' practice, presents a paradox where protective legislation designed to prevent exploitation inadvertently hampers industrial growth. The symbiotic relationship between trade unions and politics further complicates the scenario, necessitating a nuanced approach that safeguards workers' rights while fostering economic development.

Legal frameworks are evolving to address these challenges, with recent interventions against 'nokku-kooli' emphasizing the need for fairness and efficiency in labour practices. The legal landscape plays a pivotal role in navigating the intricate dynamics of labour issues, ensuring a conducive business environment while safeguarding the interests of both workers and businesses.

As Kerala stands at a crossroads, balancing ideological commitments with the imperative for economic reforms, the trade union movement emerges as a vital thread in the state's socio-economic fabric. The adaptability and resilience of these unions will play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Kerala's future, as the state grapples with an aging population, unemployment, and the shifting sands of the global economy. In this dynamic interplay, trade unions are not just historical artifacts but living entities, actively contributing to the ongoing narrative of Kerala's socio-economic evolution.

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